

Isis and Asiis

*Eastern Africa's Kalenjiin People and their
Pharaonic Origin Legend:
a Comparative Study*

by

KIPKOECH ARAAP SAMBU

Volume I

ISIS AND ASIIS
EASTERN AFRICA'S KALENJIIN PEOPLE AND THEIR
PHARAONIC ORIGIN LEGEND:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY

by

KIPKOECH ARAAP SAMBU

Submitted in accordance with the requirements
For the degree of

DOCTOR OF LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY

In the subject

SEMITIC LANGUAGES

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

PROMOTER: PROFESSOR PS VERMAAK

NOVEMBER 2000

Key Terms

Alternative spellings are given where applicable:

Asiis; Asiisian; Asis; Isis; Ptah; Maat; Ma'at; Kalenjiin language; Kalenjin; Kalenjiin religion; Oorgoiyoot; Orkoiyot; Oral tradition; Comparative religion; Divine kingship; African traditional religion.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>TITLE</u>	i
<u>DECLARATION</u>	ii
<u>SUMMARY</u>	iii
<u>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</u>	v
<u>ABBREVIATIONS</u>	ix
<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	x
<u>The Hypothesis</u>	xii
<u>SECTION A</u>	1
<u>THE METHODOLOGIES OF ORAL TRADITION, ORAL HISTORY, WRITTEN SOURCES, AND COMPARATIVE RESEARCH</u>	1
<u>Chapter 1</u>	1
<u>Oral Tradition, Oral History and Written Sources</u>	2
<u>Abstract</u>	1
<u>1.1 Oral Tradition</u>	2
<u>1.1.1 Ethnohistory, another Word for Oral Tradition</u>	5
<u>1.2 Oral History</u>	5
<u>1.3 Written Sources</u>	7
<u>1.4 Oral tradition, Oral and Written History as Inseparable Complements</u>	9
<u>1.5 Categories of Oral Sources</u>	11
<u>1.5.1 Folktales</u>	11
<u>1.5.2 Myths</u>	13
<u>1.5.3 Legends</u>	14
<u>1.5.4 Fairy tales, or Märchen</u>	15
<u>1.5.5 Proverbs and Riddles</u>	15
<u>1.5.6 Reminiscences</u>	16
<u>1.5.7 Poems, Epics, Songs and (King) Lists</u>	16
<u>1.5.8 Totemism, Clanism and Age grouping Social Structures</u>	17
<u>1.5.9 Funeral Eulogies, Circumcision, and Wedding Ceremonies</u>	19
<u>1.6 Arguments Against and For the Methodology of Oral Tradition</u>	20
<u>1.6.1 Criticism of Oral Methodology in General</u>	20
<u>1.6.2 Limitations of the Interviewee and how to Cope with Them</u>	25
<u>1.6.3 Limitations of the Interviewer</u>	30
<u>1.6.4 Limitations Inherent in the Nature of Interviewing</u>	33
<u>1.6.5 The Potential and the Advantages of Oral Tradition Methodology</u>	36
<u>1.7 Identifying the Potential Oral Sources, the Researcher and the Informant</u>	41
<u>1.7.1 Types of Field Oral Research Work</u>	42
<u>1.7.2 Types of Oral Researchers: Insider Vs Outsider</u>	44
<u>1.7.3 Preparation for Oral Fieldwork</u>	44
<u>1.7.4 Selecting Potential Interviewees</u>	49
<u>1.7.5 Methods of Recording the Interview</u>	51
<u>1.7.6 The Person of the Oral Informant</u>	53
<u>1.8 Collating Information from the Field</u>	55
<u>1.8.1 Divergent Accounts</u>	55
<u>1.8.2 Evaluating Oral Sources</u>	57
<u>1.9 The Author's Fieldwork</u>	61
<u>1.9.1 Background Information to Anthropological Fieldwork</u>	61
<u>1.9.2 Field Questionnaire</u>	65
<u>1.9.3 Sampling of informants and criteria</u>	66

<u>1.9.4 The pitfalls</u>	69
<u>1.9.5 Reward</u>	70
<u>Table 1: Field Questionnaire</u>	71
<u>Summary of Chapter 1: Oral Tradition, Oral History, and Written Sources</u>	77
<u>Chapter 2</u>	79
<u>Comparative Religion</u>	79
<u>Abstract</u>	79
<u>2.1 A Definition</u>	81
<u>2.2 Methodological Perspectives in Comparative Religion</u>	85
<u>2.3 Characteristics of Religion</u>	87
<u>2.3.1 The Holy, the Profane and the Unholy</u>	87
<u>2.3.2 Response</u>	92
<u>2.3.3 Beliefs</u>	94
<u>2.3.4 Rituals and Liturgy</u>	99
<u>2.3.5 Community</u>	102
<u>2.3.6 Ethical Codes</u>	103
<u>2.3.7 Priesthood</u>	106
<u>2.3.8 Divine Kingship</u>	109
<u>Summary of Chapter 2: Comparative Religion</u>	113
<u>Chapter 3</u>	117
<u>Comparative Linguistics</u>	117
<u>Abstract</u>	117
<u>3.1 Comparative vs. the Contrastive Method</u>	117
<u>3.2 Genetic Classification: a Comparative Linguistic Exercise</u>	120
<u>3.3 Diachronic and Synchronic Linguistics</u>	122
<u>3.4 Identifying and Declaring Items for a Comparative Exercise</u>	123
<u>3.5 Brief Notes on the Comparative Linguistics Techniques Applied in the Thesis</u>	125
<u>3.5.1 Basic Words: Employing a Lexicostatistical Technique</u>	125
<u>3.5.2 Word Order</u>	128
<u>3.5.3 Morphemes and Noun Formation</u>	129
<u>3.5.4 Infixation</u>	131
<u>Summary of Chapter 3: Comparative Linguistics</u>	132
<u>SECTION B</u>	133
<u>CULTURAL BACKGROUND</u>	133
<u>Chapter 4</u>	133
<u>Who are the Kalenjiin?</u>	133
<u>Abstract</u>	133
<u>4.1 The People</u>	134
<u>4.2 The Hamite Factor</u>	140
<u>4.2.1 Merker's Maasai/Kalenjiin Ancient Egyptian "Semites" Theory, 1904</u>	158
<u>4.3 Locating the Kalenjiin's Cradle-land and Establishing the Migration Route</u>	161
<u>4.4 Assigning Time Frame and Reasons for the Departure from Egypt</u>	172
<u>4.4.1 Geographical Corroboration from the Traces of Greek and Hebrew Influences on the Kalenjiin Language</u>	178
<u>4.5 The Kalenjiin Language after Egypt</u>	181
<u>Summary of Chapter 4: Who are the Kalenjiin?</u>	184
<u>Chapter 5</u>	187
<u>And Who are the Egyptians?</u>	187
<u>Abstract</u>	187

<u>5.1 Ancient Egyptian Society as an Extension of Nilotic Africa</u>	188
<u>5.2 The Modern Egyptian Society in General, the Copts and the Coptic Language</u>	192
<u>5.2.1 The Coptic Language</u>	195
<u>5.3 Pronunciation Help</u>	198
<u>5.3.1 A Note on Sound Change and Transcription</u>	199
<u>Summary of Chapter 5: And who are the Egyptians?</u>	202
<u>Chapter 6</u>	204
<u>Relating the Kalenjiin Language to the Ancient Egyptian Language</u>	204
<u>Abstract</u>	204
<u>6.1 The Relevance of a Linguistics Discussion to this Project</u>	204
<u>6.2 The Standards of Proof set by Linguists</u>	207
<u>6.3 Lexicostatistical Analysis</u>	211
<u>6.3.1 The Basic Words</u>	211
<u>6.3.2 Basic Word List</u>	217
<u>Table 2: A Lexicostatistical Analysis, Kalenjiin-Ancient Egyptian/Coptic</u>	217
<u>6.3.3 Word Arrangement by Semantic Domain</u>	227
<u>Table 3: Semantic Domains</u>	229
<u>6.3.4 Huntingford's Egypto-Kalenjiin Comparative attempt, 1926</u>	234
<u>Table 4: Huntingford's List of Kalenjiin-Ancient Egyptian Cognate words, 1926:</u>	236
<u>6.4 Ancient Egyptian-Kalenjiin Syntactic Analysis</u>	238
<u>6.4.1 Word Order</u>	238
<u>Table 5: Word Order</u>	241
<u>6.4.2 Gender Prefixes</u>	242
<u>6.4.3 Noun Formation</u>	245
<u>6.4.4 Reduplication</u>	250
<u>6.4.5 The Causative</u>	251
<u>6.4.6 Negation</u>	252
<u>Summary of Chapter 6: Relating the Kalenjiin Language to the Ancient Egyptian Language</u>	253
<u>SECTION C</u>	255
<u>COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPTS, BELIEFS AND MYTHS REGARDING THE HOLY, THE SUPERHUMAN BEINGS AND FORCES</u>	255
<u>A General Introduction to Section C</u>	255
<u>Chapter 7</u>	259
<u>Asiis in Ptah and in other Ancient Egyptian "Gods"</u>	259
<u>Abstract</u>	259
<u>7.1. Ptah</u>	259
<u>7.2 Ancient Egyptian/Kalenjiin Monotheism and the Accusation of Sun-worship</u>	267
<u>7.2.1 Monotheism in the Context of Ptah Worship</u>	267
<u>Table 6: A Monotheistic Statement</u>	271
<u>7.2.2 Sun-worship</u>	273
<u>7.3 The Early Kalenjiin Converts call both God, the Father, and Jesus Christ, Ptah</u>	279
<u>7.4 Ptah and the Pharaonic Concept of Divine Trinity</u>	283
<u>7.5 The Ennead</u>	292
<u>Summary of Chapter 7: Asiis in Ptah and in other Ancient Egyptian "Gods"</u>	294
<u>Chapter 8</u>	299

<u>Asiis in Ra, in Amon-Ra and in Miot</u>	299
<u>Abstract</u>	299
<u>8.1 Asiis in Ra</u>	299
<u>8.1.1 <i>Relating Ancient Egypt's Ra to the Kalenjin's Asiis on a Linguistic Level</i></u>	302
<u>8.2 Amon, Amon-Ra and Miot</u>	306
<u>8.2.1 <i>The Divine Associates of Amon</i></u>	310
<u>8.2.2 <i>The Amon Movement's Monotheism, Spread and Influence</i></u>	312
<u>8.3 Min, Menu, Menes, Munyas or Monyiis of Nilotic Phallicism?</u>	322
<u>8.4 Min, Iilat and Baal: The Semitic Resonance</u>	333
<u>Summary of Chapter 8: Asiis in Ra, in Amon-Ra and in Miot</u>	338
<u>Chapter 9</u>	339
<u>Asiis in Isis: Was Isis Asiis?</u>	339
<u>Abstract</u>	339
<u>9.1 Isis' Role in World Religion</u>	340
<u>9.2 Isis South of the Sahara</u>	351
<u>9.2.1 <i>Cheptaleel</i></u>	354
<u>9.2.2 <i>Cheemarus</i></u>	361
<u>9.3 Semitic Resonance</u>	372
<u>9.4 The Tricky Question of Gender of Deity</u>	377
<u>9.5 The Meaning of Some of Asiis' Titles and Names</u>	388
<u>Summary of Chapter 9: Asiis in Isis, Was Isis Asiis</u>	398
<u>Chapter 10</u>	401
<u>Worldwide Influence of Isis and the Associated "Gods":</u>	
<u>Osiris, Horus and Set</u>	401
<u>Abstract</u>	401
<u>10.1 The Holy Family of Isis</u>	401
<u>10.1.1 <i>The Respective Trinities and implied Dualities of Isis and Asiis</i></u>	424
<u>10.2 Creating God in Own Image</u>	440
<u>Summary of Chapter 10: Worldwide Influence of Isis and the Associated</u>	
<u>"Gods": Osiris, Horus and Set</u>	447
<u>SECTION D</u>	453
<u>THE ETHICAL CODE OF MAAT</u>	453
<u>General Introduction to Section D</u>	453
<u>Chapter 11</u>	455
<u>The Ethical Code of Maat of Ancient Egypt</u>	
<u>as retained in the <i>Maat</i> Social Institutions of the Asiisians</u>	455
<u>Abstract</u>	455
<u>11.1 An Overview of <i>Maat</i></u>	456
<u>11.2 <i>Maat</i> in the Clan System, the Clan Totem (or Clan Emblem)</u>	464
<u>11.3 <i>Maat</i> Control in Matters of Marriage</u>	477
<u>11.4 <i>Maat</i> in Marriage and the New Restrictive Scenarios</u>	485
<u>Summary of Chapter 11: The Ethical Code of Maat of Ancient Egypt as</u>	
<u>retained in the <i>Maat</i> Social Institutions of the Asiisians</u>	490
<u>Chapter 12</u>	493
<u>Ancient Egypt's Metempsychosis, or Reincarnation:</u>	
<u>a Concept continued under Asiisianism's Clan System of <i>Maat</i></u>	493

<u>Abstract</u>	493
<u>12.1 How and who may receive the <i>Maat</i> Torch and pass it on</u>	494
<u>12.2 Reincarnation under Woman-to-woman Marriage Arrangements</u>	506
<u>12.3 Ancestor Veneration, A <i>Maat</i> Preoccupation otherwise miscalled Ancestor-worship</u>	512
<u>12.4 Moral and Ceremonial Uncleanness</u>	525
<u>12.5 Other <i>Maat</i> Situations</u>	530
<u>12.6 Maternal Uncle, the Powerful Moral Force outside the Formal <i>Maat</i></u>	533
<u>12.7 Quality of Religion: The Preoccupation with Heaven, the Morbid Fear of Hell, and the Notion of “Primitive” Religion</u>	537
<u>12.8 Tout, Thout or Tehuti or Taiitta? <i>Maat</i>’s Companion</u>	542
<u>Summary of Chapter 12: Ancient Egypt’s Metempsychosis, or Reincarnation; a Concept continued under Asiisianism’s Clan System of <i>Maat</i></u>	544
<u>SECTION E</u>	549
<u>THE SERVANTS OF ASIIS: RELIGIOUS PERSONNEL AND DIVINE KINGSHIP</u>	549
<u>A General Introduction to Section E</u>	549
<u>Chapter 13</u>	550
<u>The Manager of Rituals: the Priest of Asiis, <i>Poiyoot aap Tuum</i></u>	550
<u>Abstract</u>	550
<u>13.1 The Paraphernalia of Priesthood and Temple Equipment</u>	551
<u>13.2 The Priest’s Role in Circumcision</u>	554
<u>13.3 The Priest and Marriage</u>	561
<u>13.4 The Priest’s Role in Major Prayers and Processions, and his preference for unblemished White or Black Colours for Sacrificial Animals</u>	567
<u>13.5 Qualities expected of the Priest of Asiis</u>	586
<u>Summary of Chapter 13: The Manager of Rituals: the Priest of Asiis, <i>Poiyoot aap Tuum</i></u>	596
<u>Chapter 14</u>	601
<u><i>Kiirwogiindet</i>, the Politico-Judicial Head of the Government of the Divine King, <i>Oorgoiyoot</i></u>	601
<u>Abstract</u>	601
<u>14.1 An Overview of the Structure of the <i>Kiirwogiindet</i>’s Politico-Judicial Council in Relation to the King, <i>Oorgoiyoot</i></u>	601
<u>14.1.1 <i>Egypto-Kalenjiin Political, Administrative and Territorial Nomenclature</i></u>	605
<u>14.2 Juridical Council of the <i>Kiirwogiindet</i> in Action</u>	607
<u>14.3 Qualities required of a <i>Kiirwogiindet</i></u>	610
<u>Summary of Chapter 14: <i>Kiirwogiindet</i>, the Politico-Judicial Head of the Government of the Divine King, <i>Oorgoiyoot</i></u>	613
<u>Chapter 15</u>	615
<u>The <i>Oorgoiyoot</i></u>	615
<u>Abstract</u>	615
<u>15.1 The African Origin of the Terminology of, and the Kingship Institution itself</u>	615
<u>15.2 The Origin of <i>Oorgoiyoot</i> Institution</u>	619
<u>15.2.1 <i>The Founding of a Maasai Laibon Dynasty in Kalenjiinland</i></u>	621
<u>15.3 The Person of <i>Oorgoiyoot</i></u>	632
<u>15.3.1 The Royal Totem</u>	636

<u>15.4 The Major Functions and Powers of the <i>Oorgoiyoot</i></u>	637
<u>15.5 Vulnerability of the King</u>	645
<u>15.5.1 Burial of the Dead in General</u>	660
<u>15.5.2 The Burial of the King in Particular</u>	665
<u>Summary of Chapter 15: The <i>Oorgoiyoot</i></u>	677
<u>CONCLUSIONS</u>	682
<u>BIBLIOGRAPHY</u>	693
<u>APPENDIX SECTION</u>	707
<u>ISIS AND ASIIS MOVEMENTS' RESPECTIVE RESPONSES TO EXTERNAL CHALLENGE; THE OVERTHROW, THE SYNCRETIC RESULT AND FUTURE OUTLOOK</u>	707
<u>Abstract</u>	707
<u>Appendix 1</u>	710
<u>The Country Name "Egypt" and other Place-name Etymologies</u>	710
<u>Appendix 2</u>	714
<u>The Civilising Debt as the Bone of Contention</u>	714
<u>Appendix 3</u>	718
<u>James Massam's Kalenjiin Hieroglyphs story of 1927, and the ancient Egyptian Contribution to the modern "Western" Alphabet</u>	718
<u>Appendix 4</u>	721
<u>"God has Forsaken Us and We are Scattered": The Colonial Government's Assault on the Key Institutions of Asiis</u>	721
<u>A4.1 The Neutralisation of the Nandi <i>Oorgoiyoot</i> Institution</u>	721
<u>A4.2 The Colonial Government Neutralises the Kipsigiis <i>Oorgoiyoot</i> Institution with Missionary Help</u> .	734
<u>A4.3 The Church's own Assault on the Institutions of Asiis</u>	741
<u>A4.3.1 "We Treat, Jesus Heals": Missionaries' Assault on Traditional Medical Practitioners</u>	747
<u>A4.3.2 White Missionaries Combat Female Circumcision</u>	751
<u>Appendix 5</u>	756
<u>"God has Forsaken Us and We are Scattered": The Africans' Exported Symbolism Hardens into Literalism in the West, Rebounds and Devastates</u>	756
<u>A5.1 African Allegories</u>	756
<u>A5.2 The Ancient Ankh of the Quaternary Principle is adopted by Christendom</u>	776
<u>A5.3 Ancient African Contribution to Abstract Thought and Symbolism, its Impact on Christology</u>	784
<u>A5.3.1 Africa's Unsung Contribution to the Founding of Christianity: General Textual Evidence</u>	811
<u>A5.3.2 An Example of Biblical Verses from the Pharaoh's Book of the Dead</u>	815
<u>Appendix 6</u>	818
<u>"God has Forsaken Us and We are Scattered": The Replacing of Isis/Asiis Religion in Egypt and in Kenya respectively</u>	818
<u>A6.1 As the Egyptians did 2000 years before, the Kalenjiin now begin to embrace the Bible</u>	818
<u>A6.2 Future Outlook: Is Homo Religiosus also "Homo Syncreticus"?</u>	833
<u>A Winding-down Philosophical Discussion</u>	833
<u>Summary of the Appendix Section</u>	847

TABLES:

<u>Table 1: Field Questionnaire</u>	71
<u>Table 2: A Lexicostatistical Analysis, Kalenjiin-Ancient Egyptian/Coptic</u>	217
<u>Table 3: Semantic Domains</u>	229
<u>Table 4: Huntingford's List of Kalenjiin-Ancient Egyptian Cognate Words, 1926</u>	236
<u>Table 5: Word Order</u>	241
<u>Table 6: A Monotheistic Statement</u>	271

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At least up until the time of its completion, which was at the close of the year 2000, this was still the largest single literary work that was ever attempted about the Kalenjiin. It could not have been possible, therefore, to attain such a gigantic dream of completing it without the many minds and hands that came to my assistance so often. Among the most consequential of my moral backers was H.E. President Daniel Toroitich arap Moi, who, by personally appreciating my work, be it technological or literary, and by encouraging me to continue, got me cracking tirelessly, hoping to win more of his approval!

It is well-wishers in their scores that I am talking about, otherwise, and, therefore, I can only thank the majority of them in anonymity. The most prolific of them who spoke to me, or to my field assistants, however, are named in the text and/or at the bibliography section. But included among the anonymous are all the ancestors of the Kalenjiin-speaking people and all of their descendants who have held so tenaciously and so resiliently onto the oral tradition that is being addressed here and thus made possible the interest, the verification process, and the consequent further discoveries that this project is all about.

I wish to thank the one person who saw to the systematic, scholarly and integrated approach to this study, which rigorous discipline, in turn, made possible the uncovering of much new knowledge. This is my promoter Professor PS Vermaak who encouraged me to raise the research undertaking to the doctoral level and subsequently guided me with kindness, great patience and immense personal sacrifice, to the end.

I also wish to thank the outgoing Head of Department, Professor JC Lübbe, who, as chairman of the Postgraduate Registration Committee, was always on hand to offer his Solomonic counsel and to marshal the department's senior academic staff for useful team deliberations on the progress and direction of the project, or the lack of both! I also wish to thank the incoming Head of Department, Professor Y Dadoo, who counselled me at very difficult moments and got me trudging along when giving up seemed to be the only "practical" option left.

I would also wish to acknowledge the crucial assistance of Her Excellency Professor C Chesaina, Kenya's High Commissioner to Pretoria, who read through the early chapters, made corrections and offered useful suggestions and then encouraged me to feel confident and ready to propose to submit the project.

My special thanks go to the Coptic Church and Centre, Nairobi, and to the Coptic Bishop for African Affairs, Bishop Antonious Markos, whose assistance to this project was continued even

here in South Africa. Much thanks also go to his two priests: Fr Poulos Sidhom, whose initial welcome and teaching, 1990-91, priestly patience and encouragement, was crucial to the beginning of this project; and Fr Dr Antonious Halim, whose personal counsel and huge library this project benefited immensely from. Thanks too to Dr Zaki Shenouda, President of the Coptic High Institute, Cairo, Egypt, who expressed high regard for my command of the Coptic language and script and kindly granted me an interview at the papal residence, Cairo, 1993.

I wish to express gratitude to the Museums of Kenya and the helpful staff then under Dr Isahakia (1997): Mr Gideon Matwale, Dr Sultan Somjee, M/s Kiprop Lagat, Kipchoge Chesire, and Wambugu Iruri. I also wish to thank for kindness and cooperation extended to me, the staff of the McMillan Library, Nairobi, where this project began; the staff of Nairobi University library; the staff of the Institute of African Studies, Museum Hill; the Director, Kenya National Archives and his members of staff, especially Mrs Maranga and Mr Azangu; the very conscientious and efficient staff of the University of South Africa Main Campus library who became personal friends. Many thanks too must go to my subject librarian, Dr G van der Linde who with patience severally helped with the locating of rare books and texts.

My colleagues in The Eye Opener (TEO) NGO: M/s Tela Alusala and Kinama mwana a'Mutungi who assisted both as individuals and as an organisation deserve notable mention together with my niece, Mrs Serah Sambu, who kept my operations going during my long absence from Nairobi.

Much thanks also go to Mr Sababu Shabaka of Maryland USA who encouraged this project from the beginning and scouted for rare books, and Ms Ingrid Gaddis of California, who did the same. In this category too is Mr Kimutai Bosek of the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, who initially helped me navigate my way through the tedious South African academic and bureaucratic prerequisites.

There are, of course, my many other friends, towards whom I feel special sense of gratitude and affection for their advice, moral support and for being there when I needed them: Hon. Dr Taaitta araap-Toweett, the renown politician, academician and author, who called this project "eye opener number one"; Mr David Ngasura Tuei; Mr Josiah Sang; Rev. Cheseng'eny; Revs. Burnette and Gerald Fish; Dr Mosonik arap Korir, who wrote me a very helpful letter of recognition and encouragement; Major (rtd) Chumo; Dr Charles Kiptemas Sigei (my brother-in-law, who helped with word processing at the crucial beginning); H.E. Ambassador A.K. S. Loyatum; H.E. Ambassador S. Chemai (and his daughters, Sharon and Nancy); H.E. Ambassador Kipkorir Rana; Mr Jonathan Kipbett Rutto; Mr Ben Kandie, and Colonel Robb (of Kenya High

Commission, Pretoria); Mr Kipserem Maritim (former Editor-in-Chief, KBC, also former classmate, who became my first one-man audience on the nature of this undertaking); Dr Sally Kosgei (for her quiet but pivotal assistance), Mr S. Kyungu, Director of Education, Kenya, for his practical and crucial support; Lawyer Kimutai Kandie; araap Magut; Mr Kipsang' araap Choge; Hon. Kipruto arap Kirwa; Hon. Wilberforce arap Kisiero for his enthusiasm and scouting for books for me; the late Hon. Prof. Ng'eno; Hon. Kipng'eno araap Ng'eny; General D. Tonje; Maj. (rtd) Koitaba; Miss Shua Anyamba; Mrs Edna Bore, and Mr Henry Fundi arap Ng'etich (who thoughtfully nicknamed me "Cultural Ambassador").

Special thanks go to my principal field research assistant, Mwalimu David Kiprop arap Kolil who not only covered the widest area, often literally on foot, but was also on hand to deliberate on the contents and the physical circumstances behind the field tapes.

This project could not have assumed this magnitude were it not for the generous sponsorship of The Davy Koech Foundation, under its chairman Dr Davy Kiprotich arap Koech. The Foundation bore much of the field research costs, including trips to Egypt and Israel, as well as the sponsorship of seminars, workshops and panels of experts that deliberated on the new findings, payment of office rent etc. Dr Koech has personally maintained close touch with this project and was on hand to organise verification and confirmation of certain facts from time to time after I left for South Africa in 1997. I have no adequate words to thank Dr Koech; I can only say that I feel proud of this brilliant son of the community and feel honoured to be associated with him.

Special thanks to my parents: my late father, Kipsambu araap Bargokweet and my still-energetic mother, Tapkiili nebaraap Bargokweet, both of whom, by remaining true to the traditional cultural ways of our ancestors, shed the practical lessons to me that later stood me in good stead during the field and desk research work. They themselves were also key informants to this project. I also thank profoundly my big brother Councillor Sambu for taking me to school and paying for it, otherwise I would probably be just another oral author today! Our middle brother Mr Kimagut arap Sambu who sponsored my journalism training some 30 years ago, and later encouraged and participated enthusiastically in this project, also merits a special mention. So too do the other siblings and the entire House of Pkeles.

My own immediate family bore an un-quantifiable amount of sacrifice, material and psychological, over the 10 years that this project took to complete, for I subordinated everything to the project, spending almost all waking moments on it. In the process the load of sole breadwinner was hoisted upon the shoulders of my wife, Lily, who has been equal to the

challenging and convoluted circumstances and exhibited great patience while so laden. Our sons, Kipkirui araap Kiituur and Tirop Sambu have kept the patience as much as keen interest in my progress even as I also struggled among their lot as a student.

To all the above: as I acknowledge your valued input, I also declare that all the errors of commission and omission that may be found here, of whatever nature, though certainly unintentional, are solely my own. May Asiis, to Whom we are most indebted for inspiring and overseeing things up to this stage, blaze your individual paths ever so brightly. *Iman.*

The surest way never to step on anybody's toe is, of course, not to tread on the ground at all. But since that is not practical where the mortals are concerned, I apologise in advance to any party that may feel injured, though unwittingly on my part, by any of the contents of this thesis. While I subordinate diplomacy to facts whenever the two clash, all be assured that I intend no harm or slight to any person or organisation.

Abbreviations

B	Budge, E.A. W., 1920, <i>An Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary</i>
B.Dict.	Budge, E.A. W., 1920, <i>An Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary</i> .
C	Crum, W.E. 1939. <i>A Coptic Dictionary</i> .
Cf.	Compare/contrast with.
Crum	Crum, W.E. 1939. <i>A Coptic Dictionary</i> .
def.	Definite.
e.p.n.	exclusive plural noun
e.s.n.	exclusive singular noun
ed.	Editor
F	Faulkner, R.O., 1962, <i>Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian</i> .
F.Dict.	Faulkner, R.O., 1962, <i>Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian</i> .
GME	<i>The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia</i> , Release 6, 1993.
i.p.n.	inclusive plural noun
i.s.n.	inclusive singular noun
imp.	Grammatical imperative.
indef.	indefinite
Kal./Kalenj.	Kalenjiin.
Mattar	N. Mattar, 1989, <i>A Study in Bohairic Coptic</i> .
MEE	<i>Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia</i> , 1993-1997.
n.	noun.
OIE	<i>Oxford Interactive Encyclopedia</i> .
pl	Plural.
sing.	Singular.
v.	verb.

INTRODUCTION

The Kalenjiin people have held fast on to a tradition that their ancestors in antiquity were part of ancient Egypt, which they variously call *Tto* and *Misiri*. Every Kalenjiin child is told this and remembers to pass it on to his or her own children in turn. All without questioning. But to a curious mind, at the first hearing, the tradition sounds disturbingly and hauntingly dissonant. To begin with, the Kalenjiin are among the darkest-skinned of the sub-Saharan people who bear only inferable physical semblance to the more African of the mixed Arabic-speaking population of Egypt. Until only a few decades ago there were neither Muslims nor Christians among the Kalenjiin-speaking people. None could read or write. Technologically they counted among the least advanced anywhere on the continent where the ancient Egyptians, whom they claim to have been part of historically, had managed to put in place architectural and other technological marvels, some of which are yet to be surpassed (Cf. Robins, 1995:1799). No claim of origin could seem more preposterous.

The claim, therefore, remains ludicrous to one's curious mind; but that will be so until one takes a look at the drawings and carvings of the ancient Egyptians that were done by those ancient Egyptians themselves, depicting their own general physical appearance. If that is not enough, the lingering impression will remain so until one recalls some of the Kalenjiin-sounding names of some Pharaohs of ancient Egypt that one heard some time ago in school, such as: Tutankhamun, Amasis, Chephren, Cheops, Psamtek, Psamis etc. and remembers that none of them was Mohammed, Hassan or Abdul Kharim. If this arouses enough curiosity, one may want to go a little further and look at a few ancient Egyptian words that have been transcribed into the Latin script. Or walk into a Coptic mass and listen to the Copts address God most piously as *Paiyoot*. Then one gets to realise that the ludicrous soon becomes a puzzle, a huge puzzle in one's hands. Either to push to the back of one's mind and forget it until it is time to pass it on to posterity, in its un-enriched, traditional, flat form, like most have done, or to explore like no one else has ventured before.

This author found himself at such a crossroads situation a decade ago and rather than dutifully pass on a dead, flat, meaningless-sounding tradition to his own children as all the rest do, he opted to explore and hoped to thereby be enabled to hand down to them a fuller picture of their roots.

So who are the Kalenjiin? A fuller introduction, or, more accurately, a definition, is made of them in Chapter 4, but suffice it here to say that most of them are to be found in the western

Isis and Asiis

Highlands of Kenya along the Rift Valley. Others live in the eastern districts of Uganda, while others live in the northeastern parts of Tanzania. Their close kin live along the border areas between and in the adjacent areas of Sudan and Ethiopia. All of them are either pastoralists, mixed farmers, or land tillers, who are into this mode of economy because they lost their cattle some generations back.

A quiet, reserved, almost self-effacing people, the outside world knew little about the Kalenjiin until only recently when it became known that the Africans who dominated the middle and long-distance athletic events globally, were all concentrated on one spot on the continent, in the country called Kenya, and all were, with pretty few exceptions, Kalenjiin. Other researchers from all over the world are now pursuing this what appears to be a natural predisposition, which others believe is genetic while others think that it is all environmental. However, sight may not be lost of the fact that they may merely have taken full advantage of the evenness of the playing field by way of the uniform rules, the uniform distances, uniform timing, the fixed starting and finishing lines and, not least, the inexpensiveness of track events. Apart from the inexpensiveness of track events, they have been able to own and internalise athletics fully, this being an occupation that does not require them to resort to foreign language and culture—often generally the Kalenjiin peoples' biggest handicap—in order to master.¹ The interest as far as the project on hand is concerned, however, is in their ancient oral tradition of origin.

The tradition, namely that they originated from Pharaonic Egypt, will be investigated scientifically and methodically, in such a way that if another researcher followed the same method of inquiry he or she would end up with more or less similar results. But this happens to be a popular emotional human story on the other hand, and so it may be appropriate to apply a spontaneous method, discussing issues that are relevant to the main theme as they fall in naturally and in a natural way. All is told, where possible, in a flowing narrative style of the informants from the oral field, with the hope that the end result will reflect a warm, connected human story and not a boring, detached statistical tally of facts. In most cases the conclusions are too apparent and inevitable, in others subtle, but all come best when they explode in the mind of the reader. It is, therefore, a deliberate style of the author to allow the reader to make his or her own conclusion on every major issue from the facts given.

¹ It remains for the authorities to recognise this fact and to attempt to achieve an all-round internalisation by introducing the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in all school level and tertiary subjects other than in the learning of foreign languages. Perhaps if equipped in this way they might similarly attain more superlatives in other fields other than athletics. Perhaps the said handicap and the opportunity away from it apply in various degrees to all other nations as well and a national rather than regional, or ethnic, approach needs to be considered.

This is a pioneering work that brings to light much new knowledge about the past and it ought to instigate educationists to embark on a major revision of the East African school syllabi, especially where they touch on Kalenjin history, religion, other forms of culture and literature. It should spur further research as well as inspire similar researches among other communities. The students of ancient Egypt who will be humble enough to deflate their intellectual ego, accept that there is an irrational prejudice against the very concept of ancient black African ingenuity, and accept to upgrade their stock of knowledge regarding ancient Egypt with the numerous discoveries laid out here, will also discover a powerful new tool for their trade in the form of the African languages and cultures that now lie south of the Sahara. What this statement implies is that all the while the scholars have been depriving themselves of some of the genuine tools that would have brought greater and more final results to their Egyptological investigations.

This work is also meant to contribute towards the restoration of the pride of the African in himself by bringing to him the hidden information on his illustrious past, his historical achievements and primary contribution to science, technology and world religion as well as to what became modern civilisation in general. Of these facts, the African has been the most deprived. Yet he needs to restore his sense of worth by knowing and appreciating what he has achieved in the past if he is to perform and contribute his share of creativity to the world now and in the future. This is partly the ideal of African renaissance. The world is the poorer for lacking the unique African contribution whose capacity and potential is well demonstrated in the Egyptian antiquities and hidden under the foundations of today's science, technology and religion. His potentially creative mind is now atrophied and literary works, such as this one, ought to wake him up from the prolonged deep slumber.

The Hypothesis

The author's a priori position is that there is overwhelming substance to the tradition of the Kalenjin people that their ancestors came from Egypt. The claim can be tested and proven by using elements from several different academic disciplines, each angle of approach constituting complete proof on its own. The chosen tools for this purpose are the major elements from oral tradition as history, comparative linguistics, and comparative religion.

Accordingly, this work falls into three major divisions: (1) **A** (2) **B** and (3) **CDE**. Section A discusses the research methodology from a theoretical perspective with regard to oral tradition, comparative religion, and comparative linguistics. Section B discusses the cultural and historical background including work on comparative linguistics, while sections C to E discuss and

compare the key elements of religion, theoretical and practical. The Appendix Section contains extensions of discussions and additional information to the topics that are covered in the three major divisions. Following is a brief introduction to each of the said sections:

About Section A: The Methodologies of Oral Tradition, Oral History, Written Sources, and Comparative Research

Section A discusses the universal theories and methodologies that are applicable to any work of this nature. The most extensively applied of them here is the comparative method, specifically some elements from the disciplines of comparative linguistics and comparative religion, the latter category serving all the sections after Section B. The oral traditions technique of gathering information, which played a great role in this work as a prolific collector of information and as check and verifier of other oral accounts, written history and other archival data, is discussed at length. Its usefulness, its advantages and disadvantages are explored.

About Section B: Cultural Background

Section B is divided into three major parts comprising chapters 4, 5 and 6. Chapter 4 discusses the cultural and historical background of the key players throughout the project, the Kalenjiin. A reasonably full definition of them is attempted. Their own story of how they migrated from settlement to settlement after departing from *Misiri*, or *Tto*, is recounted while also cross-checking their oral account against what has been written about the present inhabitants of the scattered settlements along the migratory route. This is followed by an informed speculation about the location of *Tto* in the context of modern Egypt as well as about the reasons why they left Egypt, and the time frame applicable to their narratives. An evaluation of some remarks from the works of others who commented on Kalenjiin migration the earliest, such as Hollis, Merker, Massam etc. as well as of the relevant comments that one could find in archival titbits, are repeatedly called upon. The written sources are evaluated against the orally collected bits of information and vice versa, i.e., oral information is crosschecked against the written sources.

In Chapter 5 the people that need introduction, or definition, the least, the Egyptians, ancient and modern, are revisited. A rare look at the process of Arab influx following a deliberate policy of demographic alteration that changed forever the demographic profile of Egypt from a basically African nation to a nation of a predominantly crossed African and Arab population, akin in most respects to the Swahili population of the East Coast of Kenya, whose history and genetic

composition are beyond doubt, is facilitated. The definition of the Egyptians is provided because there is no reason to assume that all the readers know them well enough and especially in the light of new information coming from the south, and as issues are reviewed on the basis of and with the benefit of such information. The Copts are given a mention along with their lost mother tongue, Coptic, which language is used throughout much of the remainder of the thesis as a most useful supporting tool.

In Chapter 6 certain key elements from the discipline of comparative linguistics that are introduced in Chapter 3 are applied not least because, as Claude Lévi-Strauss (1958:68-69) has pointed out, the material out of which language is built is of the same type as the material out of which the whole culture is built. And so the linguistic discussion here lays foundation for the appreciation of the other equally complex structures, which correspond to the different aspects of culture.

If the traditional Kalenjiin claim that their ancestors originated from Egypt is to be seen to make sense, then a comparison of the language of the Egypt of their time of emigration from there and their present language and dialects in Eastern Africa should reveal some semblance. This is our make or break spot as far as the entire thesis is concerned because language is the most visible item of cultural expression and identification of man. If there is a semblance of any sort here, then our a priori position is set in place, the justification to search farther and all-round, including our later preoccupation with comparing religions could never be firmer.

Absolute care needs to be taken here, so the standards of proof that the discipline of linguistics has set is applied: lexicostatistical analysis that involves the comparison of a pre-set standard list of 90 of the basic words of language, from Kalenjiin and ancient Egyptian, is carried out with a view to establishing the extent of genetic relationship between the two languages. Another comparative ancient Egyptian/Kalenjiin group of about 100 words, which are listed according to range of meanings, i.e., semantic domains, is added to push the case beyond reasonable doubt.

The overelaboration with evidence garnered from the aspect of language, if that is what it will appear to be, has been allowed by the author, why? Because, all pretence to the contrary aside, there is no shortage of sceptics where an attempt is made to associate black people with ancient Egypt. It is an emotive issue. It is for this reason that the author has resorted to what may seem to be an overelaboration from point to point, especially in this area of language, which is a difficult corner for any irrational sceptic to wriggle out of.

After the lexicostatistical analysis exercise, syntactic analysis, which involves the comparison of the respective grammars according to the various analytical rules from the field of comparative linguistics: word order; noun formation; gender markers; negation etc., follows. If any two languages share features in these areas as well as items of vocabulary, then they are genetically related. It follows that the speakers of those languages too are genetically and historically related and the extent of sharing may determine how long ago they were one. Linguists have applied the same techniques to determine the nature of relationship between Indo-European languages, the Semitic languages etc. and say that there are no two ways about it and their resolve is amply tested here.

The question may be asked as to what era of Egyptian is being compared with the Kalenjiin language of today. First of all, the most important books and dictionaries of ancient Egyptian that have been used here as the key references, have generally confined themselves to Middle Egyptian. Alan Gardiner (1927) and Raymond Faulkner (1962) respectively declare for Middle Egyptian. However, Alan Gardiner (1927:2), while describing Middle Egyptian as the classical age of Egyptian literature, with a more consistent system of spelling, and with the greatest mass of literature available, nevertheless covers the period between the 9th Dynasty, about 2200 BC, and the Saite Dynasties of about 500 BC—a span of 1700 years, and yet his work ranks among the top benchmarks of Egyptology. Another prolific Egyptologist, Wallis Budge, covers, in his two-volume dictionary, an even wider span: the period between 3rd Dynasty, about 2700 BC, and Roman times, a span of 2700 – 3000 years, up to and including the Coptic stage (1920:l).

The point being stressed here is that one is dealing with one language irrespective of the phases, which, at any rate, are mere approximations. The Egyptian age that is being compared to modern Kalenjiin is, to an extent, governed by the listed major sources. For the purpose of the argument here, the words that are most relevant are those that linguists consider largely impossible to drop and quite un-adoptable: the basic words of language. These are the words that relate to fundamentals of life. This is to say, in other words, we are for much of the project hovering over an unchanging area of language; an area for which time is almost irrelevant. Whenever we find a word from this objectively controlled area that corresponds to one or other from the Kalenjiin lexicon, we admit it on account of the fact that it is a bona fide Egyptian lexical item, irrespective of the age, and that it is useful for the purpose of enhancing our hypothesis of a historical unity between ancient Egyptian and the Kalenjiin language.

Thus there is an argument to justify the avoidance of the practice of sticking to Egyptian of a single age or dynasty as source of comparative lexicon. Besides the key sources themselves are

liberal about it and there is no way we can do better than they on this account for as long as they remain our key sources.

About Section C: Comparative Analysis of the Concepts and Myths Regarding the Holy, the Supernatural, the Superhuman Beings and Forces

Section C ushers in the larger segment of the work, of comparing the concepts, practice, beliefs, and myths regarding the Holy, the supernatural, the superhuman beings and forces: religion. We plunge deep into this exercise with the aim of confirming further thereby the genetic and historical relationship that is implied by the oral tradition.

The claim that ancient Egypt was a polytheistic society is common knowledge. But we now need to familiarise ourselves with the fact that quite unlike the well-sold polytheistic image of the ancient Egyptians, the Kalenjiin are monotheistic to the logical limit of that word. We therefore must soon enough seek to resolve the impossible scenario where we would seem to find ourselves comparing a monotheistic faith with a polytheistic system, seeking to see a commonality of origin between them.

However, a critical examination of ancient Egyptian religion reveals that although those people talked of many so-called gods and goddesses, they were still monotheistic. As a matter of fact, as important an Egyptological personage as the elder of the Champollion brothers, Champollion-Figeac (1778-1867 AD), was to call it: "a pure monotheism, which manifests itself externally by a symbolic polytheism" (Cf. Kamalu, 1990:40). Some other Egyptologists after the senior Champollion came to the same conclusion while others have kept on describing the ancient Egyptians as polytheists.

In many cases the Egyptians apportioned attributes and a suitable role to one aspect of Deity and a name to go with it so that it appeared to superficial observation that it was a different deity they were addressing in each case. For instance, in order to express how timeless and ancient Deity was, they talked of Ptah, which partly meant "of before" as it does in Kalenjiin. Ptah, therefore, represented that notion of Deity in the human mind that hails its primordially. When they wanted to emphasise the virtues of Deity as the perfect mother, they picked on the quality of Isis, giving Deity that name as well as "Mother of God". But Deity was still one and the same. When they wanted to emphasise the Deity's endlessness, seeming to die and resurrect, ushering in the day on a daily basis, they picked on Ra and his later extension of Osiris. *Ra* is also the word for "today" in both ancient Egyptian and Kalenjiin. To emphasise the creative qualities of Deity, they picked on Khnum or Amon, who portray Deity as a potter, the creator of beings from clay

etc. But it was still the same Deity who may have gone by any of the names listed, depending on the geographical region and the period in history given.

This is a very important point to understand with respect to Egyptian religion. Once we are able to crack that nut, we can then compare that movement with any in the world and with the Kalenjiin's Asiis movement in particular. The Kalenjiin seem to have left *Misiri* with the name Isis, spelt and pronounced Asiis in their case. Others call Her *Asiista* (the sun) while the southernmost branch, the Barabaig of Tanzania call Her *Aset*. As we have said, that particular Deity in the Egyptian context represented the excellent motherly qualities of Deity who, nevertheless, was still an excellent *father*, creator etc. under other names. It is therefore legitimate to compare Asiis to all ancient Egyptian so-called gods and goddesses individually and collectively because She encompasses all of their attributes just as Isis of Egypt encompassed all the attributes of the other so-called gods and goddesses.

At first the author approached the whole issue from an a priori position that Isis = Asiis and that complete and rewarding comparative work could be carried out on that limited basis. But it later became clear that what the proto-Kalenjiin brought south with them was a complete monotheistic religion that at once encompassed the attributes of all the so-called gods of ancient Egypt. That while Asiis was the Whole in East Africa; Isis was a part of the Whole in the ancient Egyptian context. That first approach by the author had, therefore, amounted to attempting to compare a whole with a part of a whole, and so it was untenable. But, yet again, Isis, as a part, was equal to the whole in the complicated Egyptian mind. Each of the other so-called gods of ancient Egypt was similarly a whole while each one of them was still separately treated as part of the whole. It is therefore advisable to view those parts separately and then collectively if we have to make anything of it at all.

As pointed out above, the Kalenjiin's level of monotheism once in the south was more severe. A number of the names for other so-called gods of Egypt had petered out here into mere vocabulary items whose meanings, however, remained within the domain of the particular so-called god or goddess in the Egyptian context, e.g., *Rmnt*, the serpent goddess of the harvest, is nowhere here but the serpent has kept that name, *Ereenet*. The potter creator "god" *Chnum*, or *Khnemu*, who fashioned people on his potter's wheel, is nowhere here although "to mould" or "to make pots" is *keenam*, or *cheenam* in some dialects of Mt. Elgon and Terik. Nevertheless, the name Ptah was recycled, reintroduced into the divine realm and given to God and Jesus Christ at the beginning of the 20th century when the Christian missionaries sought a Kalenjiin name meaning, as closely as possible, "the Lord".

Here Asiis too had many other names that could easily have led to the Kalenjiin being labelled polytheist. Some of those names were Cheepopkooiyo and Cheepomirchio, respectively: “Lady of Halo” (that gave permission to make war by means of an indicative omen of a halo around the sun) and “Lady of Wars” or, put differently, “Lady of Hosts”, the would-be feminine equivalent of the more familiar “Lord of Hosts”. If they had been allowed to portray Her in art, probably they would have drawn a lady with a halo around Her head, like Mary, and another image of Her holding some weapons of war in hand.

Asiis is also called Chebeet, “Lady of the Day”. Someone wanting to emphasise this attribute would probably have drawn a female wearing a solar disc, with wings, flying across the midday sky etc. Someone else looking at these hypothetical representations with different names and different looks and different symbols surrounding them, would probably conclude that the Kalenjiin were polytheistic too as allegedly were the ancient Egyptians and as allegedly are the Hindus. The ancient Egyptians (as still do the Hindus) fell into this type of superficial pitfall trap, which exists in the mind of some Egyptologists, because they had a well-developed art and industry, which they, uninhibited by a Deuteronomic, or other law, freely put into full use by way of illustrating their abstract religious thought iconographically.

Much is said in Section C to counter the oversold image of Egyptian polytheism, which makes it difficult to carry out fair comparison between Kalenjiin monotheism and the imagined Egyptian polytheistic set-up.

Having made matters clear, to that extent, we may now describe the content of the section. We seek out the Asiis in Ptah, in Ra, in Amon-Ra, in Isis etc. We recall Osiris, Set and Horus. We seek out the characteristics of the entire Asiisian system that are either expressed in the Kalenjiin language as mere items of vocabulary or as religious items and compare those to what is known from ancient Egypt. In the process we are comparing religions. We even venture out to explore other world religions that were historically influenced by Egypt. We include other African religions in the comparative basket as well and avoid the pitfall trap of appearing to consider African faiths as non-religions.

As just one example, Asiis religion of the Kalenjiin may have more in common with Hinduism in one aspect or other owing to a historical relationship through ancient Egypt. So Hinduism, for that reason, becomes a legitimate candidate in the comparative work between ancient Egyptian religion and the Kalenjiin religion. Items from other religions only go to make matters clearer. Certainly Judeo-Christianity is a major candidate, it being a product of ancient Egypt, as Asiisianism will certainly be confirmed to be. We need not, therefore, confine ourselves

to comparing strictly Asiis and Isis, or Kalenjiin religion with ancient Egyptian religion. A wider comparative work is more rewarding even if we are only trying to establish the Kalenjiin tradition of ancient Egyptian origin by investigating what is shared in the field of religion.

Kalenjiin religion is lived; it is manifest in every endeavour of life, so anything goes for religion and we can pick on a countless number of items to compare with what is known of Egyptian religion. Only space forbids. We must also tell the whole thing as a flowing story, continuous if possible and not allow ourselves to regress into rendering the process a tabular or statistical format affair.

We also, in a way, re-introduce into comparative religion Origen's style of carrying out comparison and putting up defence by means of the method that has been called "apology". By frequently launching into a defence of the African religious practice and thought against direct and implied slights from the adherents of other religions, we are performing a comparative religion exercise with a practical purpose rather than engaging in idle theorising. However, although defence is an instinct that comes only too reflexly to the children of those that have been called heathens, *Kafiri*, *washenzi*, savages and barbarians, the subject has to be dealt with intellectually rather than emotionally. This means that all contrary points of view are to be supported by ample and pertinent evidence.

Section C confines itself mostly to the situation as it was, religiously speaking, in pre-colonial time Kalenjiinland as compared to the situation as it was in an equally religiously pristine ancient Egypt. It is known that the said religiously pristine ancient Egypt spread its religious influence far beyond its borders and beyond the continent but later readmitted the same in various modified, or syncretised forms. The chief one of them was Christianity but later Islam also came by. The two successively virtually rooted out the said pristine indigenous forms of religion. Christianity wiped out the indigenous faith while Islam came and virtually wiped out Christianity in turn, although the process is not quite complete yet. These latter developments are discussed under Appendix 6.

The extended discussion seeks to demonstrate what aspects of religion were exported to those outside countries, how they were reinterpreted there and the means by which the same were re-introduced to the Egyptian and Kalenjiin religious scenes respectively. The reactions to the external spiritual invasions in both cases were in a way similar and go to confirm that the ancient Egyptian religion was similar to the traditional Kalenjiin one. That is to say that the Kalenjiin religion had, by extension, to be similar to what was exported out of Egypt and later re-imported into it. That this could be so further legitimises our use of elements from Christian doctrines as

some of the comparative tools with which to investigate the oral tradition of origin on the part of the Kalenjiin.

The process of replacement of the religions that Section C says so much about, i.e., the religion of ancient Egypt and the Asiisianism of the Kalenjiin respectively; the syncretism that followed and that which is anticipated and future outlook in general, is discussed in Appendix 6. The extended discussion enhances the content of sections C, D and E.

About Section D: The Ethical Code of Maat

In Section D we tackle what must lie at the base of all religions: ethics and morality. The ancient Egyptians bundled all aspects of morality and ethical behaviour and heaped them on a divinity they called Maat. But Maat is only a concept; she is the embodiment of that aspect of Deity that is sympathetic to issues of social justice, responsibility, fair play, mindfulness, religious harmony etc. She represents that aspect of Deity that desires family harmony and prefers to manage that harmony by holding together to a common sense of purpose and responsibility all the living members of a lineage towards themselves and towards their common ancestors. The ideal is: if all families stick to their *maat* code of ethics and morals, then the wider society will be at complete peace with itself. It is a way of managing the whole by minding the nucleus.

The Kalenjiin, being more severe with their monotheism, did not set up a deity-like figure in whom to entrust the ideals of *maat*. They instead packaged all the ideals associated with Maat as of Egypt, and entrusted them in family lineage units they call *maat*; in military units whose members call each other *maat*, and in age-grade units whose members refer to one another by the same term. Now anybody that one calls *maat*, one has a social responsibility towards and knows what to expect from him or her. An associated elaborate tabooing system informs what not to expect from and what not to perpetrate against the other members of the *maat* unit.

Men from one *maat* are like brothers and kinship terms between them and their individual wives' relations are the same. A mother-in-law to one member of a *maat*, for example, will be addressed by all the rest of the members of that *maat* as *pooger*, "Mother-in-law".² The same goes for the members' kinship terms between them and one another's parents and children.

² Subject to the rule of seniority in descent. *Maat* members who count fewer generations between themselves and the founder of the *maat* are considered senior to those members of the same *maat* who count more generations between themselves and the same founder. A sixty-year old man who counts four generations between himself and the founder of his *maat* reveres a twenty-year old man who counts only three generations between himself and the same founder. The older man in this case may even refer to the younger relative as "father" and call the younger man's wife "mother".

Maat is most visible in the clan structure and in the management of its affairs. Every man is charged with the responsibility of passing forward the best in the clan to the next generation. People who live righteous lives are reincarnated in the clan's newborn babies immediately after they die. But, ideally, family members ought to return every fourth generation with the same names and attributes, only in larger numbers because reincarnating souls could multiply and reincarnate in numbers that are virtually commensurate with the quality of life and level of righteousness achieved in the previous life. That righteousness could be seen through one's handling of social responsibility and observance of taboo while one was still living. In other words the extent of one's commitment to what is often called African socialism, which is only *maat* multiplied thousands fold to cover whole communities.

What is often assumed, even by Africans themselves, to be natural African generosity, was not taken for granted and rules of obligatory responsibility, taboos and ethics, were laid down to guarantee it.

One major aspect of the practice of *maat*, by any name all over Africa, and in many parts of the world, is what has been erroneously termed ancestor worship. The excess zeal with which members of lineages venerate their immediate expired ancestors, by means of sacrifices and memorials, has misled many outsiders into thinking that they were actually addressing prayers to those spirits to the total exclusion of the notion of Godhead. Here we show that where the Godhead seems to be overshadowed by the ancestors, they are just acting as the intermediaries and not supplanting the Deity figure. We show that this is no different from ancestor memorials of western tradition and their veneration of moral heroes and icons called saints. Abraham, Moses, Jesus and other saints could be viewed as ancestors too. The difference is that it has not been possible to venerate any ancestor here for too long, spreading his or her ideals over a wider realm than family.

Most of the virtues that *maat* supervised are discussed: reincarnation and its concerns, marriage and the exogamy rules etc. We discuss the totemic systems that were put in place to guarantee exogamy as well as act as the family emblem with which members could identify themselves and rally around. *Maat* of ancient Egypt stood for the totemic system as well. That was why when it was banned in Egypt; it was expressly banned as a zoolatric practice.

Since the concerns of *maat* are largely agnatic based, i.e., viewing everything from the patrilineal angle, another system had to be put in place to counterbalance it, just to guard against agnatic tyranny, neglect and injustice. The *kaamaama*, "maternal uncles" concept stepped in to guarantee that the would-be matriarchal concerns were not trampled on in the process of

enforcing agnatic rights, obligations, fines and physical punishments for the wayward. The maternal uncle's role in countering the excesses of and at the same time complimenting the largely agnatic *maat* system is discussed.

The maternal uncle roles may have been the same in ancient Egypt but not much is known about them, even the "goddess" Maat that so much is written about can only be understood better by studying the *maat* concepts, values and virtues largely known as "African socialism" in the rest of Africa, a step that established Egyptology has yet to take.

In the process of comparing the *maat* system of the Kalenjiin with the code supervised by the "goddess" Maat of Egypt, we attempt to demonstrate that they were one and the same thing and, besides, we get to learn more of each one of the systems than was possible before the widening of the Egyptian experience to include sub-Saharan Africa was attempted. Once again much of the comparative work is carried out in the form of defence of the much-maligned African ways of honouring their dues to the family, living and dead, to the community and to society at large.

About Section E: The Servants of Asiis: Religious Personnel and Divine Kingship

Section E puts into practice some of the belief systems discussed in Section C and the moral and ethical concepts discussed in Section D. By discussing the role and qualities required of the priest of Asiis, *Poiyoot aap Tuum*, we see a clearer picture of the Asiisian beliefs as they are put into practice. By discussing the role of the judge, *Kiirwogiindet*, we see the application of ethics and social laws of *maat* and what happens when these are violated. We then turn to the office that lorded it over all and sundry, kingship.

The *Oorgoiyoot*, the equivalent of king, tries to occupy that sphere between the terrestrial and the celestial as an authority rather than as a humble mediator in the way of the priest of Asiis. He tries to present himself as the total in-charge within that sphere, bringing and stopping rain at will, leading his troops by means of a hovering double of himself and thus helping the soldiers acquire loot with which to enrich the nation further, just as the Pharaoh claimed he could do with his own double. He is thus the benefactor in charge of the quality of life and of economic prosperity of the nation as a whole.

The importance and the effectiveness of the *Oorgoiyoot* institution, real or psychological, are demonstrated further in Appendix 4. There we get to know more about the institution in practice and under siege. The people's real attitude towards and belief in it, come to the fore after the institution is obliterated by the British administration.

We discuss the *Oorgoiyoot* institution as a divine kingship, an aspect that is well associated with the Great Lakes region and parts of West Africa, certain other parts of the world and, of course, ancient Egypt.

The typical consequence of divine kingship were the mass ritual murders that had to follow the king's death, which death often had to come prematurely for the king because age must not be seen to take the toll of him like a commoner. The Kalenjiin had, however, advanced beyond this, often allowing the king to complete his natural life-span—as long as he did not fail in his prophetic duties—and nobody was sacrificed in order to accompany the king in his death journey to the underworld as happened in the Great Lakes region, in parts of West Africa, in certain kingdoms within the Sudan along the Nile, and during certain dynastic regimes of ancient Egypt.

Within the main text of Section E, the Pharaonic basing of the major traditional institutional structures of Kalenjiinland, complete with the nomenclature, is etymologically retraced where known. The west's borrowing of the kingship institution from Africa, together with at least one kingship term, is given due mention.

The discussion on the death and burial of the king gives us the opportunity to explore Kalenjiin attitudes to death, to the dead, and to their survivors. We here take our comparative work unto death and burial.

About the Appendix Section

The Appendix Section is composed of extended discussions of the topics that are covered in the main text. However, it also contains discourses on the impact that the entry into the scene by the colonising power, Britain, in concert with the Christian missionaries from Britain and America, had on the indigenous socio-political institutions, religious system and other cultural structures whose existences in the ideal were described in the main text. We keep our comparative verve as we compare the challenging processes that the Isis and Asiis faiths were respectively subjected to before respective western colonial powers, Rome and Britain, all in concert with their spiritual corollary, Christianity. We get the opportunity here to compare Asiisianism to Christianity and both to the religion of Egypt and discover that we are discussing one and the same thing ultimately.

The work of the African Gnostic founders of Christianity (confirm with Bauval, 1999:97-98), including the most prolific one of them who influenced and shaped Christianity into what we

know today, Origen, who was excommunicated posthumously for all his troubles, is given ample mention.

In order to further justify our use of Christianity and other “world” religions as sources and targets for our Egypto-Kalenjiin comparative work, we demonstrate here how Africa contributed to the founding of the major world religions including Judeo-Christianity and even Hinduism, through ancient missionary work.

The Africans exported their culture of sacred symbolism as well as their allegorical narratives to many parts of the world in antiquity. We see how the west absorbs those allegorical narratives, institutionalises and canonises them as historical facts whose questioning was heresy. So armed with the canons, they come back as missionaries and despise the African on the basis of not conforming strictly to the substance of the symbols and narratives that in the first place had originated from him, the African, as mere aspects of religious symbology and allegorical morals.

The discussion on symbolism along with the allegorical narratives reveal more about the unity of origin of Isis and the other ancient Egyptian so called goddesses and gods on the one hand and Asiis on the other. Now, logically speaking, when all the other shared parameters are invoked: language, physical looks, place nomenclature etc. that are relevant to the respective believers, we shall have no cause to question the oral tradition of the Kalenjiin that we have been pursuing all along.

The colonising invader wins, subjugates the population to the will of the British Crown while, on the side, the Christian missionary simultaneously wins the war against Asiis and subjugates much of the population’s spiritual life to the crown of Christ. However, according to some major theological authorities, a hasty, poor understanding of the Bible was planted. It became the order of the day and the fertile ground on which to launch the abuse of all that was Asiisian and other African Traditional Religions (ATR) alike, by the zealous converts. As a result, a syncretic creed is taking root now even as the African intelligentsia, in their large numbers, as to indicate a trend, lead a backlash at the personal level against certain aspects of the new faith that they consider demeaning.

If the aspirations of the rebelling intelligentsia have found a voice, then it is that of the giant of African literature, Cheikh Anta Diop, who has advocated for the African a 180% turn back to the ancestral religions and languages, even as the African embraces the most advanced mode of production and technology, in order to restore his creative potential as proven of old. With that, development will only follow at a faster world pace, if not even faster.

SECTION A

**THE METHODOLOGIES OF ORAL TRADITION, ORAL HISTORY,
WRITTEN SOURCES, AND COMPARATIVE RESEARCH**

Chapter 1

Oral Tradition, Oral History and Written Sources

Abstract

Here in Chapter 1 we analyse oral tradition, a recently accepted research technique for the recording of history, as a disciplinary tool and as contrasted with the other major historiographic tools of oral history and written sources. We also discuss these techniques in a comparative manner as well as evaluate them as complements.

The main body of the thesis relies partly on oral sources for evidence, hence the need to present a discussion on this relatively new methodology at the outset. We discuss the advantages of and the criticisms against oral fieldwork in general and oral tradition in particular. We then provide detailed suggestions on how one should prepare for fieldwork, identify his or her informants; how to go about interviewing in the field and finally on how to collate, evaluate and reconcile the sources and the data so collected.

The oral tradition-as-history historiographic methodology is still a young field and it follows that the written sources on the subject are still relatively scanty and some of what is available reflect the confusing nascent stages of a fledgling academic discipline. For instance, some writers find it necessary to delineate between oral history and oral tradition and yet what they end up describing is a thorough mixture of what, going by their own respective definitions, appear to amount to both. We have here tried to take the best from both alleged approaches and gone ahead to moderate with the considerable experience in oral fieldwork which the author earned while working among the Kalenjin-speaking people of the Rift Valley Province of Kenya, East Africa.

1.1 Oral Tradition

It has been argued that the watershed in the historiography of Africa was the publication of Jan Vansina's *Oral Tradition* in 1965. Jan Vansina's work legitimised oral traditions as a historiographic source. This allowed historians to expand greatly the scope of their researches into the African past despite the handicap of an absence of written records (Cf. Packard, 1980:157). In his relatively more recent article (1980:272), Jan Vansina redefines oral tradition with an emphasis of it as a function of memory, which is also inextricably related to the language faculty:

"Oral tradition is a memory of memories in the most literal way, since the message is learned from what another person recalled and told. Given its dependence on recitation, it is reassuring to know that all memorisation has a verbal dimension to it. In fact many mnemotechnical devices, such as rhyme, verse, assonance, etc., make use of the phonemic characteristics of a language to ensure a more faithful rendering. As a consequence, traditions are the most easily and faithfully remembered and reproduced in the language in which they were told. This is all the more true when one recalls that the mnemonic code, the main dimension of memory, is congruent with the semantic code of the language in which the traditions are told. Hence it is easier to tell the tradition in its original language than to give a translation of it."

The word "Oral" specifies the mode of communication as "mouth" as contrasted with the "written" or "formal" record. According to Canonici (1995:5), oral is understood in the sense that the material under investigation can lay claim to an oral origin, which was the main form of communication and transmission before the introduction of writing. And the written texts that originate from such mode of transmission "can be considered as 'secondary orality'." According to this definition, therefore, written history that was obtained by oral means does not lose its orality entirely.

But if we were to rely too much on continued orality of written material then almost all history the world over would be of "secondary orality" because most of the world's historians, of all ages, were not eyewitness to the events that they wrote about. Some eyewitnesses narrated the stories to them. And, in fact, some of the historical accounts had done the rounds as oral tradition for centuries before they were finally written down. The Bible is a good example of these according to biblical scholars. Henige (1982:8) says:

"A particularly important field for which the importance of oral evidence has been recognised for some time is that of Biblical studies, both Old and New Testament, but especially the latter... Those books that eventually came to constitute the New Testament were collected and put together in the second and third centuries... Many early Christians were not literate enough to rely on the printed word so that word of mouth was necessarily the most effective and popular way of passing on Christian

teachings to the first converts and then to succeeding generations until such a time as a written canon was developed.”

The word “tradition” suggests association and the passage of time and implies therefore a point of view transmitted and inherited from the past. For a narrative to be passed as a “tradition” it has to be observable in the general population being studied (Cf. Henige, 1982:242). Otherwise an individual’s personal experience, which is narrated orally, cannot be described as oral tradition. It is merely a testimony.

“Tradition” implies passage of enormous lengths of time and it is, therefore, almost synonymous with “history” in as far as both relate to and keep a record of the past. The innate nature of oral tradition as a historical exercise stems from its association with the “past” or “before”. If “past” and “before” are the two key words that are indispensable to historiographers in the same manner that they are indispensable to the propagators of oral tradition, then the historicity of most aspects of oral tradition is almost necessarily absolute. “An oral tradition is a narrative describing, or purporting to describe, eras before the time of the person who relates it” (Miller, 1980:2). According to Joseph C. Miller, this definition of oral tradition differs slightly from the conventional one, which identifies ‘traditions’ as “any spoken report removed by even a single previous telling from a direct eyewitness account” (Miller, 1980:2). But even this “conventional” definition relates to a past—a time lag—that separates the narrator from the actual witness of an event who, by inference, lived before the narrator and the listener.

A society without written records must rely on an oral tradition to keep track of its history. The stories and myths of the past would be passed down by word of mouth to each generation of the society, often requiring tremendous feats of memory by individual members. This remembered narrative disappears when the society itself dies out (Cf. MEE 98/1).

In such traditional societies without either a written language or widespread literacy, oral tradition passed down from generation to generation often serves as a substitute for written historical accounts. Whatever is remembered by the elders constitutes what they saw being performed or observed by their own elders who were in turn re-enacting customs that were already much older than them. To the extent that they narrate to us what they remember from personal experience of such customs, we may call that as well as whatever was being re-enacted, or re-lived, oral history. But since what was being re-enacted was essentially a repeat of ancient custom, this may constitute oral tradition. In this we see a thorough intertwining between oral history and oral tradition: oral history in the sense that the narrator is a direct witness and oral tradition in the sense that it is manifestly ancient (Cf. Henige, 1982:2).

It is clear from the foregoing definitions of oral tradition that, in as far as we are concerned with pre-literate societies, the difference between the two is insignificant and, therefore, the term "oral history" will be used in this thesis quite interchangeably with the term "oral tradition" with little recourse to frequent definition and categorisation, this being a practical inevitability that Henige (Cf. 1982:2) also recognises although he describes oral history as an activity confined to personal experiences and recollections of the narrator and oral tradition as a genre of source or items of lore handed down for generations and known widely in the society.

Even Jan Vansina, the acknowledged doyen of African "oral-tradition-as-history", as mentioned above, frequently interchanges the words "oral tradition" with "oral history". For example, when he discusses the importance of the study of the faculty of memory, whether to say "tradition" or "history" in relation to the oral method, does not seem to bother him:

"As for oral traditions, they all begin as personal reminiscences, all the more reason to explore some of the practical consequences of what we know about memory first in relation to the informant of oral history. All personal memory is in fact a small portion of a much larger life history" (Vansina, 1980:265).

However, not all items related to oral tradition are potentially of direct historiographic application and such exceptions cannot therefore constitute oral history per se. Such are to be found within the provinces of proverbs (not all), fictions (not all) and other forms of communication that do not necessarily have a bearing on the history of the community being studied. Mainly for the reason that this thesis explores oral tradition as much as it does oral history—to the extent that the two can be separated—both approaches to the treatment of oral narratives will be pursued.

1.1.1 Ethnohistory, another Word for Oral Tradition

The technique from oral research methodology that specialises on reconstruction of evidence from little-documented groups has also been called ethnohistory. In America primarily, American cultural anthropologists and archaeologists (who focus their attention on the Native Americans' past) have employed the ethnohistorical method since the 1940s. Like the formal historian who relies on documentary evidence, the ethnohistorian can, and often does, begin with written sources. Such written sources, as in the experience of this author, were recorded by outsiders, such as missionaries, explorers and colonial officials. From the statement below, it is obvious that ethnohistory is only another word for history by oral tradition.

"The ethnohistorian must, however, pay attention to culture history, culture change, and the relationships of past culture to the present. That can be done effectively only after firsthand fieldwork has been accomplished by the researcher so as to ensure a thorough knowledge of the culture... The ethnohistorian relies extensively on orally communicated historical data. Thus, the ethnohistorian laudably combines historical, anthropological, and folkloristic methods of research" (Allen and Montell, 1981:8).

1.2 Oral History

Looking at this relationship from the angle of oral history, it has been categorically declared that modern historiography accepts oral tradition as history (Hess, 1973:36). Oral history goes a short step further in the sense that the imperative to formalise the record by reducing it to another medium of storage other than memory is implied. That is how come Louis Starr's (1996:40) definition of oral history, for one example, can run as follows:

"Oral history is primary source material obtained by recording the spoken words—generally by means of planned, tape-recorded interviews—of persons deemed to harbour hitherto unavailable information worth preserving."¹

However, according to Allen and Montell (1981:23), even the body of historical knowledge that is still in a potential informant's memory and which has not yet been reduced to a formal medium, such as tape or print, is still oral history. They identify two ways in which the term "oral

¹ Seldon and Pappworth however argue that a tape recorder is not an essential adjunct to oral history, pointing out that, "too much oral history has been, and is being, recorded direct on to paper to permit such a restrictive interpretation" (1983:234).

history” may be used: It can refer to the method by which oral information about the past is collected and recorded, and it can also mean a body of knowledge that exists only in the people’s memories and which will be lost at their deaths. Oral history, therefore, is not only a method of acquiring information but also a body of knowledge about the past that is uniquely different from the information contained in written records.

The foregoing would tend to prescribe a permanent confinement of oral history to the realm of potential. Namely that oral history remains oral only as long as it is not recorded. The moment it is recorded, it becomes formal, recorded history. At that stage then, it will remain for the author of the document to declare that he or she gathered the evidence from oral sources. The “oral historicity” of the item at that stage will have been relegated to a means, or a source, to be footnoted. This is aptly summarised by Seldon and Pappworth (1983:4) who define oral history as “Information transmitted orally, in a personal exchange, of a kind likely to be of historical or long-term value... Oral history is thus not a new *kind* of history, but rather a type of source or evidence.”

We learn from Henige (1982:107) that oral history provides an opportunity to explore and record the views of the underprivileged, the dispossessed, and the defeated—those who by virtue of being historically inarticulate, have been overlooked in most studies of the past. But in much of the west, judging from the control exercised by the registered oral societies, it tends to be an elitist’s preoccupation.

Writings about oral history are reported to have begun in the United States in 1938 with a paragraph in the introduction to Allan Nevins’s *Gateway to History*.¹ A trickle of articles characterised the 1950’s oral period. But from 1971 the flow of articles is reported to have been phenomenal, both in the United States and in the UK, and since then western leaders have been open to interviews and critical cross-questioning than before as a transparency gesture (Cf. Baum, 1996:23).

Joel Colton (GME 1993) gives us a historical perspective of oral history itself:

“Oral history, information based on interviews with those who have taken part in historical events, is as old as the study of history itself. In the 5th century BC the Greek

¹ Allan Nevins is the one man considered the “father of oral history” following his establishing of Oral Research Office, University of Columbia, USA in 1948—Willa Baum, 1996:23, also Alice Hoffman, 1996:88.

historians Herodotus and Thucydides, lacking the written sources on which modern historians have come to rely, questioned the survivors of the wars they described.”¹

1.3 Written Sources

A researcher who is pursuing the oral method, will still find the occasional visit to the library, archives and museums indispensable either as points from where to begin or as the finishing points where to evaluate and put into perspective the oral evidence gathered from the field. Pre-interview research will help the interviewer to ask informed questions; know what details to ask about; be aware of both what is known and what is not known; avoid generalities; uncover new information; establish a rapport with the narrator by showing some familiarity with subjects he/she is talking about. Apart from such benefits, a fieldwork that follows a library, archival or museum-based initial research, stands to be respected by the informant (Cf. Ericson, 1981:2.1).

In books, in archival and in museum records, the researcher comes across historical material in a variety of forms. Oral historiographers, Seldon and Pappworth (1983:4), divide such material into two broad categories: documentary evidence and reported evidence. Documentary evidence is described as:

“material produced at the time as part of a policy process, and which itself is instrumental in that process” while reported evidence is “material abstracted from that continuing policy process, and either remaining inert (as in a private diary kept confidential for a very long period) or communicated to third parties who have no interrelationship with that process or world.”

Documentary evidence constitutes notes and minutes for the benefit of the participants in the active process of generating or implementing policy. Because it is part of a continuing policy process, documentary evidence will itself have an effect on that process (as well as possibly on subsequent writing about those processes and events, i.e. on history). We may supplement the above definition of documentary evidence with one by the archivist Hilary Jenkinson:

“A document... is one which was drawn up or used in the course of an administrative or executive transaction (whether public or private) of which itself formed a part; and

¹ The two Greek historians may have been lucky in some instances to meet the actual survivors, but in many occasions theirs was to interview sources that were several generations removed from the actual events that made the stuff of their history. In such cases, therefore, their sources were no different from oral tradition.

subsequently preserved in their own custody for their own information by the person or persons responsible for that transaction and their legitimate successors.”¹

Reported evidence constitutes abstracts from that contemporary process and is not intended to effect action and therefore cannot affect the actions and omissions of the actors. Reported evidence may have effect, if at all, only on the writing of history. According to Seldon and Pappworth (1983:4), “the distinction corresponds to two main meanings that can be given to the word “history”: that which actually happens (documentary evidence) and that which is *written about* what happens (reported evidence).”

Reported evidence can either be a) *contemporary*, recorded by the informant at the time e.g. in a diary or in a purely private letter or b) *retrospective*, such as might be recounted in an autobiography written many years after the events it describes. When reported evidence is communicated orally, it can be called oral history, and such communication too can be either contemporary (informant reporting to author about a recent happening) or retrospective, when e.g. an informant might be describing an old happening to the researcher (Cf. Seldon & Pappworth 1983:4).

Documentary evidence is of greater value to the historian than reported evidence is although both are, needless to say, vital for the researcher. Documentary evidence may be in the form of minutes, reports of meetings, background papers, letters, telegrams etc.; all being part of the historical process. Documentary evidence provides an insight, for the benefit of the researcher, into contemporary thinking and reflects attitudes accurately (Cf. Seldon and Pappworth 1983:5) because such records were not written for the audience, but by and for the actors themselves. Documentary evidence must, in the first place, be meant for internal use and not for the consumption of third parties, for then it would become reported evidence liable to doctoring for the consumption of “outsiders”.

¹ A Manual of Archive Administration, 2nd. Rev. edn. (London: Lund Humphries, 1965:11).

1.4 Oral tradition, Oral and Written History as Inseparable Complements

Oral sources illuminate the written record, and written history provides the background against which oral historical traditions may be understood. Researchers can use oral sources in at least four important ways:

1) Orally communicated history can *supplement* written historical records by filling in the gaps in formal documents.

2) Orally communicated history can *complement* what has been documented in formal history by providing an intimate view of the events described and

3) it can provide information about the past that exists in no other form, i.e. serve as primary source where there are few if any written accounts (Allen & Montell, 1981:19-20).

4) Orally communicated history may not only have the capacity to *supplement, compliment* or provide *primary* data but it can also actually *supplant* written history by providing facts that dispute written accounts so convincingly that the written accounts are partially if not altogether invalidated. Thus oral sources have the capacity to set the record straight.

Allen and Montell (1981:21) have restated what they describe as two cardinal points about the nature of oral sources in relation to the written records: "Written records speak to the point of *what happened*, while oral sources almost invariably provide insights into *how people felt about what happened*". They continue to observe that written history is, ideally, objective and unbiased, although historians are increasingly coming to recognise the ideal of "objectivity" as illusory, since any historical account is necessarily biased in some respect. Orally communicated history on the other hand, they point out, deriving as it does from the personal experiences of individuals, tends to be more subjective and evaluative, so that individual and community attitudes are clearly expressed in oral accounts of historical events.

From the foregoing, it ought to be clear that oral tradition, oral and written history cannot each stand on its own, fully independent of the other. In fact, it is almost an exercise in futility to attempt to separate them and some scholars have acknowledged this fact.

“Orally communicated history is a valid and valuable source of historical information, as oral tradition and formal history complement one another. Each body of knowledge possesses qualities that, taken together, form a fuller historical record... By using orally communicated history, local historians can broaden their data base and achieve keener perspectives on the events and forces that shaped local life and thought” (Allen & Montell, 1981:3).

Yet oral tradition methodology, being a newly accepted tool of and approach to historiography, is associated with and is virtually confined to oral research work in sub-Saharan Africa in the mind of some scholars. Here the constituent population groups are referred to as “oral societies” as contrasted with the “literate societies” of the literate more developed world. Oral research work of this nature that is carried out among the “literate societies” is referred to as “oral history”; the term “oral tradition” being left to represent the historiography of “oral societies” (Cf. Henige, 1982:2). Yet the data collected orally in the literate west more often contains a cocktail of individual and family histories and social traditions that are unique to the individual families and sometimes to the general area from where the field interviews took place.

The dividing line between oral tradition and oral history is thin indeed, as has been demonstrated above, and so the continuation of the implied historiographic compartmentalisation of the world into “oral tradition” and “oral history” societies for the purpose of carrying out historical research, is becoming untenable. Moreover, literacy is catching on and any segregation in terminology is gradually becoming a reflection more of the familiar prejudiced intellectual exercise than of a practical reality. The fact remains that, where we stand now, all societies have written histories, oral histories, from the experience of retired elders, as well as oral traditions—as relayed by the same elders again—to the extent one can separate them. Africa just happens to be richer in the latter category and poorer in the first. Africa’s population is now composed of sections that are literate in the main. Many aspects of oral tradition have been written down and the scholars are now grappling with the idea of “oral-written interface”, the transitional area and process between the oral and the written. This transitional area and process is what Professor C.F. Swanepoel proposes to call literary orature “in the full sense of the adjective and its noun” (Swanepoel, 1997:121).

1.5 Categories of Oral Sources

1.5.1 Folktales

Human beings have always been storytellers. Where they have not had a Bible, history books, novels, or short stories, and before such literary forms were devised, they have entertained themselves, instructed younger generations, and kept their records with the many-faceted folktale (Cf. MEE 98/2). Much of the information that constitutes oral tradition and oral history of a society is stored in the folktale. As tales, they are given such dramatic appeal as to ensure that they remain interesting enough to be passed from generation to generation as a form of entertainment. The core of a folktale remains relatively unchanged and its presence or absence in and from a given community, as well as the final form in which they are told, having undergone varying embellishments from place to place and from time to time, can help in determining the identity and origin of that community.

The homeland and the migration of folktales have been of concern to scholars over generations. Others have argued that there is no such thing as “original home”, suggesting the polygenesis theory instead, e.g. Andrew Lang (Krohn, 1971:136) while others maintain that such

fortuitous simultaneous creativity on the part of the human beings the world over is unthinkable (Krohn, 1971:136).

Given that strong arguments abound to the effect that the original home of any folk tale does exist, it would seem worthwhile to establish that original home for any tale as it may be a pointer to the original home of the cultures and the societies that are propagating it. Kaarle Krohn, following in the footsteps of his fellow Scandinavian mentor and pioneer of "Folklore Methodology", Julius Krohn, has even suggested that the test to determine the home of a folklore should include what may be called a trial by exclusion:

"Only after the basic form of an item of folklore has been determined with the greatest possible certainty can one undertake to determine its home... Nevertheless we come closer to the sought-after site when we succeed in establishing where the item could *not* have originated, thereby determine the direction of its movement... (for) the folklorist, like the mathematician, is frequently obliged to test the same chain of thought in a reverse direction in order to validate or disprove by means of a negative postulate the accuracy of his positive line of proof" (Krohn, 1971:135, 140, 142).

Walter Anderson, in the *Emperor and the Abbot*, stated that the diffusion routes of a tradition correspond to the paths of culture in general in a majority of cases (Cf. Krohn, 1971:145). The community almost owns the particular item of lore, or oral tradition, in the same way as it owns its language and culture, its essential identity. The tradition or the lack of it within a given community, therefore, is a valid identifying mark. This echoes Krohn's (1971:146) line of argument when he says,

"the most nationalistic creation of a people, its heroic poetry, seldom spreads across linguistic boundaries. When it occasionally does, it follows the general flow of international traditions (although there is often an assumed superiority of the culture of the exporter in relation to that of the importing culture) receptivity, too, is an acquisition and a sign of culture."

1.5.2 Myths

When strictly defined, myths are folktales that are religious and explain the universe and its inhabitants. Such stories are considered true by both the narrator and the audience and tell of the creation and regulation of the world—tasks usually performed by a deity (god or goddess) who exists in chaos, in a void, or in some other world (Cf. MEE 98/2). The relationship between myths and actual history or, in other words, the relationship between religion and history as reflected in the traditions of a people, has to be accepted by the historian who hopes to reconstruct a people's past through listening to oral traditions in the form of mythology. The mythological characters often are important historical figures that have been elevated to godly status (Cf. Berger, 1980:61).

In the Kalenjiin context, the story of Cheemarus (Asiis at the mythical level)¹ who achieved fame as a virgin living an exemplary life and who was carried off to heaven alive by Thunder wherein she reigns forever as Cheptaleel or Asiis (the Creator according to the Kalenjiin), is one example of deification by oral tradition of a historical figure and a historical happening. Cheemarus was a virgin who was selected for sacrifice to the rain "god" Thunder after a prolonged drought. The rivalry between the Evil Thunder (lightning) and the soldier who tried to rescue her may reflect actual conflict between the various sections and families of the humans during the painful process of human sacrifice; some accepting it as an admirable imperative, others viewing it as an unnecessary callous murder of a beautiful virgin girl (Cf. Schecter, 1980:112). Oral tradition here is embodying and preserving a past practice of the Kalenjiin people in divine terminology and setting (Cf. Berger, 1980:61).

It would appear that a person who has been sacrificed in order to save the larger society, like the virgin Cheemarus, is treated as a saviour thereafter and probably a cult would form around her memory and deification followed and soon the latest saviour would obliterate the memory of the saviour previous to her and finally that of the Supreme Being as well.

A people's mythology, like folktales above, can contribute towards the determination of a culture's origin and the people's pattern of migration. Myths have been likened to languages. Like languages, they

¹ Narrated to the author by the lady sage of Matobo, Kericho, Cheboleet Cheepo Terik (100+) on various occasions between 1990 and 1995.

“diffuse and diverge from an original parent language or myth. These changes may be internally generated readjustments or externally stimulated innovations... Features shared by distinct later languages or myths must have been present in their common antecedent stage. There are, of course, exceptions caused by borrowings... Although the sequential development of language and myth systems may be reconstructed hypothetically without the benefit of independent confirmation, a much more satisfying and convincing analysis results when the rudimentary historical background for this development is known independently” (Yoder, 1980:84).

The oral historian, or indeed any historian, must conduct a wide search for independent, corroborating data to myths. He or she may scour other legends of origin and intellectual constructs in order to complement and complete the more narrowly focused political, economic, and military record. While factual information embedded in legendary accounts of origins is both difficult to identify and hard to interpret, the scattered bits of data that can be found shed valuable light on life several centuries ago (Cf. Yoder, 1980:84).

1.5.3 Legends

Legends are folk history, and even when dealing with religious subject matter they differ from myth in that they tell about what has happened in the world after the period of its creation is over. They are believed by both narrator and audience and encompass a great variety of subjects: saints; werewolves (or self-transforming monsters), ghosts, and other supernatural creatures; adventures of real heroes and heroines; personal reminiscences; and explanations of geographical features and place-names (called local legends). Legend differs from formal history in style of presentation, emphasis, and purpose. Like other folktale forms it tends to be formulaic, using clichés and standardised characterisation. Little effort, for example, is given to recording what a hero was really like (Cf. MEE 98/2). In the sub-Saharan context, here belong the variety of stories that so closely resemble the story of the biblical Moses and the crossing of the Red Sea.

1.5.4 Fairy tales, or Märchen

Fairy tales, or *Märchen* (the German word preferred by scholars to designate this genre), are fiction. Taking place in a wonderland filled with magic and strange characters, they are believed by neither narrator nor audience (Cf. MEE 98/2). However, it has to be borne in mind that although the exploits of popular fairy-tale animals such as Hare, Fox, or Hyena of the African fairy world, are so outlandish and fantastic as to immediately dismiss the aura of seriousness, these characters often stand in the place of human beings. The plots that they act out may have been inspired by real historical happenings. Even if they do not act out historical events at all in one example or another, they, nevertheless, can help in explaining other unrelated historical happenings and in unravelling mysteries. It must be remembered that these animals are not only assigned human characters, but they also act out their parts minding and conforming (unless otherwise intended) to the ancient, and modern culture, customs and other socio-economic idiosyncrasies of the community. Like today's satires and cartoons, which may help demystify today's happenings to future generations, fairy tales are often caricatures of true society; mnemonics of real happenings of historical note that when deciphered diligently, may facilitate the piecing together of bits of ancient puzzles, experiences and wisdom.

1.5.5 Proverbs and Riddles

Proverbs are short sayings that encode unchallengeable and sometimes bitter truth. Riddles are used to test individual member's ingenuity while entertaining at the same time. Both proverbs and riddles are the property of the ethnic community, in much the same way as language is. The sharing of proverbs and riddles between different ethnic communities may point to ancient unity or long coexistence. The distribution of such items may help explain migration patterns and the related time frames.

Proverbs and riddles often make use of human and sometimes—especially in sub-Saharan Africa—animal characters in their place. A pastoral community's proverbs and riddles may typically incorporate cattle, sheep and goats (Cf. Chesaina, 1991:14) while the proverbs and riddles of an agricultural community may make use of crops and farming implements in a similar manner. An agricultural community that was once pastoral may retain the livestock characters in most of its proverbs and riddles, thus indicating that it was once pastoral. Therefore the proverbs and riddles of a community constitute an oral tradition that points to its socio-cultural and

economic prehistory with a measure of precision. However, while acknowledging some of the above-listed potential of proverbs and riddles, Krohn (1971:138) plays down the historiographic importance of proverbs and riddles saying that “individually examined, (they) offer too few consistent characteristics to permit the establishment of firm genetic relationships, (however) cohesive groupings can be delineated, nonetheless, that are unique to cultural nations.

1.5.6 *Reminiscences*

There is a difference between an oral personal reminiscence and most oral traditions but many a set of personal reminiscences end up becoming oral traditions. Reminiscences that are recalled in the family set up have the goal of preserving family identity and cohesion and to explain one’s individuality to the family. Besides this, reminiscences are given to teach from experience, to assert the visible or invisible prominence of the family (Cf. Vansina, 1980:270-271). In the context of Kalenjinland for instance, there are, scattered all over, families that trace lineage to one ancient ruler or another, one ancient dynasty or another but who have long been sidelined from the successions of ruling houses that all they have left is the memory of the good old days when their ancestors were in power. Those reminiscences are a good source of oral history in themselves as well as for the purpose of counterchecking and verifying the family traditions of others and, ultimately, of the whole society.

1.5.7 *Poems, Epics, Songs and (King) Lists*

Those that compose and recite poems, like their counterparts who compose and sing songs, and those entrusted with keeping account of family genealogies—especially for royal houses, like the bards and poets of the medieval Celtic world and the *griots* of West African royal courts—by way of continuously reciting and adding the new members to the lists, constitute oral tradition of a formal nature (Cf. Henige, 1982:9). The artist’s creativity, revision and editing are evident in such oral works of art. Publicly recited heroic poetry is a common oral phenomenon in African societies that are ruled by monarchs, the most honoured, or flattered, in this manner being the monarch. A Southern African scholar has contented that

“of the many forms of oral poetry, heroic poetry is the best record of history and genealogical matters, a mirror of both the hero or heroine and the society, reflecting the former’s attributes and the happenings in the community during his or her lifetime” (Sithebe, 1997:37).

Local conceptions of history were preserved by oral transmission, often by the specialised group of *griots*, or bards. The combination of these various sources, together with inferences drawn from late 19th- and 20th-century data, has allowed scholars to identify what appear to be some of the major building blocks of a history of art in each of the regions of sub-Saharan Africa (Cf. MEE 98/3).

However, it has been claimed that when the oral work is reduced to writing in a translation, the creative quality of the performer as well as the sensual and visual flair of the oral are compromised: the audience participation is replaced with the silent lone reader (Cf. Sithebe, 1997:47). The remedy for this oral-to-written malady, according to Sithebe, (1997:48) is the audio-visual technique: “albeit just a picture of the real, the negative effect and the limitations of the audio-visual are far fewer than those that come with the printed and translated text.”

1.5.8 Totemism, Clanism and Age grouping Social Structures

A totem is the equivalent of an emblem, or a “flag”, of the clan among the socially organised societies of the world. A totem is often in the form of a wild animal, bird or insect, but certain families may owe totemic allegiance to non-living forms as well, such as the sun, the moon, rain, lightning etc. At least one Kalenjiin clan owes totemic allegiance to a vegetable, a tiny type of mushroom called *pugenereek*. But the majority of the people are distributed into the “animal-headed” clans: lion, buffalo, elephant, baboon, snake, lizard, crested crane, safari ant, cockroach, bee etc. Each of the clans maintains its own tradition that explains to its own posterity who founded it, when, why and how it was founded, how it has survived so far, how far it has expanded internally and externally and so on.

Such stories are the stuff of oral tradition and oral history. And if a researcher can collect a reasonable number of such clan recollections from many different clans, he or she at the end of the collating exercise, will have put together the collective history of the community. A study of the distribution of the clan members will help corroborate or dismiss certain traditions.

The mention of his or her family emblem (totem) often evokes great emotion on the part of a member who owes allegiance to it. And it may send him or her into a sort of spontaneous trance of praise singing of the totem—in the process supplying material worth an oral historian’s note.

Totemism is found among many other sub-Saharan African peoples such as the Abagusii (Bantu-speaking),¹ the Turkana (Hamitic, or Nilotic-speaking) etc. although it may not be as well developed, or keenly observed, as it is evident among the Kalenjiin. The practice is found among other people of the world, e.g. the Native Americans and many sections of the Aboriginal Australians (Durkheim, 1915:103, 198).

Age grouping is associated with the circumcising communities. Each age group is composed of men or women who were circumcised at about the same time and it has a name. The name, when mentioned, evokes emotion on the part of a member who may wish to sing the praises and exploits of his or her age group or age-set over the generations. The Kalenjiin have a fixed number of eight such age-sets which repeat themselves cyclically after every 120 years or so² and the age-set praises can easily lead to historical narratives covering multiples of 120 years. Much of Kalenjiin oral history is divided into the eras of the ideal eight age-sets that are set apart, one from the next, by 15 years or so.

¹ The universally better known term "Bantu" has been discouraged in South Africa where it is considered derogatory owing to its abuse during the apartheid era. The term is not stigmatised in East Africa at all where the Bantu-speaking population groups often casually and proudly differentiate their speech from other population groups' languages by designating it "Bantu". The largely unknown term "Kintu", used by Canonici in his PhD. dissertation submitted to the University of Natal (1995:5), which appears to represent an authentic "Bantu" way of saying "the language of Ntu" people, seems to be a clever coinage with an East African-sounding prefix *ki-*. The particle *Ki*, as tiny as it is, stands for "the language of..." E.g. KiSwahili is the mother tongue of the Swahili people; KiGiriama is the language of the Giriama people etc. Mr M.A. Hlengwa, Department of Zulu Language and Literature, University of Natal, brought to the attention of the author a more Southern African-sounding coinage for the same: *Sintu*. Clearly a universal replacement for the term "Bantu" is yet to be found and accepted. The *-Ntu*-speaking people of Western Kenya, Uganda and the surrounding areas would probably prefer the use of their prefix *lu-* and suggest *Luntu* while many other *-Ntu* speakers from Central Africa would probably prefer their prefix *chi* and suggest *Chintu*.

For the reason that this work is being presented to a South African University, the term "Kintu" will henceforth be used to denote the language of the people who have been known in linguistic circles and in general parlance as the "Bantu" for decades. Direct quotations from others' works are, needless to say, excluded from this self-imposed sensitivity requirement. However, Mathumba, 1993:41, nevertheless, prefers to retain use of the term "Bantu" because although, as he observes, it is virtually taboo in South Africa, it is still acceptable outside of it!

² Some sub-nations of the Kalenjiin have dropped one of the age-sets and are left with 7 but the principle remains the same. Even the dropping of the age-sets has a lot of oral history that explains the dropping, and this should interest the researcher.

1.5.9 Funeral Eulogies, Circumcision, and Wedding Ceremonies

All the above-listed are occasions that arouse great emotion on the part of an African crowd. Funeral proceedings are often emotionally charged events in sub-Saharan Africa and, no doubt, elsewhere. The good deeds of the deceased are recounted and his or her “positive” character would be linked to his or her clan, which then gets the opportunity to tell the receptive, sympathetic mourners the story of its origin, movement, distribution etc. Ironically, a funeral setting is the bereaved clan’s “day”! Among the Babukusu (Kintu-speaking) of western Kenya, for example, there are the comforting specialists, the *se kumse*, whose role in the society is to memorise the genealogy of every family—within his vicinity—that spans many generations. An oral tradition researcher attending a Babukusu funeral would find many of his or her clan and community-related geographical and historical puzzles solved by such expert clan praise singers when they launch into their ideal state of semi trance.

Circumcision and traditional wedding ceremonies are oral tradition in action. The ritual leaders follow age-old routines that may not only explain certain puzzles, but may also introduce items of tradition unknown to the researcher. The practice from region to region may be compared and contrasted with a view to determining the time frame, direction of migration and the nature and size of clan and ethnic distribution. If the rite, or its occasional style and movement, was learned in antiquity from another community, this will often be known from keen observation and listening because the technical terms for the ritual leaders and the ritual’s stages will often be traceable to the language of the lending community. Such language may be completely foreign to those who are now mimicking the styles and the physical movements involved.

In the Kenyan context, the Kalenjin language appears to have been the original “circumcision ritual lingua franca” because its technical name for the all-important ritual witness, *motiryoot*, is almost universal. The same goes for the eight circumcision-pegged age-set names. And since circumcision is a serious religious observance, the researcher will want to confirm the fact and then seek to know why and how one community was able to impose its religious will on another.

Attempts at clear-cut definitions such as those given above for myth, legend, *Märchen* etc. may be useful, but must not be taken too literally, for all the forms overlap. Bodies of tales may hover between and among all the forms, frequently using concepts and motifs that are common (Cf. MEE 98/2).

1.6 Arguments Against and For the Methodology of Oral Tradition

1.6.1 Criticism of Oral Methodology in General

Allen and Montell say that those historians who have doubts about the reliability and accuracy of the spoken word feel that the human memory is incapable of retaining a firm grip on historical facts and that historical truth becomes distorted and diluted through repeated retellings. That oral accounts of historical events may not only vary in important details, but may even be contradictory. But the argument that the human memory cannot be trusted has been

“disproved by research among groups of people around the world who have marked propensity for retaining historical truths over long periods of time. Ethnohistorians have demonstrated the veracity of orally communicated history among American Indians, Africans, and South Asian groups whose cultures are overwhelmingly oral and rich in ancient historical traditions. Studies in these areas indicate that, while orally communicated history thrives best in non-literate culture, it is preserved with considerable accuracy under certain favourable conditions” (Allen & Montell, 1981:68-69).

Criticism has been voiced by the structuralists¹ that the genesis stories, an important aspect of the oral narrative of any African community—indeed of any community the world over—are myths which have little value for historical purposes:

“As religious constructs, social paradigms, or ritual characters, genesis legends seem to reflect current influences rather than chronologically related events from the past. (But while such) structuralist critique is a powerful corrective of a simplistic and literalistic approach to African oral traditions, knowledge that the form and content of genesis stories are mythical in nature should not be cause to overlook the fact that these very intellectual constructs can become the objects of fruitful historical inquiry. Intellectual statements may be synchronic in content, but they are not immutable or static through time. Precisely because legends of origins are normative statements justifying a people’s religious, social, economic, and political practices, the legends must be expected to change as norms change, either marginally or radically” (Yoder, 1980:82).

The most vociferous critics of oral methodology as a technique of reconstructing history, are the structuralists, notably the anthropologists who stress the susceptibility of origin legends to change. But, in the view of John C. Yoder, because of this stand, the anthropologists may underestimate the degree to which modern revised legends may retain recognisable fragments of older tales. Yoder notes a major critic’s concession (Claude Lévi-Strauss’, 1966) that legends are

¹ Structuralists are those scholars who believe that societies, languages, works of literature, etc. can be understood only by analysis of their structure (rather than their function)—The Oxford Dictionary.

*Section A: The Methodologies of Oral Tradition, Oral History, Written Sources, 21
and Comparative Research*

not invented *ex nihilo* but that they are formed by modifying existing information and tales. This structuralist position would provide support to Jan Vansina's view

"that legends of origin resemble palimpsests composed of layers of meaning reflecting earlier times and circumstances. According to Vansina (1974:317-322), if the development of these layers of legend can be chronicled in a convincing manner, then the historical evolution of cultural norms and practises can be portrayed" (Yoder, 1980:82-83).

Robert Schecter has supported Lévi-Strauss' concession that legends are not invented *ex nihilo* after studying the myths and traditions of the African Savannah and being able to report as follows:

"My conclusions suggest that the data in these traditions are not ahistorical simply because they are expressed in stereotyped form, that traditional historical literature may only twist the facts—rather than fabricate them out of the whole cloth—in order to make the past conform more closely to accepted cosmological categories, and that the effort needed to evaluate historically other versions of the tale may also pay off with some reasonable measure of historical truth" (Schecter, 1980:110).

The historians may be interested in the insights of the structural anthropologists, but the historian's concerns differ fundamentally from those of structural anthropologists. For the structural anthropologist, myth itself is the object of study. By contrast, historians aim at reconstructing real patterns of human change in the past and, in this undertaking, use origin myths as one source of data (Cf. Sigwalt, 1980:127).

De Heusch, a noted opponent of the use of oral myth as a historiographer's source, has contented that the mythical tales are not historical chronicles at all but rather symbolic dramas which express fundamental values in the idiom of traditional historiography. He believes that the legends and myths are merely part of a philosophical discourse and that any differences between versions of the tale told in one region or another can be explained by cultural variations between the societies in which it is told, or to the variety of ways in which the same points can be symbolised (Cf. De Heusch, 1975:363-372). But Joseph Miller (in his *Kings and Kinsmen*), who is looking for history in such tales, has different views with regard to this issue. For him, the actors in the tales represent political titles and groups that actually existed, and the plots of the stories reflect their historic interaction. Miller assumes that some of the symbols in the tales are part of a traditional system of notation used for recording historical events. The names of the characters, therefore, represent historical political authorities (Cf. Schecter, 1980:112).

However, Chesaina, like De Heusch, says in her *Oral Literature of the Kalenjin* that myths have little or no affinity with historical fact, these being only stories that a community uses to

explain the mysteries around them. That in contrast, legends have some grain of historicity around them although, through inevitable distortion over time, they share the fact of imaginative creativity with myths. That legendary characters may be embellished to the extent of being given supernatural powers (Cf. Chesaina, 1991:21). From this we deduce that the extremely embellished legend becomes mythical with less and less relevance to the historiographer.

One of the serious criticisms of the interviewing process undertaken during field oral work is the phenomenon referred to as telescoping. There is a general tendency on the part of the informant to want to not only simplify and rationalise history by bypassing or glossing over complex and unpleasant issues involved, but to shorten historical time as well. Peter Oliver considers this particular shortcoming in very solemn terms:

“It seems to me that those who prepare and use the oral record have not yet given sufficient weight to the tricks that memory can play, to efforts at rationalisation and self-justification that all of us make, even if only subconsciously, or to the terrible telescoping of time which an interview often encourages and which runs counter to the very essence of history” (Oliver, 1975:17).

Telescoping is, indeed, such a serious ever-present threat to oral tradition. However, the informant may appear to telescope historical events during an interview owing to the time limitation. This he or she may do in order to cover as wide an area, both in time and space, as possible during the limited interview time. It is also possible, however, that the informant might be repeating innocently already condensed, or telescoped accounts that were handed down to him or her in that condition.

“This phenomenon has been noted for orally recited traditional genealogies in Africa. Only those generations that have a bearing on the present social and political structure of the society (usually including primeval or mythological ancestors) are included, leaving large blocks of time (by an outsiders’ reckoning) unaccounted for... Telescoping often reveals to the local historian how people wish things had happened, rather than how events actually occurred” (Allen & Montell, 1981:36).

Observing that telescoping was common in centralised as well as in non-centralised societies—where “it has long been known to be ubiquitous”, David Henige presents a quite philosophical argument:

“To the historian in one of his or her natural guises as chronophile, telescoping is naturally far more alarming than lengthening, since it is much less susceptible to detection through internal analysis and impossible to measure even if it should be discovered... (However) those less infatuated with precise dating are aware that characteristics of oral tradition like telescoping tell us far more interesting things about how history works in a non-literate society than a profusion of dates ever could” (Henige, 1982:256).

One of the dangers lurking for the oral historiographer is the occasional oral society's habit of displacing the original actors in historical events. When *what* happened is more important than *who* were involved, minor characters may have their identities changed (Cf. Allen & Montell, 1981:38). In the Kalenjiin context, this phenomenon is illustrated by the epochal story of the coming of Maasai rulers (the *laibon*) to Kalenjiinland immediately prior to colonisation by the British. The first of the *laibon* to come to Kalenjiinland—especially to Nandi, and allegedly imported by the Nandi themselves—goes by many names and some of the names belong to his son and even grandsons and to other rival families and dynasties. In this case, the *importation* of the Maasai *laibon* is more important as a historical event than the individual *identity* of the actual *laibon* so imported who founded the *laibon* dynasty in Nandi.

Another potential danger that must concern the oral historiographer is the phenomenon of migration of dramatic narrative events. The best example of this phenomenon is the appearance of the Moses character in many sub-Saharan folkloristic settings under local names but whose role and performance in many respects replicate those of Moses of the Bible very closely but which local characters happen to be sufficiently different in other ways from the biblical character. This kind of narrative unit is known as motif to folklorists (Cf. Allen & Montell 1981:36). However, folklorists are divided about the possibilities of migration of motifs, some believing that similar forms frequently develop in various places spontaneously as a result of the similar thought process and imaginations of "primitive" peoples. But certain motifs that appear in far off places may have such a complicated yet so uniform a central plot that the possibility of disparate origins is simply not feasible. This multiple disparate inception process is called polygenesis.

"Polygenesis in the most extreme sense, that every variant was composed separately at innumerable sites, is unthinkable. Usually a single origin is assumed for the traditional forms of one ethnic or linguistic group, and a common origin is rejected only in regard to international situations. But even one single independent reoccurrence of such a complicated form, for example, the Cinderella tale, as the result of the general similarity of human fantasy or pure chance is highly unlikely... The theory of polygenesis is based on the assumption that folkloristic materials are in general the common property of the whole human race, so that every genre could arise among every people and any form of a genre among any particular group. This assumption does not correspond with the facts" (Krohn, 1971:136).

If the above explanation by Krohn be thought too old and outdated, the modern position has shifted little from the old established findings: "As a result of the work of past researchers, few folklorists today believe that any one theory is satisfactory in explaining the similarities and variations in the folktales and folklore of the world" (MEE, 98/13).

The reliability and the validity of oral interviews constitute one of the persistent challenges of oral work. Reliability relates to the consistency with which an individual will tell the same story about the same events on a number of different occasions. A harmless type of inconsistency may be sensed on occasion, however. For example, an informant may remember some contradicting details subsequent to the first interview and report differently during the follow-up interview. A closer review of the facts may show that the inconsistency is itself so consistent it amounts to the same report only looked at differently after further reflection and more keenly. Inconsistency alone per se may not, therefore, dismiss an oral report altogether. Validity refers to the degree of conformity between the reports of the event and the event itself as cross-checked with other reliable sources such as archival deposits and the reports of other informants (Cf. Hoffman, 1996:88).

A second interview with an informant may determine either an absolute or relative consistency with the first session and thus place a reliability premium to his or her information while further research in the archives and interviews with other informants may help check the validity of his or her submission.

1.6.2 Limitations of the Interviewee and how to Cope with Them

Oral tradition methodology takes it for granted that the researcher who seeks to employ this method of reconstructing history, will sooner or later have to resort to the field and conduct interviews among the followers and keepers of this or that tradition. The researcher will need to be acquainted with the known weaknesses of the technique with respect to the subject that is to be interviewed.

Anthony Seldon and Joanna Pappworth, whose work we have already cited severally, are a western couple who are experienced, respected oral interview experts. Through their book *By Word of Mouth, Elite Oral History* (1983), they came close to publishing a field manual and guide in this area of oral research discipline. Barbara Allen Montell's and Lynwood Montell's *From Memory to History, Using Oral Sources in Local Historical Research* (1981) similarly constitutes relevant and authoritative reference material. Stacy Ericson makes a similar attempt in *A Field Notebook for Oral History* (1981), and so does Henige in his *Oral Historiography* (1982). The following discussion will draw a lot from these authors', among others', respective experiences as reflected in their books and papers. The books and papers target field workers in the west whose main calibre of informants are the retired politicians and administrators and the topics of interview come from the major history-making events that occurred during the informants' earlier active life. But the approach to all oral fieldwork is more or less the same and the author found the experiences and recommendations of the western writers quite applicable in the African situation when polished with the benefit of the lessons that he learned from the African oral terrain.

Among the limitations of the typical interviewee are:

- 1) The unreliability of memory of hard facts and chronological sequence. Memory of events is an area where oral evidence is peculiarly weak, and sequences easily become muddled in the mind. Events are recalled without a chronological frame of reference, perhaps because no causal relationships are recognised among different events (Cf. Hareven, 1996:248). In certain cases, with reference to the Kalenjin context, the age set system of eight cyclical sets each of which, as we have seen, ideally recurs every 120 years or so, somewhat mitigates this innate malady of oral memory's failure to chronologically pinpoint a happening. If an informant can recall that such and such epochal happening took place during

the time of such and such age set, it can be worked out to within a 15-year margin of error, or tolerance.¹ However, the event might have taken place during the time of the same age set in an earlier cycle, i.e. a further 120 years back! This is a major weakness that one sooner or later encounters in a Kalenjiin oral field.

2) The potential for being misled... by 'honest opinions mistakenly held' is all the great because there is no conscious effort to mislead. However, "Most people do not want to be recorded for posterity saying something that is inaccurate and will work hard to be exact" (Cf. Ericson, 1981:3.6). However, there is room to be misled unintentionally, i.e. by unwitting mistake, and the less the interviewer knows about the world of the interviewee, the more prone he or she is to being so misled.

3) A guarded response may sometimes result from unconfident questioning. But the more bold and direct the questions, the more the interviewee will be reassured that the researcher is knowledgeable and that he or she is entitled to be talking on this particular topic because at the back of the mind of many who agree to be interviewed will be the nagging doubt about whether it is really "all right" to be talking to this individual. It is important for the researcher to impress upon the informant at the outset that he or she (the researcher) is fairly knowledgeable in the field of inquiry. Any embarrassing mistakes that may be made by the informant, and which are obvious to the well-informed interviewer, need not invite an immediate contradiction from the interviewer. It is advisable to present the more enlightened alternative afterwards and ask the informant for his or her opinion about it (Cf. Ericson, 1981:3.8). Approaching as an insider of a sort helps bring the informant into a healthy competitive spirit. The writer found it necessary to let the Kalenjiin informant know as early as possible in the interview that in matters of traditional custom he was an insider. Although the embargoed items of ritual may not be discussed during the interview, owing to the fact that the process was being taped, the informants were put more at ease by the knowledge that they were talking to an "insider". It is known that interviewees get bored, lose interest and even go into a gear of silent hostility to interviewers who waste their time, ask silly or

¹ The Kalenjiin observe an age set calendar of a 120-year periodicity as follows: there are eight established age sets each of which comes to the top as a set of serving soldiers for a period of 15 years, then moves on to become a set of junior elders giving room to a younger group to serve their 15-year term at the top as soldiers before moving on. When the next shift takes place, the junior elders become senior elders while the surviving members of the former senior elder set are elevated to an age grade of living saints of *boore*. When all the members of an age-set (including their wives) have died, young fresh men are given their age set name and the process begins all over again. Thus, in theory at least, it is possible to guess wisely the period of an epochal happening if it can be associated with an age set. The ideal structure of age-sets is shown in Chapter 11.

tendentious questions, cannot follow up discussions and appear so insensitive and ignorant of local etiquette (Cf. Henige, 1982:43).

4)“Oral testimony is frequently used as a means of paying off old scores, particularly at the expense of those who cannot answer back” (Seldon & Pappworth 1983:19). This may or may not imply lying on the part of the informant for some truths can be mentioned even in anger. However, the informant is not incapable of engaging in artful lying in order to conceal an unpleasant past yet still satisfy the interviewer with an answer so he or she may be left alone. It is for the researcher to evaluate the submitted evidence and pick out for exclusion those items that would appear to be more rooted in vendetta or in escapism than in the historical truth (Cf. Henige, 1982:58-59). A subsequent interview with an ideological or family rival of the first informant will more or less indicate the areas of evidence that are to be excluded with respect to the testimonies of the rivalling parties. Oral evidence is often associated with gossip and settling of scores as already mentioned, but

“it is up to the individual researchers to exercise their judgement about the value of the evidence. In addition, by developing the practice of providing clear footnotes and other attributions, researchers can help to ensure that oral evidence is supplied and used as responsibly as written evidence and thus minimise the risk of gratuitous ‘gossip’ being recorded” (Seldon and Pappworth 1983:21).

5)Oversimplification:

“Interviewees have an undoubted tendency to telescope or condense events, and to rationalise complex emotions into neat packages of verbal testimony (as explained above). The subject’s desire to show that he is articulate and clear about the past can itself be responsible for considerable distortions” (Seldon and Pappworth 1983:21).

6)The interviewee may exaggerate his or her own family’s or ancestor’s contribution in a society’s historical achievement, putting the family or the ancestor in the centre where the true position was only that of a cog in the larger wheel of society.

7)Conversely, the informant may underplay, quite out of modesty, his or her ancestor’s or family’s role in a historical achievement, e.g. by crediting the entire community for a feat achieved by his or her own clan. This latter is trickier and harder for the researcher to detect than the case involving an exaggeration of role. One should also be on the look out for downplayed roles that led to disasters. However, there also exists the possibility of honest exaggeration of the role played by one’s political party or clan or family in a given development and the researcher should look out for this. The subject may do it out of

excessive pride of belonging or out of genuine ignorance of other rival players in the field (Cf. Seldon & Pappworth 1983:22).

8) Lack of perspective: the interviewee may ascribe the achievement of a larger movement, or the benefits of a fortuitous natural phenomenon to a visible individual (Cf. Seldon & Pappworth 1983:22) or, as an example, the success of a crop may be attributed to an individual "rainmaker" perhaps instead of the good rains and sunshine that made the bounty harvest possible. The informant may do so in innocence, being unaware of the broader perspective relative to the success such as the occurrence of the El Nino phenomenon. Further interviewing of informants from areas far off from the first informant's home, may help put the claims in proper perspective.

9) The interviewee may only be aware of sideshow events on the flanks of a major historical happening but be unaware of the existence of a larger, more important picture and perspective. This is genuine ignorance and may lead to the blowing up of a side show event to the proportions of a central role item (Cf. Seldon & Pappworth 1983:24).

10) Distortion due to personal feelings:

"The more personally involved a person in a particular policy, or the stronger his feelings for or against a particular course of action or associate, the more coloured and subjective is likely to be his evidence" (Seldon & Pappworth 1983:24).

The feelings of the interviewee vis-a-vis the topic of discussion may also be coloured by the various phases of the subject being discussed. On discussing the negative traits of a historical figure, the interviewee is negative towards the subject of discussion even beyond the justifying reason and when the discussion turns round to the positive traits, the interviewee might perform a complete turnaround within the same discussion (Cf. Seldon & Pappworth 1983:25). It is for the interviewer to discern the underlying personal feelings and emotions and qualify or remove them at the time of compiling the report. Hardest and needing the most care is the situation where the interviewee is so sophisticated as to completely conceal his or her personal feelings and attitude.

"The respondent reports as accurately as he can, but because his mental set has selectively perceived the situation, the data reported give a distorted impression of what occurred... The informant unconsciously modifies his report of a situation because of his emotional needs to shape the situation to fit his own perspective. Awareness of the "true" facts might be so uncomfortable that the informant wants to protect himself against this awareness" (Dean & Whyte, 1970:118).

11) The subject, seeing a chance to speak to posterity through the interviewer and researcher, may want to set the record straight or speak of things in such a way that he or she

thinks may please posterity. Some care is required here. He may not want to mislead posterity—often he does not. An interview with a historical rival who may have opposing memories of the same historical event will help balance the historical record generated from that particular field.

12) Influence of hindsight: “The subject’s projection back of a present view or emotion.” Seldon and Pappworth (1983:26) have pointed out this failing of oral methodology, citing experiences with the relatively recent politicians from the west. But, as the writer discovered in the Kalenjin oral field, this tendency is most prevalent among the descendants of the old Kalenjin ruling houses and their sympathisers as well:

“Politicians subconsciously adapt their views about the past to fit a stance they have adopted later... The more passionate or policy orientated, or self-justificatory, a particular witness, the more likely he is to fall prey to this distortion... If the interviewer briefs himself on his subject’s career and thought subsequent to the period being discussed, he can sensitise himself to his subject’s possible points of deviation.”

13) Repetition of published evidence (Seldon & Pappworth 1983:26): Some interviewees may be unable to differentiate between what they have heard subsequently with what they heard earlier from more authentic ancestral sources or, if they are eyewitnesses, what they witnessed during the occurrence of the historical event. Such confusion may set in after reading books or hearing radio and watching TV on the item. They may, out of genuine mistake, provide evidence that was experienced later through such exposure. In the African context, the publication of material would be by way of repeating and revising the happenings orally so much so that revisions and improvisations come to the fore in place of and at the expense of the truth. Many books covering African historical and anthropological aspects already exist. Radio and television have repeated, edited and re-edited accounts of the past so much so that an oral source could easily repeat the versions so edited and not the original account known to an earlier generation. The stories of the Mau Mau freedom fighters of Kenya run in families and in books, on radio and on TV in all sorts of widely varying versions for this reason. An interview with a series of informants from within fairly far off locations will soon reveal to the researcher a consistent line that must represent the truth.

14) Clustering of oral accounts: often the informant will be conversant with only one aspect of an oral tradition and so the researcher may be required to widen his or her scope of interview subjects in order to cover as many angles as possible regarding the subject of discussion and then attempt to build a more complete picture of the historical event (Cf. Allen & Montell, 1981:30). Some of the angles of approach to a historical item might well be quite

diametrically opposed. This was well demonstrated in the field when the author was carrying out research regarding the subject of the previous Kalenjiin royal families. The surviving elders who are the descendants of the pre-colonial rulers invariably gave flawless and probably exaggerated accounts of the roles and accomplishments due to the individual reigns of their ancestors. On the other hand the elders who are, generally speaking, the descendants of the subjects of those rulers, often gave a somewhat more sober report regarding the achievements or otherwise of the individual rulers and there were the heroic accounts as well as the scandalous failures that, in some cases, led to executions of the rulers concerned. In such cases an ancestor was considered a hero among the members of one clan but considered a villain who deserved the execution that he got among the members of another. The governing principle in such a situation is:

“No one person is likely to recall everything about a topic in discussion, since individual narrators respond to and recount those aspects of an event that most appeal to them emotionally... (But) the more variety there is in talk about an event or a person in local history, the more significant that occurrence or individual is likely to be in the community’s consciousness of the past, and therefore the more deserving it is of the local historian’s attention” (Allen & Montell, 1981:33).

1.6.3 *Limitations of the Interviewer*

The researcher is no angel—to use a cliché—and he or she often has an interest and probably a bias. This ought to be a standard cautionary statement to the user of research findings as well as a warning to the researcher himself or herself against this known, yet so common, professional pitfall. There are other limitations too; some of which are beyond the researcher. In listing the limitations of the researcher, below, the guidelines drawn by the couple, Seldon and Pappworth, as well as Ericson will also be relied upon considerably.

1) Unrepresentative sampling:

“The selection of subjects for interview can materially affect the findings of any research project. Very few authors in fact appear to seek a representative sample when preparing their interview lists. Many authors also apparently talk only to those with a certain view or who share with them a similar outlook” (Seldon & Pappworth 1983:27).

However, some researchers who use written evidence may also be accused of selective sampling in the sense that they may prefer reading archival or other historical documents that were written by certain officials and not those written by others.

2) Biased questioning: the researcher may be tempted to seek views with which he or she is comfortable and probably familiar with. Every interviewer must be aware of what he or she says and refrain from leading the narrator. Refrain too from using loaded words that give off a hint of subjective bias such as "How did the missionaries destroy that item of culture?" A failure to observe this objectivity principle will see the narrator attempting to locate the interviewer's bias and then trying to tailor the story accordingly (Cf. Ericson, 1981:3.9, 4.6). As to this pitfall, Seldon and Pappworth (1983:27) say:

"It is very easy to come away from an interview having learnt just what one expected to hear. Not only personal assessments but also the eliciting of hard fact can be affected by the way a question is phrased... The content of oral history is greatly susceptible to the way that questions are phrased and posed."

By telescoping the transcript or by approaching only those informants who will give him or her the answers he or she wants, or by leading the informant by style of question-framing, he or she may half-consciously use the interview to distort the truth (Cf. Ericson, 1981:3.9).

3) Self-fulfilling prophecy: "The interviewer's own preconceived ideas might condition the interviewee's responses and thus fall into the trap of the self-fulfilling prophecy" (Lothead, 1975:6).

4) Deference and bias towards interviewees: the occasional researcher may not only be biased towards the views of an informant, but he or she may also be so overwhelmed by the informant's sheer force of character and fame that the researcher would sooner seek a place in the perceived inner circle of the informant's social outfit than maintain an objective distance. Donald C. Watt gives an unflattering view of and lists consequences arising from this weakness:

"It has seduced some of the best-known historians of our day and age, Sir Louis Namier being the outstanding example and John Wheeler Bennet running him a close second. The seduction of being placed on the inside track, being made accessory to the non-written history, is extraordinarily difficult for anybody to resist and I must say most of all for the young researcher fired as he is with the hope of discovering something sensationally new."¹

And Ron Grele (1978:38) illustrates this phenomenon further:

"The excitement of fieldwork, the genuine friendliness of the people we interview, and the involvement we feel in their lives very often leads to distortion. We begin to ask

¹ Harrison, Brian, 'Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*' *The Pelican*, Oxford: Corpus Christi College, 1979-80:37—Seldon and Pappworth 1983:28.

questions which we know our respondents are going to want to answer, and they begin to give us answers which they know we are going to want to hear.”

The way around this problem is for the researcher to remain on guard and to establish “right relationship” with the subject. It may also help to interview more than one informant regarding an important area of enquiry, especially those that represent opposing views, so that the researcher may get a balanced view. The researcher needs to retain and reflect the objective position of a detached critic (Cf. Ericson, 1981:4.1). This same care should also be extended to written sources.

5) Interviews as a replacement for reading documents: here the researcher might take shortcuts and resort to oral interviews where ample written evidence already exists. The researcher should acquaint himself or herself with whatever evidence exists in written or otherwise recorded form on the subject of interest before embarking on fieldwork. This may spare the researcher interview expenses as well as it may prepare him or her better for the oral interview in the field.

6) Having said that, however, quoting selected passages from written sources out of context and without balancing them with oral evidence from the field, where the need clearly demonstrates itself, amounts to great intellectual negligence. It is important to seek field oral evidence with which to crosscheck the written source. The researcher should be knowledgeable enough in his or her field of interest to tell poor, badly researched written work from well-researched written work on which one can rely with less resort to the oral field (Cf. Henige, 1982:33).

1.6.4 Limitations Inherent in the Nature of Interviewing

These limitations stem neither from the interviewer nor from the interviewee but from the nature of the media, the concept and the available known techniques used in the interviewing itself.

1) Field oral interviews take up a lot of time and involve great expense which time could be spent in libraries and archives seeking the same or greater quantity and quality of information and money saved (Cf. Seldon and Pappworth, 1983:30).

2) Influence of variable factors: Interviews are dependent upon a number of variables that are not quantifiable. These factors can affect the quality of an interview. They include: the time of day, particularly for old people (many are at their best in the morning); interference with meal times or nap time of the interviewee can invite negative attitude to the session (Cf. Ericson, 1981:1.2); the place of the interview (people are often more relaxed in their homes); the length of the interviews (answers sometimes become superficial after an hour or so); the state of mind of the interviewee (personal anxieties may cause a different response); and the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee. The sex of the interviewer is another variable that may affect the interview: male and female researchers may elicit different responses from interviewees (Seldon & Pappworth 1983:32). The user of information from interviews may benefit from an accompanying description of the interviewee and the circumstances by the researcher.

3) Knowledgeable informants who are poor interviewees: Even in the literate world this kind of people exist and they may be good communicators on paper but not in the spoken word. It is recommended that the researcher send them a transcript of their interview for them to read through and comment/revise as necessary. It has been noted that some informants have been known to rewrite the entire transcript, attach other written proof by way of books, journals, newspaper reports etc. leading to the question as to whether theirs was still "oral evidence" (Cf. Henige, 1982:57-58).

4) Misrepresentation of what the interviewee has said: Occasionally the interviewee may deny the output when presented back to him or her by the interviewer for confirmation. Tape recording goes along way into alleviating this. However a genuine misinterpretation by a researcher can easily be overlooked. Some opinions held by the informant may change between the first interview and the second, third and so forth, confirming that the method is not perfect.

5) Oral evidence cannot be verified by others: In order to mitigate this shortcoming, the researcher should meticulously footnote his or her material garnered from field interviews. Such notes should be accessible to users of the information so that they may verify as necessary (Seldon & Pappworth 1983:33).

6) Interview transcripts miss the essence of an interview: Some interviewees may say certain things while they meant to say the opposite or the unlike. Excessive use of proverbs which African elders often resort to when explaining a difficult concept or an embarrassing tradition, may end up producing a record that is subject to several varying interpretations. The circumstances of the interviewee have a lot to do with this. A footnote description of the impression and the circumstances may help but should not go to the extent of compromising the objectivity of, or altogether altering the record. Seldon and Pappworth (1983:20-21) have given a thought to the scenario where an interviewee may not take either the interviewer or the subject seriously enough to answer questions with the seriousness deserved:

“The way to counter the undoubted tendency for oral evidence to be superficial and lacking in subtlety is again for researchers to impress the interviewee with the seriousness of their work, to be persistent in their questioning, and to ensure wherever possible that they can ‘capture’ the person for sufficiently long time and in a suitable enough environment to delve beneath surface responses. Only when the interviewer is satisfied (time permitting) that he has exhausted the interviewee’s memory on a particular topic should he pass on to the next question.”

7) Impossibility of true communication: Trades barrier or language barrier, e.g. a highly placed historian with all his or her academic jargon may be at odds with the subject even if they speak one language. In the absence of knowledge of the local language and hence the inevitable reliance on an interpreter, the researcher may also not understand the significance of a point made by the interviewee from time to time, which otherwise if he or she did, should have followed up with a supplementary impromptu question. Thus a researcher who does not know the local language abandons the chance to do effective research because he or she will not be able to interact with his or her sources in ways that would permit him or her to gain an adequate and immediate appreciation of their testimony (Cf. Henige, 1982:28-29). The interviewee may also not know the level of knowledge of the interviewer and the intended users of the information; hence he or she may not elaborate further or introduce the background information to the subject of interview where he or she should.

8) Dependence on survivors and those who agree to be interviewed: the inherent weakness of oral projects is that the interview is more often carried out with the survivors who were at the periphery during the occurrence of the substance of the interview rather than

in the deciding positions. We are further limited by the narrow availability of such survivors and can only interview those who are willing to be interviewed—further narrowing the field of informants and the quality and quantity of the information gathered. The researcher should admit accordingly that there was a shortage of appropriate interviewees and that those interviewed may not have ranked best had the circumstances been different.

9) The educational level, age or sex of the interviewer may enhance or limit his or her capacity to attract the confidence of the interviewee. Female interviewers have a limit as to how much they can learn from old men in areas that touch on initiation and sexual morality; and the same difficulty might be experienced by male researchers when they interview old women regarding female initiation, issues related to childbirth and sexual morality.

10) A researcher goes to the field to find out more about a subject but the informants may sometimes want to be impressed a little by the interviewer with a demonstration of knowledge in the subject. This is an uncomfortable kind of chicken and egg situation. However intimidating the informant with a show of vast knowledge within the field can be equally undesirable and counterproductive. Neither is it desirable to turn the interview into a conversation, with the interviewer contributing as much as the informant. Too many “yes”, “I can understand”, “I know”, interjections are only disruptive. However a timely laugh or two and well-placed wise comments that can indicate to the informant that one is attentive may be called for; the ability to listen is vital to an interview. It may indicate one’s keen interest and sufficient understanding of the subject (Cf. Ericson, 1981:1.1, 3.4). An under-informed researcher receives less while the awesomely “over-informed” researcher receives equally less from an informant. The trick is for the researcher to strike a balance between a demonstration of familiarity with the subject and the need to enquire more, all the while giving the informant an edge in knowledge perception without total surrender. Perceptions play a part here, just to confirm that the oral interview method is not a perfect, objective technique.

All the above notwithstanding, a researcher should find oral evidence trustworthy in at least two specific instances: for the unique event, which makes a powerful impression upon the interviewee, and for the regularly repeated, perhaps even humdrum events or routines. A good example of the first was demonstrated in Kipsigiis country in Kenya during the author’s fieldwork. The Kipsigiis once lost a battle to their Abagusii neighbours so badly that the proceedings of the battle are still “remembered” vividly more than a century on. The loss to the Abagusii was as unique and as rare as it was bloody and dramatic. The oral tradition regarding

this battle is virtually identical in the entire expanse of Kipsigiisland and, indeed, in most of Kalenjiinland.

The stuff of the second category above, the humdrum repetition, are most of the individual exploits of the Mau Mau generals and Kenyatta during the guerrilla stage of freedom fighting in Kenya. Mau Mau hero Field Marshall Dedan Kimathi's earlier invincibility, for example, is narrated in an almost fairy-tale manner but uniformly all the same from place to place in Central Kenya. So it may be true after all that Kimathi made holes in tree trunks big enough for him to hide in and listen while the colonial servicemen passed by, even leaned on the trunk while making plans to capture or kill Kimathi and the rest of his Land Freedom Army (more famously known as the Mau Mau).¹

1.6.5 The Potential and the Advantages of Oral Tradition Methodology

Oral sources can help document whole areas of a community's history for which written records are missing or are available but only scantily. There are also instances in which an entire community may have left virtually no formal record of its existence, and its past must be reconstructed almost entirely from oral recollections of the descendants of families that came in touch with the extinct community (Cf. Allen & Montell, 1981:64). This reconstruction method has been applied in Kalenjiinland where the oral historians have managed to effectively facilitate the reconstruction of the lives and times of the extinct Sirikwa community (Cf. Distefano, 1985:250) that their (Kalenjiin's) ancestors took part in exterminating both socially and physically.

From oral fieldwork we know that the Sirikwa built in stone and some of their structures are still standing almost two centuries after the disappearance of that community. And because of the physical evidence of those ruins, the Kalenjiin are forced to remember the story of their lives, the struggles and their unfortunate extermination. Such physical aids to memory as the stone structures act as a mnemonic code and the oral method of dissemination to regions farther afield on a constant basis has helped historians and anthropologists reconstruct the lives and times of the Sirikwa (Cf. Distefano, 1985:250). In addition to the above, there are families in Kalenjiinland that trace ancestry to the Sirikwa and their family traditions too have helped perfect the memories of Sirikwa times.

¹ Kimathi was eventually wounded, caught and hanged by the colonial government.

The path of oral tradition methodology may not come as a matter of choice where few if any written records exist as is often the case in most pre-literate African societies. The researcher will seek facts that will be communicated orally and then struggle to interpret them. Where records exist, although they will never be absolutely sufficient on their own, the researcher may study them and all that is required of him or her is the interpretation alone—of events, personalities and documents—because the written records are often assumed to be fact. Nevertheless such a researcher will still find interviewing to be a useful adjunct to his or her research because

“in addition to specific details about an event, oral sources can provide insights into the private human motivations behind the actions represented in public documents and can offer explanations for cryptic features of the written record... Through a study of orally communicated history, the local historian will be able to understand the relationship of formal history to oral historical traditions by watching the historical record blossom when orally communicated facts are included, and by seeing that the traditions of a people sometimes bear little resemblance to formal history” (Allen & Montell, 1981:55-56, 4).

That orally communicated history could also legitimise, enrich and give a broader perspective to written history, is an observation that is winning wider acceptance. Seldon and Pappworth (1983:36-37, 43) whose main focus is on contemporary and recent oral history of the western context, have added their voices to this:

“Writers of contemporary or recent history will often find they have few documentary sources to guide them. Without oral evidence their work would consist largely of regurgitation of secondary evidence, other people’s books, newspaper accounts, and so on, which might well be incomplete... The giving of broad perspective is an advantage peculiar to oral history evidence... Such oral evidence might well be partial, or one-sided, but it is none the less important to hear the interpretations and assessments of those that witnessed or participated in events, if only as a point of departure.”

Oral interviews can assist in the use of documentary evidence, apart from helping in the interpretation of events. It can also help the researcher identify where to find documentary sources and which types and categories are likely to carry the data that the researcher may be interested in even if the interviewee may not himself or herself be aware of such sources (Cf. Seldon & Pappworth 1983:43). A researcher interviewing a Kalenjin elder about an ancient religious rite, for example, may hear from the interviewee which colonial administrator banned such rite or attended it. A search in the archives of the colonial administrator mentioned in passing by the interviewee, may reveal more facts regarding the rite in question as well as either the administrator’s reasons for banning it or for attending it or both. In other words, the researcher may thus also witness the importance of the rite from the point of view of the colonial administrator.

It should not be forgotten that according to the above scenario, the researcher got the hint of the possible existence of documents from an informant who may not even be aware that he or she has given a hint of that sort. The researcher gets to learn more not only of the event whose information he or she is pursuing, but also of the subject as a whole—the interviewee ends up being a teacher to the interviewer. As we may not replace teachers' oral communication of lessons in deference to the wide and ready availability of written sources on the subjects that they teach, so too may we not eliminate the role of oral informants on account of the ready availability of documentary evidence in their field of speciality.

Documentary evidence in form of minutes may carry the final resolutions of meetings and not the circumstances, arguments and bargains that led to the final resolutions. An interview with a participant or one who was alive at the time may reveal the general nature of arguments and bargains as well as the circumstances and reasons that propelled the subject into topicality at the time. On occasion, the true reasons and reasoning that led to the documented decisions might have been suppressed at the time. Yet again the reasons written down to justify certain actions, inaction or omissions, might have been decoys, the real reasons being hidden and known only to the participants. An interview with a survivor, or someone nearest to a survivor, may reveal the true reasons as well as the underlying philosophies and approaches that might have been so taken for granted by participants that they required no contemporary elucidation in written form. A possibility also exists that the underlying motives that might not have been fully understood at the time by witnesses might since have become clearer long after the lives of the participants.

The archival evidence of the pioneering colonial administrators' meetings with their contemporary traditional leaders in Kenya, provides a good example of this scenario. Innocent, unimportant meetings attended by the administrators and the chiefs or king were later minuted as having signed away chunks of native land. But this only became clear when the people were later evicted on authority of resolutions "passed" by government sitting with the native leaders. Illiterate Maasai elders, for one example, are aware of how their king of the turn of the century, Lenana, was duped in this manner and the Maasai lost land to European settlers in terms of whole districts: Laikipia, Naivasha etc. The oral narrative has it that when Lenana had died, the colonial officers obtained his thumbprints from his corpse for endorsement of minutes and for the "signing" of the letters that gave away Maasai land. According to the prevalent oral tradition, much of the land that he "signed" away posthumously was promptly confiscated subsequent to his death.

Seldon and Pappworth (1983:45) have pointed out that documentary evidence is written usually for the benefit of contemporaries who may be familiar with the underlying as well as the

peripheral issues. The historian certainly is not expected to be party to this intimate knowledge. So his or her means to that knowledge is the interview. Such interviews can reveal the unrecorded assumptions underlying the minuted decisions.

The authorities responsible for preparing records for the archives have been known to exclude any pieces of evidence that have the potential of embarrassing the government of the day. The early colonial time archive records in Kenya exclude acts that amounted to extreme levels of abuse of human rights that were perpetrated upon the natives by the British colonial officials and soldiers for this reason. But the natives have passed down by oral means through the few generations that have come and passed vivid descriptions of those acts of cruelty. A case in point is the reputed burial of a Gikuyu chief, Waiyaki wa Hinga, alive, feet up, head down. This was done in Kibwezi, after the chief had been frog-marched two hundred kilometres away from his home, which was at Dagoretti on the outskirts of modern Nairobi. The place and nature of burial of the Gikuyu chief were the property of oral tradition for almost a century and confirmation came by way of an accidental dig into a spot where he was buried. The remains of a man buried feet up, head down, were found and exhumed. As it was not in the habit of the natives of Kibwezi to bury their dead in that manner, this seemed to tally and coincide only too well and only with the Gikuyu chief's story as maintained steadfastly by oral tradition¹ and pointedly excluded from the records of the colonial government.

The typical shyness on the part of any authority when it comes to documenting its own shameful acts, such as is demonstrated by the above story of the Gikuyu chief, has been noted by Seldon and Pappworth (1983:38) in the following manner:

“Documentary evidence is particularly weak on episodes that were considered at the time to be embarrassing or to have been failures: in such instances oral evidence can be invaluable, and it may well be that the failures are more important for the historian to learn about than the successes.”

Clarification of factual confusions: Frequently documents appear to contradict one another, or a key document cannot be traced in order to complete a picture. Or the sole archival record carries an unconvincing view of the conqueror, of the ruling elitist class or of other power; the chief reason being that it omits the social impact and implications that the event of interest had on

¹ The story of the discovery of Waiyaki's remains was carried in Kenya's *Daily Nation* newspaper, August 6th 1998. The great-great-grand children of Chief Waiyaki, led by Dr. Muniyua Waiyaki, a former minister in the Kenya Government, were reported to have decided to have a DNA test performed on the exhumed remains upon which confirmation the remains would be transported 200 kilometres back to the chief's original home. Another strong oral tradition maintained by the descendants of Chief Waiyaki, is that the Gikuyu chief was really no Gikuyu but a Maasai and that his true (Maasai) name was Koiyaki ole Kumale (D/N 6/8/98).

the subjected population. In that case an oral interview with a knowledgeable source from the underprivileged population, a participant or witness, will help eradicate the confusion or fill the gaps (Cf. Henige, 1982:106-107).

Oral interviews can animate otherwise lifeless, colourless official documents that are deposited in archives. A survivor or witness may supply background facts, human emotion and touch that the papers could not possibly convey.

“While written documents supply factual information about the whys and wherefores of important events and movements, orally communicated history often expresses how people felt about those events, how they reacted to them, and how the events affected their lives” (Allen & Montell, 1981:58).

Written history typically—possibly with only a few exceptions—deals with wars, elections, inventions, depressions, disasters, and other events that change the course of history. In this process of historiography, the background against which the “history” takes place, as may be gathered orally, has generally been neglected by most historians (Cf. Allen & Montell, 1981:60-61).

Oral interviewing gives a chance to those who cannot write for one reason or another to communicate their experience as participants or witnesses to important events. In providing such evidence they may contradict and actually disqualify certain written evidence by others less knowledgeable in the relevant field than the informant (Cf. Seldon & Pappworth, 1983:50).

Field interviews may take the researcher out of his or her armchair and the museums, libraries and archives to the real people; an enriching experience in itself as well as a way of viewing the research data in more realistic human terms—a way of acquiring the needed balance.

Besides:

“By talking to those who participated in events, the historian is less likely to make simplistic judgements, and understanding is broadened to accommodate the underlying factors that caused individuals to behave in a certain way” (Seldon & Pappworth, 1983:51-52).

1.7 Identifying the Potential Oral Sources, the Researcher and the Informant

Oral information may either be actively sought from or be received through and in the following manner: The researcher himself or herself may in the first place be heir to a rich unwritten tradition such as is often the case among African researchers. Such a researcher may write down as much of the pertinent information as he or she can remember and then go to the field to verify and cross-check his or her own memory with that of others. Those that the researcher would target should ideally be older than the researcher or, better still, be situated several locations away from the researcher's own.

1) Personal experiences as remembered by an informant: These can theoretically deal with almost any topic but tend to focus on the particularly humorous, the particularly sorrowful, the particularly spectacular, and the particularly embarrassing eyewitness accounts in the individual's or in the community's history. Stories about personal experiences are usually highly polished from many retellings. They generally focus on the speaker in favourable light and as the centre of the action in his or her own narrative (Cf. Allen & Montell, 1981:48).

2) Family stories as remembered by its members: traditional information about a variety of episodes in a family's history is often passed from one generation to another in oral form. Such traditional knowledge often constitutes a family saga, "the body of lore that tends to cluster around families, or often the patriarchs or matriarchs of families, which is preserved... by oral tradition, and which is believed to be true" (Boatright, 1958:1). Stories of this nature when collected from many families within a defined community can help create the larger picture regarding the collective history of that community.

3) Occupations: In an African setting, soothsayers and priests by dint of their occupations are depositories of the community's traditional heritage and an interview with them, or witnessing them perform their duties, can be very fruitful to the researcher.

4) The community's past: The name of the community and how it was acquired can constitute a partial explanation about the community's past. Apart from this, local place names can also act as pointers and evidence supporting certain traditional and historical contentions. It has been observed that "place names and titles are unusually resistant to change and can be very old" (Yoder, 1980:84).

5) Stories of heroes and villains: these can help explain certain historical idiosyncrasies of a community, social, cultural, economic and political. In the African setting—especially the East African setting—as explained earlier, animals that are featured in folk tales such as

Hare, Hyena, Fox and Ogre, may be used to represent real human characters that lived and shaped the community's destiny in the past. Such tales often have Hare as the eternal cunning hero while gluttonous Hyena, clever Fox and deceptive Ogre play supporting roles often of villains; Ogre eternally representing the evil (Cf. Chesaina, 1991:11, Allen & Montell, 1981:47-54).

1.7.1 Types of Field Oral Research Work

Seldon and Pappworth (1983:11-12) divide oral history activities into three branches:

1) The individual researcher: the student or academic conducting personal interviews in confidence for the purpose of providing information for a specific book, article or thesis that they are researching and writing themselves.

2) The oral project: this one falls between the oral archives, below, and the individual work of an individual researcher. The essence of an oral project is that interviews are instigated by an institution for its own private purposes, the fruits of which interviews may or may not see the light of day in the form of a book or other compilation. Such an institution may be a sports club, a school, a university faculty or department, a society, a government department or a multinational corporation. An oral project is distinguished from an individual researcher's task because it is instigated by a closed organisation for that organisation's own (in the first instance, at least) internal consumption, and the material it gathers will often not be of much interest to a wider audience.

3) Oral archives conduct and/or collect interviews not for their own use but for the immediate or eventual benefit of independent researchers. The interviewer here differs from the above two because he or she will be asking questions not for his or her own or the employing department's use, but for third parties. He or she will accordingly have to anticipate the interests of those third parties, present or future.

1.7.2 Types of Oral Researchers: Insider Vs Outsider

A researcher goes to the field to conduct oral research work either as an insider within the target community or as an outsider to it. Each of the tags, insider and outsider, comes with advantages as well as disadvantages:

The advantages of being an insider: An insider researcher will often know where to obtain written records; where to locate the suitable and appropriate informants; have a general

understanding of the subject being investigated; have a general intuitive feeling for the place and the people that comes from long residence in the community. One is a member of the same culture as the people with whom one will be working; one will share with them major historical experiences and cultural system based on similar values, symbols, customs and attitudes; one will understand nuances of meaning accessible only to someone thoroughly imbued with the cultural values of a specific group.

The disadvantages of being an insider: One may be so close to a subject as to overlook some very obvious aspects of it that an outside reader may wish to know about; some matters will be so familiar as to seem not to require explanation, yet an outsider may be baffled by them; an insider researcher may be hesitant to ask someone about what is known to be a sensitive subject and, conversely, people may be reluctant to talk about such subjects with someone from within the community who knows all persons and factors involved; an outsider in the same situation would not experience the same inhibition, nor would informants necessarily exhibit the same reticence; The “home-town” researcher’s natural emotional involvement with the subject at hand may tend to affect his or her objectivity and lead to an avoidance in exploring unpleasant aspects of it because of personal feelings about it or fear of offending others in the community by bringing it up (Cf. Allen & Montell, 1981:12-13).

The advantages of an outside researcher: The outside researcher would take note of many facets of a community or a subject that an insider may take for granted; people are more likely to talk freely with an outsider about sensitive subjects, once rapport and trust have been established, than they would with someone they know well; the lack of emotional involvement on the part of the outside researcher is more likely to assure an objective investigation of the subject (Cf. Allen & Montell, 1981:13).

The disadvantages of an outside researcher: The outsider lacking an emotional attachment to the culture being studied, will not go into great pains and endure years to obtain difficult information. His or her view and approach will often be too detached, even clinical (Cf. Henige, 1982:39).

The occasional outside researcher may be ethnocentric in the first place, in that he or she will conduct interviews with a view to confirming the perceived inferiority of the target community in relation to the community of his or her own upbringing or of any other third community that he or she may fancy more. Such bias can interfere with data collection, and especially with the subsequent interpretation of such data.¹

¹ Following a discussion with H.E. Professor C. Chesaina, October 2000.

Another disadvantage is that because the outside researcher is unfamiliar with the local scene, he or she may not ask the right questions to elicit information on certain important aspects of a subject; the outsider may bring up an embarrassing subject and yet not know why informants refuse to talk about it; people may be suspicious of a stranger or an outsider and give false information, or even refuse to talk at all (Cf. Allen & Montell, 1981:13).

It has been suggested that if the insider is too close to be objective and the outsider too removed and “disinterested” to be thorough enough and can never fully achieve the intellectual perspective of the members of the society he or she is studying, the best would be a mixture of both (Cf. Henige, 1982:39). But how does an oral researcher acquire the virtues of both the insider and the outsider? The practical way for an outsider researcher to achieve anything close to this according to the author’s own field experience is to use a local assistant who is an insider during the interview and afterwards. A discussion with the insider assistant over the taped material would help the researcher discover the sensitivities of the target society and to moderate his or her submission accordingly.

1.7.3 Preparation for Oral Fieldwork

The renowned oral historians, Seldon and Pappworth (1983:55), who are much used in this submission, have observed that there is no one correct way to conduct an oral history interview. But some basic preparations and approaches are expected. The first demand that faces the researcher in his or her field of research is the choice and scope of the problem. The researcher needs to view the problem in a broad perimeter before zeroing in on the targeted area. Various themes are often related and intertwined to such an extent that it would virtually be impossible to treat the components of one theme without an intimate knowledge of several others (Cf. Krohn, 1971:28).

For example, the interest of the researcher might be in the area of comparative religions, but he or she will have to prepare a questionnaire that covers and makes provision for observation in such areas as wide apart as: language and linguistics; folk stories; folk legends; songs; customs; witchcraft; rituals; games and dances; popular saints’ cults; items of religious symbolism such as altars of the home and village; kitchen utensils; all kinds of tools e.g. farming implements; domestic animals owned; arts; institutions created by the people such as clan organisation, age and traditional military regimentation. The researcher prepares to go to the field to cover such a wide area only to come back and utilise a minuscule of the volume of data collected in the final compilation (Cf. Krohn, 1971:19).

A well-constructed questionnaire will stand the researcher in good stead in the field. A good questionnaire should neither be too short nor too long and repetitive. A uniform questionnaire that will be applied to all informants alike is desirable although flexibility should be allowed and provision made for supplementary questions that may arise during the informant's reply. In the experience of the author, the neighbours of the informant who may attend and the informant himself or herself, may ask questions to be answered by anyone in attendance. Such questions may be as appropriate and their answers as relevant as any that the researcher poses and receives.

A formal questionnaire in such cases, and very often in even the one to one private interviews, proves to be a stumbling block rather than an aid. As David Lance (1996:139) says, no questionnaire is sufficiently flexible to accommodate, in itself, the unexpected and valuable twists and turns of an informant's memory; "and partly it is due to the fact that a questionnaire can become an obstacle to achieving the natural and spontaneous dialogue that is the aim of most oral historians." The questionnaire itself, if it is used in spite of such drawback, should be well edited and, where possible, the questions should be arranged in a logical chronological order or in subject categories—depending on the prioritisation set by the researcher—one category smoothly introducing and ushering in the other.

However a fixed interview structure, such as a questionnaire necessarily engenders, harbours the danger of imposing one's own outlook on the material given. Sometimes too rigid and mechanical questioning repels the interviewees because this tends to give them insufficient opportunity to develop their own thoughts. According to Henige (Cf. 1982:34), relying on questionnaires too extensively is a bit old-fashioned. Flexibility and continuously updating the questionnaire itself, ridding it of questions that prove unproductive, and continuously tailoring it to suit the various targeted informants, makes a difference as this author learned in the oral field.

In the experience of the author among the Kalenjiin, an elder who is well-known as a parish sage, would often be a "specialist" in only one area of traditional knowledge. Where such cases were concerned, the author's pre-formulated questionnaire was found not to have sufficiently taken such an informant's field of "specialisation" into account during its formulation. In such a case the elder was given leeway to pour out as much of his or her expert knowledge as he or she was able to without confining him or her to the questionnaire.

Where it was possible, an elder was informed of the author's (or his assistant's) intended visit and intention. He or she would then begin to prepare psychologically in advance to impart certain aspects of knowledge that he or she either felt that the younger generation should know, or whatever happened to be his or her pet topic of discussion and for which he or she was often famous within the parish. Subjecting such an informant to a rigid pre-formulated questionnaire

was often visibly irritating to him or to her and made them feel that they were not given the opportunity to “excel” commensurate with their local fame.

Some of the informants were retired or serving chiefs who were used to having their way and who often preferred lecturing to the interviewer according to their own preferred—often dictatorial—method. Chiefs are often known to be and are indeed repositories of traditional knowledge and culture because part of their routine duties is to preside over customary law trials. Confronted by such an informant, the researcher does little else other than to listen and keep glancing at the questionnaire in order to strike out the questions that may have been answered before they were asked. Time and temperament allowing, the researcher may ask the remaining questions later.

Seldon and Pappworth (1983:75) recommend the part-relegation, or compromise, of the rigid questionnaire-style in deference to flexibility and spontaneity:

“It is advisable to adopt a formula that combines the comprehensiveness and comparability of set questions with the flexibility of the open-ended informal approach. This can be achieved by letting informants talk at the beginning of the interview—the sequence in which they say things can itself be significant—and by allowing them to develop themes that arise from your questions.”

The language tool is an important piece of preparation for fieldwork and the researcher need acquaint himself or herself with the key aspects of it in advance. The basic training in phonetics that the researcher needs to undergo before plunging into his or her field interview sessions can help him or her unravel mythological names and concepts associated with them. In the Kalenjin context, the many names for the Deity embody whole concepts and the ability to break them apart and interrogate the informant accordingly can be beneficial to the study. In any case language is the medium of conversation and the reasonable social and technical knowledge of the medium to be used during an interview should therefore be a prerequisite for the researcher.

Another oral methodology scholar, Charles Morrissey, has stressed the need to keep stiff methodology prescriptions off oral fieldwork. He has suggested that the researcher maintain a flexible outlook to his or her approach:

“The more I’ve discussed oral history with various people, the more I’ve become impressed with the fact that techniques and other aspects of oral history vary with the type of person you’re interviewing... to reduce interviewing to a set of techniques is, as one person put it, like reducing courtship to a formula... There is a danger of too much reliance on tools and not relying sufficiently on old-fashioned intuition as to which tool to use in which situation” (Morrissey, 1970:109-110).

In debating whether to go to the field physically or otherwise, the researcher has, and may select the option of requesting for written submissions against his or her written questionnaire if

the selected informant is literate enough to do this. But this is a poor approach and unless the circumstances are such that this method is inevitable, it should be discouraged. The face-to-face oral interview is irreplaceable for many reasons, e.g.: "an interview can often convey types of information which of their very nature can never be communicated in writing. The informant's gesture, intonation and manner will often be as important as the words he utters."¹

One of the greatest benefits of interviewing people face to face is the ability to cross-question them. Written recollections are useful but can be guarded, bland, and difficult to evaluate (Cf. Seldon and Pappworth 1983:14). Oral interviews also entail visits to the informant. In the process the researcher may witness the circumstances surrounding the informant's life and how such circumstances may have influenced the life of the informant and what he or she has to say.

A telephone interview is close to face-to-face oral interview. It can save time and travel expenses. According to Seldon and Pappworth (1983:14), it is only second best to the face-to-face interview approach. However, as the author experienced, telephone conversations with the informant are useful for crosschecking afterwards in the light of further information being available and for clarification of certain matters that may have appeared unclear to the researcher subsequent to the interview. But the fact that the researcher and the interviewee are familiar with one another and the researcher knows the social and personal circumstances of the interviewee well, should make subsequent interviews between them by telephone fruitful and almost as good as face to face encounters. However, the calibre of informants that was targeted by the author had no access to telephones in general and the author often crosschecked information from various informants with his own mother by telephone.

Some researchers prefer to interview informants after carrying out the armchair, library, museum and archival research work and even after writing the first draft of the findings. This way they place themselves in a better position to work out a more comprehensive questionnaire. Others prefer to go to the field before writing. This approach yields less and may call for revisits to the informants because when the researcher finally sits down to write, he or she might discover many gaps that were left during the interview. Nevertheless, as pointed out further above, this approach sometimes helps with the identification of pertinent and important documents in the archives, libraries and museums by way of the hints that may be dropped by the informant during the interview process. But there is no substituting the pre-interview acquaintance with the subject as well as with the social norms and etiquette associated with the informant's larger society. The

¹ Brian Harrison, *Oral History and Recent Political History* p. 38 (Seldon & Pappworth, 1983:14).

interviewer needs to learn especially which kinds of social behaviour are unacceptable (Cf. Henige, 1982:42).

A researcher who carries out his or her armchair research work prior to going to the field may be so enabled to guide the informant through the interview. On the other hand, interviews that come before the armchair research work has been undertaken may see the researcher being guided along and even bullied through the interview by the informant. And not so guided only during the interview, but also indirectly during his or her subsequent armchair, archival and museum-based research. This is not bad in itself were it not for the too many gaps that are often discovered subsequent to the fieldwork.

It is also to be noted that exhibiting too much ignorance of the subject before the informant, as an under-prepared interviewer would sooner do, is likely to make the informant uncomfortable, even irritated.

The comfort of the interviewee is very important and the interviewer should strive to establish rapport from the beginning of the interview. The tough and the sensitive questions should be left for later in the interview and not be brought forward because once an informant takes offence, he or she is likely to be less forthcoming over the remainder of the session (Cf. Morrissey, 1970:114).

Morrissey advises that questions posed to an informant should not cover more than two sentences and should be framed in such a way that they elicit long answers and not invite "yes" or "no" answers.

"In oral history one of the great dangers is for the interviewer to feel that he has to keep talking until the interviewee tries to get a word in edgewise... We should let the interviewee set his own pace; if it is slow, from our view point, nonetheless it is his pace" (Morrissey, 1970:113).

A prearranged interview session is not the only forum for the researcher to reach his or her informants. Informal gathering of information from reminiscences about the past of the individual or the community can be pursued instead of, or apart from the prearranged formal interview sessions. In an African setting, the researcher may make it a habit to attend beer parties, a community's annual cultural days, coronations, initiations, weddings and funerals during which the people might stray into interesting topics of culture, religion and history, some or all of which may be of interest to the researcher. Under the influence of alcohol or the emotions generated by sheer numbers, people from various clans almost invariably argue about their respective and collective origins and the clan and individual socio-political contribution to the making of the community in the past etc. Unaware that someone is trying to gather information, the old men and

women participate, correcting and supplementing each other's oral recollections uninhibited. These kinds of informal and pseudo-formal settings can yield the highest quality of historical information and a researcher may utilise them as a research strategy.

There are, however, a number of drawbacks to this information gathering method. The occasions that call for such gatherings may be few and far between and well outside the control of the researcher. The researcher's timetable and deadline pressures might not allow him or her to depend on such chance occasions. Another drawback to this method is in the fact that the discussants are often people who are familiar with one another and familiar with the topic of discussion and many aspects of the discussion may not have to be elaborated owing to the fact that "everyone around knows the basics". But the researcher may not be party to such basic knowledge and may be thrown off by the catch phrases used in place of the full story. Such catch phrases that stand for fuller stories supposedly "known to everyone around", have been called "kernel narratives" (Cf. Allen & Montell, 1981:40).

1.7.4 Selecting Potential Interviewees

Depending on his or her topic, the researcher may target different categories of informants and compile a priority list of them. The nature and convenience of the topic overrides all considerations. But all the elements being equal, the frail, the sick and the old informants should be visited earliest. Such informants may not only continue to deteriorate physically and mentally but they are also often at the sunset of their lives and postponement of interviews may find them either unable to communicate or absent from the scene altogether. One should be careful not to suddenly appear in a potential interviewee's compound only to be confronted with the news of his or her death. A researcher should avoid distress to a family that would be caused by his or her writing to or visiting someone who has just died (Cf. Seldon & Pappworth 1983:57, 59).

In the experience of the author, one selected interviewee will often suggest another potential interviewee for further interviewing. Their suggestion is often a wise choice arrived at through peer network or otherwise. But Seldon and Pappworth have pointed out a major drawback to this what they call the "snowball" technique. Its chief weakness, according to them, is in the fact that informants tend to suggest those of similar outlook (Cf. Seldon & Pappworth, 1983:59).

This snowball malady is the cancer that struck the oral fieldwork carried out among the Kipsigiis two decades or so ago by Henry Mwanzi, an outsider to the community. His first subjects were Kipsigiis elders who were of Gusii (Kintu-speakers) origin. After an interview session, one elder would recommend him to the next elder of his or her own kind and so on. At

the end of his fieldwork, Mwanzi noticed that most of the informants that he had interviewed had mentioned a Gusii origin. He therefore concluded that the vast majority of the entire Kipsigiis population originated from the Abagusii. Little did Mwanzi know that he had been confined to a closed circuit of ex-Gusii families of Kipsigiis that are only in significant numbers in the southern area that he had visited.

After a study of the thorough analysis of linguistic borrowings carried out by Christopher Ehret (1971:160), Distefano (1985:130) says as follows about Mwanzi's work among the Kipsigiis:

"There are Gusii loans (words) in Kipsigiis, but they form a light-general set of borrowings. These latter are not the type of borrowing which would have to exist in such a scenario as Dr Mwanzi has postulated; the Gusii clearly have a notable part in the evolution of the Kipsigiis society but not the central focal role."

A researcher who is preparing to go to the field is best advised to prepare a list of potential interviewees in various expertise and social categories where applicable, especially so as to avoid the type of snowballing effect that impacted on Mwanzi's work materially. This should be done well in advance with an intention to exhaust the list of potential interviewees subsequently but at the same time preparing to accept some of the names suggested by the earlier interviewees along the way as often as possible but with a wary eye permanently looking out for the snowball of the oral kind.

It is best to interview people in their own home settings. With elderly people, their home may come as an inevitable location for an interview with them. Jan Vansina (1980:272) advises that it is best to conduct an interview in the original language of the tradition being pursued whenever possible. In the African setting, the informants who are the current custodians of the oral tradition are often only at ease communicating in their African mother tongues. Any attempted use of a foreign language does not only throw them off balance in terms of the necessary comfort and command of language for the ideal interview process, but it also instinctively recalls the all-encompassing embargo against divulging the community's secrets to "outsiders".

1.7.5 Methods of Recording the Interview

Seldon and Pappworth (1983:69) have listed four different methods of recording the proceedings of an oral interview:

- 1) Trying to memorise the entire interview proceedings without any attempt at recording in any form and only writing everything down in a quiet place soon after the interview.
- 2) Notes are written during the interview.
- 3) The interview is tape-recorded and a transcript is made subsequently.
- 4) A video camera is used to record the entire interview session, transcription work to follow.

The advantages of the memorising technique include the absence of paper and the other recording devices of number 2, 3, and 4 above, which may inhibit free communication. However, memorising facts during an interview requires a good memory but even though, the facts should be jotted down as soon as the researcher can and certainly before visiting the next interviewee.

Some informants may actually insist on some kind of recording of the interview session in order to avoid a scenario of a misrepresentation later that does not allow them the opportunity to a legal or other recourse. However, the recording method may not go well with an interview that takes place in a bar or restaurant. Here the interviewee might not want to appear to be granting an interview and attracting crowds of curious onlookers in the process. And, in any case, the management of the establishment may not welcome such distraction of its customers in the first place.

Tape recording has its disadvantages as well as advantages: Some informants may not want to be recorded verbatim for legal reasons or out of sheer nervousness. But some informants may be stimulated rather than daunted by the presence of recording equipment and even become verbose in front of the electronic gadgetry (Cf. Henige, 1982:62-63). Such recording could also spur the informant into taking the interview seriously and into providing what he or she thinks is vital information. However, transcribing may also become a long and laborious exercise, often requiring the researcher himself/herself to do the transcribing. The lengthy transcribed text, out of its sheer length, may make it difficult to spot the relevant and informative bits of information.

On the other hand, facts written down during the interview would be shorter, as proliferation is necessarily avoided because the note-taker decides what to take down and what to leave out. Written down points are also easier to locate during the collating process. Taking notes as the speaker rambles on can also help the speaker identify the researcher's particular areas of interest

and thus concentrate on it and hence provide more information on the researcher's specialised area of interest (Cf. Tuchman, 1996:96).

The recording tapes and machines can also malfunction as the author and his field assistants noticed several times. The speaker and interviewer might carry on with the interview without noticing that the machine is actually not recording and, ignorant of the defect, continue with the interview and lose time and spontaneity as a repeat may be called for.

Where the note-taking technique is used, the researcher may take with him, or her, an assistant who will take the notes and free the researcher from the need to interrupt the speaker in order to take time off to make notes. However this technique has its price: the informant might not be as free as he or she would be if the interviewee and interviewer were in the interview venue alone. The sex, esteem and age of the assistant may also contribute to inhibiting the interviewee. The author avoided this by utilising assistants of his own age and sex and by instructing those interviewing on their own to do the same.

Taping has its advantages: nothing is missed during the interview; the interviewer/interviewee maintain eye contact throughout the session without the need to stop in order to jot down notes, thereby losing the tempo and flow of thought and speech; the need for an assistant whose presence might inhibit the speaker is removed; the record is permanent and may be used still as an "oral" source by future researchers; the researcher, listening to the tape later, might discover important bits of information that at the time of the interview he or she may not have realised and would not have recorded if he or she had used the note-taking technique; "tapes record accurately not only what is said but the *way* the informant says it, the emphasis, uncertainty and manner" (Seldon & Pappworth, 1983:71).

Guided by a properly laid out questionnaire, the tape-method can be very effectively used by the researcher's assistants in the researcher's absence and the result would still be almost as good as if the researcher were present in person during the interview. This method allows the researcher to reach several informants simultaneously and also to obtain data from far off places. The author used this technique effectively and managed to run interviews by "remote control" in otherwise risky areas due to Luhya-Saboot ethnic clashes in western Kenya in 1992.

It is possible to employ both note taking and taping simultaneously. This may remove the need to transcribe the taped material after the interview. The researcher may only fall back on the tape should the need arise to fill gaps on the notes.

1.7.6 *The Person of the Oral Informant*

Some prior knowledge regarding the life of a prospective informant and his or her likely areas of specialised knowledge, his or her role in the society and with regard to the historical area of inquiry is important (Cf. Ericson, 1981:1.1). The informant's sensibilities are best guarded against if known in advance. In the Kalenjiin context, the researcher is better prepared if he or she knows in advance the informant's age group's or generation's, or military regiment's historical failures and, importantly, their successes. Some informants are cagey where personal and community failures are concerned yet, to the researcher, historical failures may be of greater importance than the successes.

Saad A. Sowayan (1992:30) in his *The Arabian Oral Historical Narrative: an Ethnographic and Linguistic Analysis*, agrees that the informant's own background may have fundamental influence on the information he or she provides. He says that each group

“looks at a given situation and evaluates it from its own perspective. Social milieu and vested interests no doubt influence people's perception of reality and the way they process and organise life-experiences and social forces... Informants differ greatly in their abilities, as well as in the handling of their material.”

Sowayan (1992:31) describes the various shades of interviewees that any one informant may belong to: Some focus on the allegorical and moral aspect of a narrative; others focus on entertainment while yet others are

“indiscriminate rhapsodists and do not differentiate between mere tales and serious narratives... But, on the other hand, some informants are very keen on ascertaining the accuracy of their testimonies and they will make special efforts to check the historical veracity of any narrative before they admit it into their repertory and start telling it to others.”

The author got very little by way of oral historical information regarding military losses among the Nandi of earlier centuries during field work because the Nandi are accustomed to talking about their unquestionably heroic pre-colonial past and appear to have succeeded in erasing memories of the inevitable intermittent failures and tragedies. Some such failures were recorded by the pioneering colonial administrators and anthropologists and are either preserved in books or in the national archives. Any questioning in the field in order to verify such published or archival records often met stone faces and outright denials. Yet, for instance, the absence of one age group in Nandi out of the standard Kalenjiin list of eight cyclical age groups, implies that there occurred a tragic loss during the “reign” of such an age group in the past and it was subsequently dropped. But the Nandi informants, without exception, had forgotten—and actually

denied—that the age group by the name *Koroongoro* ever existed in Nandi. But the fact that this age group name exists in all the other Kalenjiin branches as well as among non-Kalenjiin-speaking neighbours, who historically came under Kalenjiin influence, implies that it definitely existed in Nandi too before. The custom and actual incidences of dropping, or renaming, an age group after it encountered a tragedy of one sort or another has been recorded and confirmed among three other branches of the Kalenjiin: the Kipsigiis, the Tugen, and the Marakwet clusters.

The ethnic and group nationalism illustrated by the above-narrated experience of the author among the Nandi, is not unique. It has been encountered and vigorously defended from places as far off as Arabia. Sowayan (1992:30), who worked among a rural nomadic and basically oral Arab society of Arabia called Šammar, is firm on his conviction that in presenting stories in such a selective nationalist prism, the oral narrator does not attempt to falsify history—any more than learned historians. “But, even in the non-literate society, people are keenly aware of the value and power of information. They manipulate it and dispense it only in such a way as to serve their interests”.

The phenomenon of selective memory is given a mention by Vansina where he says that emotions strongly colour perception and hence memory of it:

“Emotions govern the selection of which items may be remembered. Exciting situations are better remembered than others, perhaps because the senses were more alert, just as fatigue and stress tend to dull observations and hence their remembrance. On the whole, situations involving pleasurable emotions are best remembered, while situations involving unpleasant emotions are forgotten. Many painful memories are blocked... True, there are cases where misfortune was so strong or persistent as to ‘scar’ a personality and break through inhibitions. The unhappy event then becomes a very vivid part of a person’s mental heritage... Oral historians should keep this in mind, so that they can attempt by specific probing questions to counteract the general tendency to gloss over unpleasantness” (Vansina, 1980:270).

Sowayan’s Arabian experience is little different from the African experience which may, after all, be universal, namely that the informant performs a chameleon of an act during an interview, presenting information to suit his or her family background, the place, time and the audience simultaneously. He or she may not be manipulating information, or creating lies during such expert multifaceted tailoring of delivery. The fact is, informants of the level of village sage have so much traditional knowledge and know so many angles from which to narrate a story that they could suit most audiences from a variety of backgrounds without telling a lie at all:

“The testimony of an informant is affected by his view of the interviewer and by the performance context. For example, if the interview was conducted in a tent of the chief of the tribe, the informant would most likely praise the lineage of the current chief and ignore mention of any previous chiefs from different lineages. Should the informant perceive the interviewer as being a representative of the government or from TV and

radio stations, he would give suitable information that everything was well and harmonious. In compliance with the general policy of fostering national unity and eradicating all traces of past intertribal and interregional discord, informants are very hesitant to talk openly about hostilities. It takes a great deal of trust and rapport for them to divulge crucial information of that sort" (Sowayan, 1992:32).

1.8 Collating Information from the Field

1.8.1 Divergent Accounts

With caveat emptor ever in mind, the researcher must test the evidence in the memories gathered from the oral field for internal consistency and, whenever possible, by corroboration from other sources, often including the oral recollections of others on the same topic (Cf. Starr, 1996:41). A single informant is not able and should not be expected to recount all details surrounding a specific event of many years ago,

"But when enough people are interviewed, trends develop, patterns unfold, and truth emerges... While separate narrations about the same incident cannot each be accepted as accurate rendering of history, they can be placed side by side and analysed to discern the basic common thread involved" (Allen & Montell, 1981:77).

Where the researcher has to make a choice between various versions, the one to be preferred is the one that evidently provides an initial form from which the others could have evolved directly or indirectly (Krohn, 1971:104).

Divergent accounts of the same event may appear to contradict each other on the surface. The tendency, as the author discovered when interviewing various members of the recent Maasai-descended royal clan of the Kalenjiin, is for each informant to tell the story from his immediate family's tradition and consequently his or her own direct ancestors are accorded central and heroic historical roles. While all the separate accounts differed in certain key respects and even presented differing genealogies, they all converged at the undisputed founder and his immediate successor from whom many ruling families sprang. The author was then able to establish that there were, at any one time, several rulers running their slice of the nation simultaneously and that only occasionally was there an overall ruler who could bequeath the throne of the entire nation to his son undisputed. Overall power gravitated towards the senior-most ruler of his slice of the nation at any one time. When one ruler happened to be of a senior age-set to the rest of the rulers, combined with a seniority in proximity to the undisputed founder of the dynasty, the other rulers would have to consult him purely in deference to age and seniority in descent.

The author found out that the descendants of minor rulers were apt to elevate the positions of their ancestors to the central position and to count such ancestors among the most influential rulers. An interview with various family heads with divergent accounts reduced the number of “influential” historical rulers by elimination. But this is not to say that any of the families lied deliberately or at all about their lineage. As a principle,

“each oral account represents truth as known by its narrator. A close analysis of each text will often demonstrate that it represents portion of the story with which the narrator could naturally identify through personal or ancestral association” (Allen & Montell, 1981:77).

The researcher needs to guard against the tendency of embellishment when collating the information that he or she has obtained from the field. Incidental details used in describing historical events may contain a certain amount of coloration—what East Africans call *kuongeza chumvi*, “adding salt”—which increases the sweetness of the story, making it more memorable. Such embellishment detail does not take away from the historical core of truth, however, because such improvisations are usually concerned mainly with non-essential details (Allen & Montell, 1981:78). Nonetheless the core truth ought to be marked out.

Where an oral claim flies in the face of irrefutable historical facts, it must be discounted to the extent that it contradicts the established fact. Other parts of the oral tale that illuminate community values, attitudes and detail the human impact of the historical action may be retained and used to enrich the written or irrefutable historical account (Cf. Allen & Montell, 1981:80-81).

The author encountered at least one example of a tradition flying in the face of facts during his fieldwork. The Nandi *Oorgoiyoot* (king), Kimnyoolei who was executed by the people for alleged “multiple prophetic failures” and massive loss of soldiers in battle, about 1890 AD, has since been made by some oral accounts to foretell about the coming of the white man, which he allegedly did moments before his execution. He is made to say that the white man would be armed with a “stick” that produced fire that killed (guns). But irrefutable documented evidence narrate accounts of Kimnyoolei’s soldiers fighting Arabs who fought *with guns* almost thirty years before his “prophesying” about the coming of guns. Kimnyoolei’s troops had defeated the gun-wielding Arabs in one major encounter. So the “stick that produces fire”, as a contemporary reality, was not unknown to him at the time of his execution.

As for the “prophesied” coming of a white race, white people had for some years prior to the execution, criss-crossed parts of the territory that Kimnyoolei controlled through his network of representatives, *maootik*. The representatives are bound to have reported the encounters with white people to Kimnyoolei vividly (Cf. Matson, 1972:41, 47, 59).

Kimnyoolei's reported prophesying of the two items, guns and white men, may be discounted in a final conclusion—as it definitely flies in the face of reason and the established historical facts. But if the issue of prophesying of those items is to be included in a final report, it has to be qualified by the necessary negating rider. However, the human side of things, the moving exchanges between Kimnyoolei and his executioners reported verbatim, or as re-enacted by the narrators, constitute an essential human side that must go to enrich the written accounts.

1.8.2 Evaluating Oral Sources

In evaluating oral evidence, the source of that evidence must be carefully considered. Some accounts may be based on personal experience while others may be second or even third hand. First hand reports would have the upper hand over the second and third hand material (what may be called hearsay) in that order although this is not to say that all first hand accounts are absolutely infallible (Allen & Montell, 1981:81).

In the event that informants supply divergent accounts of an oral tradition, the researcher's option should be to compare the track records of the individual informants from the researcher's social knowledge regarding his or her informants as well as from the performance during the interview. The informant with the most apparent memory lapses, who produces the most conflicts with known and established historical facts, should be rated least credible. The informant who performs so consistently and whose narration is least deviant from the known and established historical background to the facts that he or she supplies, should be rated the most reliable under the circumstances and known limitations of oral interviewing (Cf. Allen & Montell, 1981:81).

As the author discovered in the field, accounts regarding historical events may not only vary from individual to individual but also from one sub-ethnic group to another—each sub-ethnic group professing a version that is more or less uniform within its boundaries. According to Krohn, such

“variants must not be merely counted and categorised according to their regions; they must also be evaluated. With regard to the direction of geographic diffusion of a tradition, greater demonstrative reliability must be attributed to that version which lies nearer to the point of origin. A single variant preserved at the birthplace of the item can be of significant importance and may even outweigh all others” (Krohn, 1971:100).

What this means in the Kalenjin context is that should divergent information regarding the events that led to the migration into and from the Mt. Elgon area, for example, emanate from the Kipsigiis informants on the one hand and those of Sabaoot of Mt. Elgon on the other, the Sabaoot

account should be given more weight because the Sabaoot have maintained residence in the acknowledged original immediate homeland of most Kalenjiin including the Kipsigiis.¹ In the same way, any linguistic, social, cultural or religious item discovered with respect to Egypt that bears enough resemblance to the Kalenjiin counterpart as to have most likely had a singular origin, the origin may not only be ascribed to Egypt, but the Egyptian version and explanation must hold sway because that is the acknowledged geographical place of origin according to Kalenjiin oral tradition. Otherwise

“variants in dialects of one language, especially in rhymed folklore, often provide linguistic footholds for establishing transmission from one dialect area to another... Besides linguistic indexes, the place-names in songs can also serve as indicators in determining the direction (of diffusion) between two neighbours... In establishing the direction of a tradition’s flow we must depend primarily on the analytical study of the varying traits in geographic order. If we have before us the norms of the various (places) along with individual variations the direction of migration may be obvious... Geographic affiliation of traditions along with the relative stability of the basic form is the firm foundation of folklore research... Similarly, personal names can serve as evidence of the alien origin of folk tradition” (Krohn, 1971:147, 148, 149, 150).

Oral tradition often deals with the question of population migration and diffusion. The researcher will sooner or later be faced with many accounts of geographical stagnation, migration patterns and dispersal: physical and cultural diffusion of the people. How does he or she cope? Diffusion is recognised in two ways: geographic horizontal diffusion involves the actual migration of the vehicles of transmission (humans) along land, covering huge distances; the temporal vertical diffusion is by means of inheritance at the same site over generations (Cf. Krohn, 1971:153). The researcher will be dealing here with the issue of space and time. The accounts collected from the most disparate locations—both geographically and socially—and those from the centre if compared, might yield a pattern of migration, diffusion as well as a time frame.

In the case of songs and certain very old folktales that are more recited than told, besides the linguistic indexes, the place names mentioned suggest the origin of the genre (Krohn, 1971:148). Thus the popular Kalenjiin traditional song *igere ra we leelo*, for example, has something to do with Kapkimolwo and Longisa, two place names mentioned in the refrain and which are located

¹ However, the Sabaoot Kalenjiin clusters of Mt. Elgon area have evidently since received a heavy dose of influence from Kintu-speaking neighbours and it may help to look elsewhere for an alternative for the most unpolluted repository of Kalenjiin culture et al. The most likely candidate would be the Marakwet Kalenjiin clusters of Marakwet District because they are not geographically far away from the immediate original homeland and yet they alone, of all Kalenjiin branches, have for centuries been shielded from non-Kalenjiin influence by other Kalenjiin groups that have hemmed them in on all sides. But, again, the Sabaoot claim that the Marakwet parted before the ancestors had reached the foot of Mt. Elgon, therefore questions regarding the departure from the slopes by other Kalenjiin are still best asked the Sabaoot and those individual groups involved in the reported dispersion.

in South Kipsigiisland. Although the song has long been virtually universal to the entire Kalenjinland and indeed currently among school children throughout the whole of Kenya, its original home cannot be doubted very seriously.

Allowing for personal and group Bias: It is important for the researcher to be knowledgeable enough about his or her quarry to be able to detect personal and group biases that may colour the informants' narrations. Informants may not consciously distort the truth although they may end up glossing over or avoiding answering questions that may remind them of an embarrassing past for them as individuals, families or for their community as a whole. It is, therefore, important for the researcher to know in what respects an informant's statement must be taken as a reflection of his or her own personality and perception and in which respects as a reasonably accurate record of actual events:

"Most people from whom oral information about the past is gathered are willing, even eager, to relate what they know to the local historian in order to have their community's history preserved. As a result, they strive to convey their historical knowledge as accurately and as fully as possible. Yet oral accounts of historical events necessarily express the personal viewpoints of the individuals from whom they are collected, and reflect the over-all perspective on the events of the community at large. As a result, orally communicated history is as subject to bias as written materials, such as newspaper editorials or accounts of military or economic conflicts penned by partisans. While informants normally do not deliberately falsify information, personal or community prejudices may alter an individual's interpretation and, hence, recounting of an event" (Allen & Montell, 1981:82-83).

Apart from listening to the oral narratives out there in the field, the researcher needs to observe the community's material culture by way of the physical objects that appear to be typical to the locality of the informant as well as to the informant's own premises. The physical examination works as an external test to the oral narratives collected from the locality. Physical objects and cultural artefacts used in daily life during an earlier period may assist in verifying an oral tradition (Allen & Montell, 1981:83). The author found a furniture item, the headrest, among other "Egyptianising" cultural artefacts typical of certain Kalenjin branches of today, useful in corroborating the Kalenjin people's claim to ancient Egyptian descent because items of similar design are depicted on Egypt's ancient tomb walls, temple walls and papyri that are extant.

Corroborating tradition through ethnic or racial groups. The historical traditions of a group are usually known and passed along orally only among the group's members. On few occasions do historical traditions cross ethnic boundaries. For these reasons, the trustworthiness of an oral historical tradition is a sure bet when it is present in the repertoires of more than one group within the community, whether or not disruptive social factors are present that may tend to cause each group to be biased in its opinion of the others (Cf. Allen & Montell, 1981:85).

It is therefore important to visit the various independent groups within the ethnic confines to seek their points of view, or their memories surrounding an oral tradition of interest to the researcher. If their independent narrations converge in important respects, then the value of the testimonies can be highly rated. Jan Vansina has recommended this approach, being categorical by saying that

“if the lines of transmission are independent, then independence has the same value as for written sources or oral history. If not, or if this cannot be shown positively, the source can still be used in a probationary status as grounds for a hypothesis. Cross-cultural confirmation constitutes the most certain type of evidence” (Vansina 1980:275).¹

Corroboration from Records: Newspaper accounts, court records, census schedules, diary entries, archival sources, archive-based and individually preserved pictures etc. can prove useful in verifying oral traditional accounts (Cf. Allen & Montell, 1981:85). In the Kalenjin context the diaries and books left behind by the pioneering colonial officers and soldiers, are very useful in verifying reports from the field because:

- a) the pioneering colonial officers recorded what they saw and heard about and from the Kalenjin prior to the latter undergoing any influence
- b) the Kalenjin who spoke to those pioneering colonial officers had no external knowledge other than what they had heard from their own ancestors
- c) the present informants have no knowledge of the archive-based and book-based information owing to illiteracy and the correspondence between their oral contribution with the written sources can only serve to strengthen the historicity value of their tradition.

Vansina has placed a caveat upon the appraisal of field data where the informant seems to remember too vividly dates and quantities, e.g. bride price at various times and places. He prescribes that where a researcher comes upon such an informant, he or she should interrogate the informant further as to why he or she went into the trouble of memorising numbers. The same goes for general rules and norms

“because abstract items are difficult to remember (and) one must be distrustful also of statements about former norms or general rules... since informants have a strong tendency to generalise and often speak in terms of ‘norms’... (which have often been) ‘rectified’ for the past” (Vansina, 1980:269).

Vansina also cautions about trusting “opinions” when he says:

¹ Vansina warns that contamination between oral sources, especially in the same society, is extremely frequent.

“Remembrance of opinions must be distrusted unless there are strong grounds to the contrary. Such grounds include concrete action resulting from standing on an opinion, as when a person is jailed for his beliefs... the usefulness of oral history, and in its wake oral tradition, for a direct intellectual history is as weak as it is for quantitative history (Similarly when the narrative) is too elegant or too logical, the picture too rosy, or norms or motivations too clearly recalled. Suspicion once aroused invites not rejection but closer scrutiny” (Vansina, 1980: 269, 276).

1.9 The Author’s Fieldwork

1.9.1 Background Information to Anthropological Fieldwork

There is no shortage altogether of written information on the Kalenjiin. There is a modest amount of written material, some of which date back to as early as 1884 (Thompson’s march through Kalenjiinland) while others are of recent date e.g. the book written by Revs. Burnette and Gerald Fish (1995). There is the outstanding work of the German anthropologist, Merker (1904), among the Maasai, which includes an important mention of the Kalenjiin branches of Tanzania. Available too are the works of Hollis, (Merker’s contemporary on the Kenya side) among the Maasai and among the Nandi branch of the Kalenjiin-speaking people between 1900 and 1908 (publications: 1904 and 1909). M.W. Beech’s work among the Pokoot resulted in an authoritative book (1911). Other major sources whose works are available are: Orchardson (various records in the archives between 1918 and 1927 and the book of 1961). Massam’s eyewitness book among the Keiyo is a masterpiece, available in the library shelves (1927). Hotchkiss, the pioneering Christian missionary to Kalenjiinland left a book that documents his observation of the Kalenjiin before he began Christianising them at the beginning of the 20th century (1938).

Kenyatta’s pioneering anthropological book (1938) is widely available and because, according to reputable writers such as Professor Godfrey Muriuki (1974), Professor Christopher Ehret (1971) and others, many Gikuyu religious rites are of Kalenjiin origin, the importance and relevance of Kenyatta’s anthropological works to this project could not be overemphasised. Peristiany’s book on the Kipsigiis is an anthropological masterpiece (1939). Seligman’s work that touched on some related communities in Sudan and western Ethiopia is preserved in an informative book (1934). Huntingford’s (books and journal contribution 1926 - 1953) prolific literary contributions, if, in certain instances, lacking in accuracy, are available. Col. Meinhertzhagen’s diaries (covering the periods 1899 - 1956) are available as sad reminders of the exploits of a murderous sadist. Matson’s work in Nandi is documented in a good book (1972). Kipkorir is still the authority on matters of Marakwet after his publication of a book (1973) and subsequent seminar papers.

Other major sources on the Kalenjin that were available to this project were: Towett (1975 and various); Professor Chesaina's largely verbatim oral literature work on the Kalenjin (1991); Mwanzi's book was also available in spite of its controversy (1977). There are many more books as well as the archive-based heaps of colonial district reports ranging from the beginning of the 20th century to independence time. These are well-detailed accounts of the socio-cultural, political and economic matters of the Kalenjin prior to European influence and as they gradually got influenced.

Given the nature of this enterprise, it was important to revisit the field and seek answers to questions that had arisen from reading the written sources. There was also the need to broach areas that the predecessors had skipped. Others had singularly avoided the ancient Egyptian origin question and this required a fresh approach. Other observations by the early western visitors to Kalenjinland were so starkly similar to the observations of the early western visitors to Egypt that it was important to crosscheck and double-check such information in the field.

Oral-based field research within the discipline of socio-cultural anthropology is a relatively old technique of gathering information, long accepted for its merit as for its inevitability. The societies that early western anthropologists often chose to study were those considered by them to be pre-industrial and primitive and such people by definition, therefore, had no written records and reliance on oral communication of ideas during face-to-face oral interviews was total. In order for the results of such research to win wider acceptability, a scientific approach by way of utilising standard questionnaires and subjecting different divisions of a community to the questionnaires, then collating the different masses of information later, was early recognised. This was the favoured approach of Radcliffe-Brown who was an admirer of the French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858-1917).¹ Durkheim

“conceived of society as a system of interrelated structures and ideas that have primacy over the individual. For Durkheim and Radcliffe-Brown, society is an object of study in its own right. Any social activity or belief is part of a complex of interrelated activities and beliefs that constitute society, and should be examined holistically—that is, in terms of its relationship to this greater whole. It should not be reduced to psychology, biology, or history” (MEE 98/4).

Radcliffe-Brown (1881-1955) introduced social anthropology as a form of:

“functionalism (whereby activities and beliefs are examined in terms of the contribution the analyst believes they make to the needs of the society or group), with emphasis on

¹ Some of the books by Durkheim that shaped the discipline of social anthropology are: *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* (1897; translated 1951) *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893; translated 1933), *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895; translated 1938), and *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912; translated 1915)—MEE 98/4.

structures, the patterns of relationships that constitute organised groups. Structures exist because they enable the performance of activities crucial for the existence of society, and can be classified as, for example, political structures, economic structures, or religious structures.”

This structural-functional approach dominated British social anthropology from the 1930s to the 1960s (Cf. MEE 98/4).

With the potency of the above in mind, this author spent much energy, time and other resources in the field to especially enquire into the Kalenjiin practice of *maat*, a possible relic of the ancient Egyptian system that was personified by a “goddess” who went by the same name. The following structures which are all characterised by their members’ habit—especially in the past—of calling one another *maat*, received a great deal of attention in the field: *ipinda*, the circumcision age set that each Kalenjiin adult belongs to; *poryeet*, the military regiment; *oreet*, clan and the sub-clan network. All who together belong to any one or more of these address one another within the group by the term *maat*. This reciprocal term immediately recalls the group’s governing taboos, licences, expectations from and obligations they have towards one another.

From Africa, we have the narrowed definition of J. Vansina. In his pioneering studies on oral sources, he says that oral tradition, strictly speaking, is “confined to oral testimony transmitted verbally from one generation to the next one or more” (Roderic 1975:17 quoting Vansina 1971:444). But according to Roderic (1975:17), this definition should be widened

“to make the search for and assessment of oral sources as complete as possible. It (is) necessary... to include other forms of data beyond traditions strictly defined, particularly informants’ reminiscences about events in their own lives and those of their immediate ancestors.”

According to one of the latest updates on this issue, the social anthropologist, Professor Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) is still regarded “the most important figure in the development of the modern fieldwork tradition.” Malinowski applied his scientific method when he studied the people of Trobriand Island of New Guinea between 1914 and 1918. We are also informed that Malinowski is considered the “founder of the ‘functional’ school of anthropology which maintains that human institutions should be examined in the context of their culture as a whole” (MEE 98/14).

Professor Malinowski was later to touch the people of Kenya, anthropologically speaking, quite profoundly. Two of his students were inspired and they carried out anthropological studies that were so scientifically executed that they are still benchmarks today. We have already mentioned their works above. One of the students of Malinowski, Jomo Kenyatta, wrote his great

anthropological book on the Gikuyu of Kenya, *Facing Mount Kenya* (1938). The other student of Malinowski who worked among Kenyans was a Greek Cypriot, Dr J.G. Peristiany.¹ Peristiany worked among the Kipsigiis while still a student of Malinowski and wrote his very important book *The Social Institutions of the Kipsigis* (1939).

These works by two of Malinowski's students done under his inspiration, similarly inspired this author and the method of researching and as to what social areas to enquire into, follow their scientific format. The general area was defined and emphasised by Émile Durkheim who was older than and perhaps had influenced Malinowski.

“Durkheim believed that scientific methods should be applied to the study of society, and he proposed that groups had characteristics that were more than, or different from, the sum of the individuals' characteristics or behaviours. He was also concerned with the basis of social stability—the common values shared by a society, such as morality and religion. In his view, these values, or the *collective conscience*, are the cohesive bonds that hold the social order intact. A breakdown of these values, he believed, leads to a loss of social stability, or anomie (from the Greek *anomia*, “lawlessness”) and to individual feelings of anxiety and dissatisfaction” (MEE 98/5).

1.9.2 Field Questionnaire

The author developed a questionnaire that would meet the scientific standard of data collection and interpretation as set by the above founding Fathers of oral-based field research within the discipline of social anthropology. One of the standards, however, is that “you don't have to stick to it (questionnaire) but it may be helpful” (Ericson, 1981:1.3), meaning that the questionnaire should not block other avenues of inquiry other than the desired brief but should allow adequate flexibility. In addition to the generally accepted standards, there was the need to verify the people's claim to ancient Egyptian origin. The set questions were therefore largely, although not wholly, tailored to address this major line of inquiry. This project also happened to be one of the most extensive, intensive and ambitious research undertakings that were ever attempted in Kalenjinland—covering the entire Kalenjinland and part of Kalenjin-influenced Maasailand over a period of ten years.

Following is the questionnaire that was used in the field all over Kalenjinland by the author and his field assistants. The interviewer followed the questionnaire as closely as possible but allowed the informant to expound as he or she wished. Digressions were also deliberately allowed although immediately stopped when they seemed to veer completely off course in relation to the

¹ Of Peristiany's ethnic background the author owes the information to Dr Toweett who personally met Peristiany in
Footnote continued at bottom of next page

main theme of the project. The interviewer was also instructed to ask supplementary questions arising from the answers given to the set questions if the opportunity and the need arose. The interviewers could and did add questions tailored to the peculiar circumstances they saw in an area. Such supplementary and additional questions and their answers were later to become very important during the collating process. The order of the questions was meant to facilitate the natural manner of discussion although the informants would often expound and in the process answer other questions before they were put to them. Some of the later questions were meant to crosscheck, in an indirect manner, the earlier answers and in this way test the overall reliability of the informant.

1.9.3 Sampling of informants and criteria

Given the nature of this project, namely that the least culturally adulterated tradition was being sought, the oldest of the men and women in a given area, as long as they were still of sound mind, were the best pick. Men and women of the *Nyoongi* age set, now averaging 110 years, the following age set of *Maiina* now averaging 95 and those of the *Chuumo* age set now between 70 and 80 were picked in that order. These age sets represent generations that were either born before the onset of colonialism and the attendant influence of Christianity in Kalenjinland or those who grew up relatively free from direct bondage and intensive cultural influence from the external forces (the technical information on age-sets is to be found in Chapter 11).

The author is aware that oral historians do not place as much premium on age as he does. The oral historians claim, quite correctly, that memory capacity wanes with age (e.g. Henige, 1982:112). However, this assertion loses sight of two important factors: 1) book illiteracy, which is what characterised the author's favourite pool of informants, in many cases helps improve memory retention because the illiterate have to rely on memory more than the literate need do. Their faculty of memory, therefore, runs less risk of being atrophied, although atrophying is known to exist and to take some toll, 2) even if a Kalenjin old man of 110 years, for example, will have lost three quarters of his memory, the one quarter left will still be significant and relate to events completely outside the knowledge of the researcher and the relatively young.

The interviews were conducted in the targeted informants' homes. An old man or woman would sometimes decline but suggest a known sage in the area. Such sages were many and were indeed willing and very knowledgeable. The peers of the chief informant were encouraged to join in although they would often do this of their own free will. The Kalenjin are such that one cannot visit privately, especially if one arrives in a car. The presence of the peers and even younger or older neighbours would act as a check against misinforming and they often prompted the chief informant and jogged his or her mind. Occasionally a neighbour would upstage the would-be chief informant and this was allowed as long as things moved on diplomatically and those in attendance had appeared to shift loyalty to the more prolific contributor. The would-be chief informant would often yield quickly and declare that the impromptu visitor was a greater sage than him or her. Deference to age was often the key factor in this.

Ericson's advice: "Talk to the person alone and in a quiet room" (1981:1.3) was often neither advisable nor possible. The method employed under such circumstances utilised the small group dynamics potential with its attendant pluses and minuses, a no-big-deal situation, however, for the author's and his field assistants' insider position. The greatest danger was in the sacrificing of the potential testimony of the shy and quiet individuals as the vocal ones sought to dominate (Cf. Henige, 1982:50). But since this project's interest was in the general tradition of the people, its collective wisdom and consensus, the crowd was not unhelpful under such circumstances because the collective opinion brought itself to the surface quite easily. It was at times like interviewing the whole community at a single venue.

Besides the major advantage of a crowd, in that it promotes testimony to that of a collective statement, there are speakers who are frustrated would-be performing artists who seem to get intoxicated by numbers and they speak best and are less and less shy the bigger the crowd. The crowd approach also works best if the informant is the type that likes to pass on some knowledge in song and dance. An audience is clearly desirable where song is involved as no one wants to sing alone to one person, the interviewer. But the researcher will be left to expunge or stringently crosscheck in another oral setting, or during his report writing, those parts of testimony that appear to have been intended more to impress the crowd than to express the truth (Cf. Henige, 1982:76-77).

In the author's Kalenjiin oral field, there was no shortage of relatively younger people who were generally born of very old fathers and who therefore had been exposed to the knowledge of a great number of earlier generations through their fathers. Then there was the occasional relatively young widow of an ancient old man. The social pecking order was such that an elderly informant who however ancient happened to belong to a younger circumcision generation than that of the late husband of such a widow, would yield to the widow who may be so much younger than him chronologically speaking. Such is the nature of the Kalenjiin social hierarchy.

The relatively younger men and women that were interviewed were those that were referred to the author and/or his field assistants by the local elders. These younger lot, of between 45 and 70, were the children of departed great sages who by virtue of having lived under such sages, were exposed to great knowledge in the affairs of the community themselves.

It is important to take into account the fact that the author himself is a son of the community and the direct offspring of a father who never proselytised and who at the time of the interviews was about 100 years old. His mother, who is currently in her nineties and who is still as steadfast on her Asiisian path as she ever was before being widowed in 1995 by the master of the Asiisian way, was always available to comment on field reports. The author, the last son of his mother, grew up listening to and watching such old parents who had maintained their belief in the old ways of the community; who had owed total loyalty to and practised the authentic religion of the community.

Unlike the European anthropologists who came to settle in Kalenjiinland and produced anthropological masterpieces within a few months or years of their arrival, the author grew up in the circumstances and lived the very life that was being investigated. He spoke, as mother tongue, the language of the people he investigated, conducting interviews in that language and receiving the answers in it. This insider's language advantage has been highly applauded by Jan Vansina (1980:272).

Given such an insider situation, the fear of compromise and decreased objectivity is real, but real too is the capacity to discern and understand the most intricate of the community's affairs. The intimate association brings with it a lot of inhibition, knowing too well the unsayable, but this should be compensated for by the more incisive capacity to understand nuances of meaning accessible only to someone thoroughly imbued with the cultural values of his community (Cf. Allen and Montell, 1981:12-13). Only an insider with an overwhelming interest can have the will to carry out strenuous research work over many years. The outsider does not have so much time and energy to devote to someone else's history and culture over a long period. He or she is bound to work somewhat with the attitude of a mercenary, i.e., for quick gain and under the least pain.

In contrast to the author's hands-on approach, Jomo Kenyatta, one of the greatest Kenyan anthropologists, for instance, hardly interviewed anyone for his anthropological masterpiece, *Facing Mount Kenya* (1938). He merely sat on his desk in England and reproduced on paper from his own head solely a great mass of information on the socio-cultural, economic and religious life of the Gikuyu. The great master himself, Malinowski, was impressed and he endorsed the study by way of a generous foreword. Kenyatta was of *Nyoongi* age set equivalent and lived the earlier part of his life in pre-colonial Gikuyuland. He had additionally been exposed to the older sages who had lived an unadulterated Gikuyu lifestyle.¹

¹ If one may discount the religious influence of the early central Kenya Kalenjiin and the Maasai upon the Gikuyu. In a way, Kenyatta was marooned in Europe, his preparation for the freedom struggle and the urgent fight for alienated
Footnote continued at bottom of next page

Not being a Kenyatta and neither being so ancient, the author had to resort to the fieldwork technique.

1.9.4 The pitfalls

The informants would not co-operate if the question touched on them personally or hurt their nationalist pride. Telling a lie in order to get out of the problem was a major worry although this experience was rare if any occurred at all. Most would either plead loss of memory or ignorance about the question instead of lying or embarrassing themselves by divulging sensitive information (Cf. Henige, 1982:58). Others would digress vigorously. Other informants had genuine problems of memory in certain areas of their history, while yet others would recall events in a distorted, inaccurate manner. The interrogators were cautioned against appearing to side with or be biased against any angle of explanation such as would encourage a bias on the part of the informant who would be so biased in order to please the interrogator—objectivity was important. Some informants would only remember heroic moments of their history, erasing from their memory epochs that were less glorious. Another informant would still fill such gaps either from the same sub-ethnic community or from another sub-ethnic community altogether.

Some elderly people saw offence in the part of the questionnaire that discusses death and burial, others wondering whether they were being prompted to go yonder by being questioned about death and the widespread desire to be re-incarnated as narrated in Chapter 12. It is widely believed that to talk about death, especially on the part of the elderly, is to invite it. To many, therefore, this was an area of unutterable taboo. However others took the whole thing in stride and the occasional one or two took the opportunity and so personalised the answers that such answers, uttered in the presence of their younger kin, virtually amounted to a declaration of a will on how they would like to be buried and how they would like to be inherited. This is called *kerarget* in Kalenjiin and it was a sorrowful moment for the interviewer who had prompted such a trance even though the elder may have appeared obviously relieved to be given such a chance that would allow him or her to broach a difficult subject.¹

parcels of Gikuyu land, compounded by the expense of travel, the requirement to carry out a field study came far below in the order of priority.

¹ At least four elders from among the informants passed away before the conclusion of this project.

1.9.5 Reward

The informants in general were willing participants who saw in this a chance to aid in a research effort that was being carried out by their own, which research might benefit the community and, so desirous to help preserve the community's endangered way of life, the expenditure on them in form of rewards was minimal, Shs. 100-200 (approximately R.10-20) for the traditional snuff and chewed tobacco and a supply of traditional beer for consumption during the interview, would suffice. Others would not take any form of inducement in return for their cooperation. The greater expense was on travel and accommodation and, of course, the payments to the assistants.

Most of the original interviews were recorded on tape while the follow-ups were written down although a few were taped again. The oldest female informant, one of the greatest sages, Cheboleet Cheepo Terik, and the author's mother, were filmed during the last organised interview with them. The language of communication, as we have pointed out, was Kalenjiin.

Table 1: Field Questionnaire

Question	Main Purpose
<p>Instructions to the Interviewer</p> <p>Record the main informants' full names, age set age grade, physical location, clan, clan origin, sub-clan and family titles, clan emblems (i.e. their sacred animals or totems) and if applicable, the military or warrior unit (<i>poroyet</i> or <i>pororycet</i> if that is or whatever the local community name is) all on tape at the beginning of the interview. Allow the informant to praise the traditional institutions that he or she belongs to.</p> <p>Let the informant/s understand that you appreciate the fact that the ancestors did not allow that secrets be divulged to non-initiates or outsiders. But put it carefully across that the modern elders on the other hand should also appreciate that any information not disclosed for record purposes dies with elders. Should we deprive the future generations of the right to practise as did their ancestors; for mere excuse of ancient rules of embargo and the resultant ignorance?</p>	<p>Name needed for acknowledgement, for transparency, verification and follow up. Age-group is important to ascertain level of authority. Clan questions intended to enable build map of intra-Kalenjiin movements—also for authority on particular clan-related issues. Military regiments data needed for crosschecking with Egyptological records and archive/published records. Amass data on <i>maat</i>.</p>
<p>1. Are you a member of this community e.g. Kipsigiis, Nandi, Keiyo etc., of what sub-division?</p>	<p>It is important to categorise for database, recent history and to build clearer picture on longer history. Respondent will automatically reassert or omit the <i>Misiri</i> legend.</p>
<p>2. What is the meaning of the sub-division name, what is the meaning of the larger community name?</p>	<p>Facts will help build clear picture of major external and internal migrations and dating.</p>
<p>3. Are the sub-divisions of the larger community related? Degrees of relationship?</p>	<p>As above.</p>
<p>4. Where did each of the sub-divisions come from before settling in the present homeland? Before that etc.?</p>	<p>As above.</p>
<p>5. Is your sub-division related to the Kalenjiin as a whole? Are you aware of other Kalenjiin-speaking communities other than those in Kenya? How is each of those communities related to the Kalenjiin of Kenya?</p>	<p>To collect data on batches of arrivals, state of knowledge of route of migration and old settlements, awareness/recognition of other kin.</p>
<p>6. Do you understand these other Kalenjiin dialects? Perfectly, average, barely, not at all?: Pokoot, Arroor, Samoor, Merkweeta, Eendo, Cherang'aany etc. ,Keiyo, Sebei, Sabaoot, Kony, etc., Terik, Nandi, Ogieek, Kipsigiis. Do you know of any other subgroup not named here?</p>	<p>To ascertain intra-Kalenjiin mutual intelligibility level for cross-checking with Ehret's works and for investigating reason for dialect formation.</p>
<p>7. What is the meaning of each of those sub-ethnic names?</p>	<p>Answers to this question entail a great deal of history.</p>
<p>8. Why and where did the Kalenjiin split into</p>	<p>Ascertaining historical unity, the latest</p>

Question	Main Purpose
these subgroups?	concentration.
9. Where did they come from before settling in the concentration area? And before that (until informant declares that he/she has named the ultimate original homeland)?	To establish migratory route, old settlements and ascertain the spread of ancient Egyptian origin tradition.
10. Who is the God of your people and what are the other names for this deity? If the names are masculine sounding ask why and if they are feminine sounding also ask why.	To build the religious picture and amass data for comparative religion exercise, to cross-check other information and to confirm gender perception of Deity.
11. Where does the Supreme Being reside?	To prod concept of heaven to compare with similar concepts in ancient Egypt and the rest of religions.
12. Does the Supreme Being have consorts, other superhuman companions?	To ascertain the spread of and crosscheck early researchers' record of Iilat-Asiis-Iilat trinity (Hollis 1909, Orchardson 1961).
13. If there are companions what are their names, what are their functions/powers?	To ascertain degree of monotheism and follow up above question of trinity.
14. What is the position of Iilat in your religion? How many types of Iilat are there? All evil? All beneficent? One here one there etc.?	To jog mind and help informant on the above question if not already answered satisfactorily.
15. Who is Netoroor, Tororrot and who is Asiis in your religion (if these were not mentioned in reply to No. 10 onwards above).	To jog memory and build more data to compare with ancient Egyptian "god" name Ntr.
16. Who is the Creator? How was creation accomplished? What was the situation like before creation?	Just in case Creator is different from the Chief Deity. The rest of the questions for database to compare with ancient Egyptian myths.
17. Why is the Creator not with His/Her creatures?	To probe for traditional concepts of Original Sin.
18. Did the first people created offend the creator? Creator's anger?	Pursue Original Sin concept and question of curse.
19. Any hope of saviour, redemption or forgiveness?	Probe for traditional concept of salvation from original sin if informant has a traditional version of original sin.
20. How often and where did the people assemble to worship their supreme being? How often and where did the individual (or family) say his/her prayers to the Creator? Were prayers directed to the Creator exclusively or to the subordinate super-humans and departed relatives as well? Do you remember any prayer? Please recite one for us (does the informant have a <i>mabwaaita</i> ? If so ask what it signifies. Which plants have been used to erect the <i>mabwaaita</i> ? Was it a <i>Kaapkoros</i> brought home? If this shrine is not there please ask why).	Build database on conduct of prayers and general level of piety of the community. Ascertain further the degree of monotheism. Crosscheck colonial records that mention ancestor worship. Prayers store a lot of information. The presence or absence of the <i>mabwaaita</i> shrine indicates the level of commitment to Asiis worship. If the shrine is missing, then the level of knowledge of traditional worship may not be as good as in a home with the shrine.
21. Which clan/clans or families led prayers? Did the <i>Oorgciyoot</i> play a role?	Build database on priesthood and ascertain the powers of the king vis-a-vis religion and the priesthood.
22. Is there heaven/hell concept in Kalenjiin belief? Sky or underworld bound?	Further the concept of heaven/hell and open related issue of <i>maat</i> and concept of reincarnation both characteristic of ancient Egypt.
23. Who goes to heaven and who goes to hell (whether sky or underworld bound)?	Determine the <i>maat</i> concept of righteousness in practice.
24. Do you name children after the dead?	Further investigation of the <i>maat</i> concept of

*Section A: The Methodologies of Oral Tradition, Oral History, Written Sources, 73
and Comparative Research*

Question	Main Purpose
Would you name them after departed social failures as well as the wealthy, successful departed?	righteousness and the related concept of reincarnation.
25. How were female and male children named? How and who chose their names?	Further investigation of the <i>maat</i> concept and the related concept of reincarnation.
26. Is it believed that the baby named after a departed person is the very person it is named after who has come back in form of that baby? Are the two similar? Or bound to be in character?	Probing the belief that underlines the concept of reincarnation.
27. Which is the child's more important name, the one indicating the time of (or circumstances at) birth or the one recycled from a dead member of the family?	Determining the level of seriousness in the belief in reincarnation.
28. If your community gives some baby boys girls' names, why is this done? Do you do the reverse; give baby girls' boys' names? Why or why not?	To determine whether or not the community believed in the transmigration as well as transformation of a soul from one sex to another between cycles of reincarnation. This has a bearing on gender relations and attitudes.
29. It has been claimed that it was the practice among certain Kalenjiin sub-ethnic groups for very old men to commit communal suicide in order to be recalled back to earth via new-born babies. It has also been claimed that very old women would also do it given some circumstances. Is either of these or both of them true as far as your sub-ethnic group is concerned? Is it true that the suicides were committed by dropping from high cliffs? Would you name your child after a person who committed suicide thus? Would you name a child after a person who committed suicide in any other manner e.g. hanged himself/herself?	To ascertain the foundation and spread of this observation by early anthropologists and colonial administrators. Further investigate the concept of heaven, reincarnation. Compare the esteem attached to "criminal" suicide such as by hanging self with the "holy" suicide committed en-mass by the most senior citizens.
30. Why were boys circumcised? Why were the girls circumcised?	Seek explanation of this practice traceable to ancient Egypt.
31. What is the significance of each of these (and any other) circumcision stages: <i>tienjiinet</i> , <i>rotyiinet</i> , <i>labeet aap euun</i> , <i>kayaaet (kapkiyai)</i> , <i>rikseet</i> , <i>yateet aap oreet etc</i> ? The informants can sing some of the songs pertinent to each stage.	To confirm that the whole process amounts to an Asiian form of baptism and to investigate informant's understanding of it either way and to ascertain the spread of this concept.
32. Do you understand the circumcision practice as a religious observance of the Kalenjiin people? Is it a baptism (e.g. as apparent at the <i>kayaaet</i> and naming stage) Or is it, to you, a mere socio-cultural step to man/womanhood?	Crosscheck above and seek more information. Informant might add substance to above, or clarify further.
33. How was the name given after circumcision derived? Do you use <i>araap</i> , <i>weero</i> or any other? What is the meaning of the one applicable in your case?	To pursue further the concept of circumcision baptism and to explore Kalenjiin post-circumcision nomenclature.
34. When and where did the Kalenjiin begin to circumcise?	Circumcision is generally connected to ancient Egypt. This is an indirect follow-up of ancient

Question	Main Purpose
	Egyptian origin claim.
35. Did your people engrave <i>sigilgilyoot</i> or write on the ground communication symbols during circumcision seclusion? Can you remember some of these symbols and their meanings? The informant may draw this and the interviewer tries to copy them as closely as possible on paper (It has been documented that the Keiyo male and female initiates used to carry out complete discussions using such symbols written on ashes because verbal communication was forbidden. The Kipsigiis used a piece of stick called <i>sigilgilyoot</i> to similar effect). Was either or both of these practices present in your immediate sub-division?	To verify the Kalenjiin hieroglyphics story of Massam-1927. Establish why the word for "write" is the same in both Kalenjiin and ancient Egyptian yet the Kalenjiin are not known for any form of indigenous writing.
36. Did your community observe the <i>boreet</i> rite? (This is the rite that elderly men went through and after which they earned the names starting with <i>Bar</i> , e.g Barsolai, Barmaasai etc.)	To ascertain the concept and spread of living sainthood.
37. How was the <i>boreet</i> name coined?	To establish the meaning of Bar and compare with Middle Eastern concept.
38. Please describe what went on at <i>boreet</i> . (You may try to find a person who went through it although it is doubtful that any of these are still around. But try, one might well be found in some remote places).	This is a dead institution but if we could find anyone who knew its secrets we need to hear him/her as soon as possible.
39. Who may a man from your clan not marry? Who may any man not marry?	To establish inter-clan relationships and taboos, internal migrations etc. To record general marital embargoes. Pursue <i>maat</i> .
40. Describe steps to a man's first wedding.	To document further the institution of marriage.
41. Describe steps to a man's wedding to a second or third wife etc. Are there differences?	It would appear the Kalenjiin were basically monogamous, subsequent wives acquired as assistants for the first. To confirm this or dismiss.
42. Do you have the higher form of wedding called <i>Tororyeet</i> (practised by the Kipsigiis at least)?	This practice confirms the original monogamy position. To establish its spread.
43. What is the term applied to a girl who is preparing to get married? Does the name change when she marries and after she gives birth? Names such as <i>chepto</i> , <i>cheptoongilo</i> , <i>chemeriaat</i> , <i>meliaat</i> , <i>murereet</i> , <i>kwoondo</i> , <i>chepyoseet</i> etc. are examples.	Establish the point when marriage becomes irrevocable. Establish the usage of <i>murereet</i> to compare with ancient Egyptian <i>murt</i> and the latter's wide usage.
44. Can you describe steps leading to divorce?	Acquire knowledge relative to divorce
45. Can either of the divorced parties remarry freely? Explain if not.	As above. The claim that women may never remarry legally needs to be verified as it has a bearing on <i>maat</i> .
46. How did your community deal with a girl who turned out not to be virgin at circumcision? And how did the community deal with a girl who conceived prior to circumcision? Did she acquire a name as well as her child?	Investigate the virtue of virginity as the Catholic and Coptic obsession with the virginity of Mary seems comparable to the "virgin" fame of Isis and Kalenjiin mythical versions of the same.
47. Do you have traditional healers, i.e. herbalists, surgeons etc.? Please name them and	To understand the community more and to build database on traditional medical practice.

*Section A: The Methodologies of Oral Tradition, Oral History, Written Sources, 75
and Comparative Research*

Question	Main Purpose
what they do.	
48. Did your community have an <i>Oorgoiyoot</i> ? If not was your community served by an <i>Oorgoiyoot</i> from another Kalenjiin sub-group? What was the role of the <i>Oorgoiyoot</i> ? Did he have to be from any particular clan/family? Please name these as well as their emblem/s. Can you name the most powerful <i>Oorgoiyoot</i> , his origin and his successors? In order of antiquity if possible?	<i>Oorgoiyoot</i> was the Kalenjiin king, comparable in local esteem to Pharaoh. Establish whether there were super- <i>Oorgoiyoot</i> who lorded it over other sub-ethnic communities other than their own. To investigate link to Pharaoh here.
49. Is your community divided into traditional military units? (The Kipsigiis refer to such units as <i>poroyeet</i> and the Nandi as <i>pororyeet</i> .) What do you call such units? Are they hereditary?	To establish the martial poise of the sub-ethnic group and to establish the "military clan" of Egypt origin theory.
50. Did your community use to go on livestock raids? Who did they attack and who attacked them?	Further investigate the martial origin theory and crosscheck and determine degrees of intra-Kalenjiin relationships.
51. Was your community victorious some of the time, all of the time or never? Who were the community's fiercest enemy?	Testing the informant's parochial nationalism and reliability. To add more to topic above.
52. How was the killer of an enemy in battle rewarded? Was he tattooed? How was the killer of a kinsman treated if murder was: Accidental/venge/in hot blood/cold murder?	Investigate the reported differentiation of "killing" and "murder". Gather more data for the ex-Pharaonic military clan theory.
53. Do you know anything about your community's ancient battle formations? How they matched to war and how they attacked? Did they match in columns, how many columns if so?	To compare with information on ancient Egypt's army.
54. What was the role of the <i>Oorgoiyoot</i> if any, during, before and after battle?	To investigate the relationship of the <i>Oorgoiyoot</i> with his army as compared to the same between the Pharaoh and his army.
55. Was it a habit of your community to bury the dead? How were the babies, children, middle-age men/women and the very old men/women buried?	To investigate burial customs and why no pyramids and elaborate tombs were not constructed here as in Egypt.
56. Was the <i>mabwaaita</i> used in this respect?	This is the family shrine. The Kalenjiin divorced the priesthood and sacred items from the dead until after some stipulated time after burial. Question seeks to document this and compare with ancient Egyptian practice.
57. Was the piece of stick that juts out at the tip of houses affected by the death of the homeowner?	Build information database on this curious item and its symbolising manhood, its sanctity and authority. Later seek corroboration from Egyptian sources.
58. Did the grave area, if any, have significance to the survivors of the departed one?	Follow up on earlier question.
59. Who presided over burials? The same person who presided over circumcision and marriage?	Further investigate the priest's absence from matters of death and burial.
60. Have you anything to tell the young	General advice from the wise man/woman and for

Question	Main Purpose
people who may benefit from your teachings of today and other days?	them to slip in anything that may have been forgotten.

Summary of Chapter 1: Oral Tradition, Oral History, and Written Sources

Oral tradition differs little from oral history and writers in both fields do interchange the two terms quite liberally and quite rightly. Oral researchers from the west, who are conducting research among their own, may prefer to call theirs "oral history", but in their fieldwork they still find anecdotes from family *traditions* as useful corroborative addition to their oral *history* research work. For example, big political families in the US have their own family traditions: the Kennedy tradition, the Ford tradition etc. The word "tradition" in this sense refers more to the mettle that drives and holds the members of such institutionalised families together than to chronological history. It may be their religion and the constant reminders to the children of the resourceful past of their ancestors; tales of perceived or real superior genetic make-up or any other reason that cannot be classified as history but as family tradition and which the "oral history" researchers must still make a significant note of. Oral tradition and oral history, therefore, complement one another. So the continued insistence by some on differentiating the two, as if they had a mutually exclusive relationship may not be justified.

Oral tradition is an inevitable tool of resort for the researcher working among communities that did not write their histories such as sub-Saharan Africa typifies. Researchers have proved that stories told by the preliterate peoples are often accurate. Collecting versions of a tradition from geographically and socially disparate areas then collating them will often yield corroborated evidence that may pass as true history. They may be poor from the chronological viewpoint but still the oral narratives would represent true historical happenings that either affected or were witnessed by the ancestors of the community that relates them.

Oral tradition can bring to the researcher's attention the existence of and indicate where to find either archival evidence or any other documentary and reported evidence stored in other forms. Oral tradition can therefore guide the researcher in his or her armchair work. But it is also of benefit to begin from archival and other written sources before going to the field for oral work.

Oral tradition may be encoded in form of proverbs and riddles, poems, epics, songs, king lists, place names etc. It may benefit the researcher to pay attention to these forms of mnemonic. Earlier writers might not have observed or stressed this but it is this writer's submission that further oral traditions may be collected from attending beer, or social parties, passage rite ceremonies, weddings and funerals. In such gatherings, casual, often emotionally charged "informants", are freer to talk, and do talk in an informal natural manner, listened to, watched and checked by relevantly knowledgeable audiences. Evidence gathered by this what is called the

eavesdropping method, from such unsolicited, uninhibited outpourings and polite oratory, is of the highest quality.

The criticism of oral tradition-as-history, namely that it relies entirely on memory and repeated retellings that add, subtract or alter over time, especially according to the changing norms, that it inherently suffers from telescoping and embellishing maladies etc. may be justified. But when we are dealing with preliterate societies we have no choice. In mitigation, we spread the oral research net across a wider area both in the geographical and the thematic sense.

Chapter 2

Comparative Religion

Abstract

Chapters 2 and 3, which fall under Section A, deal respectively with two important areas of the comparative research method: comparative religion and comparative linguistics. The major elements from both of these disciplines feature throughout the thesis as tools of analysis, or methods of approach to study.

The core of the thesis zeroes in on the area of ancient Egyptian-Kalenjiin cognates, especially with respect to religion, with a view to establishing the claimed unity in antiquity. However, the discussion, within Chapters 2 and 3, constitutes a general evaluation at the theoretical level of the disciplinary tools that are universally applicable irrespective of socio-cultural or geographical area. The theories could be applied to similar research work with respect to any population anywhere in the world. However, we will keep in mind that specific socio-cultural and geographical area, namely Africa in general, and the Eastern Africa Nilotic heirs of the Ancient Near Eastern culture, in particular. It follows then that examples that may go to illustrate the discussions pertaining to theory here will also come from Nilotic, including Kalenjiin, as well as from the cultures of other African peoples.

It is an area that is still yearning for more researchers and research work. Professor PS Vermaak, in his paper that introduced the course in Ancient Near Eastern Culture (ANEC) titled, *Ancient Near Eastern Culture: the Conceptual Basis of a New Distance Education Course* (Department of Semitics, UNISA), recognised this reality:

“The study of comparative research in ANE studies may be regarded as being in its infancy. This is not because scholars have not been able to draw comparisons or parallels between ANE literature and cultures, but these studies have very often been carried out without the use of any scientific method (Cf. Malul 1990¹). Often no clear indication has been given by these scholars as to what method was permitted to be used for parallels. Each scholar who indulged in these comparisons used his or her own intuition as to what could be used as parallels, and in this unscientific way various studies have appeared... The problem is to find a set of categories that will be suitable for discussion on ancient and modern societies, in order to use them as framework or paradigm for any significant parallels” (Vermaak, 1995a: 164, 163).

¹ Malul, Meir, 1990. *The Comparative Method in Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical Legal Studies*. Kevelaer: Butzon & Becker.

The present chapter, Chapter 2, is confined to an evaluation of the potential of the tool of comparative religion. Comparative religion seeks to analyse the nature of belief in the supernatural and the varying philosophical and physical structures that the various human societies put up in response to such belief. The characteristics of religion which form the *tertia comparationis* for this purpose are known and a fairly objective result as to similarities that point to ancient single origin or otherwise can be arrived at through comparing the varying degrees and the nature of response that each subject society has put in place.

We will also touch on the issue of quality of religion, a difficult concept that has seen certain religions being classified primitive while others were considered civilised. Certainly the perceived quality of religion is not one of the platforms agreed upon for the purpose of working out shared characteristics between religions and some attention will be devoted to the major arguments surrounding the misconception.

How the various ethnic groups have created codes of ethics by which to govern the morals of society is an interesting area that comparative religion can investigate. We discuss the elements within this area that should interest the researcher.

The religious personnel who devote their time to serving the people's faith come in various levels of esteem. The levels of esteem that were commanded socially and professionally by the various priesthoods may concern the researcher. And so will the nature of kingship, especially if it has a bearing on the management of religion within society. Some extremely indulgent kingships have positioned themselves with the Holy and are objects of divine reverence themselves and the degrees of such indulgence and reverence may interest the researcher as comparative variables.

2.1 A Definition

We are going to take a definition of the discipline of comparative religion from E.M. Kasiera, an East African scholar, and it will be our understanding of the discipline throughout the rest of the project. However, may be it is necessary to state here that although our sections C, D, and E (including the Appendix) make use of religious rudiments in the attempt to show that the religion(s) of ancient Egypt had a bearing on the religion of the Kalenjiin, this is not the regular comparative religion document where comparison work is carried out for its own sake. The attempt, utilising certain tools of the comparative religion discipline, is intended to confirm the Kalenjiin people's oral tradition of ancient Egyptian origin by comparing certain aspects of their religious tradition, the related structures, myths, legends, lore, and other cultural practices, with what is known of Pharaonic religion, or religions. The object is not, therefore, to compare the two religions, but rather to bring to attention the shared elements that, for the reason that they are had in common, may prove a point which lies outside what is commonly understood as religion: a people's oral legend of origin.

Towards this end, certain elements from other religions outside the Pharaonic religions are also brought in from time to time if only in order to make the picture clearer, and also for the reason that some of these religions, which are now no longer associated with Africa, were probably originally African, or were inspired by Africans through Egypt, as we will see from the arguments of various scholars.

The Kalenjiin people's religion is a way of life, almost every human action, and even certain actions of animals, reptiles and birds, can be given a religious interpretation. What constitute religion and what do not, become a problem, therefore, and in order to make comparative discussion possible, we have to admit as religion only those aspects and practices that approximate most what the west understands as religion. To that extent we are, therefore, restricted.

In this characteristic, the Kalenjiin reflect much of Africa whose spiritual understanding, according to Mbiti (1969:15) is that the whole of existence is a religious phenomenon and that man is a deeply religious being living in a religious universe.

The following definition is taken with the understanding in mind that we are restricting ourselves to a framework partly alien to our subject community and that in certain instances we may have to go outside the restrictive framework, but reasonably retain the African latitude, in order to get the point across. The definition of comparative religion, in any case, is not that restrictive itself and, very importantly, does not confine us to the religions of the Kalenjiin and the ancient Egyptian ones as such. We need wider latitude, because in order to understand the relationship between the ancient Egyptian and the Asiisian religious movements, it is at times advisable to involve religions outside of the two, and especially those that have been influenced by one or both of the two. Christianity is one such candidate and Chapter 10 and its extension, by way of Appendix 5, are largely devoted to demonstrating just how fundamentally African in origin it is and why we will often need to resort to it for clarity and authority with regard to the area of Kalenjiin/Egyptian religious cognacy:

“Comparative Religion is the study of the inter-relationships of the various religious traditions and of the way in which religious themes and ideas are diffused in these traditions. Comparative Religion, is concerned with the influences of religions on one another... Comparative Religion means an attempt to achieve a generalisation by comparing similar kinds of phenomena gathered from various religious traditions and disciplines, covering various parts of the world” (Kasiera, 1990:7-8).

The major aims of comparative religion are: 1) to establish general laws or regularities that are common to all situations 2) to note the range of variation in the phenomena that have been studied 3) to attempt to reconstruct the history of religion and culture 4) to test the hypotheses derived from religious traditions that have hitherto been left out of scholarly enquiry (Kasiera, 1990:8). It goes without saying that this thesis will be characterised by numbers 3 and 4 in the main.

Comparative religion constitutes an academic area that is so well trodden and yet so wide that the problem for any writer on the subject is not where to obtain information but one of how to select, what to include and what to leave out. And after that there is the need to summarise the chosen topics and even then launch into the process of culling. It goes without saying, therefore, that the areas, or the religious movements chosen for illustration, will rely to a great extent on the writer and his or her bias. One of the greatest lights in this discipline, Mircea Eliade, has admitted as much: “No author of such anthology can hope to satisfy all of his colleagues or, even less so, all of his readers. No matter how ‘objective’ an author may be in collecting, classifying, and presenting religious documents, his choice is ultimately a personal one” (Eliade, 1967, vii).

This predicament afflicts more the writer whose aim is to write a very brief treatise on the subject. The following discussion shall inevitably be characterised by such need for brevity and will from time to time lay emphasis on the relatively neglected, or abused, region of Africa either for source of examples or in defence of the Africans' religious ingenuity where external commentators have ignored, belittled, abused or dismissed it.

Much of the early work in comparative religions was undertaken by missionaries seeking points of agreement between alien faiths and Christianity, and also ways of demonstrating the superiority of Christianity (Cf. Cole, 1982:9). Other work was accomplished by philologists whose interest lay in the linguistic form rather than the content of the sacred writings of other cultures. Such were the likes of Sir Wallis Budge and Sir Alan Gardiner who are renowned Egyptologists and whose work is much cited by the author throughout the thesis.¹ The two, like many other great scholars from France and Germany, studied the various stages of the ancient Egyptian language thoroughly; but in the process found themselves delving deep into the religion of the ancients because therein is where lay much of the material for their philological interests.

¹ The author is aware of certain views to the effect that Budge's works count among those that are now considered "woefully outdated" (e.g. Bianchi 1991). On the other hand the author recognises that Gardiner, still a saint of Egyptology, whose work largely remains a benchmark of the Egyptological discipline, himself used Budge's works as reference, at least the latter's *Book of the Dead* of 1898 (Gardiner, 1927, bibliography). So did Gardiner's assistant who later achieved great reputation in his own right, R.O. Faulkner (1962). The entries in Faulkner's *Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian* (1962) compare well, in the opinion of the author, with Budge's 2-volume *An Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary* of 1920, only Budge has many many more lexical entries and is more user-friendly, even to non-linguists.

Homung (1982:24-26), lists Budge among the erring apologists of ancient Egyptian religion as a monotheistic movement. However he goes on to draw upon Budge as an authority at least in 3 instances in his book (1982). Two of the latest major books on Egyptology: *Secret Chamber* (1999) by Robert Bauval and *The Phoenix Solution* (1998) by Alan Alford, for example, cite and quote from, and even rely on, Budge's works extensively. This author counts himself a follower of Budge as respects his acceptance of ancient Egyptian monotheism, however, believing firmly that polytheism in its absolute sense is a psychologically impossible condition, even before other arguments are considered. A people whose hierarchical socio-political predisposition has created only one place for one Pharaoh at a time, at the apex of their society, ought naturally to apply the same hierarchical scenario to the divine world as well. And hierarchy of authority is necessarily pyramidal, only one occupies the apex at a time and the pyramids of Egypt are there to permanently remind us that it could not have been otherwise in their conceptual divine sphere. At least the Ganda of Uganda, for an example, according to Mbiti (1970:228), projected their kingdom's elaborate political and administrative structure to the divine sphere.

This author respects the above-cited dictionary of Budge's and various of his extensive works and particularly his brave declaration to the effect that the pre-dynastic Egyptians were really Africans whose language was rooted right in the heart of Africa, to the east of the Great Lakes region, to be precise (Budge 1920:lxviii). Ironically that area approximates the present location of the Kalenjin. We will see, in Chapter 4, that the Kalenjin replaced populations that were akin to themselves and who spoke Hamitic dialects similar to Kalenjin: the Ogieck hunter-gatherers and the Sirikwa mixed farmers who were famous for building in stone.

Budge's kind of statement, conceding as it did to sub-Saharan Africa, could, conceivably, not find favour in the eyes of a number of his contemporaries (e.g. Maspero, 1897:45-50 who considers the ancient Egyptians white Africans from west and south-west of the continent who destroyed an aboriginal black population and took over the land of Egypt) and some later Egyptologists who wore an even foggier intellectual blinker that did not let them see any distance south of the Sahara.

Henri Frankfort, the great German Egyptologist, is one of the few that actually turned south in order to understand Egypt better and he does concede the same, admitting that the Egyptian language was part of a Hamitic substratum that

Footnote continued at bottom of next page

A statement by Malcolm McVeigh in his *God in Africa* illustrates the observation, above, namely that some Christian missionaries went out to study alien faiths in order to compare and contrast them with Christianity and thereby put themselves in a knowledgeable position to be able to finally outmanoeuvre those alien faiths from within, to the benefit of Christianity. Cole (1982:9) also shares this view. The favourite technique was to appreciate those alien faiths and then suggest that Christianity went up to the point registered by the alien faiths, yes, but then Christianity went farther still than those faiths in the knowledge of God. An example, from McVeigh (1974:17):

“Although the traditional African conception of God contains truth, it does not contain the whole truth. In this sense the Christian gospel comes as the fulfilment of African Traditional Religion. One way by which Christianity fulfils African Religion is in clarifying the issues of power and personality in Africa.”

The accusation that “African religion does not contain the whole truth”, in relation to Christianity, necessarily invites the student in comparative religion to probe and see for himself or herself the want, or gap, in truth that is implied, and thus enter into comparative analysis and bring out arguments that attempt to address the issue of deficiency in truth, i.e., whether or not, with more adequate information in place, the same charge could still be laid against African religious thought.

covered today's Nilotic East Africa (1948:348, 360). To this place he traces the origin of the kingship institution of Egypt, from where it later found its way to the west as he says. However, he, in the same breath, calls the African benefactors “savages” (1948:6).

Besides all the foregoing, the author's own research from one untested African side (part of Frankfort's old Hamitic substratum), finds Budge reliable in too many instances to be dismissed outright, or even at all. The said dictionary, for example, has supplied a great number of Egypto-Kalenjin cognate lexical items, too basic and too many to be considered fortuitous.

2.2 Methodological Perspectives in Comparative Religion

Scholars have attempted to study religion from the base, or perspective of their own individual academic disciplines:

Psychologists have tended to approach it as an exercise in psychology, taking the point of view that each person has personal problems which include the manner in which he or she handles his or her personal drives like the need for sexual satisfaction, friendship, acceptance etc. They have, therefore, analysed how religious symbols and practices help or hinder the individual in working out these problems. The famous proponents of the psychological approach to religion are Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, William James, and Erik Erikson.

Sociologists, on their part, have concerned themselves with how religion operates at the social level to solve a number of related problems: to maintain and propagate itself as the minimum requisite from generation to generation; its confinement to and association with social units like an ethnic group or nation; its capacity to help or hinder the individual in his or her interaction and integration into the larger life of his or her society. Some of the biggest names among scholars who have pursued the sociological or anthropological approach are Bronislaw Malinowski—known to Kenyans as Kenyatta's tutor and mentor in anthropology—A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, who was Malinowski's intellectual rival, Claude Levi-Strauss, Max Weber and the Frenchman Emile Durkheim.

There are those scholars who consider religion as a specific tradition of beliefs and practices which have gone through a complex course of development and transformation. They pursue the historical approach and so "comparative religion" is also called "history of religions". The famous name with regard to the historical approach is Mircea Eliade.

Some scholars prefer to compare or contrast one chief phenomenon that is characteristic of one religion with the corresponding phenomenon in another religion. This is the form-comparative approach, or phenomenology. The phenomenological study of religion, although often starting with the results of the historian, is directed towards discovering the nature of religion—the fundamental characteristics that lie behind its historical manifestations. In this particular field the classic treatment remains Gerardus van der Leeuw's *Religion in Essence and Manifestation: A Study in Phenomenology*. Apart from Leeuw, the school of phenomenology is readily associated with Edmund Husserl, Max Scheler and Rudolf Otto. The stress in phenomenology is on the study of

the various forms in which something appears as distinct from studying its meaning and origin. To discover the essential structures and relationships of the phenomena as well as the acts of consciousness in which the phenomena appeared, and to do this by as faithful an exploration as possible, uncluttered by scientific or cultural presuppositions.

Hermeneutics provides another methodological perspective in comparative religion. This is the study of the theory and practice of interpretation. It was originally used in the study of theology, and applied specifically to biblical interpretation, but has broadened since the 19th century to include philosophical theories of meaning and understanding, and also theories of literary interpretation (Cf. Kasiera, 1990:8-9).

Our adopted approach here would seem to approximate the methods of the sociological school of Malinowski and company for the reason that we are going to discuss the socio-cultural survival as a distinct ethnic unit of a people and the tenacity of the same people to hang on to an oral tradition of origin over millennia. We will also inevitably employ the historical approach method that is associated with Mircea Eliade. This is because we discuss a specific tradition of beliefs and practices which have gone through a complex, if minimal, course of development and transformation over several millennia and over thousands of kilometres.

2.3 Characteristics of Religion

A comparative study of religions, like any other comparative study such as comparative linguistics, will require the use of finite and uniform parameters. Against these parameters the features and properties of the individual religions and cults are weighted then compared or contrasted either in a tabular format or in a running discussion format. The religions or cults being studied may either reflect these characteristics in differing degrees and finesse or may be opposed in such a patterned manner as to facilitate a comparative as well as a contrastive exercise. These correspond to the *tertia comparationis* that we will encounter in respect of comparative linguistics in the next subsection. Simply put, this is to say that same-level, or the corresponding aspects of the religions are to be discussed, compared and contrasted.

The requisite step of initial determination and definition of the parameters, or levels, to be compared, applies to all comparative research and not just to comparative religion:

“In comparative research it is of paramount importance that the levels of comparison should be stated clearly so that apples are not compared with pears. The same levels should be the basis of specific comparisons. No culture can be studied thoroughly or compared appropriately without analysing the different categories of a specific society” (Vermaak, 1995a:163).

The following are the distinctive characteristics found in universal religion as a ubiquitous preoccupation of mankind, for it has been said that *Homo sapiens* is *Homo Religiosus* (Gehman, 1989). They constitute the main levels, or the specific areas, around which the respective corresponding data from the various religions of the world are to be compared and contrasted.

2.3.1 *The Holy, the Profane and the Unholy*

The mention of religion immediately conjures up the images of a holy, sacred mysterious sphere to anyone. All human beings—unless the occasional one be modified in outlook by philosophies such as those of atheism—share in this experience. What the comparativist will want to investigate is to what extent such feelings are aroused in the different communities of the world that practise their respective religions. And are the recognised stimuli that arouse the awe of the Holy appreciated in a similar manner or different as to degree of recognition in terms of quality and quantity? How do the adherents of the African Traditional Religions (ATR) such as those of Asiis, the Buddhists of the Far East, the Hindus of India, the Christians of the Christianised world etc. respectively relate to the being that they regard as the Holy? How do they respectively relate to the forces and actions that are regarded unholy and profane?

The British chemist-turned-administrator, Orchardson, who lived among the Kipsigiis members of the Kalenjin community early in the 20th century, was comparing the Kipsigiis' apparent mere *reverence* for the Holy, Asiis, with the often-declared *fear* of the Holy, God, in his own religious community when he remarked: "... it was very noticeable that there was not the fear of God that one found among so many peoples. One did not speak of Him (sic) in a hushed voice, but openly and freely, but with respect" (Orchardson, D.C./KER/3/1).

It has been claimed that some other African sections go to the extreme as respects the issue of day-to-day personal resort to their idea of the Holy. It has been noted that the Bakongo people of Congo actually do not worship Nzambi Mpungu, the Deity according to them, at all: "He intervenes in the creation of every child, he punishes those who violate his prohibitions. They render him no worship, for he has need of none and is inaccessible" (Eliade, 1967:6).¹

Mircea Eliade (1967:6) summarises what he believes is the image of Deity in the mind of the African; a distant transcendent being:

"The High Gods of a great number of African ethnic groups are regarded as creators, all-powerful, benevolent, and so forth; but they play a rather insignificant part in the religious life. Being either too distant or too good to need a real cult, they are invoked only in the case of great crisis."

Jomo Kenyatta puts across the same view of the Holy, *Ngai*, as respects his Gikuyu Kintu-speaking people:

"... In the ordinary way of everyday life, there are no prayers or religious ceremonies, such as 'morning and evening prayers.' So long as people and things go well and prosper, it is taken for granted that God is pleased with the general behaviour of the people and the welfare of the country. In this happy state there is no need for prayers. Indeed they are inadvisable, for *Ngai* must not needlessly be bothered. It is only when humans are in real need that they must approach him without fear of disturbing him and incurring his wrath. But when people meet to discuss public affairs or decide a case, or at public dances, they offer prayers for protection and guidance" ("*Ngai* was also called upon during the crises of the lives of the people, i.e. at birth, at initiation, upon marriage and death of every Gikuyu"—Jomo Kenyatta, 'Kikuyu Religion, Ancestor-Worship, and Sacrificial Practices,' *Africa*, x [1937:308-309] Eliade, 1967:8).²

¹ Indeed the Africans in their theosophical bearing had so advanced, metaphysically speaking, that they had reached a point of realising, as Kenyatta implies below, that to constantly pray to the Deity, praise Him or Her incessantly, was disrespectful of the being so approached. Perhaps indeed over-worship puts Deity in the station of and the attendant weakness of man. For man likes to be praised, worshipped, and the temptation is to impute those weaknesses to The One "above". Looked at keenly, the conjuring of such images and the treatment of Deity as if a human, with the attendant weaknesses, may indeed constitute a blasphemy.

² Kenyatta says that *Ngai* occasionally descended from the skies and inhabited Mt. Kenya for the purpose of inspecting the earth. His occasional earth-bound abode then is comparable to the Hebrew's Yahwe in relation to Mt. Sinai.

*Section A: The Methodologies of Oral Tradition, Oral History, Written Sources, 89
and Comparative Research*

The concept of the “Holy” as a parameter to be compared and contrasted across the religions will first have to be defined. Any comparative exercise requires that at the very outset, the parameters be identified and defined. To the Christians the Holy territory may be occupied by God in His trinity and the saints but to the Asiis faithful, the Holy may be represented by Asiis (in Her conceptual female form) as the Deity, the sun, Benevolent Thunder and the departed souls of ancestors.¹

The Hindus may revere the Great Mother Goddess and, like the Kalenjiin, perceive the ultimate principle, the creator (the holiest) in the feminine form (Cf. Kasiera, 1990:57). The Abrahamic faiths, which are sometimes called western faiths, in this simple, limited example concerning the gender of Deity, then remain among a reduced number of whose followers perceive the Godhead outright in the masculine form. Among many of the other African religions, according to Mbiti (1970:92), the Godhead is considered Father and Mother, i.e., it transcends gender. A handful of the African religions, according to him, view the Godhead as Mother. He cites as an example the Southern Nuba (Sudan) who have a matrilineal system of descent and speak of God(dess) in feminine pronouns. However he leaves out major African peoples like the Maasai and the Kalenjiin, whose languages’ structures similarly demand the use of pronouns and do indeed assign Deity female pronouns. The difficulty in coming to terms with the Kintu speakers in this respect, is that the Kintu phylum just does not have gender-discriminating pronouns or particles. So, in all honesty, we may never come to know the psychically ingrained idea of gender of Deity among the pre-Christian-time members of such communities. So Mbiti (1970:91-92) was content to cite as examples only those that refer to Deity literally as “Father”, i.e., with the same kinship term as they would their earthly fathers.

Each conception of Deity, whether as male, female or as a non-anthropomorphic being—as in most African traditional cases (Cf. Mbiti, 1970:91)—has a consequence on the entire ontology of the communities concerned. It may even affect gender relations and sensitivities at the communal and at the personal level. It follows then that the rest of the features of the religions concerned will either differ or relate in accordance with their individual gender-perceptions of the ultimate—and this is a legitimate province and concern of comparative religion.

The great veneration of the cow on the part of two female Godhead worshippers: the Asiis worshippers, and the Hindus, who virtually worship the cow, seems to associate the cow

¹ As it was the tradition of the Ancient Near East, Asiis, being the Mother Goddess of the Kalenjiin (albeit the sole Deity) is directly and indirectly associated with the masculine “storm god” *ilal* or Thunder (see the Cheemarus narrative in Chapter 9). As for “Egypt the mother Goddess Isis acted in conjunction with the storm god Osiris as reflected in the Osiris myth” (Vermaak, 1995b: 17).

“worship” with the worship of a female Godhead. Is this characteristic truly representative of all, a few or most of the female Godhead worshippers? Isis, the ultimate principle in Egypt and in the Mediterranean neighbourhood towards the end of the first millennium BC, was similarly associated with the cow and was often depicted wearing cow horns.

“Although the Holy may ultimately be nothing but the social order, a projection of the human mind, or some sort of illusion, it is nevertheless experienced in religion as an initiating power, coming to human life and touching it from beyond itself” (MacQuarrie, GME 1993).

Rudolph Otto understood the Holy as a non-human, pure “other”, which can be approached on a rational level as well as on a non-rational level as a *mysterium* (Latin, “mystery”). The existence of the Holy can be rationally determined through the senses, by perceiving, for instance, the order apparent in nature. The non-rational apprehension of the Holy, or “numinous”, has two aspects: fascination, or attraction, and awe (Cf. MEE 98/6).

Most adherents of religion necessarily believe that at the opposing end of the Holy is the unholy; but in between is the everyday and profane. To the Christians the ultimate opposite of the Holy is Lucifer the devil who is responsible for all evil. The researcher in comparative religion will seek to know the equivalent of the Lucifer concept, or an ultimate scapegoat for sin, in other religions. To some African communities God is composed of both good and evil. Example is given of two Shona names for God: *Chirazamauya*, which means “the one who provides for good and bad” and *Chirozva-mauya*, “the one who has power to destroy the good and the bad,” (McVeigh, 1974:129). This duality of the Shona concept of deity led Van der Merwe to conclude: “The VaShona seem to believe that God could also be the author of Evil” (Van der Merwe, 1957:8).

The association of deity with duality is a widespread phenomenon in the African religious scene. According to our Maasai informant, ole Koros, the Maasai recognise the Ultimate Principle in two: *Enkai Narok* and *Enkai Nanyokie*: Black God(dess) and Red God(dess). The Black God(dess) is benevolent while the Red God(dess), like the red-haired Set of ancient Egypt and the Greek equivalent of Typhon, is the evil deity.

The Kalenjiin on their part, and this is still current according to our northern Kalenjiin informants, lay two sticks at a place of prayer or deliberation: One stick, the *kaapseroiyoot* (“of serpent?”),¹ is used for cursing while the other one is the *nogirweet*, used for blessing. They are never used together simultaneously in any one prayer session or in any one meeting, but their

¹ *Kaapseroyoot* is listed in Hollis’ (1909) Nandi Vocabulary section as a type of snake. Indef. *Kaapseroiyo*, indef. pl. *kaapseroiin*, pl. def *kaapseroiinik* (spellings this author’s own).

twin presence portrays a quiet recognition of the duality of Asiis, the Deity as seen through Her creations that depict good and evil in all their respects. The uttered blessing that one sometimes hears, “*chamin Asiis*”, “may Asiis love you” and the reverse of it, a curse that goes, “*barin Asiis*”, “may Asiis kill you” are indirect acknowledgements of the duality of Deity.¹ The Africans here are recognising a fact of life in the material world, namely that if the Creator is truly the *all-powerful*, then both the evil and the good belong with Him or Her. If not so, an essentially blasphemous reason must be found to explain why the Deity is *unable* to banish evil and retain only good for eternity.²

Thomas Paine in his *Age of Reason*, 1794, found himself attempting to balance this same equation and blasted Christianity for making the unholy equal the Holy, by creating Satan to whom they make God lose control of all His creation:

“Not content with this deification of Satan, they represent him as defeating, by stratagem, in the shape of an animal of the creation, all the power and wisdom of the Almighty. They represent him as having compelled the Almighty to the direct necessity either of surrendering the whole of the creation to the government and sovereignty of this Satan, or of capitulating for its redemption by coming down upon earth, and exhibiting himself upon a cross in the shape of a man... Had the inventors of this story told it the contrary way, that is, had they represented the Almighty as compelling Satan to exhibit himself on a cross, in the shape of a snake, as a punishment for his new transgression, the story would have been less absurd—less contradictory. But instead of this, they make the transgressor triumph, and the Almighty fall” (Paine 1794:part I).

The ancient Middle-Eastern Zoroastrian religion also recognised dualism of the deity as part and parcel of the person of the Creator. Mardan-Farrukh of the ninth century AD, under *Shikand Gumani Vazar*, Chapter VIII, wrote:

“(35) Since we have seen that in the material world contrary substances exist and that they are sometimes mutually co-operative and sometimes mutually destructive, so (must it also be) in the spiritual world (36) which is the cause of the material, (37) and material things are its effects. That this is so is not open to doubt (38) and follows from the very nature of contrary substances. (39-40) I have shown above that the reason and

¹ Following a discussion with H.E. Professor Chesaina, October 2000.

² The Maasai and the Kalenjin perceive the Deity in the feminine form and Her names are female names. In the Maasai language even the adjectives and verbs used with respect to *Enkai* are of the feminine class. It is difficult to ascertain the corresponding situation as concerns the Kintu-speaking Africans because the Kintu family of languages is not sex discriminating like the Hamitic language family (strictly speaking the Maasai speak a language called Maa from this family of languages). But the perception of the Ultimate as female is not confined to Africa, India and parts of the Ancient Near East; some South American natives also recognise a female Godhead e.g. Kagapa people of Colombia who recognise the “Universal Mother and Supreme Deity”—Paul Radin, *Monotheism among primitive Peoples*, New York p.15 (Eliade, 1967:16).

occasion for the wise activity of the Creator which is exemplified in the creative act is the existence of an adversary..." (Eliade, 1967:619).¹

The researcher in comparative religions will want to know the beginnings of the religions that he or she intends to study, compare and contrast. The stories are bound to vary, but it is thought that the concept of revelation is a thread that runs through all myths of the individual origins of religions alike. Revelation is described as distinctive experiences of the Holy coming into human life. The miraculous resurrection of Osiris by Isis, according to the ancient Egyptian belief; the later miraculous resurrection of Jesus Christ, according to the Christian dogma; the revelations to Moses in the desert etc. according to Judaism and its daughter religions; are examples of revelations with phenomenal consequences that can be compared and contrasted. Revelations may be similar to ordinary religious experience, but they have a creative originating power from which can flow an entire religious tradition—even a movement with all the makings of an independent religion from its immediate ancestor (Cf. MacQuarrie, GME 1993).

2.3.2 Response

This is response to the Holy, which may take the form of participation in, and acquiescence to the customs and rituals of a religious community of a commitment of faith (sometimes, as in many parts of Africa, Arab countries and Israel, just to name a few examples, religious communities are indistinguishable from an ethnic community). Faith is not merely belief but an attitude of persons in which they commit themselves to the Holy and acknowledge its claim upon them. In a deeply religious person, faith commitment tends to shape all of that person's life and character (Cf. MacQuarrie, GME 1993). In the aggregate, the nature of response to the Holy may end up creating a community that is characterised by that nature of response. In time and with the aid of geography, the community ends up assuming ethnic or even state proportions (see Community below). But what is formed initially in response to the Holy is essentially a religious culture: "It is the positive human response to this experience in thought (myth and theology) and action (cult and worship) that constitutes religion" (Jacobsen, 1976:3).

The Keiyo branch of the Kalenjiin live in an area where rain is unreliable and the perennial droughts can be devastating. So among the Keiyo, *Iilat*, the Thunder, or Rain "God", is revered almost as much as and is in fact mentioned more often than Asiis is. This is a natural response to the harsh climatic predicament that they have had to face for centuries: honour the deity that

¹ Translation by R.C. Zaehner, in *The Teachings of the Magi* (London, 1956:59-66).

alleviates the predicament from time to time and constantly pray to him that he perform the benevolent act more often.

Tuitoek arap Cherugut, as a young University of Nairobi oral literature student in 1969, observed and wrote the following about his own mother. The first born child of his mother was a female. Among the Keiyo, women whose first borns are girls are called *Saniako*¹ and they are given a special station vis-a-vis the Thunder "God". They can intercede on behalf of the people either by prayer for rain or by pleading with lightning to spare people and property. But most importantly of all, Thunder is the Just One: the one who mediates, metes out justice and shows the just way. But Cherugut's mother was then vacillating between this traditional understanding of the just way and another—nay, attempting to follow two just paths—the one of her traditional upbringing and the new one! Another deity was being introduced into her life and as she was going through a religious crisis, she was responding in a syncretic manner:

"Recently she was converted to Christianity but she still insists on addressing Thunder, the Just One. On Sundays she goes to church and prays to God through Jesus Christ the Just One. I have often wondered how she ranks the two supreme beings; she must be applying two standards in having direct communication with justice. Call it what you like, I am sure my mother is not alone in this double-deity standard" (Taban lo Liyong, 1972:32).

¹ The position of honour that was accorded mothers whose first borns were girls, may point to an ancient practice that saw first born (?) virgin girls being sacrificed to *lilat*, the Thunder, or Rain "God" if there happened to be a prolonged dry spell. The mother whose daughter was "given to *lilat* to marry" (actually sacrificed to *lilat*) would thereafter have a *saanik*, "in-law" relationship with the all-powerful *lilat*. She would, therefore, automatically hold a position of honour among women. The fathers whose first-borns are girls are accorded similar honour and feared for their ability to silence Thunder or to pray for rain. Most parents would prefer their first born to be a boy but the honour of a *saniako* is good enough a consolation should the first to come happen to be a girl.

2.3.3 Beliefs

Religious movements have arisen in response to the Holy, have split and re-split in the process called schism. Most major religious movements, denominations and sects today arose from schisms: the split among the adherents along the lines of leaders who have broken away from the main course and those who stay put on the old course. Part of what became Christianity broke away from Judaism in this manner and Islam, in certain respects, broke away from both; Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism broke away from Hinduism etc. (Cf. Mugambi, 1990:292). As these splinter religions developed their own distinct traditions, they generated systems of belief with respect to both practice and doctrine and sometimes others claimed to be more steadfast and true to the original than others and are therefore called orthodox. Each of the major movements listed above has those that claim orthodoxy and those that concede a measure of liberalism:

“The importance attached to right belief (“orthodoxy”) has varied from religion to religion and from period to period. It has loomed large in Christianity, as for example in the great Christological and Trinitarian controversies from the 3d century onward” (MacQuarrie, GME 1993).

Several European and American anthropologists, e.g. Barton (1919:1-15) *The Religions of the World*; E.B. Tylor (1871, general theme) *Primitive Culture*; Rudolf Otto (1923, general theme), *The Idea of the Holy*; (see Brandon, 1970:334) and Charles Long (GME 1993), have held the view that certain religions are higher, or are more developed, than others. So Mugambi (1990:288) says:

“It used to be taught that the African religious heritage is ‘primitive’ in contrast with Christianity which was supposed to be one of the ‘higher’ religions. According to this view, the African is supposed to be ‘animistic’. Animism is the belief that everything in the universe is inhabited by spirits which are ‘worshipped’ by the animists. However, it is now recognised that African peoples are not animists—they have concepts and names for God which is impossible in animism.”

E.E. Evans-Pritchard, who studied the religion of the Nuer community of Sudan, was able to report that the Nuer religion was a sophisticated philosophical indulgence that could not fit into the framework of animism—if animism is to be defined as “*belief that all beings and natural things such as rocks, streams, and winds have a living soul.*”—*Oxford Dictionary*:

“It would be quite contrary to the Nuer thought, and it would even seem absurd to them, to say that sky, moon, rain, and so forth are in themselves, singly or collectively, God. God is Spirit, which, like wind and air, is invisible and ubiquitous. But though God is not these things he is in them in the sense that he reveals himself through them. In this sense, he is the sky, falls in the rain, shines in the sun and moon, and blows in the wind.

95

*Section A: The Methodologies of Oral Tradition, Oral History, Written Sources,
and Comparative Research*

These divine manifestations are to be understood as modes of God and not as his essence, which is Spirit" (Evans-Pritchard, 1957:1-10).

MacQuarrie (1993) is one of those scholars who can still imagine that certain religions can be primitive and that others can be more advanced than others:

"In early or primitive traditions this practice and doctrine (belief in the Holy) usually find expression in bodies of myth or in ritual law. In those traditions which develop an extensive literate class, theology often comes to supplant myth as the vehicle for refining and elaborating belief. The more this happens, the more the belief system has to be evaluated."

The so-called primitive religious mind has been associated by certain anthropologists and theologians with the fear and worship of anything and everything around because they are believed to possess spirits—the typical definition of animism as we saw above. Uncontrolled as the contents of experience may be in this state of mind, objects would appear to be so lively, mysterious, and fascinating, as well as terrifying, that the whole of nature is suffused with an atmosphere of the awesome and uncanny. We have mentioned that the German religious historian Rudolf Otto (Cf. MEE 98/7) referred to such an atmosphere as the "numinous". And where the numinous is concerned, the Japanese have been granted by the scholar an honorary place among the "primitive":

"Basically, the numinous atmosphere is attached to the entire natural world and every object within it. A good example may be seen in Shinto, a present-day "primitive" religion practised in the sophisticated civilisation of Japan. The Japanese term *shinto* (Japanese *shin*, "spirit") means "the way of the gods" or "the way of spirit". In the view of Shinto, every rock, tree, animal, and stream has its own *shin* or *kami*" (Japanese, "god" or "goddess").

Although in the understanding of certain western scholars (e.g. Tylor, 1871, Barton, 1919, Otto, 1923), "primitive" religious mind is supposed to go hand in hand with the material depravity and backwardness of Africa and Polynesia, it need not always be so as the Japanese have demonstrated a negative exception to certain philosophers' stereotypical association of "religious primitivity" with material backwardness and depravity (Cf. MEE 98/7).

As we have said with regard to the concept of Holy, Otto understood this as a non-human, pure "other", which can be approached on a rational level as well as on a non-rational level as a *mysterium* (Latin, "mystery"). According to Otto, the existence of the Holy can be rationally determined through the senses, by perceiving, for instance, the order apparent in nature. The non-rational apprehension of the Holy, or "numinous", has two aspects: fascination, or attraction, and awe.

“This dual conception of the numinous experience has been criticised by some (western) philosophers who claim that it is appropriate only for primitive religions (because) the varieties of feeling and behaviour known as primitive religion constitute a type of consciousness that Western civilisation has lost” (MEE 98/6).

What is implied here is that through sheer immensity of height of civilisation and greater religious sophistication, the west has so rationalised religious belief that they have lost the belief instinct, or the sense of religious touch. They are now able to communicate with the Holy but only by means of arithmetically calculated impersonal, soulless means, having managed to compartmentalise life into strict mutually exclusive spheres of the sacred and the profane.

Charles H. Long (GME 1993), who uses in his discussion the term “primitive religion” quite lavishly, nevertheless, concedes that the term is misleading:

“The term is misleading in suggesting that the religions of those peoples are somehow less complex than the religions of “advanced” societies. In fact, research carried out among the indigenous peoples of Oceania, the Americas, and sub-Saharan Africa has revealed rich and very complex religions, which organise the smallest details of the people’s lives.”

The German (later Swiss) historian, journalist, and essayist, Emil Ludwig, was surprised to hear from a western missionary who was working in Africa that the missionaries were trying to Christianise the Africans and that the Africans knew the existence of God but only that they were not sure “of God as a living power in their individual experiences.” That the missionaries were in Africa to convey this message to the African. Ludwig is reputed to have retorted: “How can the untutored African conceive God?... Deity is a philosophical concept which savages are incapable of framing” (Kibicho, 1993:44).¹

Decades later, advances in science in the west were to come to the aid of the Africans, and Claude Alan Stark, in his foreword to McVeigh’s *God in Africa* (1974:xiii), was able to write:

“We have much of great value to learn from the African. For example, only recently in the post-modern scientific era have we become aware of the matter-energy-life-mind-spirit continuum as a proposition of empirical science, while to the Bantu this has long been a part of his life experience. For him, all reality—animate, inanimate, and post-animate—represents different states of the same energy, with God the transcendent-immanent, all-powerful One who creates, regulates, permeates, harmonises and supports all other forces in the universe, and yet as absolute Power is beyond them. God as power is accorded personality and the whole universe is personal by analogy: a universe alive with personal forces. God is the ultimate Person, but people, like God, are forces that interact rather than beings that coexist. From this view springs the sense of Bantu community, a community of interrelationship of forces of persons and thoughts, animals

¹ Citing Edwin Smith’s *African Ideas of God*, p.1. (ed.). Smith is the missionary who spoke to Ludwig.

*Section A: The Methodologies of Oral Tradition, Oral History, Written Sources, 97
and Comparative Research*

and things, God and forefathers: a sense of community which we in ignorance call 'tribalism'."

Stark goes on to describe how wrong the west has been in naming the African understanding of religion "animism", a term he attributes to "hasty observers". Then comes the most unusual conclusion: "Now we must modify our attitude from one of condescension to appreciation for the Bantu's early perception of that which we are just now ourselves apprehending" (Stark, 1974:xiv).

G. van der Leeuw (1963:53), in his book *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, discusses naturism alongside animism as if they were one and the same concept and practice, and says categorically: "what we moderns call "Nature", in fact, has a prominent role in all religions without exception. Yet it is neither Nature, nor natural phenomena as such, that are ever worshipped, but always the power within or behind." From van der Leeuw, therefore, comes the revelation that all religions have a certain animistic, or naturistic tendency, and so it is not just the African ones, which are otherwise more famously known to view Deity through the manifestation in nature. He goes on to list such natural items as stones, rivers, metals, fire, and, especially, mountains (Cf. Leeuw, 1963:52 ff) which should remind us of the Gikuyu of Central Kenya who believed that Deity, *Ngai*, often visited, or lived on Mt. Kenya. Leeuw (1963:55), on this question of the sacredness of mountains says: "The oldest heaven is the mountain-top", citing the Old Testament, where Deity is said to dwell on the mount (Psalms 89:12). He also cites the events of Mt. Sinai as may be read in Exodus.

An East African scholar, Mbiti (1969:8) comments about Tylor's theory of religious evolution, which gave birth to the concept of hierarchy of religions, at the bottom of which was the stage of animism. According to Tylor (quite unlike van der Leeuw, who attempts to counter Tylor's school of thought, above, by stating that all religions are basically animistic), animism was the preserve of the societies that he considered to be languishing in primitivity. About the subject Mbiti says:

"The theory of religious evolution, in whichever direction, does not satisfactorily explain or interpret African religions. Animism is not an adequate description of these religions and it is better for that term to be abandoned once and for all."

One of the greatest western authorities in the field of anthropology to have lived is still Claude Lévi-Strauss, the Frenchman. Through his book *Structural Anthropology* published in 1958, he leads the onslaught on the "misunderstanding" of the term "primitive" as often associated with pre-literate peoples. He draws his example from native Australia and Melanesia while Stark, above, draws his from Kintu-speaking Africa. But how similar are their views!

“To be sure, the term *primitive* now seems to be safe from the confusion inherent in its etymological meaning and reinforced by an obsolete evolutionism. A primitive people is not a backward or retarded people; indeed it may possess, in one realm or another, a genius for invention or action that leaves the achievements of civilised peoples far behind. One might cite as illustrations the true “sociological planning” evident in the study of family organisation among (indigenous) Australian societies; the integration of emotional life within a complex system of rights and obligations in Melanesia; and, almost everywhere, the utilisation of religious feeling to establish a viable, if not always harmonious, synthesis of individual aspirations and the social order... Nor do primitive peoples lack history, although its development often eludes us” (Lévi-Strauss, 1958:102).

This admission by at least three western Christian writers—Long, Stark and Lévi-Strauss—that the African, after all, was all along theologically more sophisticated than the westerners in certain key philosophical respects as listed above, may be contrasted with Ludwig’s scurrilous statement: “Deity is a philosophical concept which savages are incapable of framing”.

Comparative religion as an academic discipline can take all the aspects of practice, regard for and belief in the Holy, and the nature of response among the various religious communities; compare and contrast them and come up with its own opinion regarding the viability or otherwise of the concept of hierarchy of religions. Compare and contrast types of and levels of devotion (to stones, mountains, rivers, fire, wind, earth, trees, the sun, the heavens etc.) that could lead to or excuse a religion from being tagged “animistic”. Professor John Mbiti’s conclusion—where he denies that African religions are animist—as well as Long’s, Stark’s and Lévi-Strauss’ concessions, above; were evidently arrived at through the process of comparative and contrastive analysis of the understanding of the concept of and belief in the Holy across the religions. Leeuw’s statement that effectively labels all religions animistic ought to have been arrived at by analysing this item with respect to all religions.

2.3.4 Rituals and Liturgy

“Liturgy” and “ritual” are two words that are difficult to distinguish semantically. *The Oxford Dictionary* defines “liturgy” as: “*A form of public worship, esp. in the Christian Church; a set of formularies for the conduct of this.*” And “rite”, from where we get “ritual”, is defined by the same dictionary as follows: “*A custom or practice of a formal kind, a social observance... A body of liturgical etc. observances characteristic of a religious denomination.*” Quite universal, one may say, yet a notable scholar, Charles Long (GME 1993), seems to confine the “ritual” notion to the religions of the pre-literate societies:

“One of the most pervasive forms of religious behaviour in primitive cultures is expressed by rituals and ritualistic actions. The forms and functions of rituals are diverse. They may be performed to ensure the favour of the divine, to ward off evil, or to mark a change in cultural status. In most, but not all, cases an aetiological myth provides the basis for the ritual in a divine act or injunction.”

The burial service for a deceased among the Christians is often called “rite”. The act of burial, therefore, seems to be an undisputed semantic meeting point between the “primitive” and the “advanced” religions. The student in comparative religions will want to find out if, as defined above, “primitive” rituals are “performed to ensure the favour of the divine”; are the Judaeo-Christian liturgies not performed to seek the favour of the divine (God) as well? If the “primitive” rituals are performed “to ward off evil”, is this not what the Christians ask for directly in uttering “deliver us from the evil” when saying the liturgical Lord’s Prayer?

It seems then, from the foregoing, that the comparative religions researcher will not only have to compare religious practices across the world's religions, but he or she will also have to take into account and compare the discriminatory terms used by the anthropologists and theologians in their own comparative work. Especially when it comes to the descriptions of similar religious concepts and practices that the researcher will want to compare and contrast inside Judaeo-Christianity, Islam, Hinduism etc. on the one hand and African, Native American and Polynesian religions on the other.

Religious traditions almost invariably involve ritual and liturgical forms as well as systems of belief or, otherwise, we would have to redefine "religion". These may take the form of sacrifice or sacrament, passage rites, or invocations of Deity. For the Christians it is said that all sacrifice is fulfilled in the once-for-all self-offering of Jesus (Heb. 10:10). The Kalenjiin Asiiis worshippers up until recently sacrificed a white bull once every fifteen years or so during the *sageet aap eito* age-set cutting ceremony. A white goat was sacrificed annually—lately symbolically—at the *Kaapkoros* altar while a black sheep found its time for sacrifice for rain when the need arose, also lately a symbolic affair—meaning that no actual killing took place. Judaism also inherited such sacrificial practices that involved bulls and goats (Heb. 9-10) from ancient Egypt through Moses (Cf. Budge, 1934:8), this being a typical African form of repentance and worship.

Vedic Hinduism originally sacrificed animals too such as in horse sacrifice, *ashvamedha* and, in "addition, there were human sacrifices which were considered the most efficacious of all" (Kasiera, 1990:64).

The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches accept seven sacraments while the other Christian movements recognise them with differing esteem. The seven are: Baptism, the Eucharist, Confirmation, Confession, Anointing of the sick, marriage, and the Holy Orders.

Sacraments are ritual observances that are associated with Christianity but which will be found to be not unfamiliar to the traditional Africans although the term "sacrament" is not usually associated with African liturgical practice. The definition goes as follows: "Sacraments are Christian rites that are believed to be outward visible signs of inward spiritual grace to which the promise of Christ is attached" (Mitchell, GME 1993).

*Section A: The Methodologies of Oral Tradition, Oral History, Written Sources, 101
and Comparative Research*

The African, especially those of Asiian persuasion and those that have been influenced by the Asiian followers, perform—or used to perform—many rites that correspond to the Christian sacraments. Four months after birth, a ceremony is held for the baby. At about thirteen he or she is circumcised, this being essentially a baptismal rite. At about eighteen the girls are married, the boys later. Not long after circumcision, the boys are initiated into the army by means of the bull sacrifice. They retire from the army ideally fifteen years later during another bull sacrifice ceremony, whereupon they are initiated into elder class. They are later initiated into senior grades of elders. The senior elders are then initiated into the grade of living saints of *boore*. All these promotional movements from one social grade to the next higher grade involve ceremonies that can essentially be described as sacraments. As we have pointed out, circumcision corresponds to the Christian sacrament of baptism, complete with immersion in water.

Of the Asiian “sacraments” two involve temporary separation from society: circumcision for those attaining puberty, and initiation into the saintly status of *boore* for the grand old citizens. The temporary seclusion of initiands is more or less a universal practice. “Van Gennep held that passage rituals have three steps: separation from society; inculcation-transformation; and return to society in the new status” (Endleman, GME 1993).

So what is the importance of ritual and sacrament to the individual and to the society as a whole?

“Participation in communal rituals marks a person as a member of the community, as being inside and integral to the community that is articulated in the system of beliefs. That in many traditions the disfavour of the community is expressed in its barring a person from the important cultic acts is not surprising because these acts insure the proper standing of the individual and community in relation to the Holy” (MacQuarrie, GME 1993).

The most important cultic acts are often those performed by the entire community or by a significant portion of it, although in many traditions, private devotional forms such as prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage; are also practised. In truly cultic acts such as prayer and sacrifice, the prevailing attitude is one of awe, worship, and thanksgiving (Cf. Mitchell, GME 1993).

The student of comparative religion will want to study how each of the above-listed elements of sacrament and sacrifice impact on the societies involved, and study and compare the varying extents to which liturgical and ritual acts characterise and define the individual, the communities and their religions.

2.3.5 Community

In many cases religious movements, or religions, are closely identified with ethnic and national communities. Before colonisation in Africa, which came together with the introduction of Christianity and Islam as well as the creation of multiethnic states, the indigenous African religions defined the state, society and culture. The Africans lived their religion, there being little to distinguish religion from culture, economics and politics. Among the Kalenjiin, the Asiis religion defined the Kalenjiin person and there was no way one could call oneself a Kalenjiin person—or whatever ethnic designation they then went by—devoid of Asiis. Islam was also originally the same, it being essentially the culture of the Arabs. Judaism is still identified with the Jews, this also originally and even presently, being the way of life for the Hebrew people. It is characteristic of an ethnic based movement, being, as it is, devoid of an aspiration to gain converts outside the traditional Jewish and Hebrew heritage.

The Sikhs of India are in the process of fighting to establish a state out of the province of Punjab that will be defined by the Sikh religion and way of life (Cf. Kibicho, 1990:122). Although religious solitaries exist, most religions have a social aspect that leads their adherents to form a community, which may be more or less tightly organised. As we have seen, in earlier times the religious community could scarcely be distinguished from the community at large; all professed the same faith, and the ruler was both a political and a religious leader. In the course of time, however, religious and civil societies have become distinct and may even come into conflict.

Others have achieved virtual single-religion statehood, such as Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Israel, but it remains an aspiration to many others such as the said Sikhs of Punjab, India. In most of the rest of the modern secular world, a plurality of religious communities coexists more or less peacefully within single political entities.

A comparative religion researcher targeting communities that are defined by cult would be interested in studying the extent of interlink between the various religions with state and the ethnic community, and whether or not there exist common characteristics within the world's closed nationalist religions as a typologically confined exercise. A comparison between the closed nationalist religions on the one hand and the open religions such as Christianity and Islam on the other would be an interesting undertaking.

2.3.6 Ethical Codes

Connected with beliefs is yet another aspect of religion, the possession of an ethical code incumbent upon the members of the community. The code of ethics often operates along social structures and societies whose structures are well defined—often along family lines—have a fine code of ethics. A good example is the *hsiao*, filial piety and *t'i* brotherly affection, of the Chinese. Confucian ethics dwell on these much. The Chinese families are structured, much as is characteristic of Kalenjiinland, along patriarchal lines. Governed by this, one's first duty is to serve and obey one's parents in accordance with custom when alive and to mourn and bury them, then sacrifice to them periodically thereafter (Cf. Smith, 1970:265), which is nothing new to the Africans, the Kalenjiin included, as we shall see in Section D under the discussion on the *maat* ethical codes. Here the intensity and frequency of acts of devotion to the departed invited the epithet of "ancestor-worshippers" from some early visitors to the African religious scene.

The presence or absence, or the intensity, of ancestor reverence become another *tertium comparationis*—a technical term for which we may, for now, adopt the *Oxford Dictionary's* definition: "*the third element in comparison. The factor which links or is the common ground between two elements in comparison.*" We will get used to the term as we read along.

An ethical code that is based on social structures is also evident in other highly structured societies such as those of India, where the often-discredited caste system is an integral part of traditional Hinduism. We need to remember that the ultimate aim of a Hindu believer is to complete the cycle of rebirths up the caste system and be finally conjoined in identity with Brahman (\approx God) and thus be liberated from the "misfortune" of being reborn again and again. Ideals and duty have been set for each caste with respect to the ethics of Hinduism, e.g. the higher castes' theory of four stages of life, *asramas*, in which one's obligations differ in accordance with the stage of life towards the said final liberation from rebirth that one has reached. These are: *kama*, "pleasure"; *artha*, "economic gain"; *dharma*, "duty or virtue", and *moksha*, "liberation". Other Hindu virtues by which humans are rewarded commensurate with their goodness and love for family, are self-control and unselfishness: the highest station with regard to the latter ideal being where one performs to the utmost without expecting the least in return, inevitably leading to liberation from further rebirth (Cf. Smart, 1970:266).

The "lowest" Hindu caste members, the so-called untouchables, or, more respectably, (Gandhi's) *Harijans*, "sons of God", are considered to be a long way from the state of final liberation from further rebirths and may be treated contemptuously no matter how pious and righteous an outlook the individual may wear. His or her reward can only come in the next cycle


of life if he or she can earn it under the horrible trying circumstances of the present cycle (Cf. Smart, 1970:630).

As religions develop, they come to place increasing stress on the ethical, and sometimes religion is almost totally absorbed into morality such as we will see under the discussion on the philosophy of *Maat* in Section D here. Namely that the *Maat* ethical code of the Kalenjiin may appear to constitute a religion independent of the Holy and the unholy. Thanks to the occasional collective prayers that act as reminders of the Holy (as well as the unholy and the profane), a sense of and profound respect for the Holy is, once in a while, through them, reasserted (Cf. MacQuarrie, GME 1993).

Maat to the Kalenjiin refers to the social interaction points, with all the ethical do's and don'ts defining and controlling such interactions as between: a man and his ancestors; a man and his agnatic relatives; a man and his age-set colleagues (Hollis, 1909); and a man and his military regiment (Peristiany, 1939). Men related through any one or all of these scenarios, thus address themselves by the term *maat*, this way constantly reminding themselves of their obligations to and expectations from one another as well as of the specific interpersonal taboos that come with the term.

Ancient Egypt's *maat* meant the same essentially as that of the Kalenjiin although the concept there was embodied in a female "deity" that they called Maat, who stood for interpersonal relationships, truth and justice as well as for the basic order of universe and of human society (Cf. Brandon, 1970:416). Budge (1920:271b) defines Maat as follows:

"A goddess, the personification of law, order, rule, truth, right, righteousness, canon, justice, straightness, integrity, uprightness, and of the highest conception of physical and moral law known to the Egyptians."

Truth, order, integrity, justice etc., which may be summed up by Kalenjiin *iman* or *iman-it*, is what *maat* is ultimately about and in the hieroglyphic form,  *maa* (B.Dict. 271b), comes close to Gikuyu, Kikamba and other central Kenya Kintu tongues' *ma*, "truth", "justice", "honesty" etc. The *maat* concept, as understood respectively by the Kalenjiin and by the ancient Egyptians, is treated in much analogical detail in Section D.

The researcher in comparative religion will need to go through and list his or her target religions and their host societies' socio-cultural rules of conduct as recognised in the particular professions and in other areas of conduct of human life. He or she will be interested in such areas as the individual's and the societies' attitudes to, obligations to and expectations from: the ancestors; the departed; the living relatives of whatever degree and nature of relationship; the peers; the senior; the middle age and the junior members of the larger community. He or she will

*Section A: The Methodologies of Oral Tradition, Oral History, Written Sources, 105
and Comparative Research*

also be interested in the interrelationship taboos and licenses between the sexes across and within the age groups as fixed by the guiding social codes of morality of the target religious movements and their host communities.

Exogamic and endogamic restricting codes of ethics with regard to the institution of marriage, as they are understood and effected by the various parties, will interest the researcher. The rules against technical and actual incest lie in this area. The concepts of reincarnation and metempsychosis, under the wider philosophy of *maat*, play out clearly here where the individual, in some societies, is compelled to relight the family relay torch, the *maat* in Kalenjiin—meaning to produce (male) offspring—as an absolute imperative.

The researcher may want to classify his or her subjects in such typological categories as: those that maintain caste systems; those that maintain totemic systems along either patrilineal or matrilineal lines; those that revere ancestors to the degree of appearing to worship them and those that do not etc. He or she will document how each of the various religions and their host communities treat and view each of the elements listed.

The researcher will study and compare the respective concepts of heaven and hell as understood by his or her targeted individual communities and how, given the code of morality to live by, these concepts have shaped the socio-cultural structures as well as influenced the moral outlook of those host communities. For example, to what extent has Hinduism's central characteristic of considering as heavenly bliss its ideal of the most virtuous finally not being reincarnated, i.e., being born again, shaped the moral and physical outlook of the Hindu individual and society? Pose the same questions to the Asiisians who, contrary to Hindu philosophy, consider being reincarnated a heavenly reward, and not being reincarnated a tragedy equal to going to hell? The two religions, Hinduism and Asiisianism, are reincarnationist movements, but with the perceptions of the ideal attainment of heaven, in this regard, lying right on the opposite ends.

2.3.7 Priesthood

Each religious community, whether it is in a pluralistic or in a homogeneous society, has its own organised structure. A common—though by no means universal—feature of these religious organisations is a priesthood charged with teaching and transmitting the faith and performing liturgical act, presiding over the rites of birth, baptism/circumcision, marriage and burial (Cf. MacQuarrie, GME 1993).

Any religion in so far as it has a traditionally organised faith and practice, needs such ministers who are competent to teach its doctrines, perform its rituals, as said, intercede with Deity on behalf of the individual as well as on behalf of the congregation, offer sacrifice on behalf of the community and manage other religious and social counselling roles generally. The priests may be wholly professional, part time or occasional. Priesthood requires special initiation, training and ordination. Some religions require their clergy to practice celibacy while others are liberal about it as long as the priests set, or, at least, conform to the moral code of the communities that they minister to. Most priesthoods wear prescribed dress, either at work or both at work and outside of it. Membership may be acquired through inheritance, purchase, or through an election (Cf. Brandon, 1970:327).

In ancient Egypt, the office and power of priesthood was believed to have been held by the appointee on behalf of the appointing authority, the Pharaoh, who was the true priest, or the priest in principle. To further underline this, it would appear that only Pharaoh could build temples for Deity and in principle perform the temple rituals, i.e., if we were to go by the pictures left on the temple walls (Cf. Te Velde, 1995:1732). However we know that the actual ritual performance was left to the priest and that temples were often built or extended in the reigning Pharaoh's name rather than by him or her.¹

Some religions organise their faith managers, the priests, in a hierarchical manner. E.g. the Anglican Christian Church has an archbishop within an area of jurisdiction. He in turn has bishops under him who look after smaller jurisdictional areas. Such hierarchies provide that the rank of archbishop only differ from that of bishop in jurisdictional rather than spiritual clout. A bishop may participate with other bishops to consecrate new bishops from the rank of priesthood. A bishop is also empowered to ordain and supervise several priests or presbyters under whom, in turn, serve the deacons, a variety of other functionaries and the readers. The Roman Catholic Church has a pope at the head who claims divine authority and commensurate infallibility. He is

¹ The "or her" provision is used here in recognition of Queen-Pharaoh Hatshepsut, 16th century BC who is associated with the construction of and magnificent additions to temples of Ra at Karnak (Cf. Armour, 1986:28).

*Section A: The Methodologies of Oral Tradition, Oral History, Written Sources, 107
and Comparative Research*

elected in such mystical ceremony and pomp as to imply the conferment of a measure of divinity (Cf. Brandon, 1970:328).

The priests of ancient Egypt spent much time in the temples, maintaining physical and moral purity, including that they had to be circumcised. They administered to the daily food and toilet needs of the temple statues that were symbolically indwelled by Deity, and thus earned the title “Servants of the god” (Cf. T Velde, 1995:1741).

They married and were inherited in office by their sons or as the Pharaoh occasionally desired. The priestly order was hierarchical: at the top there was the High Priest, e.g. the “Priest of Amon”, who enjoyed immense political power; then there were the mortuary priests and the priestesses and chantresses of the temple (Cf. Brandon, 1970:328).

The Hindu priesthood is caste-based, favouring—but not exclusively (except for the lowest caste who may not be expected to even contend)—the highest of the castes, the Brahmins. Being the transmitters of sacred and secular lore and wisdom, Hindu priesthood was much in demand as the supplier of civil servants and tutors before India was colonised and the acquisition of knowledge was so westernised and democratised that the Brahmins lost their monopoly of knowledge and even of priesthood (Cf. N. Smart, 1970:329).

In certain ancient civilisations, the political crown was not separate from priesthood and often the king was the priest and was only aided by a professional who performed the priestly duties in the monarch’s name. The monarch often professed divinity and greater spiritual and constitutional proximity to Deity to justify his claim to the priestly role; for why should the subjects pick on the second best for a priest when the closest to Deity was around? Such a system characterised the Mesopotamian, Some Egyptian dynasties, Greek, and Roman states during pre-Christian imperial times (Cf. Brandon, 1970:329).

The moment a Roman tetrarch or monarch was appointed, he was conferred priesthood, joining a college of priest-chiefs, the best of whom were picked to join the brotherhood of Roman priesthood. They took active part in ceremonies as ordained priests (Cf. Tacitus, 109 AD Book I).

The researcher in comparative religion will want to establish at the onset whether his or her target religious movements and their hosting communities maintain the priestly institution and if so whether the officers are professional, part time or occasional. A description of their relative esteem in their respective societies is the basis and stuff of comparative religion with regard to its managers, the priesthood.

The researcher then goes further to compare the priest’s or priestess’ role, esteem and indispensability, or the absence of them with regard to:

- a) the crises of life, e.g.: rites of birth; initiation rites; rites of baptism; circumcision and other puberty rites; conduct of marriage rites and performance of funeral rites as well as other life crisis rites that may be idiosyncratic to the communities and religions being studied.
- b) Standing in society, especially as the wisest and most learned person around in doctrinal matters but also equally in astrological, folkloric, philosophical, genealogical reckoning with respect to his flock, historical and other educational matters.
- c) His or her relative position as an interceder and interpreter between the people and Deity.
- d) His or her relative position and function in the temple with regard to the conduct of worship service, such as during processions, sacrifice, and the care for the statues, sacrificial and other temple property.
- e) The training, whether or not required of a priest, the initiation and ordination rites.
- f) Moral and physical personal purity and cleanness as required of the priest, and whether he or she is required to undergo circumcision before initiation into the profession; celibacy and marital requirement if any.
- g) Whether the monarch, where there is one, is required to serve as a priest as well and his or her position vis-a-vis other priests.
- h) Whether the priest is appointed by monarch, by election, by inheritance, or by purchase.
- i) Whether the office of priesthood is hierarchical in nature, and how the ranks relate to the top political and religious authority within the religions and societies being studied.

2.3.8 Divine Kingship


The Oxford Dictionary defines the word "divine" in one respect as: "*Partaking of the nature of God or a god; godlike; heavenly, immortal, superhumanly gifted.*" A divine king, therefore, is one who has either elevated himself to such superhuman realm of the divine or been perceived and often accepted as belonging to that sphere by his subjects. A divine king is not simply a political head; he is a mystical religious head, the divine symbol of his people's health and welfare. It is doubtful that such a system still exists anywhere in the world although many of the present kings and queens are descendants of ancestors who were once considered divine. Within such system of divine kingship, the well being of the king was often believed to embody the well being of the people as a whole. A sick or weak king might mean a sick or weak society, and he could be killed, in an obligatory process that may be called ritual regicide, in order to maintain the health of the body politic (Cf. Mbiti, 1969:182-183).

Often the divine king did not die alone; a number of servants, sometimes including wives, were buried with him so that he may enter the next world with a retinue befitting his status. Those

*Section A: The Methodologies of Oral Tradition, Oral History, Written Sources, 109
and Comparative Research*

interred with him were either buried alive although in a state of stupor after being stunned or forced to drink themselves senseless, or joined after being clubbed to death. More sacrificial murders would follow on a regular basis. Other divine monarchs were buried with virgins of either sex (Cf. Petrie, 1924:146, Baldick, 1997:138, Rattray, 1927:106, Frazer, 1910, various).

Divine kingship received perhaps its most elaborate definition in ancient Egypt. Ra, the creator (Atum at other times) was at the head of the lists of the kings of Egypt as the first king of the land. He was succeeded by other “gods” including, notably, Osiris. Horus assumed the legacy of Osiris and he was to be perpetually reincarnated in successive human though divine Pharaohs. The last “god” king of Egypt was, therefore, Horus. The Pharaohs, who were his successive reincarnations, were the representatives of the “gods” among humankind (Cf. Van Dijk, 1995:1705).

For the reason that the Pharaohs were thought to be the successive reincarnations of Horus, they, particularly of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 6th, 11th, and 26th dynasties, had their names preceded by the Horus symbol  *Heru* (B.Dict. cxiv, 917-940), perhaps pronounced *Horr*, a probable origin of the Coptic ⲟⲣⲓⲟⲩⲥ (*urou*) (Cf. Crum Dict., 299) and other versions; Ingassana *aur* (Seligman, 1932:431), and Kalenjiin *oorgoi* (royalty). We will treat this in greater detail in Chapter 15. Suffice it to say here that if the Coptic (and Kalenjiin) masculine particle /p/ were prefixed to the Coptic ⲟⲣⲓⲟⲩⲥ, we would end up with ⲡⲟⲣⲓⲟⲩⲥ or ⲡⲟⲣⲓⲟ (Cf. Gardiner, 1927:75), pronounced *p'urou*, or *p'uro*, which is something close to “Pharaoh” but which stands etymologically opposed to the mainstream Egyptological thought with respect to this word as we shall see under the said Chapter 15.

It was in the sense of being recognised as the incarnations of Horus that the Pharaohs were considered divine kings. In contrast, the Mesopotamian kings, for example, were not divine kings because, as Frankfort (1948:231) theorises, the theological aspect of kingship was less impressive, reason being that the monarchy there was not regarded as the natural system within which cosmic and social forces were effective. Kingship there had gained universal acceptance as a social institution, “but nature did not appear to conform to a simple scheme of forces coordinated by the will of a ruler.”

Frankfort here has given us an indirect definition of a divine king: he had to be able to control the social, i.e., human resource, activity and behaviour as well as natural phenomena such as rain which he combined and thereby influenced the growth of vegetation for the benefit of man and beast. The *Oorgoiyoot* equivalent of divine king among the Kalenjiin, like many other Nilotic and other African monarchs of his time, would equally claim to be able to manage such divine

feats and thus justified his exalted position above other human beings. The *Oorgoiyoot* was like Pharaoh who was considered the intermediary between the world of humanity and the divine sphere (Cf. Te Velde, 1995:1731).

Frankfort goes on to contrast the speculations as to the origins of royalty with respect to the ancient Egyptians and their Mesopotamian counterparts respectively:

“Royalty in early Mesopotamia was something not of human origin but added to society by the gods; the king was a mortal made to carry a superhuman charge which the gods could remove at any time, to bestow it upon another... (In contrast) the Egyptian saw Pharaoh as a god” (Frankfort, 1948:237-238).

This argument becomes problematical, however, when we come across names of Mesopotamian kings, who reigned between 2300 and 1500 BC that have a divine determinative indicating that they were considered divine. It is reportedly the later Mesopotamian kings that dispensed with pretended divinity, the prominent one of them being Hamurabi of Babylon, and a good number of his successors who are reported to have progressively ditched the pretence (Cf. Frankfort, 1948:224).

It is legitimate for the student in comparative religion to include the matters of divine kingship in his or her work because the claim to divinity, on the part of those erstwhile kings, alone necessarily pushes the topic into the realm of religion. He or she will need to collect data from the target religions and their host communities that deal with kingships that were considered divine in their respective eras and compile them in such a way that they will form the *tertium comparationis*, i.e., the basis of his or her comparative study. Here are some of the common platforms that can form the necessary *tertium comparationis*:

- a) The kingships to be taken into account are those in which the serving kings were considered godlike and, or otherwise, superhumanly gifted. The extent to which the king was accorded such high divine regard, the innovations and the inevitable idiosyncrasies between one religious system and another, is the stuff of comparative religion.
- b) The kingships taken into consideration ought to be those whose personal health and wellbeing of the reigning monarch were thought to go up and down with the fortunes of their kingdoms and empires. As we said, such kings were considered the representatives of Deity among human kind; the intermediary between the world and the divine sphere. Of great interest, by degree of divinity, would be those reigns that

*Section A: The Methodologies of Oral Tradition, Oral History, Written Sources, 111
and Comparative Research*

ended up in the monarch either being sacrificed or being killed to avoid an onset of personal infirmity which was thought to affect such divine representation on earth, taking down with it the entire nation concerned.

- c) Some divine kingships demanded that a king be buried along with a number of select people. The professional calibre and class of those that went down with him may have differed from state to state and even from age to age within one state. Some kingships, like that of the Kalenjiin's *Oorgoiyoot*, and the Maasai's *Laiboni*, banned the practice altogether, leaving no memory and no sign, except by inference, as to whether it was practised in the more distant past. All the foregoing facts constitute the platforms for comparative analysis.
- d) In some Nilotic religions, such as Asiisianism, the dead were thought to reincarnate in form of newborn babies. Thus the monarch too, who was thought to be divine, was held to be an incarnation of a previous divine monarch. This necessarily perpetuated the divinity of a monarchy that often traced origin back to the personal handiwork of Deity and literal physical descent from heaven of the dynasty founder. The extent, to which this philosophy was upheld from kingship to kingship and the innovative idiosyncrasies, will be of interest to the student of comparative religion.
- e) A divine monarch must be thought to control natural forces at will. The rainmaker-kings are typical of this category. Their alleged abilities and the manner of going about their duties and their paraphernalia of apparatus could be compared.
- f) The divine king, being a virtual "god", typically could not be expected to appear before or otherwise be tried in a temporal court of law, be impeached and forced to abdicate because he could not possibly be expected to part with his congenital divine properties and retire into ordinary life. So he died in office, either of natural causes or through execution and sacrifice. Certainly there were variations to this rule from kingship to kingship and from era to era that could form the basis for comparative work.
- g) The daily administration and the courts were left to authorities that were below and rather far-removed from the king. The king presented himself as an all-knowing earthly being, what with his divinity, and just as he could not be tried before a court of law, he could not, logically, himself try cases, perhaps because he would be

knowing all the facts even before the litigants came before him. Such matters were best left to the judicial and administrative arm. This was the case in the *Oorgoiyoot* ruled parts of Kalenjiinland although at least in one place, Mt Elgon, the *Oorgoiyoot* personally listened to such trivial cases as a hunting dispute between two litigants (Cf. Goldshmidt, 1976:57). Whether or to what extent the king presented himself as one above the law, and how much leverage was allowed to the courts and the administrative arm of government, become the *tertia comparationis* for the researcher in comparative religion where it touches on divine kingship. The more divine a king was held to be, the farther removed he was from day-to-day “trivia”.

Summary of Chapter 2: Comparative Religion

It has been noted that all comparative work, linguistic, religious, or other, involve the basic assumption that the objects to be compared have something in common against which differences and similarities can be stated. Such elements form the common platform, or the *tertia comparationis*. The researcher, therefore, has to have his or her *tertia comparationis* in place, predetermined and defined before embarking on comparative research work.

Like the languages, the world’s religions exhibit certain interrelationships. This may be by way of common laws or by way of other features. All religions are characterised by features that can be reduced to a handful in order to create a manageable platform that would facilitate cross comparison. All religions recognise the Holy, the unholy and the profane. In response to these senses, humans have tended to invent customs and rituals in their own unique ways so that ethnic communities are characterised partly by the way they conduct their affairs in response to the divinity in all its awesome characteristics that such communities have heaped upon it. This is to say that the various world communities have created divinities according to their unique experiences and in the image of their individual societies. The various communities’ idiosyncratic nature of response at all levels, and because of the innovations involved, can be collected for cross-cultural comparison purposes.

The conduct of sacraments, sacrifices and the rites of passage, i.e., the total sum of the rituals and general liturgical approaches, can be so unique as to define a people—even give them a name e.g. Sikh or Jews, and this also can be added to the common platform of items for comparative work.

It has been noted that fanatical followers of certain religious movements, even though theirs may have arisen from a schism, believe that they are so different and special in their belief

*Section A: The Methodologies of Oral Tradition, Oral History, Written Sources, 113
and Comparative Research*

outlook from the adherents of the mother religion that only a separate political entity can cater securely for their religious idiosyncrasy. Such aspiration has manifested itself in extreme sense of nationalism and political uprising.

Comparative religion can also attempt to reconstruct the history of religion and culture. In going about it, it seeks to identify and establish common areas between the religions and how those areas came to be shared in the degree to which the individual features are shared. Such work is undertaken to prove possible inheritance through schisms, migrations or by way of assimilation through either mutual or lop-sided influence.

Africa South of the Sahara has many indigenous religions. Their comparative study may facilitate the understanding of the foundation of religion and the final banishment of the notion of "primitive" religions with which the African theological terrain, among others, has been associated by several western scholars. Some important western scholars, however, have already voiced their disapproval of the term "primitive" in relation to such religions and have recognised certain sophisticated features and philosophies in them that, in their own words, are yet to be matched by the "civilised" western faiths.

We have seen the unfortunate notion persisting although the "primitivity" of the African religions, among others, has been dispelled by scholars such as Mugambi, Mbiti and, significantly, by the western scholars whose compatriots came up with the concept of "primitive" religions: Lévi-Strauss, Stark and Charles Long. It will, therefore, take greater effort on the part of the Africans themselves to vehemently and incessantly demonstrate otherwise by conducting and publishing studies of their own. Mbiti and Mugambi have put in some notable effort towards this end.

Some societies have put in place an ethical code that aims to govern the morals of their members so comprehensively that the core of religion, which involves the belief in and the response to the Holy, seems to take a back seat so to speak. A code of ethics often operates along social structures such as clan and family lines that often, but not always, adopt a totem for identification purposes. The strict clan and family structuring and the identification system also serve to ensure the observance of exogamic rules and other marriage restrictions.

The social structuring and its totemic, or family name, identification, is not enough and members must organise periodic communions when they, jointly under a patriarch, offer libation by way of sacrifice to their ancestors. The devotion to their departed may appear so great that the accusation of ancestor worship may be very tempting to an outside observer. The degree to which these various responses are adhered to and the innovations in between, may interest the student of comparative religion.

Other social groupings whose conduct may be governed by an ethical code are age groups that are often ushered in by circumcision in parts of Africa.

However, India provides the most spectacular example of ethical code management by a caste system that virtually grades families along strict social lines so that the individual and collective spirituality of a given family is more or less subordinated to their station in the social hierarchy. Here a member of the lowest caste, the so-called untouchables, is considered spiritually unwholesome no matter how pious and righteous he or she appears to be. A member of the highest caste, the Brahmin, is considered spiritually way above him or her no matter how unjust, impious and unrighteous he may appear to be in the conduct of his personal affairs and in dealing with others.

A religion cannot operate successfully unless it has a nucleus of specialised personnel that are devoted to conducting it on behalf of the larger society. These are the ubiquitous operatives going by the familiar general term "priests". In certain communities, the priests were the most learned and the wisest sages, the teachers as well as the natural repositories of the community's lore and history besides answering to their priestly calling. However, their key role is the latter wherein they serve as the intermediary between Deity and the people, the interceders with Deity on behalf of the people, the interpreters of Deity to the people and vice versa. The priest is also charged with teaching and transmitting of the faith and performing liturgical act, baptism, circumcision rituals, marriage, burial etc.

Some priesthoods are hierarchical in structure with the equivalent of bishops, priests and deacons in place. Others are not hierarchically structured, there being only one office for the priest, who is assisted by lay assistants. Some priesthoods are inherited, father-to-son, while others may be attained by appointment by the highest authority, such as by the monarch, or by purchase. Some are caste based as in India where the lowest caste may never taste priesthood, which, until only recently, was the preserve of the highest caste, the Brahmins.

In some societies the monarch is the titular priest, an honour that comes to him with the job, or by virtue of his claimed divinity and greater proximity to Deity, being made of the same material as the latter. Often he will appoint professionals to carry out his priestly role on his behalf on a day-to-day basis.

Divine kingship comes about as a result of a monarch being considered godlike, immortal, and superhumanly gifted. He communicates directly with Deity and is able to control natural forces such as thunder and rain. Such monarch is thought to be the reincarnation of a previous king who in turn traces descent from Deity through earlier divine kings.

*Section A: The Methodologies of Oral Tradition, Oral History, Written Sources, 115
and Comparative Research*

The well being of a divine king is believed by his subjects to embody the well being of the people as a whole. A sign of deterioration in his health could lead to the killing of the king, either as a sacrifice or by way of execution. Abdication is not an alternative because the king is innately and indivisibly divine. To his subjects, he is the sole “god” on earth who must keep those divine properties until his death whereupon it is possible for his successor to assume those divine properties on ascending to his throne. The divine king in many cases is buried along with a number of select people who may or may not be quite dead at the time of burial.

We have seen the Christian missionary at work, conducting comparative religion exercises in Africa and in other economically deprived regions of the world. He first learns the religion of the materially impoverished host community, then suggests that although it is good, it just falls short of perfect and that Christianity can help the indigenous faith attain the desired perfect state. This is a thinly veiled claim that Christianity is superior and that the African, or the other economically less developed nations’ religions, are correspondingly inferior. Some authorities in the field of comparative religion have admitted that much of the early comparative work that was undertaken by the Christian missionaries was based on this pedestal.

Chapter 3

Comparative Linguistics

Abstract

Chapter 3 discusses comparative linguistics as a tool for probing genetic relationships between languages. A researcher employs this method upon noticing preliminary evidence of similarities that in initial quantity and quality can justify a hypothesis. Comparative linguistics differs from contrastive linguistics in that the latter concentrates on dissimilarities and pays no attention to either typological or genetic relationship. We will discuss and contrast both in order to make clearer the important difference between the two methods as far as our theme is concerned.

We will explore the lexicostatistical technique of comparing the basic words of language. We will also see why linguists value the basic word order that may characterise languages that are typologically similar, and especially those that seem to exhibit this characteristic from a genetic rather than typological point of view. We will explore other comparative techniques that are grammar based, such as: infixation, morphemic inflexion, noun formation etc.

3.1 Comparative vs. the Contrastive Method

“The subject of comparative linguistics, or comparative philology, as it is called more traditionally, can be broadly defined as the study of genetic relationships between languages” (Katičić, 1970:1). A researcher who chooses to employ this technique often begins from an a priori position that the languages whose relationship is to be investigated have a genetic affinity, the extent of which affinity it is his or her undertaking to ascertain using the available scientific techniques. The supposition for comparative studies is that “only adequate preliminary evidence should exist before commencing with a hypothesis” (Vermaak, 1995a:20).

Unlike comparative linguistics, “contrastive linguistics describes differences between languages (related or not)” (Bennett, 1998:3). According to this definition, therefore, the researcher who chooses to apply a contrastive research method for the investigation of relationships of the targeted languages is often one who holds an a priori position that the languages whose relationship is to be scientifically investigated have little or no genetic affinity. A further definition specifies that contrastive linguistics notes and describes similarities and differences in languages rather than grouping them genetically or typologically:

“typological linguistics focuses on clusters of languages united by some common feature or features, while contrastive linguistics focuses on pairs of languages and

*Section A: The Methodologies of Oral Tradition, Oral History, Written Sources, 117
and Comparative Research*

explores similarities as well as differences between them... contrastive linguistics is an area of linguistics in which a linguistic theory is applied to a comparative description of two or more languages, which need not be genetically or typologically related" (Krzyszowski, 1990:10).

Viewed graphically, both types of researchers—the comparative oriented researcher and the contrastive oriented researcher—would find it worthwhile to concentrate their energies on a pair of languages whose relationship, by intuition, would appear to conform to scenario B and C respectively as represented in the language relationship cline diagram below (Figure 1). The relationship between the pairs of languages (L_3/L_4 and L_5/L_6) of the respective scenarios B and C, is such that they have certain features in common—the pair under scenario C having more features in common than the pair under scenario B.

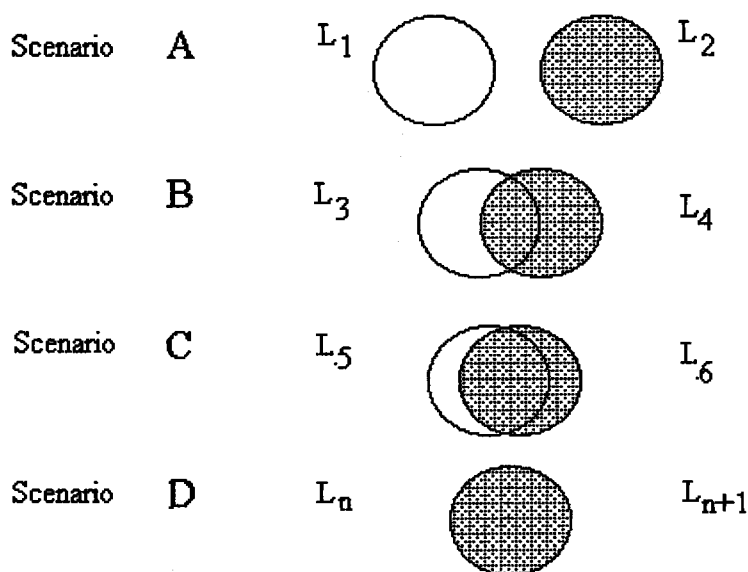


Figure 1. Hypothetical pairs of languages in a cline ranging from those with nothing in common to those that are identical (a modification based on Krzyszowski, 1990:5).

The relationship between L_1 and L_2 under scenario A is such that they appear to intuition at the outset to have no feature in common and, therefore, no one would bother attempting to study the relationship either from a comparative or from a contrastive viewpoint. Both comparative and contrastive ventures assume that there is at least one feature in common, a *tertium comparationis* upon which comparative or contrastive arguments could be based. "The two languages that would have nothing in common could not be compared since there would be nothing that could serve as *tertium comparationis*" (Krzyszowski, 1990:4).

At the other extreme of the cline, the hypothetical languages L_n and L_{n+1} under scenario D, readily appear to intuition to be structurally identical and "the two structurally identical

languages, being identical, could not be compared either since there would be nothing different to consider" (Krzyszowski, 1990:4). Going by the above two arguments, therefore, one may infer that comparative and contrastive linguistic ventures rely on both the presence and the absence of a measure of parallelism in the features of the languages whose relationships are being investigated. The lack of one or the other necessarily cripples the study attempt.

Put differently, if the congruity between the target language pair, as in scenario D, is absolute, then we are talking about one and the same language bearing two different names, and one did not get anywhere comparing and contrasting two identical objects even if they went by different names. Conversely, if the structural incongruity between the pair of languages being considered is as complete as that between a man and a tree (an idea represented by scenario A), then any comparative or contrastive effort would yield little if anything worth the time and effort spent on the exercise. Generally speaking, there are no features, *tertia comparationis*, shared between a man and a tree to enable a sensible comparison to be made between them.

"What makes a purely structural approach to contrastive studies theoretically impossible is the fact that any comparison presupposes similarity as *tertium comparationis* (TC) against which differences can be stated. Therefore languages are structurally comparable in the extent to which they are structurally similar" (Krzyszowski, 1990:4).

All comparisons involve the basic assumption that the objects to be compared have something in common against which differences can be stated. This common platform of reference is (the) *tertium comparationis*, and this could be applied to comparative work with regard to any discipline (Cf. Krzyszowski, 1990:15), indeed as we were able to do with respect to comparative religion. Different objects can be compared and may be found to exhibit similarities in certain respects while they are dissimilar in others. The example is given of the square and rectangle: In terms of the angles they are similar while the length of the sides are different:

"To avoid this circularity, in deciding about formal correspondences, one needs a common *tertium comparationis* outside the formal properties. The underlying meaning of the closest approximations to well-formed word-for-word translations provide such a *tertium comparationis*. Sentences and constructions sharing identical semantic representations at the level of sentence semantics (but necessarily exhibiting certain idiosyncratic differences at the level of word-semantics) are semantotactically equivalent and constitute a constrained set of data for syntactic contrastive studies" (Krzyszowski, 1990:20).

Some grammarians seek to establish the differences or similarities in words and word order in various languages. Thus, specialists in comparative grammar study sound and meaning correspondences among languages to determine their relationship to one another. By looking at

similar forms in related languages, grammarians can discover how different languages may have influenced one another (Cf. MEE 98/8).

By launching into the brief introductory Egypto-Kalenjiin comparative linguistic exercise that forms part of this thesis, the author, by implication and in fact, believes a priori that the nature of relationship between the extinct Egyptian language and the living Kalenjiin language, belongs somewhere between scenarios B and C of Figure 1 above. That is, there are enough incidences of semblance between them as well as enough incidences of difference between them to warrant either a comparative or a contrastive engagement. The author's choice is the comparative method given that he seeks to prove and to establish a long-hidden fact of genetic affinity and neither to disclaim nor to downplay one. This exercise belongs in the following category:

"The Comparative method as the main tool of comparative linguistics serves to find out the data that are thought relevant for the establishment of genetic relationships. The results obtained by such research permit the classification of the languages of the world in accordance with genetic criteria" (Katičić, 1970:1).

3.2 Genetic Classification: a Comparative Linguistic Exercise

There are several approaches to linguistic comparisons. Historical linguistics and the related field of comparative historical studies aim at finding the common genetic background for all groups of languages. Typological linguistics refers to the field of comparative linguistics where languages are grouped together on the basis of the features that they share. Languages grouped together in the same typological group need not be genetically (historically) related. An example is given of English and Chinese, which are not genetically related but they share a number of grammatical properties, such as relatively fixed and grammatically constrained word order, paucity of inflections, and prominence of function words. These shared features place the two languages quite close in a typological grouping, in spite of the genetic distance separating them (Cf. Krzeszowski, 1990:9).

To establish relationships among languages is to study their genealogy and classify them genetically. Unlike a typological classification, a genetic classification involves comparing the sound and meaning units of different languages in order to show common parentage. Like family resemblances among people, shared genetic resemblances among related languages do not depend on where the languages are spoken or when they existed. But members of a language family have a historical connection with one another and descend in common from a

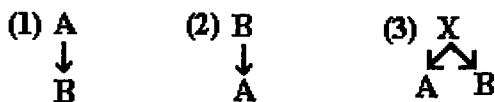
single ancestor. Language family trees show the relationships among languages; the oldest traceable ancestor language is shown at the top of the tree, and the bottom branches show the distance of relationship among current living members of the family.

Related languages are alike in that their grammatical elements and vocabulary show regular correspondences in both sound and meaning. For example, the English word *fish* corresponds to Latin *piscis*, and English *father* to Latin *pater*. Where English has /f/, Latin has /p/; English /th/ corresponds to Latin /t/, and so forth. These English and Latin words are obvious cognates, judging from the consistency in the adoption of the parallel elements /p/ and /f/, /t/ and /th/.

Comparative linguistics is the field in which sound and meaning correspondences among languages are analysed; genetic groups of languages are established; and by comparing modern languages, the hypothetical ancestor languages of such groups are tentatively reconstructed. Such reconstructed precursor languages are indicated by the term *proto-*, as in Proto-Indo-European (Cf. MEE 98/9).

Linguists assume that patterned similarities between languages are not accidental. They assume three possible explanations, once chance is ruled out: (1) mutual influence, (2) parallel development from a similar base, or (3) from a common ancestor. It is not always easy to differentiate between the three; in some cases the experts need to look to all three to explain the similarities between any pair of languages (Bennett, 1998:25). Katičić puts numbers (2) and (3) above in a different way and demonstrates with a diagram as follows:

“The genetic relationship of languages is usually defined by sound laws: two phonemic strings are genetically related if one can be derived by sound laws from the other or both from a postulated third phonemic string. These three possibilities determine the three ways in which languages A and B can be genetically related. All genetic relationship, however complicated they may be, can be reduced to combinations of these three basic patterns of genetic relationship” (Katičić, 1970:7).



3.3 Diachronic and Synchronic Linguistics

Having picked the choice of comparative linguistics for this study, one is then faced with two (or three) possible study approaches within the field of comparative linguistics: either to pursue the diachronic or the synchronic analytical methods (or both). When a language is studied as an object of development and change through time, the study is called diachronic or historical linguistics. Diachronic linguistics is the study of a single language, tracing its development through time, looking at the similarities and differences in several languages at the same time, or combining the two, studying the development of a language family from its common ancestor to the language of today. Synchronic linguistics, on the other hand, examines a single language as spoken at a given time (Cf. Bennett, 1998:3).

Synchronic linguistics is the newer of the two approaches having gained recognition and wider acceptance only early in the 20th century. It has been pointed out that during the last years of the 19th century linguists began turning their attention to non-historical aspects of language organisation and function. They developed ways of studying a language independently of its own past history, as an object functioning at any given time or stage of its existence. The Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure's detailed exposition of the non-historical approach in the posthumous publication, in 1916, of his *Course in General Linguistics*, ushered in the new discipline in linguistics. The new vantage on language came to be known as synchronic linguistics, in contradistinction to historical or diachronic linguistics (Cf. Malone, GME 1993).

Put differently, when a language is studied irrespective of its own past—as an object having specific properties at any given temporal point of its existence—the study belongs to the sphere of descriptive or synchronic linguistics. The recognition of these two analytic perspectives, which provide complementary rather than competing modes of linguistic investigation, has remained a cardinal feature of linguistics (Cf. Malone, GME 1993).

The approach adopted for our present project may fall under diachronic, or historical, linguistics as defined above by Bennett, namely that we are indulging in something akin to “looking at the similarities and differences in several languages at the same time, or combining the two, studying the development of a language family from its common ancestor to the language of today” (Bennett, 1998:3).

3.4 Identifying and Declaring Items for a Comparative Exercise

A classical contrastive (and comparative) analysis consists of three steps that are not always clearly distinguishable in the analysis itself but are tacitly assumed: 1) description; 2) juxtaposition; 3) comparison, i.e., contrastive analysis in the strict sense (Cf. Krzeszowski, 1990:35).

No comparison is possible without a prior description of the elements to be compared: all contrastive studies must, therefore, be founded on independent descriptions of the relevant items of the languages that are to be compared. The fundamental demand on such descriptions is that they should be made within the same theoretical framework so that items that are compared are seen to have an innate similarity, a common platform (Cf. Krzeszowski, 1990:35).

Juxtaposition is crucial in deciding what is to be compared with what and requires a bilingual person to identify the equivalents (therefore bilingual competence is essential). But, even though, there must be a sharing of semanto-syntactic *tertium comparationis* for a comparison to be possible.

The comparison requisite consists of three basic areas:

- 1) Comparisons of various equivalent systems across languages, such as pronouns, articles, verbs, and in phonology consonants, vowels, as well as subsystems, such as nasals, laterals, etc., depending on the degree of "delicacy" of the grammar.
- 2) Comparisons of equivalent constructions, for example, the interrogative, relative, negative, nominal phrase, etc., and in phonology clusters, syllables, diphthongs, and various distributions of sounds.
- 3) Comparisons of equivalent rules (in those models where the concept of rule appears), for example, subject raising from embedded sentence, adjective placement, interrogative inversion, passivisation, etc., and in phonology assimilation, dissimilation, metathesis, etc. (Cf. Krzeszowski, 1990:37).

In cross-language comparisons, the relative character of identity must be remembered: compared items can only be identical with respect to some selected property or properties that they share. There are three possibilities out of any comparison of given properties: identical in some respects and/or different in some respects, or there may be no equivalence at all: If X represents an item being compared in both languages and L_i represents one language and L_j the other, the three possibilities can be presented as follows: 1) $XL_i = XL_j$, 2) $XL_i \neq XL_j$, 3) $XL_i =$

*Section A: The Methodologies of Oral Tradition, Oral History, Written Sources, 123
and Comparative Research*

ØL_j. Possibility No. 1 represents a case where item X in L_i is in some respects identical with an equivalent in L_j; possibility No. 2 represents the situation arising when item X in L_i may be different in some respects from an equivalent item in L_j; while possibility No. 3 represents the situation arising when item X in L_i has no equivalent in L_j (Krzyszowski, 1990:38).

We compare in order to see what is similar and what is different in the compared materials; we can only compare items which are in some respects similar, but we cannot use similarity as an independent criterion in deciding how to match items for comparison since similarity (or difference) is to result from the comparison and not to motivate it (Cf. MEE 98/8).

But as we prepare to conduct a linguistic comparative research exercise, our mind must be preoccupied with an a priori position that is based on sound intuition; that the set of languages whose respective corresponding features we intend to compare, exhibit some constant similarity and cognacy, otherwise there would be no incentive to spur the tedious research work involved. In fact it is the first few hints of cognacy that spur further comparative work. The strictness as to the set of corresponding items to compare controls the exercise from there. The very act of getting involved in judging the cognacy of items, as we have said, already assumes, on the basis of intuition, that they sort of have a common origin. Bennett observes that in practice, definitions of cognacy are greatly varied, that some studies demand very high standards, recognising as cognate only semantically equivalent items that show point-by-point regular correspondence in form and then only where borrowing is ruled out:

“In most cases, a moderate, somewhat flexible standard of cognacy is desirable. We generally restrict cognacy to items whose similarity in form and meaning is too great to be due to chance and where borrowing and onomatopoeia can be ruled out... regularity of correspondence, which is quantifiable, is an important factor” (Bennett, 1998:27).

Bennet (1998:28) suggests that the number of instances that may justify terming a correspondence “regular” is arbitrary but a number between three and five can be set as a minimum.

3.5 Brief Notes on the Comparative Linguistics Techniques Applied in the Thesis

3.5.1 Basic Words: Employing a Lexicostatistical Technique

Lexicostatistics involves judging degrees of linguistic relationship on the basis of the frequency of shared features. For the purpose of either simple counting or weighting, the researcher may elect to use any shared features within the areas of: vocabulary, inflectional morphemes, syntactic patterns and even cultural features. However,

“The most commonly used type of data is lexical, because the number of data is critical... (and) counts of linguistic features other than lexicon are rare because there simply are not enough phonemes or verbal constructions... In counting vocabulary, it is normal to use lists of between 100 and 500 items per language” (Bennett, 1998:34).

A simple count of cognates from a basic word list gives the percentage of genetic relationship of the pair of languages whose historical relationship is being investigated. If, for example, out of 100 basic word list language A and language B share 60 of the words, allowing for (or ignoring) skewing within reasonable levels of deviation on the individual words, then this result reflects a 60% degree of genetic relationship. Some linguists use the 60% retention or the converse 40% loss to calculate the length of time that has come to pass since the two languages were one and the respective speakers one. A pair of languages that exhibit a 30% sharing of basic words, for example, would have drifted apart for a longer period than a pair that exhibits a 60% sharing of the same list (Cf. Bennett, 1998:35-37).

The weighting method awards full point for a regular correspondence and penalises for skewing by awarding less points. No point is given when the items compared are not seen as related. The weighting method of count will award one point for regular correspondence, $\frac{2}{3}$ point for simple skewing and $\frac{1}{3}$ point for multiple skewing (Bennett, 1998:35-36). The aggregate can be worked out in percentage terms when each individual item will have been considered. Because of the penalising for simple and multiple skewing, this method yields less generous results in terms of genetic relationships than does the simple count method.

Skewing reflexes of the protoform of a language or languages come as a result of random changes in one language or both (Cf. Guthrie, 1967:71). “Skewing may be formal, involving replacements of phonological units, metatheses, expansions or truncations” (Bennett, 1998:31).

Opinions of linguists differ on which items should be included in a lexicostatistical wordlist. Katičić admits that the list of basic word items for use in cognate counting is arrived at intuitively and therefore no two people will come up with the same list. However, Katičić (1970:128) is in

accord with the fact that not all strata of the vocabulary are equally open to the intrusion of borrowings—notable area wherein borrowing of basic vocabulary item is not uncommon is

“those semantic classes of vocabulary composed by lexemes denoting objects imported from foreign countries... We know intuitively very well this to be so, but it is not easy to find a methodologically sound criterion by which the borrowed and the inherited elements may be identified.”

Bennett (1998:34) recommends the use of culture-free vocabulary, e.g. body parts rather than iron-working terminology, numerals rather than colour items, contending that cultural vocabulary is readily borrowed. However, in the experience of the author, colour, especially black, white and red, may be included in the statistical count of basic word list because they are emphatically basic and create an impression early on in a child's life. In fact these colours are included in Bennett's list from Morris Swadesh's 200 basic wordlist (Cf. Bennett, 1998:40).

Where the 200 wordlist from Swadesh is concerned, conceivably it may be difficult to obtain all the listed words from dead languages. Bennett (1998:41) recognises this problem and commendably provides for this kind of situation,





“However, it is often more convenient (especially when dealing with extinct languages for which many items on the Swadesh lists are not attested) to devise a list specific to the study... it is desirable to include vocabulary from a variety of semantic domains (not focusing on body parts or verbs of motion, for example). It is important to include both nouns and verbs—but do not draw the list with an eye to emphasising similarity or dissimilarity.”


In the author's experience, with reference to Professor Christopher Ehret's list of 90 basic-word list which he used for cognate counting between various East African languages and dialects, it is possible and more desirable to work with a 90-100 word list. One can eliminate many basic words from a longer list such as Swadesh's according to the degree of “basicness”—the most basic being preferred over the less basic. Words of a less basic nature like “liver”, “leaf”, “swim” and “year” may be excluded from a shorter list of 90-100 basic words.

The 90-100 basic word list is compiled in a neutral language such as English. From there the researcher proceeds to look up the equivalents of the English words in a dictionary of the most shrunken of the languages being compared. Between Kalenjin and ancient Egyptian, for instance, Kalenjin appears the more shrunken, i.e. it has less vocabulary. The researcher would then look up the words in what may be called a Kalenjin dictionary, glossary, or recall from memory and proceed to look the same up in an ancient Egyptian dictionary. Chances are the less-shrunken language (in this example, ancient Egyptian) will have several words for one item. In such a case it is reasonable to take the one that compares to the word from the shrunken language. The logic

employed here is that the shrunken language may have over the years either lost the other equivalents, retaining only one or two, or the shrunken language was a dialect of the less-shrunken language at the time of separating and were, therefore, identical in most basic respects but had their own idiosyncrasies.

For example, there is only one general word for intestines (stomach entrails), stomach, bowels and belly in Kalenjiin; *moet*. But ancient Egyptian, considered as one together with Coptic for the purpose of this argument, has many words for the same item, general and specific but only one* of which comes to very close phonetic unity with the Kalenjiin equivalent *moet*:

(1) $\pi\theta\epsilon\iota\omega$ (*noeish*) (2) $\mathfrak{M}\mathfrak{A}\mathfrak{S}\mathfrak{T}$ (*maht*)* or $\mathfrak{M}\mathfrak{A}\mathfrak{H}\mathfrak{T}$ (*makht*),  Δ \mathfrak{Q} (*makhat*) (3) \square  \mathfrak{Q} (*nenshem*) (4) Δ \square  \mathfrak{Q} (*qen-ti*) (5) Δ  \mathfrak{Q} (*qeb-t*).¹

On account of the Coptic $\mathfrak{M}\mathfrak{A}\mathfrak{S}\mathfrak{T}$ (*maht*) or $\mathfrak{M}\mathfrak{A}\mathfrak{H}\mathfrak{T}$ (*makht*), supported by the close ancient Egyptian  Δ \mathfrak{Q} (*makhat*), it is possible to confirm that the basic word “belly”, which is in Swadesh’s 200- basic vocabulary word list, is shared between ancient Egyptian and Kalenjiin. Particularly if there are many other cognates between the two languages from the same semantic domain of body part names, such as: head, hair, nose, leg etc., there would be little cause to prompt one to consider the incidence of cognacy with respect to “belly” to be a mere coincidence. The virtue of considering lexical items in categories of semantic domains is what Bennet (1998:34) implies when he suggests as follows: “It is desirable to include vocabulary from a variety of semantic domains.”

Linguists generally agree that verbs are harder to drop and, conversely, harder to borrow, Bennett (1998:35) and Katičić—who goes on to examine the differential in the susceptibility to borrowing within the syntactic and substantive areas—concur. Katičić (1970:129) writes:

“So it can be stated that verbs are less open to borrowed morphs than substantives are, and among the morphemes of both (nouns and verbs) big classes there are quite clearly observable differences. Pronouns and numerals are still seldomer borrowed. The class which is least of all exposed to borrowing is composed by the grammatical morphemes. The morphs which serve as their expression are mostly homogenous as to their origin. This holds true even in extreme cases of ‘language mixture.’”

¹ The Coptic and ancient Egyptian words are taken from E. Wallis Budge’s *An Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary* (p. 286a, 378a, 767b, 773a). It is the author’s considered opinion that the transcriptions by western Egyptologists, Budge included, have yet to be improved upon—which they admit—but the transcriptions used above, all the same, are Budge’s and they conform to the western convention. According to the author, that convention awaits a far-reaching African intervention.

3.5.2 Word Order

Even though any two languages may form words or organise sentence elements in the same way, they may not necessarily be genetically related to each other. For example, English, which is from the Indo-European linguistic stock, just happens to share the SVO verbal word order with Kiswahili, a language from the Kintu African linguistic grouping, but they have little else in common and could not, therefore, be genetically related.¹ But, in many cases, two languages that have a similar basic word order have other features in common and the word order sharing in such cases, therefore, only goes to support the genetic relationship that the other features that the languages have in common would be suggesting.

In the Language Universals Project at Stanford University, for example, the American linguist Joseph Greenberg and his colleagues have shown that languages that share a basic word order (such as subject+verb+object or object+verb+subject or object+subject+verb) also share other features of structure (Cf. MEE 98/10).

Languages are often classified into basic word-order types because word order often correlates with other grammatical characteristics. For example, languages with the basic order subject+verb+object (as in English) also tend to have the orders adjective-noun and preposition-noun. On the other hand, languages having the basic order subject+object+verb tend to place the modifiers after nouns, for example, noun-adjective and noun-postposition (Cf. MEE 98/11).²

¹ For example the verbal sentence “father has come home (SVO)” is rendered in Kiswahili *baba ame-kuja nyumbani* Subject+Verb+Object (SVO). In Kalenjin the same is rendered: *kaago-myo kaa paapa*—“has come home father”—Verb+Object+Subject (VOS). Or, alternatively, *kaago-myo paapa kaa*, “has come father home”: VSO.

² Part of this, of course, does not hold true between Kiswahili and English although they are both SVO languages. Kiswahili *mii mrefu* “a tall tree” reads “tree tall” which is noun + adjective and not adjective + noun of the English tradition. Here Kiswahili behaves like one of Greenberg’s SOV languages with noun+modifier characteristic whereas it is a firm SVO language. Greenberg’s generalisation, therefore, may have to be largely confined to the Native American languages.

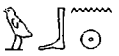


3.5.3 Morphemes and Noun Formation

Perhaps the best definition of a morpheme is as the smallest contrastive unit in the grammar of a language; that is, the smallest element that can express grammatical contrasts. Morphemes may be described as “free” or “bound”. A free morpheme is one that normally occurs as a separate indivisible word, such as “bank”, “no”, “house”, and so on, whereas a bound morpheme can only occur as part of another word, such as the affixes non- and -ic in non-alcohol-ic, for example. Free morphemes may of course also form part of compound words such as car+port (carport) best-known, river+bank etc. (Cf. MEE 98/12).

In syntactic structure, the smallest units that must be posited are not words but morphemes which, as we have seen, are the smallest identifiable units with constant meaning or grammatical function. If a word has no smaller meaning-bearing parts, the word itself is a morpheme. The word dogs, for instance, may be broken down into the morphemes dog and s; unfavourable into un, favour, and able.

Usually one of the morphemes in a polymorphemic word may be regarded as the core, or root, to which the others are successively added as prefixes (preroot elements) or suffixes (postroot elements) to form successively larger units. Dog and favour, are the roots in the words cited above. Prefixes and suffixes adhere to the roots in layers that constitute the morphological structure of the complex words.





Perhaps the most common morphological process among the world’s languages is affixation, in which an affix morpheme, normally with a grammatical, as opposed to a lexical, function, is added to a stem morpheme. In English the type of affixation used in verb inflection is suffixation (for example, walk-ed, walk-s, walk-ing). Many other languages use prefixation (for example, Kiswahili *tembea*, “walk,” (*a-*)*li-tembea*, “he/she walked”; Kalenjiin *bir* “beat up”, *ka-bir* “he/she beat up...” (Cf. Malone, GME 1993). Affixation with respect to verbs will not feature much in the ancient Egyptian-Kalenjiin comparative exercise because the primary sources of words in hieroglyphics exhibit a major shortcoming in this respect. The verbs are retained in their root form and the reader is left to make out from context the appropriate tense in any given situation.

For example the verb  *wbn* “rise” in the sentence  *wbn re m pt* could convey any of: “the sun rises in the sky”; “the sun rose in the sky”; “the sun will rise in the sky”; “when the sun rises in the sky”; “when the sun rose in the sky” etc. (Gardiner. 1927:36). But that is because the scribe did not bother to inflect, i.e. affix an article that would indicate the tense of the verb stem  *wbn*. He left it to the reader to apply according to the context and

*Section A: The Methodologies of Oral Tradition, Oral History, Written Sources, 129
and Comparative Research*

pronounce accordingly. The altered pronunciation and the spelling of the modified verb we do not for now know. Therefore this exercise will not make use of comparative verb inflection because our constraint is to compare like items and yet in this case we are denied one. But just for the record and simply put, Kalenjiin prefixes a morpheme to a verb root in order to modify it to the past tense and suffixes a morpheme to a verb root when it is required either in the present or future tense. The verb stem *cham*, “like”, for example, behaves as follows: *ka-cham* “he/she/it liked”, *cham-e* either “he/she/it likes” or “he/she/it will like”. The prefixal morpheme, which is an equivalent of the English auxiliary verbs “has” or “had”, applies according to the time of the action as follows: *ka-* (a while ago), *ko-* (yesterday) and *ki-* (the day before yesterday and earlier). The suffixal morpheme for the present and future tense is very often an *e* if the object is in the third person and is only seldom an *i* as in *isib-i*, “he/she/it follows...” or “he/she/it will follow.”¹

Ancient Egyptian-Kalenjiin comparative morphological process however has better luck with respect to the affixation to the nominal, or lexical items. This exercise will therefore be in a position to compare the inflectional systems, e.g. how a word changes by inflectional means from a substantive (or primary noun form) to an indefinite or definite form. An example is Kalenjiin root morpheme *moo* “tummy”, “belly” etc. becoming *mo-eet* “the belly” or “a belly”, by the addition of the post-root or suffixal morpheme *-eet*. The ancient Egyptian language will be shown to follow this rule in an identical manner.

The formation of nouns by addition of post-root morphemes to verbs will also be demonstrated. For example the verb root  *mn* “be ill”, with the addition of a *-t* () suffix, transforms it into the noun   *mn-t* “sickness” (Gardiner, 1927:615, B.Dict:296). Kalenjiin will be shown to conform to this rule in an identical manner.

The affixation of a gender discriminating prefix to nouns will also be demonstrated. The favourite prefix *t-* for feminine gender items and *p-* for masculine gender items, a prominent feature in both Kalenjiin and Coptic—and by extension ancient Egyptian—will also be demonstrated.

¹ But if the person is being followed either towards the speaker or towards the second person, the suffixal morpheme becomes a *u*: *isib-u*.

The foregoing practical examples demonstrate the effectiveness of the comparative morphological exercise in word or noun formation when applied for investigation between a pair of languages that share certain features such as Kalenjiin and ancient Egyptian. Word-formation may be classified in terms of form (affixation, compounding, ablaut, and so on) or function. The most common functional classification of morphology is that of inflection and derivation.

Linguists believe that

“inflectional morphology characteristically involves relatively tight systems of grammatical marks—most commonly but not always affixes—on one lexical item without change in part of speech. In grammars the inflected forms of a given lexical item are frequently grouped into paradigms” (Malone, GME 1993).

Part of the above demonstration, however, indicates that both the Kalenjiin language and the ancient Egyptian language are capable of effecting change in part of speech by adding post root elements to the roots such as verbs thus rendering them into nouns. Kalenjiin and ancient Egyptian alike can also, by means of morpheme inflection, make nouns out of adjectives in the same predictable manner as in the foregoing.

3.5.4 Infixation

Infixation may be similar in a number of ways to ablaut, but in its strictest application it is more or less a feature confined to the Semitic languages and may only be used here as a means of ruling out the ancient Egyptian and the Kalenjiin languages from the Semitic stock. An example of infixation is the internal flexion of the Semitic languages; the stem consists of a consonantal framework—the root—and the affix consists of vowels within that framework—the scheme. In the Hebrew word *halakh*, “walked,” *h-l-kh* is “walk” and *a-a* signals the past tense (Cf. Malone b, GME 1993).

Kalenjiin, however, features a limited amount of Semitic-type infixation in certain verbal and nominal forms e.g. respectively: *bir*, *bar*, and *boor* “beat up”, “raid/kill” and “prosper” (from raided property). These words seem to be bound to a consonantal frame *b-r*—a typical Semitic feature. The Kalenjiin words: *Iliel*, *ilaal*, *liil*, *iila*: meaning “flash” v., “kindle”, “beam” v. and “lightning” respectively, exhibit a Semitic internal flexion tendency.

Summary of Chapter 3: Comparative Linguistics

Comparative linguistics, or comparative philology, involves the evaluation of the genetic relationship between languages that the researcher has intuitively predetermined to warrant a study on the basis of a number of similarities. Contrastive linguistics, on the other hand, we have seen, has similar aims although it may involve studying languages that are not genetically related but which may share a feature or structure typologically speaking, that enables or constitutes an excuse for a contrastive analysis work. It is, therefore, left for the researcher to use his or her intuition a priori in deciding whether, given the seeming similarities in linguistic features or consistently differing features therefrom, it is worthwhile launching into comparative linguistics work within a group or between a pair of languages that exhibit such shared characteristics.

Typological linguistics focuses on clusters of languages that are characterised by certain common features but which may never be genetically related. An example is the similar basic word order between English and Kiswahili: Kiswahili and English would be lumped together in a typological cluster that is defined by the SVO word order characteristic but have little else in common. Typological linguistics, therefore, is of limited use to comparative linguistics.

Specialists in comparative grammar study similar forms in related languages to discover how languages may have resulted from or influenced one another. Grammatical elements and vocabulary are shown by comparative grammar to exhibit regular correspondences in both sound and meaning. The linguist's comparative work, like in any other discipline, assumes a priori that such patterned similarities are not accidental.

We have demonstrated the importance of basic words to comparative analysis. Such are the words in any language that are so vital in day to day life that they are inherited almost in as much the same way as the colour of skin and almost as hard to drop or adopt. If any two languages have a reasonable number of such words in common, then they are bound to be genetically related, i.e., descend from one proto-language.

We have explored basic word order as an important feature exhibited by genetically related languages—this sometimes being a symptom of deeper relationships inherent in other linguistic forms such as lexicon and the wider syntactic structure.

We have also demonstrated the importance of morphology to the study of word or noun formation by means of inflexion. It has been shown that the researcher who intends to employ comparative linguistics will want to confirm that the languages being compared form words in a similar manner, or in a consistently parallel manner by affixing, modifying or dropping certain

morphemes. If indeed such consistency is the case between a pair of languages that are being compared, then it follows that those languages are genetically related.

SECTION B

CULTURAL BACKGROUND

Chapter 4

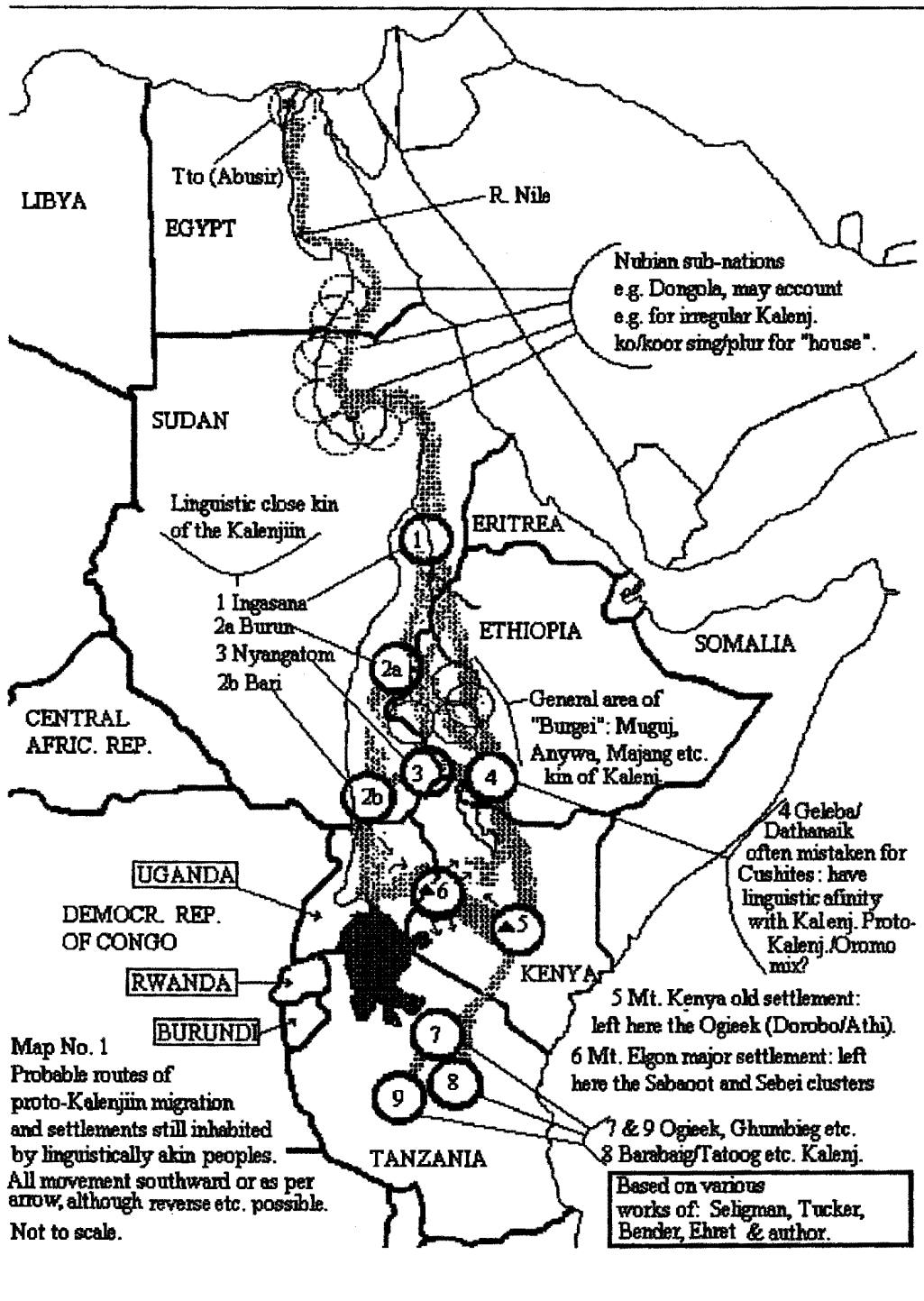
Who are the Kalenjin?

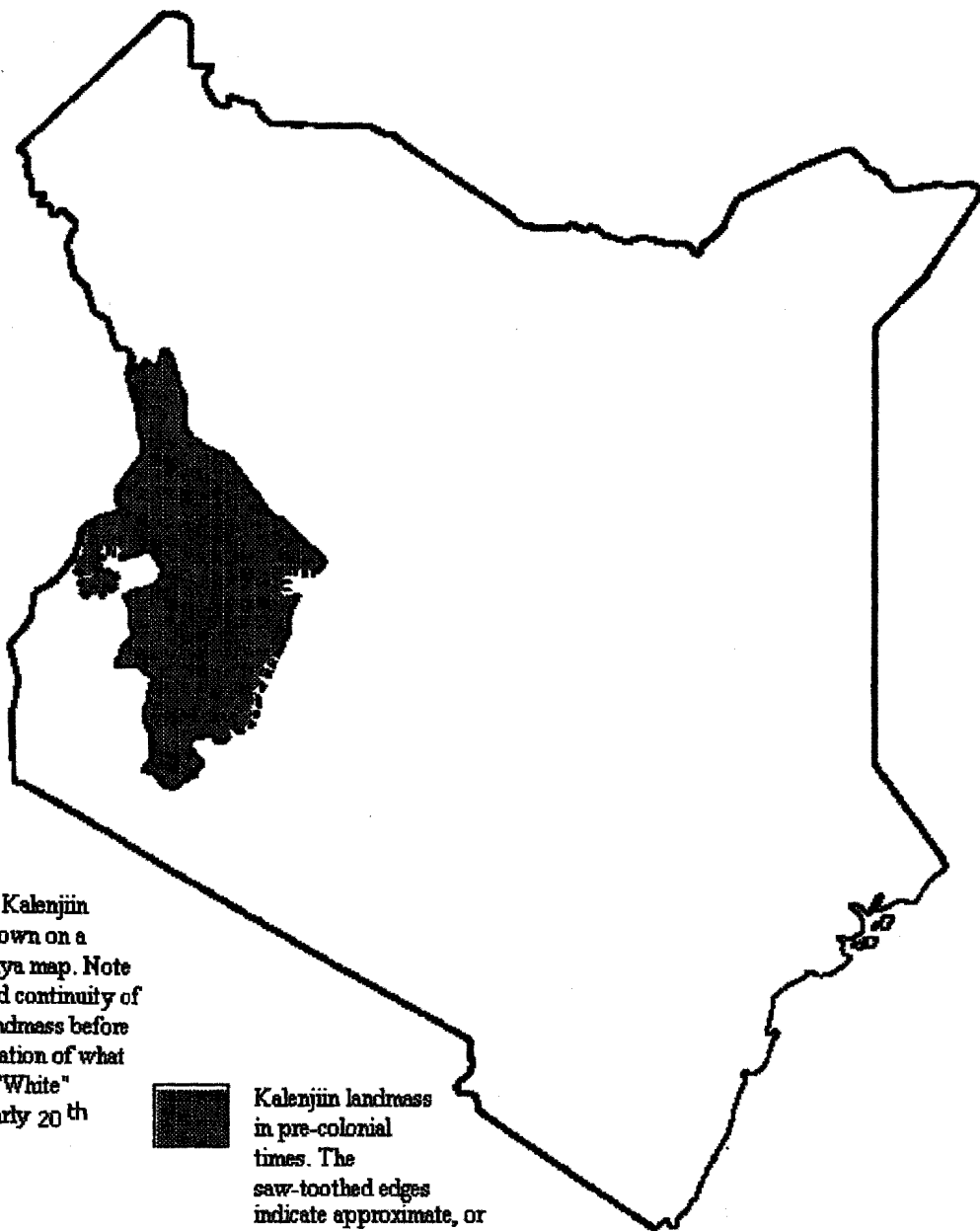
Abstract

Section B comprises Chapters 4, 5 and 6. The present chapter, Chapter 4, attempts to define the Kalenjin people whose religious aspect of life, together with the corresponding beliefs and practice of the ancient Egyptians, otherwise constitute the main focus of the entire thesis insofar as they go to prove an old tradition of origin. The introduction here is, consequently, made largely in relation to their oral tradition, i.e., as part of the process of investigating the tradition.

Although the Kalenjin may be familiar, naturally to themselves, and fairly so to the other East Africans, they may not have been discussed in the context and approach adopted here in any authoritative document so far available to them. Even to those who are familiar with the Kalenjin history et al, a re-introduction of the kind that follows will still be worth their while if only because the author has broken rather drastically with the traditional approaches and with many a "fact" with which they are so familiar. It goes without saying that the reader who is less acquainted with the East African literary terrain will find the introductory account even more indispensable in preparation for better appreciation of the major discussions ahead.

One of the important breaks with the literary past, which is played out here in Chapter 4, is our readmission of and the attempt to re-interpret and rehabilitate the term "Hamite/Hamitic". The discussion on the Hamite and Hamitic issue affords us a chance to describe the Kalenjin and the ancient Egyptians from a physical appearance point of view. The necessarily extensive arguments surrounding the controversial Hamite/Hamitic linguistic and ethnic classification also afford us an opportunity to present the "independent" outsiders' view of the socio-cultural and physical characteristics of the Kalenjin people as recorded during their less contaminated, socio-culturally-speaking, early parts of the twentieth century. The "independent" commentators were the early visitors, anthropologists and colonial officers. Many of those anthropologists and colonial officers, it is admitted, may not have had the best interests of the Kalenjin at heart, but neither were they such great liars even if racial prejudice was their major log-in-eye. With such jaundiced eye, they saw and wrote about things as they appeared to them prior to the massive disorientation by western influence and values. Therefore, none of us, despite our best intentions, can claim

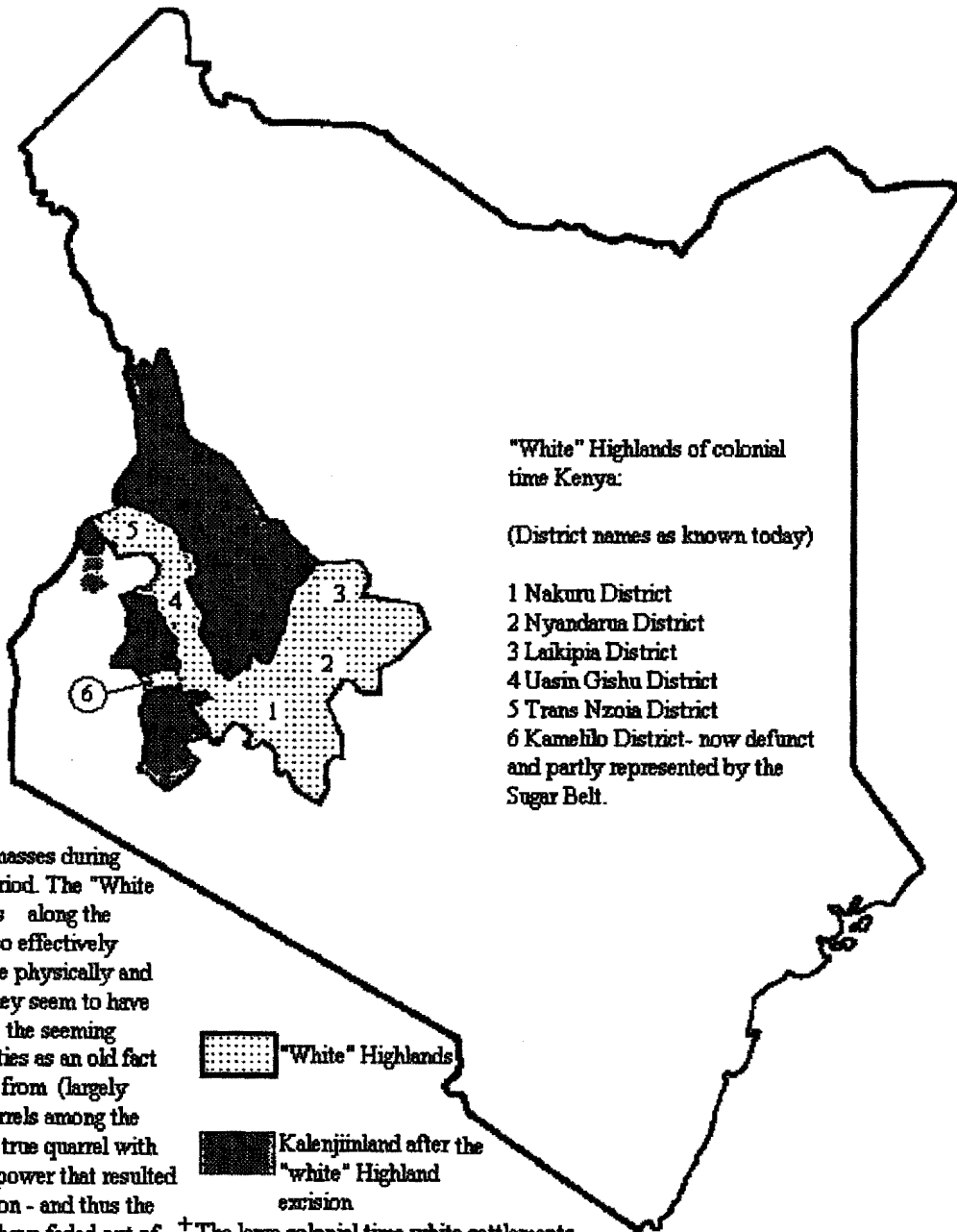




Map No. 2
Pre-colonial Kalenjin
landmass shown on a
modern Kenya map. Note
the unity and continuity of
the single landmass before
the expropriation of what
became the "White"
Highlands early 20th
century.



Kalenjin landmass
in pre-colonial
times. The
saw-toothed edges
indicate approximate, or
unknown (to the author)
boundaries. The then
diminishing presence of Ogieek
Kalenjin in what is today's
central Kenya and parts of Maasailand,
is not indicated here.
Not to scale.




"White" Highlands of colonial
time Kenya:

(District names as known today)

- 1 Nakuru District
- 2 Nyandarua District
- 3 Laikipia District
- 4 Uasin Gishu District
- 5 Trans Nzoia District
- 6 Kameliko District- now defunct
and partly represented by the
Sugar Belt.

Map No. 3
Kalenjin landmasses during
the colonial period. The "White
Highland" belts along the
railway lines so effectively
split the people physically and
socially that they seem to have
come to accept the seeming
separate identities as an old fact
that had arisen from (largely
imaginary) quarrels among the
ancestors. The true quarrel with
the colonising power that resulted
in the occupation - and thus the
split-seems to have faded out of
the people's collective memory.

 "White" Highlands

 Kalenjinland after the
"white" Highland
exsion

+ The large colonial time white settlements
in today's Koibatek, Nandi, Kericho and
Bomet districts, are not shown here.

to “see” and “hear” better than those early commentators all of what they saw and heard at that material and eventful time, even if we took into account such great multiple handicaps as encumbered them.

After the basic introduction, or definition of the people, we enter into the inevitable (as far as our basic theme is concerned), if controversial, Hamitic question. After we have put the infamous “Hamitic hypothesis” in its ignominious place, to the extent that it is possible, and after, hopefully, restoring some honour to the terms “Hamite and Hamitic”, we make an attempt at pinpointing the actual geographical spot in Egypt that is mentioned in the Kalenjiin oral legends as the original home of the ancestors of the Kalenjiin by re-examining the place names that often come up in the legends. We then compare such nomenclature to those found in the historical records of ancient Egypt together with the written works of Egyptologists, notably the eyewitness accounts of the great Greek historian, Herodotus, who visited the Egypt of the 5th century BC. We then attempt to assign a time frame and hypothetical reasons for the proto-Kalenjiin’s departure from Egypt. An extension of the discussion on place names is to be found under Appendix 1. There we relate ancient Egyptian place names to the living Kalenjiin language as a further exercise in the investigation of the Kalenjiin ancestors’ claim and as an important piece of corroborative contribution to the entire enterprise of this project.

4.1 The People

The name “Kalenjiin” refers collectively to a basically pastoral closely related people of the highlands of western Kenya, Mt Elgon region of eastern Uganda, and the highlands of central-northern Tanzania.¹ The various constituent sub-ethnic groups live in a diverse geographical area within and adjacent to the north-south oriented Great Rift Valley fault. Although they are historically associated with the Nile Valley, their choice of habitat here is characterised by high altitude—hence the linguists’ technical name for them: Highland Nilotes (Ehret 1971:3).

The term “Kalenjiin” also refers to the language spoken by the defined people. Each of the sub-nations speaks a distinct dialect of the one language and degrees of mutual intelligibility among these sub-nationalities vary mainly according to the distances that keep them apart. The differences in dialect are chiefly attributable to the vastness of territory and the differing influence exerted upon the respective speakers by neighbours of each individual sub-nation as these neighbours are bound to be different for each one of them.

The very useful collective name, Kalenjiin, according to one influential source, was coined in the mid-forties by a group of students of Alliance High School.²

¹ See Christopher Ehret (1971:11 map). The Kalenjiin speaking peoples and their close kin of western Ethiopia and south-eastern Sudan, are associated with land that lies over 6500 feet in elevation.

² Dr Taaita araap-Toweett in a verbal contribution to a seminar organised by The Davy Koech Foundation, Feb 1994. Those he could remember to have been together with him at Alliance High School, in that historic moment of coinage, *Footnote continued at bottom of next page*

The name Kalenjiin, as it stands, is a contraction of a complete sentence which means “I tell you” or “I have told you...” *ka a lee nychi iin* or *ka a lenchi in(yee)*, “I have told you”. Since most Kalenjiin pronounce the syllable *nch* as if it was *nj*, preferring to utter *ranj* for the English word “ranch”, for example, the same combination in what would have been *Kaalenchiin* gave way phonetically to *Kaalenjiin*. And because of the phonetically poor writing of the language, which practice was the order of the day for most of the century, this soon gave way to the much shorter and more familiar “Kalenjin”.

All Kalenjiin speakers have the habit of drawing the attention of the listener by so stating each time they want to say or re-emphasise something they think must be understood.

During the colonial period and before the collective term Kalenjiin had been coined and taken root, the kindred peoples—those based in Kenya in particular—were referred to in most early colonial official documents and in the general parlance as the “Nandi-speaking peoples”. The designation “Kalenjiin”, therefore, directly replaced the rather mouthful “Nandi-speaking peoples”.

“Nandi-speaking” radio broadcasters, singers—notably one Wilson araap Labooso at the beginning and later Kipchambai araap Tapotuk (both from Kipsigiis)—as well as the pre-independence Kenya politicians, picked up the new coinage and, to tremendous effect, used it to rouse awareness, a sense of belonging to one family, among the kindred peoples. They drummed up the message that urged greater political and social unity among these peoples. The natural bonds, between the many constituent groups, had been ruptured chiefly by decades of foreign occupation of much of the land during the colonial era. With the new neutral unifying name, these groups began to think of themselves even more as one. Other communities began to treat and regard them as such in the course of time.

The name has been universally accepted and it has really stuck although it has little historical base to it. It is similar to calling the Gikuyu *Ate-rere* or the Maasai *A-tejo-maa* and the Englishmen, *I-say*, or *I-tell-you*.

The names, for the Kalenjiin, at that collective level, that are more steeped in history are *Sabiiny*, *Sebei*, *Sabaoot*, and *Myoot*. As alluded to earlier, the Sabiiny would appear to have been part of the ancient Egyptian military clan called the Calasiries. As mentioned above, the province of this “warrior tribe”, referred to by ancient Greek records as *Sebennies*, included the delta area of Egypt and, in fact, the middle “finger” of the Nile where it touches the Mediterranean Sea was, in those times, called *Sebennitus* by the Greeks (Herodotus Book II).

were araap Ng'ulat, John Kotut Koitie, William Maritim, Richard Koskei, Benjamin s/o Kimnyigei, araap Seroney and a
Footnote continued at bottom of next page

Sebei is only another way of saying *Sabiiny* or *Sapiiny*. The Kalenjiin of Uganda who occupy a part of that country's slopes of Mt. Elgon and whose district goes by the same name Sebei—and governed from the town of Kapchorwa—go by the *Sebei* version of the name.

Sabaoot is the version of the very same name, *Sabiiny*, that the Kalenjiin who occupy part of the Kenyan slopes of Mt. Elgon, collectively go by. The version *Sabaoot* also appears in ancient records, in various contexts but always in relation to the military notion. "It is the descriptive name of God in Hebrew, literally meaning 'of the armies'". In Greek it comes in the form: *Κιριος Σαβαωθ* (*Kirios Sabaoth*), "Lord Almighty."¹

Most of the Elderly Kalenjiin people interviewed said that all Kalenjiin were called *Sabiiny* or *Sabaoot* up to Mt. Elgon from where sections later hived off, giving rise to the present Kalenjiin sub-nations and their relatively new names. But the Kalenjiin sections that stayed put at the slopes of the volcanic mass that is Mt. Elgon, retained the original name, or different versions of it. And indeed it is only natural, in any such situation, that those who migrate find or are given new names but those who remain behind retain the old name.

Myoot was also mentioned in some of the research interviews as being one of the original names for the Kalenjiin. It also exists in written records that date back to early in the 20th century. More about this one is said further below, this being one name that is used frequently throughout this thesis in reference to the Kalenjiin people of those earlier times. It is used quite interchangeably with the expression "proto-Kalenjiin".

Myoot was picked on because the equally competent *Sebei*, *Sabiiny*, or *Sabaoot* would bring about confusion now and then if used as a collective "proto" name for all the sub-ethnic groups. Such confusion would occur because there are sub-ethnic groups today that are still commonly known by these versions of the original name while there are others of the larger stock who are not. And, yet again, there may be certain sub-ethnic groups that never were *Sabiiny* and yet speak the Kalenjiin language.

Myoot is free of the first malady because there is no single group that still refers to itself as *Myoot*. On the other hand no one really knows whether there is a Kalenjiin group that was not called *Myoot* in its more ancient past. This latter historical vagueness allows *Myoot* the benefit of doubt that all the other alternatives lack.

The designation Kalenjiin continues to be used here albeit this being, historically speaking, the most incompetent of them all. It is a mere linguistic grouping terminology, but one just has to

Benjamin from Nakuru.

¹ *The Greek New Testament* (Dictionary). United Bible Societies, 1983.

recognise its wide contemporary usage. It is also convenient because it encompasses all the "Kalenjiin"-speaking people in this part of Africa. Some of them, e.g. the Barabaig, the Ogieek (Dorobo) and others, may not have been among the Sabiiny (Sebei or Sabaoot). The latter are those that, for a time, inhabited the slopes of Mt. Elgon before branching out into the major sub-ethnic groups of today in a gradual expansion process that began almost five centuries ago or, as the elderly informants would put it: "the age-set cycle has rolled four times since". A full cycle ideally takes 120 years.

The main body of the vast and diverse Kalenjiin community is to be found in Kenya. It comprises the following sub-ethnic groups: Kipsigiis, Nandi, Tugen, Keiyo, Pokoot, Merkweeta (and Eendo, Almo, Kiptani, Barokot and Sengwer [Kipkorir, 1971]), Sabaoot clusters (Koony, Sapiiny, Pook and the Pong'omeek) of Mt. Elgon area, Terik and Ogieek (Dorobo).

As already mentioned, there are many Kalenjiin sub-ethnic groups outside of Kenya. In Tanzania we find a significant concentration in the district of Mbulu. But there are many clusters of tiny populations outside this district farther west and south, some of whom are facing extinction as entities distinct from their Kintu-speaking neighbours. These Tanzanian Kalenjiin speakers are collectively referred to officially as Barabaig although this is a designation relevant to only one group. The more appropriate collective name for them would probably be Tatoog, or Datoog, which also appears in Tanzanian records. Tatoog or Datoog would seem to suggest "the people of Tto" which, as we have noted above, translates to modern Abusir in Egypt. The name Datoog, or Tatoog, would tend to tally with the name of one of the more remotely related (to the Kalenjiin) group still living in old Burgei, i.e. northeast of Lake Turkana, called the Dathanaik.

The Barabaig may be another former member of the Calasiri military wing, as listed by the Greek visitor to Egypt, Herodotus of 500 BC. He mentioned the Pharbaithis alongside the Sebbenies and others. Barabaig and their kin speak a probable dialect of ancient Egyptian akin to Kalenjiin, observe all Kalenjiin customs and have therefore been classified here under Kalenjiin.

The Kalenjiin of Kenya refer to all Tanzanian non-Ogieek Kalenjiin people as *Mang'orori* and believe that they migrated from Kenya to *Naata* (Tanzania) as a result of pressure from the later waves of incoming Kalenjiin as well as in adventure. The more likely scenario, as we have noted, is that the Barabaig and Co. were cut off from the rest of the Kalenjiin in Kenya and driven south deep into Tanzania by the Maasai.

The other "Barabaig" are Gisamjeng, Iseimajeg, Rudageing (these two live in Ruwana Valley of Musoma area), Buradig, Bajud and Dororojeg of the plains running south along the Sibiti River from Lake Eyasi. There are also the Ghumbieg, Mangadg, Reimojig, Daragwajeg,

and Bianjid, who extend along the Wembere River in Singida area as far as Itigi. (Ehret 1971:3-6).

These people are apparently grossly under-enumerated given the area they cover and the number of independent units. The official Barabaig tally for 1969 Tanzania Census was only 48,000. At the rate of 26 per cent increase per decade—which is the estimate for other less fertile Kalenjiin—they should now number around 96,000. But like happens to the rest of the nomadic/pastoral peoples, the Barabaig are bound to suffer under-enumeration census after census.

Some of these Tanzanian Kalenjiin speakers were the people who were briefly studied at the close of the 19th century by the German ethnologist, Merker, who concluded in his book, *Die Masai*, that they were a most pure race that was representative of ancient Egyptians.¹

The Sebei area of eastern Uganda, as mentioned above, is home to the Sapiiny or Sabiiny, Mbai and Sor Kalenjiin who also exist in these independent subdivisions but are officially collectively referred to as *Sebei*.

A few more rather distant—linguistically and geographically—kin communities are to be found in eastern Sudan and western Ethiopia. They were formerly generally referred to as Shanqilla (Bender 1975). Some of them are somewhat suggestive of a cross between Maasai and Kalenjiin linguistically and culturally. They could fall into either classificatory grouping and a few of them are listed here with that caution in mind: Nyangatom, Anywa, Kunama, Muguj, Bari, northern Lang'o, and Ingassana. Ethiopia's (also Kenya's) Nyangatom and Anywa as well as Ingassana of Sudan, appear to be closer linguistically to the Kalenjiin proper. Ingassana is a conglomeration of small Hamitic-speaking groups of whom the early anthropological couple, C.G. and Brenda Seligman (1932:429), say do not call themselves any name in particular, the collective name Ingassana being a term attributed to the Arabs. The various constituent groups of Ingassana call themselves, *Jok Tan*, *Jok Kuthulok*, *Jok Gor* etc.²

Judging from the kinship terms, language and various customs listed by the Seligmans (1932) and Bender (1975), one can say that if there were any community or communities that represented a linguistic mid-way between the mainstream Kalenjiin, Maasai and the Luo, they are the Ingassana and the Lang'o of Sudan; The Anywa and the Majang' of Ethiopia.

¹ Merker refers to these people as Semites. Semites in Merker's view were black people (1904:ch.1).

² Ingassana is attributed to Arabic, meaning "thankless ones" because they had initially rejected Islam—Lionel M. Bender (1975). *Ingasana* is a Kalenjiin word meaning "village", now more often pronounced *inganasa*. Sir Claud Hollis who, as mentioned already, studied the Nandi during the first decade of the century, found the Nandi pronouncing the word *ingasana* and he duly listed it that way in the "Nandi Vocabulary" section of his book.

The largest single Kalenjiin sub-nation is the Kipsigiis group, most of whose dialect speakers are to be found in Kericho, Bureti and Bomet districts of Kenya. At an estimated population strength of 1,250,000 (1999),¹ the Kipsigiis comprise more than one third of the entire Kenya Kalenjiin population. All the Kipsigiis, in the three districts and beyond, speak one uniform dialect. That degree of dialectal homogeneity that spans such vast administrative and territorial units, is not matched anywhere else within the entire Kalenjiin homeland.

In the numerical pecking order the vastly more famous Nandi come a distant second at an estimated 780,000 (1999).² The smallest Kalenjiin sub-ethnic group could be any one of the many tiny independent communities that live in small locations attached to larger districts which are dominated by one or the other of the major Kalenjiin sub-nations.

Going by a quick estimate that considers the 1989 Kenya census figure of just over 2.4 million for the Kalenjiin, and the “infamous” annual growth rate of 4.2%, the 1999 population figure for the entire Kalenjiin nation was about 3,650,000 souls.³ The community occupied the fourth place in the Kenya population pecking order according to the 1989 published government census.

For reasons of similarities in martial inclination, socio-cultural and economic practices and, to a considerable degree, language, the Maasai (including the Samburu) are often psychologically lumped together with the Kalenjiin by other communities. Indeed over twenty per cent of the basic vocabulary (Cf. Ehret, 1971:29) and much of the basic structure of language, are shared by the Kalenjiin and this grouping. The Teso and the Turkana, who speak what is virtually one common language, are also included in this psychological—and often political—union.⁴

¹ This represents an extrapolation of the 1989 Kenya Census figure at the rate of 4.2% per year. It is confined to the Kalenjiin element in Kericho, Bureti and Bomet Districts. The Kipsigiis populations outside the three Kipsigiis districts are not included in the tally. Such would be those in Kilgoris (formerly part of Narok) where the Kalenjiin—mostly Kipsigiis—made up about 30% of the population of the old larger Narok District, according to the 1989 national census; a sizeable number in Nakuru, Nandi, Uasin Gishu, Laikipia and Trans-Nzoia.

² This also represents an extrapolation of the 1989 Kenya Census figure for the Kalenjiin element in Nandi at the rate of 4.2% per year. The figure includes the large Kipsigiis population settled all over Nandi (who are rapidly becoming Nandi in speech anyway), and the more “nationalistic” Terik of the Terik location who have tenaciously hang on to their identity against all odds perhaps for centuries. The figure also includes estimates of Nandi populations in Uasin Gishu and Trans-Nzoia.

³ The more conservative population increase rate of 26% per annum yields an estimated 3,024,000 population figure for all the Kalenjiin in 1999. The average between the conservative and the higher figure yields 3,337,000 souls to be expected from the 1999 official census tally.

⁴ The Maasai, Samburu and Turkana, were referred to by the authoritative Weekly Review, as “natural allies” of the Kalenjiin. Issue dated September 27th 1991. A new acronym, probably meant to be derogatory by groups outside the indigenous pastoralist Rift Valley communities, is doing the rounds: KAMATUSA: Kalenjiin Maasai, Turkana and Samburu (the Teso are often forgotten for some reason, but probably because, unlike all the former, they do not live in the Rift Valley Province). However, there is a Kalenjiin term for all the pastoral peoples: *porop*, or *poropeek*. Perhaps it would be politer to use such a self-name in collective reference to the pastoralist grouping.

All the latter peoples, being Hamitic-speakers like the Kalenjiin, truly have a lot in common with the Kalenjiin and, given two thousand or more years back in their history, may have actually been one. For that matter, a lot of Maasai, Samburu, Teso, and Turkana cultural aspects, have been included in support of the theme of this thesis.

These kin of the Kalenjiin in Kenya, put together, total about 1,150,000—extrapolating at 4.2% p.a. from the 1989 census figures. Therefore the population in Kenya touched on most by this work, may lie anywhere in the range 4.5 to 5.0 million (1999).

4.2 The Hamite Factor

These four and a half to five million or so people in Kenya, together with millions more in eastern Uganda, eastern Sudan, western Ethiopia and northern Tanzania, are the people referred to here variously as the: Hamites, Nilo-Hamites, Highland Nilotes and Plains Nilotes. The word “Nilotic”, which is linguistically, geographically and historically applicable to them as an adjective—because the Nile Valley was their original abode—is sparingly used here in reference to them owing to the fact that the same is more often associated with the western Nilotes: the Luo, Acholi, Dinka etc. However, these latter have of late been re-baptised River/Lake Nilotes. All these linguistic and ethnic labels are the inventions and re-inventions of visiting anthropologists and linguists to the exclusion of the Africans themselves. Nevertheless, it is clear that “Nile” remains the common strain that runs through all these labels except when we talk of the Hamites without reference to “Nile”. But, strictly speaking, there is no Hamite who is not originally of the Nile Valley.

The following discussion incorporates the issue of race. Under other circumstances such a divisive issue as race by the excuse and convenience of which Africa and the Black Diaspora has suffered in the hands of invaders, colonisers and slavers, would not be discussed in the serious work of a black person whose focus did not include such racial abuse. But there are two important reasons why the “race-based” discussion will be found necessary at this stage:

- (1) The author is almost going against the new tradition by seeking to readmit and use the adjective “Hamitic” with reference to the languages of the Kalenjiin and kin. A thorough discussion that seeks to put in perspective such an indispensable yet potentially alienating terminology is therefore called for and will shortly be entered into.



PICTURE 1: Isis who was worshipped in Egypt for many thousands of years BC and well into the early Christian Egypt, parts of Asia and Europe. This ancient portrait, which was carved in black granite, is included here so that it may objectively and accurately illustrate the concept of the ancient black Egypt that this thesis partly bases its authority on. The ancient Egyptians, like most others, perceived and portrayed their deity and saints in their own likeness—*Museum of Egypt, Cairo. Picture by the author*



PICTURE 2: Head of Athena the Greek Goddess of the Cities, Arts, Industry, Wisdom and War. During the dying years of Isis worship in Egypt, Western Asia and Europe, Athena was a contemporary Goddess. It is clear here that as the black people of ancient Egypt portrayed their Isis in their likeness, so did the white people of the Greek lands portray their Athena in their own likeness—*picture acquired through the Israel Museum, Jerusalem < Israel Antiquities Authority.*



PICTURE 3: The famous Sphinx of Giza, Egypt, exactly as seen by Napoleon Bonaparte and his artists who sketched it in 1798. Excited Frenchmen are taking measurements after climbing to the top of the Sphinx's head on a tall ladder. Thought to bear the looks of one of the Pharaohs, Chephren, of 4,500 years ago, the Sphinx has been deteriorating over the years since and at this rate this most African of faces, the strongest reminder of the looks of the population of its time, will cease acting as a reminder of that era. The loss of much of the nose is blamed on a Mameluke ruler (Mamelukes ruled 1250-1517 AD) who made it a habit to use the Sphinx as a shooting target. However, this does not explain why most other important monuments have their noses broken, their more delicate parts, like ears, still intact—*Picture from Archaeology, May/June 1999.*

(2) Many people have grown up with the misleading picture of Hamites—namely that these were white or light-skinned people—and would instinctively consider the use of the term “Hamite”, or its derivative “Hamitic”, in relation to the Kalenjiin and kin, awfully dissonant with the “facts” as they know, if not in outright bad taste.

We must stress here that the term “Hamite” from the point of view of some of its chief purveyors, the early western anthropologists (further below), first and foremost meant those Africans who appear to us to project, and history as well as geography supports it, European and Asian admixture. However, the term “Hamite” is misapplied as far as it is used to describe such a hybrid product. To intuition, the modern populations of Egypt and most of the rest of North Africa reflect the mixture of black African blood with European and Arab blood in varying proportions. The original Negro or Hamite, i.e. the black African content, has been diluted a great deal. The same has happened to Mediterranean European populations; they appear to intuition to have imbibed a good deal of black African and west Asian blood in general. As a result, they have ended up with darker skin and finer features than is characteristic of their northern kin.¹ It is apparently with this modified southern species of European in mind that Seligman (1966:62), surmises as follows in his *Races of Africa*

“The Hamites—who are ‘Europeans’, i.e. belong to the same great branch of mankind as the whites—are commonly divided into two great branches, Eastern and Northern.

(1) “The Eastern Hamites comprise the ancient and modern Egyptians (in the latter case recognising the infusion of foreign blood in the upper classes), the Beja, the Berberines (Barabra or Nubians), the Galla, the Somali, the Danakil, and (though mixed with Semites and Negroes) most Ethiopians.

(2) “The Northern Hamites include the Berbers of Cyrenaica, Tripolitania, Tunisia, and Algeria (often conventionally distinguished as Libyans), the Berbers of Morocco, the Tuareg and Tibu of the Sahara, the Fulbe of Western Sudan, and the extinct Guanche of the Canary Islands.”

Perhaps the remarks about the Copts, apparently the most mixed race of modern Egypt, made by another western scholar, Volney, in his *Travels in Syria and in Egypt*, 1787, are more exact in this respect and less contentious than Seligman’s:

¹ According to Herodotus, 5th century BC, during his lifetime there were black people living in and around the Colchis, i.e. the general area to the east of the Black Sea and in other parts. Because black people are no longer in those areas of South-eastern Europe, but in their place we find dark-skinned Europeans with black hair and facial features suggestive of African input, we must infer, with justification, that intermarriage took place, absorbing and altering Herodotus’ black Colchians. But in the process, those blacks also left their mark that is visible to all of us. Read Herodotus’ own observation, from *Histories*, Book II, further on.

“They all have a bloated face, bulging eyes, a flat nose, thick lips, in short, a real mulatto face. I was tempted to attribute it to the climate but after I had been to see the Sphinx, its looks provided me with a clue to the enigma. In seeing this typically Negro face in every respect, I remembered that remarkable passage by Herodotus in which he said: ‘For me, I consider that the Colchians are a colony of Egyptians because like them, they have black skin and frizzy hair,’ which means that the ancient Egyptians were real blacks of the same stock as all indigenous Africans” (Volney, 1787:74—Diop, 1996:122).

In the following discussion, the terminologies Negro and Negroid, which were much abused and thus now may be considered offensive, depending on context, will pop up now and then owing to the inevitable presence of extensive quotation from early western sources. So will the ethnic and linguistic terminology “Bantu” whose abuse and subsequent dislike was and is confined to South Africa but which terminology is accepted with pride elsewhere in Africa as an accurate linguistic—as opposed to racial—classification.

The attempt by certain scholars to draw a “racial” map of Africa by applying the variables Bantu, Negro, Hamites, Semites, Sudanics and Bushman (e.g. Seligman 1930 rev.1966), seems to have failed owing to the fact, which they appear not to acknowledge, that all indigenous Africans are members of one major race whose physical variations are analogous to the internal physical variations found in Asia, Europe and elsewhere. These variations are within a range and that range is socially and geographically characteristic of a continuum and not of a dichotomy. All the indigenous “races” of Africa differ a lot more with Europeans and Asians respectively than they differ amongst themselves.

If a racial group be defined as “a group of peoples who have certain well-marked physical characters in common” (Seligman, 1966:4) then all indigenous Africans form one race chiefly characterised by: woolly black hair of various texture—but never straight; brown, dark-to-black skin; full, or rich rather than thin lips and, at any rate, pencil-line lips are not to be seen; relatively broader noses of various shapes—but neither hooked nor thin and long even when not so broad.

Albert Mosley’s (1997:103) idea of race concurs with that of the author:

“A population definition of race does not assume that there is any one trait or set of traits that each black or white person must have. In fact, in a representative sample of black people, many might lack one or more of the traits deemed typical for black people. It is this kind of variation that the populational concept of race countenances and leads us to expect. In every population there is variation. A race is simply a particular population of human beings that shows a higher frequency of certain typical traits than another group. But none of these traits are in themselves racial traits.”

Early western anthropologists, beginning from B. Struck, 1911—to whom the origin of the term “Nilo-Hamites” could be traced (Cf. Bender, 1975 various)—and including the colonial administrators, classified the Kalenjin and kin as Nilo-Hamites. The Nilo-Hamitic family of languages was, in turn, considered a member of the larger Nilo-Saharan, or Nilo-Saharan linguistic super-phylum. That super-phylum in the words of Greenberg (1963:130) is “focused on the White Nile from Uganda to Egypt, and the Blue Nile in the Ethio-Sudan border area, with a westward extension across the Sahara (and adjoining Sahel belt) as far as Mali”.

The coining of the term “Nilo-Saharan” is attributed to the American linguistics expert, Greenberg (1963:130) while the term “Nilotic” was introduced by the German explorer J. Ludwig Krapf in 1850. The Maasai type of Nilotic languages were grouped together under the term “Nile languages” in 1868 by Friedrich Muller and the Kalenjin language’s, among others’ membership of it was recognised by Ernst von Hohnel in 1890. The grouping of the Kalenjin languages, Tatoon included, under “Southern Nilotic”, is attributed to Oswin Köhler (Cf. Distefano, 1985:32).

A further distinguishing linguistic idiosyncrasy between the Kalenjin type of languages and the Maasai type of languages on the one hand and the Luo, Acholi, Shilluk type etc. on the other, was realised by the early linguistic scholars of Eastern African languages. That was when those western scholars classified the Kalenjin/Maasai types “Nilo Hamitic”. The “Hamitic” tag was appended because these languages were thought to be a mixture of Nilotic and Hamitic (ancient Egyptian type) languages. The linguistic pair, A.N. Tucker and M.A. Bryan, shared this view as did G.W.B. Huntingford before them (Cf. Distefano, 1985:33).

Seligman (1966:102), on his part, tried to describe and contextualise geographically and historically the people, culture and the language that he and fellow western anthropologists had persisted in calling “Nilo-Hamites” and “Nilo-Hamitic”:

“The Nilo-Hamites are limited to East Africa and East Central Africa. They occupy much of Kenya, with that part of Uganda which runs northwards to the Sudan boundary, as well as some of the northern portion of Tanzania... They have arisen as the result of the mixture of Hamite with Negro, and as the name implies they have a considerable amount of Hamitic ancestry, i.e. definitely more than almost all the Bantu and Nilotes. This relative preponderance of the Hamitic side of their ancestry is reflected alike in speech, appearance, and culture. They all speak languages of Nilotic type, and although their skins are dark their faces are generally Negroid rather than Negro, the difference being especially obvious in the nose. Culturally they are predominantly pastoralists...”

In Seligman's time and throughout the intellectual reign of the western anthropologist in Africa—which extended from the 19th to the 20th centuries—Africa's population was seen in terms of the reduced list of variables that they called Hamite, Negro, and the supposed mixture of the two. The supposed mixtures were in turn further classified depending on the perceived preponderance of one chief variable over the other. We have seen the definition of "Hamite" and "Nilo-Hamite" according to them—and we will come across it several times in the following pages. But the descriptions can only be understood if the definition of their concept of the other supposed chief variable can be grasped:

"According to Haddon, the main physical characters of the true Negro are a black skin, spiralled hair, a tall structure averaging about 68 inches, moderate dolicocephaly (average cephalic index 74-75), a flat broad nose, thick and often everted lips, and frequently a considerable degree of prognathism... The true Negro is mainly confined to the neighbourhood of the Guinea coast, including Nigeria and the Western Sudan, with some part of the Cameroons and perhaps the Congo. The rest of Negro Africa consists of Negroes hamiticized to a varying extent: on the one hand the Bantu, on the other the Nilotes and 'Nilo-Hamites'" (Seligman, 1966:31, 32).

Of late, however, many black intellectuals¹ have been trying to fight the word "Hamite". One reason has been that they dislike its purported linkage to one Ham who is assigned a scandalous role in the Bible. Another major reason why the black scholars have come to detest the designation Hamite has had a great deal to do with what has been called "Hamitic hypothesis". This was characterised by the assumption on the part of certain early white anthropologists and colonial administrators (e.g. Emin Pasha, Sir Harry Hamilton Johnson and most prolifically C.G. Seligman through his extensive works cited generously in this thesis)² that much of civilisation came from Egypt to the rest of Africa to the south. That the conveyors of the civilisation were light-skinned Egyptian natives who came and dominated the black-skinned southern peoples in all spheres. The most visible example given was that of the Hima and the Tutsi ruling classes of parts of Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, who evidently possess one physical trait or other that are associated, if ambiguously, with the Caucasian stock (Cf. Berger, 1980:68).

¹ The Afro-centric works edited by Ivan van Sertima (*Journal of African Civilizations*) and those edited by Amon Saba Saakana of Karnak House are among the leaders, while Prof. H. Mwanzi in his *A History of the Kipsigiis* 1977, made an effort to demonstrate that African civilisation and influence, far from moving from north to south of the continent, actually began in the south then moved northwards. His model has the Kintu-speaking Gusii people "civilising" a forest-dwelling hunter-gatherer people who then come out of the forests into the open and, wallah! there materialised the Kipsigiis! It is shameful that it had to take an American doctoral student, Distefano (1985), to come all the way and blast, quite successfully, gaping holes through Mwanzi's claim that the Kipsigiis resulted from a fusion between the Ogieek hunter-gatherers and the Gusii.

² *Emin Pasha in Central Africa*, 1888. Sir Harry Johnson, *The Uganda Protectorate*, ii, 1902:616—Seligman, 1932:4.

The personification of the “Hamitic Hypothesis” was the works of Seligman who, with nothing to support the claim would make such a far-reaching statement as this:

“Indeed it would not be very wide of the mark to say that the history of Africa south of the Sahara is no more than the history of the permeation through the ages, in different degrees and at various times, of the Negroes and the Bushmen by Hamitic blood and culture. The Hamites were, in fact, the great civilising force of black Africa from a relatively early period, the influence of the Semites being late and in the main confined to the ‘white’ areas north of the Sahara inhabited by Hamitic peoples.” (Seligman 1966:8).

The above statement was written by Seligman in 1930.¹ But his categorical claim that the ancient Egyptians (Hamites) were ‘white’, goes against the archaeological observations of Batrawi (1946) and others and, most importantly, against the observations of an eyewitness: the man who personally came into physical contact and interacted with the ancient Egyptians and personally wrote unambiguously about the encounter: Herodotus. Herodotus (Book II) was trying to explain the origin of a certain people called the Colchians, who lived near the eastern shore of the Black Sea in the present day Republic of Georgia when he said:

“For it is plain to see that the Colchians are descended from the Egyptians; and this that I say I myself noted before I heard it from others. When I began to think on this matter, I enquired of both peoples; and the Colchians remembered the Egyptians better than the Egyptians remembered the Colchians; the Egyptians said that they held the Colchians to be part of Sesostri’s army... My own idea on the subject was based first on the fact that they have black skins and woolly hair (not that that amounts to much, as other nations have the same), and secondly, and more especially, on the fact that the Colchians, the Egyptians, and the Ethiopians are the only races which from ancient times have practised circumcision... The Phoenicians and the Syrians of Palestine acknowledge of themselves that they learnt the custom from the Egyptians, and the Syrians of the Valleys of Thermodon and the Porthereus, as well as their neighbours the Merones, say they learnt it lately from the Colchians... “But as to the Egyptians and Ethiopians themselves I cannot say which nation learnt it from the other for it is manifestly a very ancient custom.”²

It is futile to try and contradict Herodotus owing to his privileged position as an eyewitness and owing to his consistency. We would be going against all the rules of intellectual honesty and fairness if we persisted in doing so.

In another reference to the black pigmentation of the ancient Egyptians, Herodotus is attempting to trace back to Egypt some two priestesses whom he says were stolen from Egypt by Phoenicians long before his own time. One priestess, it was said, was sold to Libya, and the other

¹ The Book quoted, *Races of Africa*, was first published in 1930. The fourth edition, which is the copy used by this author, was published posthumously in 1966.

² Sesostris being mentioned here is likely to be Sesostri I who reigned 1962-1928 BC. Others of the same name, II and III were kings of the 12th Dynasty (2000-1750 BC—MEE 98/16).

to Greece. The two priestesses built oracles to their “god”, Amon, while in slavery in their separate destinations abroad. Herodotus tries to link the one that went to his Greek homeland to the myth regarding a female black dove that came to Greece (or what it was then), and ordered the building of an oracle to Zeus (Amon). Herodotus (*Histories* Book II) believed that this mythological black “dove” was the Egyptian priestess: “... For how could a dove utter the speech of men?” he wrote, “The tale that the dove was black signifies that the woman was Egyptian.” The English editor, or the translator of Herodotus’ *Histories*, A.D. Godley, 1921, seems to agree with Herodotus as in a footnote follow-up, there is a remark, “Perhaps Herodotus’ explanation is right.”

According to more recent findings, the “Hamitic hypothesis” was wrong in ascribing the source of all African civilisation, physical and social, to the north of the continent in general and to Egypt in particular. Martin Bernal, who is not one of the protesting black intellectuals, but a white descendant of the Semites who are sometimes given credit for initiating the Egyptian civilisation, concedes as follows in his *Black Athena*: “Egyptian civilisation is clearly based on the rich pre-dynastic cultures of upper Egypt and Nubia, whose African origin is uncontested” (1987:15).

But if one went by the opinions of Seligman—one of the architects of the “Hamitic hypothesis” who could only see civilisation moving in one direction; south—the ancient Egyptians did not originate from the south and neither did their civilisation; rather their civilisation, as their supposedly Caucasoid Hamitic blood did (1934:3) filtered southwards. Some of that civilisation’s important stopping points were Kerma, Meroe and Soba, of which he says,

“A bastard Egyptian civilisation existed at Kerma in the neighbourhood of the third cataract during the twelfth dynasty (approx. 1991 BC); indeed, there is evidence that the site was occupied as early as the sixth dynasty (approx. 2345-2181 BC). During the next thousand years or so it spread southward and gave rise to the hybrid Meroitic civilisation, whose southern bastion was the great city of Soba on the Blue Nile, a few miles south of Khartoum... We can scarcely doubt that a number of the traits common to ancient Egypt and our Eastern area arose in Egypt and were passed on to the negroid tribes of the Nile Valley and the Negroes of the Congo” (Seligman, 1934:12&13).

We have seen, especially from reading the unaltered first-hand evidence of Herodotus, that the “Hamitic hypothesis” was misled in its assumption that the Hamitic peoples from the north were light-skinned and Caucasoid in other respects too. The Tutsi and their relatives may well exhibit such characteristics owing to the Semitic blood that they might have picked while still in Ethiopia, their acknowledged probable cradle-land. But the genuine Hamitic-speaking peoples, the Maasai, the Kalenjin, the Turkana, the Teso and others in Sudan, Uganda and Ethiopia, are some of the darkest black people in Africa which phenomenon Seligman himself thinks

constitutes an irony. He concedes: "Yet, strangely enough, it is these mixed tribes that exhibit the darkest skins, and, in spite of the moderate stature of most Hamites, the tallest stature" (Seligman, 1932:3).

The Hamitic-speakers' somatic profile, although it may be distinct in comparison with that of other African groups, just as each group possesses its own unique characteristics, is not Caucasoid by any stretch of imagination. Black Africa contains a variety of distinct "racial" stocks like any other continent and the Hamitic-speakers represent just one of the varieties. Archaeological facts plus eyewitness accounts, which are quoted elsewhere in this subsection, confirm that the ancestors of the Hamitic speakers who were native to Egypt were not derived from prehistoric Caucasians who came to Africa. The explicit and implied erroneous assumption to the contrary by Seligman (1932), Johnson (1902), Emin Pasha (1888) and others, is part of what contributed to the later stigmatisation of the so-called "Hamitic hypothesis" in the eyes of today's black intelligentsia. But we can see that one of the initial false steps was taken when the physically partly Cushitic Tutsi people were labelled Hamites. Their aristocratic position in the Great Lakes area of Africa had also mesmerised the white scholars so much so that they assumed this to be characteristic of the rest of the entire region.

Indeed the anthropological and historiographic works of early colonial administrators contributed much to the confusion from the beginning and this has finally led to the said distaste for the term "Hamite" among many black intellectuals. Being of Caucasian extraction themselves, the early visiting scholars and colonial administrators probably considered their conquest of Africa a manifestation of their racial superiority over the black race and not one of technological superiority, which it certainly was. They then psychologically—and officially in some cases—rearranged all "races" in a superiority pecking order with themselves at the head. Any group that they thought—often debatably—resembled them was placed higher up but emphatically below them. This was one of the obvious follies that were later to contribute to the said black intelligentsia's distaste for the term "Hamite"; for those western visitors considered the Nilotic-speaking blacks physically "almost Caucasian" and in the process of interacting between the groups, promoted the myth of relative superiority and inferiority all around. Some Nilotic-speaking groups, or those of apparent Nilotic origin, who no longer spoke a Nilotic language such as the Kintu-speaking Bahima and Tutsi, seem to have bought into the folly and hence the position in which things are now.¹

¹ This is how a journal compilation by Felix Fundi, a Rwandese diplomat in South Africa puts it: "(19th century) Europeans had never seen such a well-organised kingdom in Africa, so they assumed that the (Tutsi) people of Rwanda must have come from another continent, that they were, in fact, Hamites from Egypt. THIS WAS THE FIRST STEP
Footnote continued at bottom of next page

Julian Baldick notes that the original division between the Tutsi and the Hutu was all economic and that it had little to do with race; that it had everything to do with the haves and the have-nots. He says that in the 1930's the Belgians, when conducting a census in Rwanda, identified those members of the population who owned ten or more cows as Tutsi, and thus as "constituting a superior, civilised 'Hamitic' aristocracy of northern origin. Those who owned less than ten cows were identified as Hutu, and thus constituting an inferior, primitive 'race'. Unfortunately, many Rwandans believed this nonsense, and the result has been the recent genocide" (1997:17).¹

Most communities that trace their origin to the Nile Valley seem to have a highly noticeable nationalistic sense—often feeling second to none, which is a healthy sign of self-appreciation, self-acceptance as opposed to self-rejection. The latter is a psychological frame into which years of external racially driven oppression has confined many African communities. But there is a clear distinction between healthy nationalism, even if at times this may unfortunately appear to slide into ethnic chauvinism of sorts, and a sense of racial superiority. Whether this came about as a result of their having managed to impose their will on almost all the neighbouring agricultural communities or whether such victory came about as a result of this nationalistic pride that they were able to impose their will thus upon much larger population groups is not known. But their wealth in cattle, the most prestigious form of wealth at the time, to the exclusion of most others, may have had a lot to do with the high sense of self-appreciation in relation to the then "less

TOWARDS GENOCIDE (where approximately 1,000,000 Tutsi and a few Hutu sympathisers were killed by the hitherto lowly placed Hutu in 1994)... As a matter of policy, the first Europeans to arrive in Rwanda assigned the Tutsi a genetic superiority over all tribal groups in Rwanda. Together, the colonialists and the missionaries exploited the Hamitic myth and the myth of Tutsi superiority to colonise and evangelise the Rwandan people. This reliance on Tutsi (as rulers)... was also based on an erroneous conviction propagated by the writings of missionaries which stated that the Tutsi were better suited to rule than Hutus. To their own detriment, this was a conviction that some Tutsis themselves ended up believing".—*Journal of the Rwanda South African Alliance*, Special Edition, 1999.

¹ Citing Alex de Waal, 'The genocide state', in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 1st July, 1994, pp 3-4. However, as we have observed, there is a clear physical distinction between the members of the two dichotomous sections that comprise the Rwandese and the Burundian societies and it is not all due to the wealth and health that characterise the Tutsi on the one side and the poverty and malnutrition that characterise the lot of the Hutu on the other side. Unless nutritionists are prepared to tell us that after many generations of lacto-carnivorous diet, a whole people can develop into a race quite visibly distinct from the one that was not as well endowed over the same number of generations down the line. If this argument holds any water, it may apply to the clear somatic dichotomy between the petite-bodied agricultural sections of the Pokoot and the Marakwet respectively in relation to their cattle-herding brothers who are taller, more ebullient if leaner with equally lean facial features to match and definitely more athletic-looking. The easier explanation which, however, should not be dismissed for its simplicity, if for nothing else, is that the two sections were in the process of coming together from their various backgrounds, those coming in from the North—probably carrying an ancient pint of Semitic blood in the case of the Tutsi—preferring cattle-herding while the more aboriginal sections as well as those coming in from the South and the South-west preferred land-tilling. The agriculturalists tilled their own parcels of land and, there being no cause nor cultural inclination to rob agricultural produce from the neighbours, wanted to live in peace and never prepared themselves for war, either of the defensive or of the offensive nature. That is why the pastoralists who were used to raiding stock from one another in vicious wars, were more war-hardened and prepared. So they were able to subjugate and dominate the agricultural sections almost without exception.



PICTURE 4: A lady from Nandi, Chapkwe Kibirir as painted by Joy Adamson in the late 1940's. Married and all initiated women had to wear such long skin garments. The shawl, *koligeet*, may be cast aside during work and a woman may remain bare from the waist upwards only at the farm and away from those she was ceremonially bound to respect, but at any rate never from the waist downwards, i.e., the area covered by the indispensable *chepkaait*—Picture by Felan Ikenga with special permission to the author by the Museums of Kenya.

fortunate” land-tilling communities. The pioneering European colonists and administrators noticed this and they did not like the fact that the Africans of the Nile did not readily acknowledge their (European's) supposed racial superiority over every other race. To this end, Seligman notes perhaps with a bit of grudge: “Psychically the Nilotes show an aloofness and pride of race, with a lack of desire for European clothes or trade objects which is probably unparalleled elsewhere in Africa” (1966:112).

Sir Charles Eliot (1905:132-133) is one example of the typical anthropologist/administrator/scholar of that misinformed and, consequently, misinforming period. He says of the Nilotic-speaking people:

“Physically the Nilotes are generally tall thin men, with features which are not characteristically Negro and often almost Caucasian. Their languages are sharply distinguished from Bantu. Grammatical forms are built up chiefly by adding suffixes, and in some of them at any rate there is an article. There is also a considerable general resemblance in vocabulary and phonetics. In customs there is such general agreement as might be expected among

kindred peoples practising very different modes of life, and among all the men go completely naked, though the women are clad. Other remarkable customs found both on the Nile and in East Africa are the habit of resting standing on one leg, the extraction of the middle teeth of the lower jaw, shaving the heads of women, drinking the warm

blood from living animals, and the toleration of free love between the warriors and unmarried girls... They are probably a mixed race, representing a fusion of the Negro with some superior type, which we must confess to be unknown, though the neighbourhood of Egypt and Abyssinia (Ethiopia) affords support for many hypotheses. Sir H. Johnson thinks that the other and superior factor may have been the Gallas or Somalis, which is not impossible.”

The “almost Caucasian” observation above was reportedly shot down later by German scholars who wanted to scientifically prove the alleged Caucasian part-origin of the Tutsi. The Germans themselves who, having been the earliest Europeans to occupy Rwanda, had initiated the Caucasoid and “Hamitic myth” vis-a-vis the Tutsi, later discovered otherwise following tests:

“They searched for scientific explanations by measuring the height, nose and forehead size of the Tutsis. German anthropologists eventually discovered that there is no morphological difference between Hutu and Tutsi and that their supposition that the Hutus and the Tutsi were two different races was false” (Fundi, 1999).

The claim by Eliot that all the men of Nilotic origin went stark naked at the turn of the century, tallies with what is known of ancient Egyptians, which we shall come to shortly.

However, Eliot was partly contradicted as to the sweeping nature of his statement by his own officer, Mr, later Sir, Claud Hollis (1909:27-28), insofar as the Nandi were concerned. Hollis observed as follows:

“Both men and women are scantily dressed. The former show no signs of shame at being seen naked, but women must not appear without their lower garments (Hollis then proceeded to describe the wear apparel of the various gender and age groups, partly contradicting himself and his boss)... The dress of the warriors consists of two or three black goats’ or calves’ hides, sewn together and loosely fixed by a strip of leather over the shoulder... Old men attire themselves in a *kaross* or fur garment made of hyrax, gazelle, ox, or goat hide (*sambut*, *sumet*, *tisiet*, or *ingoriet*), which they sling toga-fashion from the shoulder.”¹

We may at this stage turn to the two definitions of “Hamite” by Webster. Bible inspired definition: “A descendant of Ham, Noah’s second son—Gen. 6-20”. Webster’s ethnological definition largely echoes Seligman’s, above, but goes a little further:

¹ It is the testimony of the author that during his youth, he witnessed that Kalenjiin men, when thatching houses, worked naked as if by a customary requirement. Men otherwise dressed in sheets that hung from a knot above one shoulder and was looped diagonally under the opposite armpit. The occasional wind may lift the garment, leaving the bottom part of the body uncovered but this did not disturb anyone, least of all the wearer. It seems that only married women were required to remain clad at work and the rest may rid themselves of any encumbering clothing and toil uninhibitedly in the birth suit. If there was a community that needed an exemption from the myth of discovery of nudity and shame of it by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, then it is the Kalenjiin and kin of that period and before. Ironically, the Ham from whom the Hamites were thought to descend, were he of the proto-Kalenjiin type, would not have precipitated the laughter at his father’s nakedness that the Hebrew literature claims led to the curse of his own descendants by the old man.

“A number of the chief native race of north Africa which includes not only the Berber peoples north of the Sahara, but also Fulah, Tuaregs, and Tibu in the Sudan, the extinct Guanches of the Canaries, and in East Africa the ancient Egyptians and their descendants, and the principal Ethiopian tribes, the Gallas, Somalis, and conquering tribes far to the south... The Hamites are characterised by tall stature, often with magnificent physique, dark olive, bronze, or even black skin, wavy hair, oval face with well formed features, the nose often aquiline...”





PICTURE 5: The portrait of Pharaoh Tutankhamun, 1200 BC. He exhibits no aquiline nose yet this is a typical African profile of the ancient Egyptians. Webster’s generalisation is, therefore, inaccurate—Picture from Cairo Museum.

The “wavy hair” and the often “aquiline (hooked) nose” cannot possibly be referring to the Kalenjiin as a general characteristic. The Somali and some Ethiopian communities may possess such characteristics due to the widespread Semitic (Arabic) content in their blood.

The definition by Webster above is typical of the old school that referred to the Oromo and the Somali as Hamites. Cushite is the right historical term for the Oromo, Somali, Iraqw and others of that readily distinguishable black African stock. The ancient Egyptians themselves used this name in relation to these people.

The Egyptian knew that he was himself of  Kemet and

that the Cushites were of  Kush or  Punt (Punoof?).

The Somali, Oromo (Galla) and Tutsi of Rwanda/Burundi in particular, are very tall people on the average. But the average Kalenjiin man is more erect than tall and is only tall in relation to his Kintu-speaking neighbour who is likely to appear short and stout.

A British administrator cum historian who served in the Nandi District during the fifties of the 20th century, observed as follows about the Nandi branch of the Kalenjiin:



PICTURE 6: The occasional Cushitic-speaking African exhibits an aquiline nose in the manner described by Webster—Joy Adamson’s painting of the 1940’s. Courtesy of the National Museums of Kenya.

“Most Nandi are of medium height, although they appear to be taller because of their upright carriage and military bearing. They are slightly built and seldom carry surplus fat. Trunk and limbs show no pronounced muscular development, and the Nandi have neither the physical strength for heavy manual labour nor the stamina for sustained work. On the other hand, they are agile, athletic and able to travel long distances without fatigue; when marching, hunting and raiding, they exhibit considerable powers of endurance and great reserves of strength” (Matson, 1972:9).



PICTURE. 7: The Kalenjin man of Marakwet, Jano araap Kessir, as painted by Joy Adamson in the 1940's. Joy was struck by the ancient Egyptian's profile that Jano cut—see her remarks in text. Picture by Felan Ikenga, courtesy of National Museums of Kenya.



PICTURE. 8: The Maasai moran, Moroyan, as painted by Joy Adamson in the 1940's. A typical ancient Egyptian man's profile. Picture by Tela Alusala, with special permission to the author from the National Museums of Kenya.



PICTURE 9: Queen Tiy, wife of Pharaoh Amenhotep III (reigned 1417-1379 BC). Mother of the reputed "founder of monotheism" Pharaoh Ikhnoton. Portrait to be compared with Nanyika's portrait to the right. Cairo Museum.



PICTURE 10: Nanyika, a Kalenjin (Ogieek) woman as painted by Joy Adamson in the 1940's. To be compared with Queen Tiy, to the left. Picture by Felan Ikenga, included by special permission to the author from the National Museums of Kenya.

Matson gives the measurements with regard to the Nandi as: average height, 67 inches and the average weight as 130-140 lb. The ancient Egyptian, on the average, was not tall either. Compare the Nandi average height with the respective heights of the Pharaohs Akhenaton and Tutankhamon: 5ft. 5.25 inches and 5ft. 6 inches.¹ Then compare Matson's statement above with the archaeological field-based data compiled by Batrawi (1945/46): "The pre-dynastic Egyptian was of medium height, about 66 inches in flesh, and dolichocephalic,² with an index, as regards Naqada crania of 73 (corresponding to 75 in the living)."

As for the cephalic index,

"Masai, Nandi, and Turkana give a cephalic index of 73-74 (which, being under 75, is dolichocephalic, i.e. the head is prominently long from forehead to back of head and narrower from side to side); but the Suk (Pokoot) are mesocephalic with an index of about 77" (Seligman, 1966:104).³

The colonial administrator/anthropologist whom we have met before, Sir Charles Eliot, the Commissioner (governor) for the British 'East Africa Protectorate' that was later to become Kenya, saw the ancient Egyptians in the Tugen people, a characteristic he pointed out as being common among the other branches of the Kalenjiin as among the Maasai. In his book, *The East Africa Protectorate*, published in 1905, he says the following of the Tugen whom he calls *Kamasia*, the derogatory name given them by the Maasai and promoted by the British.

"Of the *Kamasia* there is little to be said. They are not many in number, or well known, and as in their weapons and manner of dressing the hair they imitate the Masai, they are often not distinguished from them... Like all this group of tribes, they are probably of mixed origin, and show very various physical types. I have been much struck by seeing in assemblies of warriors held at Londiani or the Ravine faces which seem to reproduce the features of the ancient Egyptians as shown on their monuments" (Eliot, 1905:147).

In the late forties of the 20th century, Joy Adamson, of the *Born Free* movie fame, was to remark about the Kalenjiin in an almost similar manner as Sir Charles Eliot had done close to half a century earlier. The hairstyle alluded to by Sir Charles Eliot, is given a more detailed descriptive treatment by Joy Adamson. Between the two westerners, a combined picture is

¹Pharaohs' measurements were done by Dr. Douglas E. Derry and reported in his *Report upon the Examination of Tutankhamen's mummy*, in Howard Carter's *The Tomb of Tutankhamen*, Barn & Jenkins, London, 1972, copyright Phyllis Walker, 1954. Appendix 1.

² Like the Kalenjiin, see Seligman 1966:104 and Peristiany, 1939:1.

³ This measurement expresses the width of the skull (at its widest point) as a percentage of the length from front to back. When measurements are made directly on a skull, the percentage is known as the *cranial index*. Craniologists distinguish three basic classifications of skulls based on cranial and cephalic indexes: *dolichocephalic* (long skulls), with widths of less than 75 per cent of the length; *mesocephalic* (medium skulls), with indexes of 75 to 80; and *brachycephalic* (broad skulls), with indexes of more than 80 per cent (Cf. MEE 98/17).

painted of the physical features, hairstyle and apparel that recreated images of ancient Egypt right in the heart of Kalenjinland.

Joy Adamson was going round Kenya painting the various ethnic communities in their traditional costumes and she had just turned to Rift Valley and her experience in Kalenjinland inspired her as follows:

“The Africans of this area had been very little exposed to European influences and wore their traditional garments. Most of the inhabitants of the valley (Rift Valley) were Nilo-Hamites, which accounted for their fine looks and great height... Most men had their hair braided into pigtailed and greased with ochre and fat, but once I noticed a young man wearing a head ornament of blue beads of a distinctly Egyptian style” (Adamson, 1967).¹

The description of Hamitic speakers, or Nilo-Hamites, put together by Frank Snowden Jr., seems to be more cogent on the physical aspect. However, a more complete picture emerges when it is read together with the descriptions of others. Snowden (1970:8) writes:

“Another subtype of Negro known to the ancients apparently resembled a group described variously by anthropologists as Nilotic, Hamitic, or Nilo-Hamitic. This type is black or bluish-black in colour, has reduced prognathism (often absent), less platyrrhiny, and lips probably less thick or everted than in the “true” Negro, with hair, according to M.J. Herskovits, ranging from less tightly curled to almost straight, and with long narrow faces.”

Dr Peristiany, the Greek Cypriot anthropologist who wrote about the Kipsigiis branch of the Kalenjin before the “Second World” War, described their somatic attributes (1939:1) as follows: “The Kipsigiis are dolichocephalic, and comparatively thin-lipped and leptorrhine, of a light brown or copper-red colour and are of tall stature.”

Another description of the Kipsigiis by an early colonial administrator, found in an old colonial government record, probably written within the first decade of the century, intended to be non-too-flattering, either to the subjects then being described or to their Kintu-speaking neighbours. The report reads:

“As might be expected the Kipsigis exhibit a variety of types of feature and form. The tall handsome Hamite, the burly Niletic (sic), the prognathous and somewhat repellent Bantu, the small nicely made hunter. The features of the women do not compare with those of the men either from a masculine or feminine stand point. The hair of the head varies from Negro wool to the crinkly and finer hair of Hamite. The feet are often hypsolide and as often well-formed. The carriage of the young men and girls is erect and free” (D.C. Ker 3/1).

¹ The young man who sported Egyptian style beadwork was Jano araap Kessir. His portrait, by Joy Adamson, is included.

The prognathism (i.e. jaws appear to protrude forwards prominently in relation to the forehead) mentioned above, was not absent from the ancient Egyptians either, and is a widespread African characteristic. This is confirmed by Batrawi (1945/46) from archaeological fieldwork: "The southern Egyptians were distinguished from the northerners by a smaller cranial index (i.e. they were dolicocephalic), a larger nasal index (i.e. relatively more broad-nosed) and greater prognathism (in relation to the northerners)" (Seligman, 1966:63).

The African scientist and historian who as early as 1956 taught physics and chemistry in France, Cheikh Anta Diop, carried out melanin tests on mummies in order to determine their skin pigmentation. At first sight this would appear to have been an unnecessary undertaking, however, considering that even the word "mummy" itself means "black" or "tar" in Arabic, this having come about as a result of the Arab-speaking layman's examination of the skin of the mummies which is indeed profoundly black. But the melanin test was inevitable all the same considering that many early Egyptologists painted and promoted the wrong picture for too long and, therefore, strong, even superfluous, corrective measures, can neither be considered out of place nor overdone. After explaining that the melanin test involves the use of ultra-violet rays for determining the amount of melanin in a pigmentation, Diop (1996:141) concludes:

"The same goes for that (skin) of the ancient Egyptian. This is the reason why, from prehistory to the ptolemaic period, the Egyptian mummy has invariably remained black. In other words, during all Egypt's known history, the skin of all Egyptians of all social classes (from Pharaoh to fellah), has remained that of authentic blacks. The same goes for their bone structure. Witness: (western Egyptologist) Lepsius' canon (sic). And science seriously asked the following question: 'Are we right in considering as black a people whose nationals, from the beginning to the end of history, have had black skin and negroid bone structure?'"

The laboratory work of Diop and the works of the western Egyptologist Lepsius, well summarised above, combined with the archaeological reports of Batrawi, which confirmed the Negroid profiles of the fossils of the Egyptians of very remote antiquity, give us an unassailable platform to carry forward our arguments without being tied too much to the controversy of what racial classification to assign the ancient Egyptians.

We may say that from the same descriptions, and those further above, it is clear that in the dolicocephalic Kalenjin (and in the Maasai, the Turkana and the Iteso) of East Africa, a physically and culturally distinct, describable African species, actually existed among others of varying African somatic construction. The early anthropologists had duly assigned to them a collective name. That classificatory nomenclature was later to be contested partly on account of its being based on a physical rather than cultural distinctiveness. The naming appeared to have been inspired by racial rather than social terminology.

Indeed so urgent are some of the historians about the abolition of the label “Hamite”. Basil Davidson, whose history books everyone going through the school system in Kenya during the author’s school days had to read at one stage or other as a mandatory part of the history subject’s syllabus, has not been left behind in this collective “de-Hamitising” effort. He accepts the blackness of pre-Arab Egypt unequivocally, but goes on to list the Hamite label among the

“stereotypes of the racial model (which) the scholarship of the last thirty years and more simply tipped into the dustbin of exploded fantasies... This was not achieved easily or without a lot of stubborn effort; but it has now been achieved beyond any possibility of reversion to those aforesaid fantasies. It may even be claimed that this achievement is among the most significant intellectual advances of the twentieth century...” (Davidson 1989:47).

This last boast, itself of historical proportions, illustrates the extent of urgency and emotion surrounding this whole subject on the part of certain historians, even one like Davidson who is otherwise known for relative objectivity in his treatment of African history. The effect of this whole argument is to intellectually wish away a whole black African people who do not fit hundred per cent into the social, linguistic, psychological as well as the physical mould of other African groupings that nobody is trying to similarly erase from the world map. So established and undisturbed are the following ethnic classifications: Cushites, Negroes, Nilotics, Bantus and Khoisans.

Not that one should treasure the classification of Africans according to their minute “racial” and linguistic idiosyncrasies—especially when such initiative comes from outsiders whose motive for doing so may either be positively inquisitive or, at times, suspect. But given that African anthropologists have not come up with their own alternatives, and yet the necessity still exists to know more about themselves, we have no choice but to go by the available tools of identification but which happen to be of outside origin. On our part, we shall take such classifications as being indications of *variety* and not regard them as manifestations of innate *differences*. The former has positive connotations while the latter concept harbours seeds of confrontation whose ugliest harvest has been amply demonstrated in Rwanda and in Burundi.¹

¹ The populations of the two countries are identical: 15% Tutsi and 85% Hutu. The formers’ ancestors who were either Nilotic or Cushitic-speaking, came from the north centuries ago. The latter’s ancestors were the earlier inhabitants who were predominantly Kintu speakers. Although the Tutsi abandoned their original language and adopted the hosts’ Kintu-based language, little by way of intermarriage took place between the two peoples to the extent that it is still easy to tell one stock from the other centuries on. The devastating war between the two population groups has been facilitated, if not encouraged, by those superficial appearances.

Of late, terms like “Highland Nilotes”, “River-Lake Nilotes” and “Plains Nilotes”, have been coined for the Kalenjiin, Luo and Maasai respectively.¹ This has helped find some classificatory “home” for the people who are being “de-Himitised” for their own good! And because they exist, are real and could not be completely wished away.

But if these people are still referring to themselves as the “People of *Emeet*”, why not use this what is their own chosen term for themselves? A term that they have kept over the millennia—perhaps longer than any other known community the world over may have done in respect of its own self-name?

Some European historians and anthropologists have promptly come to the African intellectuals’ aid in their “de-Hamitising” “struggle”—but for different reasons. One ostensible reason put forward by them is that the more common designation “Nilo Hamites” presupposes that these people are half Nilotic and half Hamitic where Hamitic is supposed to be the same as Cushitic in both language and physical characteristics. One western Scholar, Ehret, considered this “not a very likely historical and linguistic fact” (1971:39).

Let us admit, for argument’s sake, the obvious racial—within the black African context—linguistic and historical fact, that Cushites are different from Hamites. That we have real Cushites who are not Hamites and real Hamites who are not Cushites; then we must see no reason to force the Hamitic label on Cushites; and then go ahead to separate the real Hamites from their own fitting label on the ground that they are not Cushites and so they cannot be Hamites!

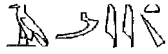
Eisee Reclus suggested in the *The Earth and its Inhabitants* (1882 Vol 2:314), about 110 years ago, that the term *Kam*, *Kham* (and Ham[ite]), as applied to African peoples in the Genesis; might be nothing but the ancient Egyptian name for their country *Kemet* (𓆎𓅓𓏏𓏂). And, indeed, most of the Kalenjiin nationalities call their homeland *emeet*. This simply means “the country”, or “the nation”. The root of the word is *eem*. The Pokoot, a northern branch of Kalenjiin, have retained the original *Hem* for “nation”, and the “nation of Pokoot” is therefore styled *Hem-pa-Pokoot* (Beech, 1911:109).² So, as suggested by Reclus, the names “Ham” and “Hamite” might just have come from the “people of *hem-eet*” where *hem-eet* referred to both country and its people. It is likely that *emeet* was originally *khemeet*, or even *hemeet* as suggested by the combination of the Pokoot substantive form *hem*, “nationality”, and the central Kalenjiin definite form *emeet* as well as the ancient Egyptian definite form *keme(e)t*.

¹ The notable pioneering users of the new designations were B.A. Ogot and J. Kieran (eds), *Zamani: A Survey of East African History* (Nairobi: Longmans and East African Publishing House, 1968)—Ehret 1971:3.

² Pokoot ignores the Hamitic definite article /t/ often and were it to be added to *Hem*, we would have *Hem-eet*, which is reasonably close to “Hamite”.

This change of sound in accordance with distance north-to-south can be demonstrated. The northern Egyptian Coptic dialect, termed Bohairic, employs the /kh/ sound a lot. The southern dialect, referred to as Sahidic, would use only /h/, omitting the /k/ where /kh/ is employed in Bohairic. So if the northerners referred to their country as *khemeet* for instance, the southerners would call it *hemeet* and as one comes much further south, skipping Pokoot country and to the heartland of the Kalenjiin, the /h/ is lost altogether and the people here just have *emeet* left of it.

One word (out of many), which illustrates this changing of sound, as one comes southward, very well, is the word that is equivalent to the English preposition “in” as in the phrase “in the name of the Father”. In Bohairic Coptic it is ⲬⲚⲏ (*khen*). The Sahidic dialect of Coptic further south has it in the form ⲬⲚⲏ (*hen*) and the Kalenjiin, of course, have it as *een*.

However, the ancient Egyptians also spelt their word for “the land”  which Budge (1920:6) transcribed *amait*. With the benefit of the Kalenjiin language—of which Budge was deprived—we can point out with little hesitation that this should have been transcribed *emeet*.

So why resist the designation “Hamite” when most probabilities point to it having been an authentic African people’s name for their own nation and country? The life and the reported role of Ham in early Hebrew literature is beside the author’s acceptance of the term Hamite. The understanding and usage of the term, throughout the thesis, leans largely on the historical and linguistic side and less on the emotional, racial and biblical side if at all, except as an occasional source of important pieces of evidence that contribute to an argument where applicable. It is a convenient, factually-based term that groups together certain obviously related languages and their speakers into a real family which, by any other name, would still be one distinguishable family.

4.2.1 Merker's Maasai/Kalenjiin Ancient Egyptian "Semites" Theory, 1904¹

A German anthropologist, M. Merker, kicked off a debate by way of his controversial views that were carried in a book he published in 1904, *Die Masai: ethnographische Monographie eines ostafrikanischen Semitenvolkes*. In that book he powerfully articulated his conviction that in the Maasai and the Tatoog branch of the Tanzanian Kalenjiin communities, he had discovered a Semitic people in East Africa. The debate conducted in the early print media, notably in *The East African Standard* (which had just been launched, 1902),² indicates a wide chasm in the view points of the early colonial settlers and administrators with regard to Merker's claim.

Hollis, who was conducting parallel research among the Kenyan Maasai, denied that Maasai traditions that were analogous to the ancient Hebrew and Babylonian stories, a great number of which Merker had documented in his book, existed among the Kenyan Maasai. This prompted the then colonial governor of The East Africa Protectorate, whom we have mentioned further above, Sir Charles Eliot (1905:140), to remark:

"I cannot help suspecting that, if they are known in German territory (Tanganyika), they must be due to European and Christian influence. It is true that the Masai have by no means shown themselves amenable to missionary influence; but a certain number of them have learned to read and write in the old-established mission at Taveta, and they may possibly have got hold of some distorted version of the biblical account of the early history of the world."

To the initiated in the matters touching on the Maasai, this view is plainly naïve. Considering the mass of indigenous Maasai information, including sayings of the wise most of which are not biblical that Merker collected, the Maasai conservatism and how so new Christianity was then in this part of Africa—even in Taveta which was not part of Maasai country. Nevertheless, Eliot allowed himself some leeway: "It would be rash to assume that a people coming from the north and the neighbourhood of Egypt and Abyssinia cannot have brought with them such traditions" (1905:140).

Before we focus attention on Merker's fleeting impression of the Kalenjiin, as represented by the Tatoog, we may first acquaint ourselves with Merker's definition of the ethnic designation

¹ It may be useful to note down here the fact that the German anthropologist, Merker, confined his investigation to the Tanzanian Maasai and Kalenjiin branches at the turn of the century. This was largely because Tanganyika, as mainland Tanzania was then known, was a German "possession". This fact made it administratively convenient for him to carry out his research within the confines of that territory. At almost precisely the same time, the Briton, Hollis, was busying himself with the Kenyan Maasai branch—soon to shift attention to a Kenyan branch of the Kalenjiin. Generally speaking, whatever holds true about the respective Tanzanian branches of the Maasai and the Kalenjiin, is bound to hold true too among the Kenyan branches of the same respective peoples and vice versa.

² Early copies of the colonial newspapers are preserved in the basement archive section of McMillan Library, Nairobi.

“Semite” which he launches into here contrasting the Maasai people’s physical characteristics with those of the modern Jews—one of the “official” Semite races:

“If I may here counter a generally held error. When a layman hears of Semites, he thinks of a people whose external appearance is similar to or resembles that of today’s Jews. This is completely wrong, because Jews in their generality are no longer Semites. They were Semites when they were strong nomadic people; the mixing of blood began already during the transitional stage from nomadism to a semi, periodic settled people, which after the completion of settling became more vigorous thereby changing the shape of the body drastically and developed a new one... The Semites are tall, slender figures with handsome finely cut facial features: narrow, sometimes long, but not unbeautiful noses; small and not rarely delicate feet and hands. The pure Semitic character is perhaps not often represented among today’s Jews. It appears to me that the Jews from Aden show some purity. A large number of today’s Jews on the contrary show clearly more or less characteristics of the race of the Hittites... strong (brachycephalic) heads, large bent fleshy noses, dark hair, dark eyes, strong receding forehead, prominent chest bones, rough bones and a plumb body build... I consider the Masai the descendants of the nomadic Semitic people, which belong to the oldest Hebrew pastoral people” (Merker 1904: Ch. 1).



To Merker, the Tatoog, or Tatooga (Barabaig are a section of these), were part of the Semitic group that came to the African continent from Asia, founded the Egyptian civilisation, and then blocked other Semites from entering Africa. Some of those Semites that had become Egyptian, were later to migrate southwards—hence the Tatoog and, later, the Maasai. Of the Tatoog he says:

“Among the above Semite nations of East Africa, I consider the Tatoga to be one of the oldest purest or less mixed or only in certain castes with niggers, of whom those living near Iraku and Ufiomi are called El Ataturu... As far as I can establish, they are the oldest inhabitants of the East African steppes, from where they were driven out by the Maasai... These Tatoog were pushed from place to place near their present habitat in Mbulu District as they gradually became poorer and poorer, having lost cattle and having begun to hunt-gather even as they attempted to settle and farm ... The fact that they had little success to complete the transaction from nomads to farmers makes it clear that they are the dirtiest blacks I have ever met and that they still live from the old settled peoples like parasites” (Merker 1904/1910: Ch. 1).¹

The occasional serious, honest, western researcher has, however, maintained that the ancient Egyptian, and the beginnings of his civilisation, came from the southern interior of Africa—Eastern Africa being quite notable in this respect—and not from outside of the continent as claimed by Merker above. One such scholar, Sir Wallis Budge, is emphatic about the African origin of the ancient Egyptian. He observes that the ancient Egyptian language “... was fundamentally an African language...” and says as follows about the ancient Egyptian’s words, the bulk of which he considers to be monosyllabic:






¹ Parts of Ch. 1, Merker 1904, were kindly translated from German into English for the author by Ambassador John Lanyasunya, presently Kenya’s ambassador to Berlin.


“These are words used to express fundamental relationships and feelings, and beliefs which are peculiarly African and are foreign in every particular to Semitic peoples. The primitive home of the people who invented these words lay far to the south of Egypt, and all that we know of the Pre-dynastic Egyptians suggest that it was in the neighbourhood of the Great Lakes, probably to the east of them. The whole length of the Valley of the Nile lay then, as now, open to peoples who dwelt to the west and east of it, and there must always have been a mingling of immigrants with its aboriginal inhabitants” (Budge 1920:lxviii).

Budge confirms this view by way of his definition of Punt, the country often mentioned by the ancient Egyptians in their records: “Punt  a gold-bearing country in the Southern Sudan, whence came some of the aboriginal Egyptians (called)  *Puntiu*” (Dictionary 984a).¹

The observation that the ancient Egyptians originated from further south of their country and, by extension, right in the heart of Africa, is corroborated by the Bible, by way of Ezekiel 29:13-14:



“Yet this is what the Sovereign Lord says: At the end of forty years I will gather the Egyptians from the nations where they were scattered. I will bring them back from captivity and return them to Upper Egypt (i.e. the South, called by the Hebrews *Pathros*) the land of their ancestry. There they will be a lowly kingdom.”²

It being their acknowledged cradle-land, the ancient Egyptians associated the south with  *khent* “pre-eminence, exalted condition, tip, limit (i.e. of excellence)... in the front, in the forepart, before, aforeside, formerly, previously, in advance, the beginning: the land south of Egypt” (Budge Dict. 554a, cf. Faulkner 194-195). Within the same context, they called the one “who is at the head, the chief, the forerunner, in the first rank, leader etc.  *khenti* (and the) leader of the fight  *khenti eha*... (and) those who go forward  *khentiu*” (Budge Dict. 554a). All these words are cognate with Kalenjiin *kaantoi*, “leaders”, “those in front”, “those of before” and *kantoiintet* (*kandoiindet*) “the leader”. The root word is *taa*, “front”, “before”, “ahead”, Coptic ⲁⲓⲧⲉⲥⲓ *hi-tehi*, “in front” (Crum 642). The same is evident in ancient Egyptian for “primeval time, remote ages”  *paut ta* (Budge Dict. 230b) which is Kalenjiin *po taa* or *aap taa*.

The ancient Egyptians, naturally, considered the south interior of Africa where their cradle-land of Punt, Pwenet (or *Punoot*?) was located, their “Holy Land”,  *T3 ntr* “God’s Land”

¹ When the Kalenjiin call themselves *Punoot*, they may be doing so with reference to this cradle-land of the ancient Egyptians. But, again, *Punoot* carries the connotation of “migrants on the move” or “new arrivals”.

² The Holy Bible, New International Version, 1973-1984.

(Faulkner's Dict. 293).  *T3 ntr* may be compared to Kalenjiin *ol-ta ne toroor* "the high/exalted place".¹ It is also important to note the fact that those ancient Egyptians attributed the invention of all their science and technology to their "gods" whose "official" residence was at  *T3 ntr*. And no wonder this area, which included Meroe, "was the centre of an iron smelting industry and may have been a source of the spread of iron-casting techniques in ancient Africa. Extensively excavated, the site revealed royal palaces, temples to Amon and Isis, and a group of pyramids." (GME 1993, "Meroe").

4.3 Locating the Kalenjiin's Cradle-land and Establishing the Migration Route

Generation after generation of the elders of the Kalenjiin-speaking people have passed on to the youth the tradition that their ancestors of antiquity migrated to East Africa from *Misiri*, i.e., Egypt (Cf. Lang'at, 1969:74, Kipkorir, 1978:5, Sang, 2000:1). The persistence and consistency have been such that Chesaina describes this oral tradition that she also encountered time and again during her oral fieldwork all over Kalenjiinland, for her *Oral Literature of the Kalenjin*, as follows: "The most popular theory says that the Kalenjin originated from a country in the north of Kenya known as 'Emetab Burgei', which means the hot country. It is speculated that this country was either Sudan or Egypt" (Chesaina 1991:1, also see the relative myth/legend 1991:29).

After conducting his own oral research in Kipsigiisland, Sang (2000:1) echoes Chesaina: "*Ole woo komwoe kole ki kiyobu Misri anan ko Southern Sudan amun emotinwechoton tugul ko melewet.*" i.e., "The majority maintain that we came from *Misri* (Egypt) or Southern Sudan, all these being desert lands."

By surviving into the present, an old oral tradition will have demonstrated a capacity to appeal to the interests of enough people to ensure its long and continuous retention and retelling (Cf. Henige, 1982:107). In this we see the diffusion of an oral tradition and culture in the two dimensions that we mentioned in Chapter 1. The geographic horizontal diffusion applies in the sense that actual migration of the vehicles of transmission (humans) along land, and covering a huge distance took place; and the temporal vertical diffusion applies in the sense that the people involved continued transmitting the oral tradition and the old culture from their new geographical

¹ The place name Tororo in Eastern Uganda, 65-70 km Southwest of Mt. Elgon, is said to be from Kalenjiin *Toroor*, "high and massive". The place was previously inhabited by the Kalenjiin and they, or people akin to them, gave it that name (Oral interview: Paramount Chief araap Kirwa, Nandi, 1992). In the search for Punt, Punoot, or the principal ancient cradle-land of the Egyptians, Tororo should be an inevitable port of call to the excavators. Presently very little excavation work has been done south of Sudan except in the search for early man by the Leakey family and associates.

setting from generation to generation (Cf. Krohn, 1971:153). What happened is, therefore, a recognised development as far as oral tradition scholars are concerned.

The undying popular tradition of *Misrian* origin on the part of the Kalenjiin was very much alive and “distinct” when Sir Claud Hollis, the British colonial administrator cum anthropologist, studied the Nandi branch of the Kalenjiin-speaking people between 1905 and 1908 AD. The traditional claim of *Misrian* origin cannot, therefore, be linked to early Christian proselytes who were merely trying to associate their origin with biblical places and times as Lang’at (1969:74) seems to imply. Hollis came soon after the cessation of the colonial subjugation hostilities and the British had achieved total control of Kalenjiinland. There were virtually no Kalenjiin Christian proselytes by that time—certainly not a single soul in Nandi, Marakwet, Tugen etc. had been proselytised as yet—and almost all could neither read nor write. Yet they all maintained the *Misiri* origin tradition equally and consistently.

Says Hollis:

“The ancestors of the main body of what constitutes the so-called Nandi-Lumbwa group, came, beyond doubt, from the north. There is a distinct tradition to this effect, and it seems probable that the tribes allied to the Nandi who live on or near Mount Elgon (The Lako, Kony, Mbai, Sabaut, Sapin, Pok, and Kipkara) are only a section of the migrants, the remainder having pushed on to the south and east, and settled in Nandi, Lumbwa, Buret, Sotik, Elgeyo, and Kamasia” (Cf. Hollis 1909:2, also Hopley, 1902:10).

This is what the governor of the East Africa Protectorate that was later to be named Kenya, Sir Charles Eliot said in his introduction to A.C. Hollis’ earlier book on the Maasai, in 1904:

“... It also seems probable that the physical type of these races (Masai, Nandi, Turkana, Dinka & co.) represents a mixture between the Negro and some other factor. It does not seem to me possible to make any definite statement as to what that factor may be, but the neighbourhood of Egypt and Abyssinia (Ethiopia) renders several hypotheses plausible...”

Hollis is obviously relying on the oral tradition of *Misiri* origin which he summarises, above, as “distinct tradition to this effect” in order to be able to draw his definitive conclusion: “the main body of what constitutes the so-called Nandi-Lumbwa group, came, beyond doubt, from the north.” Just how reliable oral tradition is as a source of history was an issue well debated by Jan Vansina as we saw in Chapter 1. We may here add his views to the effect that what a historian can do is to arrive at some approximation to the ultimate truth. That he or she does this by using calculations of probability, by interpreting the facts and by evaluating them in an attempt to recreate for himself or herself the circumstances that existed at certain given moments of the past. And here

“the historian using oral traditions finds himself on exactly the same level as historians using any other kind of historical source material. No doubt he will arrive at a lower degree of probability than would otherwise be attained, but that does not rule out the fact that what he is doing is valid, and that it is history” (Vansina, 1996:125).¹


On his part the author set out in 1990 to investigate this Egyptian-origin legend of the Kalenjiin people and began by studying the dead language and dialects of the ancient Egyptians. Armed with and facilitated by the linguistic tool, he went on to study those ancient people’s religion and other aspects of culture, all in order to compare those respective human traits with their modern Kalenjiin parallels—much of which was collected from the oral field—and thus to establish the age-old claim of origin either way.

This thesis, the result of that investigation, as we have already said, dwells on the major cultural aspects of sharing with an emphasis on the area of religion. Through a comprehensive comparative exercise, the author seeks to prove that the major aspects of culture and the indigenous religion of the Kalenjiin in particular, which revolves around the worship of Asiis, indeed represent a carryover from the old ancient Egyptian culture and religion that revolved around the worship of Deity in the name of Isis and in the other well-known ancient Egyptian names for Deity. That, therefore, the Deity name Asiis of the Kalenjiin notion has, indeed, more than just a phonetic semblance to the Deity name Isis of ancient Egypt.



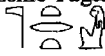
¹ Reproduced in *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, ed. Dunaway and Baum, 1996, from a reprinting of Vansina’s 1965, “Oral Tradition and Historical Methodology” in *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology* (1961).

Egypt is now, for all practical purposes, an Arabised Islamic country and it is not easy to trace, from studying any section of their current population, evidence of a people of proto-Kalenjiin (the ancestors of, or the Kalenjiin-to-be) nature. But the Arabisation and Islamisation phenomenon diminishes progressively as one comes southward of Egypt. And where the phenomenon of Arabisation halts, the population begins to exhibit Kalenjiin and other indigenous African linguistic, social and cultural traits with increasing intensity as one comes further southwards towards the present heartland of the Kalenjiin and the other related black African peoples in East Africa.

The proto-Kalenjiin migrants to Eastern Africa left evidence all along the migratory route by way of the existing settlements of kin peoples. These settlements of kin peoples constitute a socio-cultural and geographical proof of a historical claim. The fact that the existing settlements describe a narrow north-south axis, or a belt, proves that these people were either migrating northwards or southwards.¹ The Kalenjiin people's oral tradition, understandably for a people now domiciled two and a half thousand and more aerial kilometres south of Egypt, asserts that the migration in their case was, southwards.

Evidence as can be illustrated by plotting the existing settlements of the Kalenjiin and their kin on the maps of Ethiopia, Sudan, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, indicates that the ancestors of the Kalenjiin followed the eastern banks of the combined Nile right from their former Egyptian abode. The south was an attractive direction to migrate towards, not least for religious reasons. The south was the ancient Egyptians' esteemed "Holy Land", their land of origin (Budge 1920:lxviii) which they called "the land of our 'gods'"  T3 ntr.² Besides, the river that was Egypt's life flowed from there. The migrants were also encouraged every point of the way by the progressively diminishing desert conditions as they moved south and pastures got greener and greener—there could have been no greater incentive for a pastoral people.

¹ The Egyptologist, Wallis Budge, with reference to this precise area vis-a-vis Egypt, argues that migration was always constant in both directions—Budge 1920:lxviii.

² Faulkner's *A Concise Dictionary of Ancient Egyptian* p. 293.  T3 ntr may relate to Kalenjiin *ol-to ne toroor* "the exalted/high place". *To* is an old Kalenjiin word for a "place" which now survives and is used only with the help of a prefix e.g. *yu-to* "this place", *yoo-to* "that place" *oloo-to* "that general place" *oli-to* "this general place" (it is however possible, if unlikely, that the *-to* here is part of the Hamitic definite article governed by *ti*).  T3 ntr may also relate to the Maasai *Naiteru*, "the creator", "the beginner". It may also relate to *Tororrot*: according to some Kalenjiin branches, e.g. Pokoot, the highest placed superhuman is *Tororrot*, lit. "the Sky" of whom some Tugen man told Beech (1911:19) was the husband of *Asiis*, lit. "the Sun". Someone also told Beech that the Pokoot believed *Asiis* to be the younger brother of *Tororrot*. *Tororrot* seems to be a feminine gender name—although some Tugen say *Tororrot* is the husband of *Asiis*—and sooner tallies with ancient Egyptian word for "Goddess",  Trt (Cf. Gardiner, 1927:614).

At the confluence of the Blue and White Nile tributaries—present-day Khartoum—they were faced with a choice. Either to follow the westward White Nile course or the eastward Blue Nile course. Where a choice had to be made, all options being equal, they would follow the course of the tributary that flowed from the east rather than follow the course of the tributary that appeared to flow from the west. Having the present Kalenjiin religious attitude in mind, the reason for turning towards the east at the confluence may have had a lot to do with religion: namely that the east, where the fresh morning sun broke the horizon, symbolised blessings of Asiiis, the Deity. In contrast, the west symbolised decline and death, as that was the direction of the setting sun.


The Blue Nile, which flowed from the east, would, therefore, be *favoured* over the White Nile, which, at the confluence, would appear to be flowing from the west. The word *favoured* here is emphasised to indicate that while most clans followed the eastern route, a few may have chosen to follow the White Nile course with, or without, the intention to rejoin the others later on further south.

Some of those that followed the course of the White Nile, and who had been influenced heavily by the non-circumcising communities of Sudan that lived along the western banks of the White Nile—the migration route of their choice—would not and did not rejoin the others. According to the elderly Kalenjiin informants, some of those were the ancestors of the Luo of Kenya. The Luo are still domiciled approximately to the west of the larger Kalenjiin communities. Still divided from their cousins by a socio-religious wall that is no thicker than a foreskin, yet so impenetrable.¹

The migration route now described by the almost linear north-south remnant settlements of the people akin to the Kalenjiin along the Blue Nile and about the southern highlands of Ethiopia, is similar to that described by C.G. Seligman in a 1933 lecture thus: “The third route (for ancient Egyptian influence) is up the Nile to what is now Khartoum, thence up the Blue Nile, along the region of the Abyssinian (Ethiopian) foothills, and so to the Great Lakes, and westward to Congo” (Seligman, 1934:11).

The proto-Kalenjiin people came in several waves; some settling permanently at scattered points on the migratory route. But a grander settlement seems to have been established at one stage en route in the southern Ethiopian Highlands immediately to the Northeast of Lake Turkana.

¹ The Luo and their close kin on both sides and especially to the west of the White Nile, e.g. the Dinka, do not circumcise. According to the Kalenjiin elders, the ancestors of the Luo used to circumcise before they became a completely separate ethnic entity from the people whose descendants are now mostly domiciled to the east of the White Nile and generally to the east of the Luo.

This might be the area that Kalenjiin oral tradition calls *Burgeti*, meaning, “warm”. The ancient Egyptians called that general area  which is sometimes transcribed *Punt*¹ or *Pwenet*, but which should perhaps be correctly transcribed *Punoot*, Kalenjiin for “arrivals”, or “those in transit”, or “the people of the exodus” (Kipkorir, 1978:6)—called so in contrast with the *Ogieek*, which, as hinted by the Ethiopic *Ogaw*, probably meant “the original” or “indigenous inhabitants”. But the term *Ogieek* to the Kalenjiin always referred to those impoverished hunter-gatherer forest-dwelling earlier settlers who were akin in many respects to the ancestors of the Kalenjiin. These *Ogieek*, for the reason that they spoke a form of Kalenjiin, may have either left the Nile Basin much earlier themselves or were part of the original parent stock of the ancient Egyptians. It is instructive in this respect that many Maasai and Kalenjiin genesis stories have it that the first man on earth, and from whom the entire human race is descended, was an *Ogioot* (singular for *Ogieek*).

Certainly linguistic and many other cultural traits and practices link the *Ogieek* intrinsically with the Kalenjiin and with the ancient Egyptians alike. That said, however, the legend of *Misiri* seems to be singularly lacking in *Ogieek* tradition. They instead insist on and derive a certain amount of pleasure and prestige from their claim of indigenesness to their present forest localities (Cf. Blackburn, 1976:68ff). Discounting the possibility of unexplained but genuine widespread collective amnesia, the reason for the absence of the *Misiri* tradition from their lore, may be understood by taking into account the importance to them of staking indigenous claim to the forests. This could prompt the desire to be as indigenous to the forest domains as possible and the mind, for the sake of social and economic survival, then practices to and finally forgets every other tradition that mentions immigration. It is, of course, also possible that their claim as it stands is based on some pre-historical truth. But if they were migrants, like the rest of the Kalenjiin-speaking peoples, then we must respect the Kalenjiin elders’ popular tradition to the effect that the *Ogieek* were earlier arrivals who became impoverished over time as they gradually lost their livestock to both disease and theft. The Maasai name for the *Ogieek*, *Il Torobo*, “the impoverished ones”, is useful to this view. That following such loss, therefore, they took to the forest and to the hunter-gathering economy. That they had then over the millennia intermarried with and adopted the minimum survival ways of even older and truly indigenous peoples who pursued this hunter-gathering type of survival economy (Cf. Seligman, 1966:16). The latter element may have been akin to the people who have derogatorily been called “Bushmen” in Southern Africa. This speculation is encouraged by the relatively lighter complexion of the

¹ Budge’s Dictionary, 984a.

Ogieek, their relatively lighter build, as well as their rather Mongoloid facial profile; the standard look of the average member of the Southern African population mentioned (Cf. Blackburn, 1976:63).

From every settlement on the proto-Kalenjiin's migratory route, offshoots, led by young energetic men and followed subsequently by their women, would leave the more settled older ones behind, in the charge of their youngest siblings, this being a practice in accord with custom; and proceed with their exploratory adventures south. Those left behind in each major stop account for the presence there, today, of settlements of kin peoples which when plotted on a map, describe and confirm, in the said linear manner, the direction of migration.

The next significant stop was the settlement around the foot of Mt. Kenya—which Kalenjiin oral tradition calls Mt. Koilegeen, which means "the Marble stone Mountain" owing to the variegated impression created by its permanent snowcap. They occupied almost the entire Central and parts of the Eastern Provinces of today's Kenya where the modern inhabitants of those areas remember some of the proto-Kalenjiin sections under the names Athi, Ghumba and Barabiu. They were here by 1000 AD. But the Athi, who were true Ogieek, may have arrived earlier (Cf. Muriuki, 1974:21,111,112).

The Kintu speakers¹ arrived not long afterwards in Central Kenya and they lived in harmony with the earlier proto-Kalenjiin settlers for quite a while. Inter-marriage appears to have been rampant. Cultural and religious items were exchanged too—hence the obtaining situation

¹ Caution, with reference to the South African situation in particular: Kintu and Isintu are new coinages that are intended to replace the old "Bantu" linguistic terminology especially within South Africa. Kintu, although it is still obscure, is preferred by the author within the South African confines. But this is possible only where he is not quoting an authority that is applying the term "Bantu". Canonici (1995) uses the term Kintu while Mr Hlengwa (personal communication) of the University of Natal and many of his colleagues prefer Isintu which is the same word from the Zulu—or Nguni—angle. The term "Bantu" is understood to refer to the linguistic grouping of the communities over much of sub-Saharan Africa who speak various independent but related forms of one super-language whose prominent linking word is *NTU*. *Ntu*, or variations of it, is the common root of the word meaning "person" throughout the related languages and dialects that are grouped under Bantu by linguists. Thus we have: *mu-ntu mu-ndu, omu-ntu*, meaning "person" or "a person", and *a-ndu, aba-ntu, ba-ntu* for "people" or "the people". Bantu is, therefore, an authentic African word and is a decent terminology that East Africans whose languages are grouped under the Bantu classification are proud and happy to go by. However, the same word was so abused in the apartheid era South Africa that, understandably, it is still considered highly offensive in South Africa. In fact *The Oxford Dictionary* has gone ahead to tag it as an "often offensive" word. The apartheid governments had qualified any facility thought and meant to be inferior "Bantu". Thus we had Bantu Education, Bantu Homelands, Bantu Quarters etc., all characterised by depravity.

The "Bantu" term is indeed redundant in South Africa owing to the fact that most of the black people speak various forms of the Bantu speech. However, in East Africa, the term is indispensable because there are many other languages that do not fall under the Bantu linguistic classification and indeed have little in common with the Bantu languages. Thus in East Africa we have such major African language classifications as: Nilotic, Cushitic, Hamitic etc. besides Bantu. Linguists, anthropologists and historians would, therefore, not manage to discuss their respective disciplines at all in the East African context were they to be deprived of the use of such language classifications, Bantu included. The author quotes extensively from sources that use the term "Bantu" generously and is therefore helpless about it in most instances.

whereby the Central Kenya Kintu-speaking people, such as the Gikuyu; adopted circumcision as well as three of the eight Kalenjiin circumcision age-sets in the correct sequence, *Nyoongi*, *Maiina* and *Chuumo* (Cf. Muriuki, 1974:39-40). This means that the *happy* coexistence lasted at least three circumcision generations, i.e. not less than 45 years. The same logic argues for a period of proto-Kalenjiin *effective influence*¹ that was not longer than three circumcision generations, i.e., at the most, 60 or so years. This argument is supported by the fact that the western and south-western Kenya Kintu-speakers, such as most branches of the Abaluyia and those of the Abakuria who coexisted longer with the Kalenjiin, and still do, adopted circumcision culture as well as all the eight circumcision generations in the correct sequence: *Maiina*, *Chuumo*, *Saawe*, *Koroongoro*, *Kipkooimet*, *Kapleelach*, *Kimnyiigei* and *Nyoongi* (see Were, 1967:4, 172 and various).

The main core of the proto-Kalenjiin left the Mt. Kenya region between the 14th and the 16th centuries AD, reportedly due to population pressure but really not least owing to the arrival of a power that quickly established an alliance with the Mt. Kenya Kintu-speaking peoples. The new alliance was struck at the expense of the older proto-Kalenjiin allies of the Mt. Kenya Kintu-speaking peoples. The late powerful entrants to the central Kenya scene were the Maasai (Cf. Muriuki, 1974:21,65,111,112,124).

A number of the proto-Kalenjiin sections that remained in Central Kenya were later to be absorbed into Gikuyu, Meru, Embu and Akamba Kintu-speaking people's identities. The process of assimilation went on up to our own time. The Athi, Ghumba, Barabiu and Maasai genes account for the distinctively modified physical characteristics of the Kintu speakers of today's Central and Eastern Provinces of Kenya whose members, therefore, resemble other Kintu-speaking peoples of Africa less, physically as well as culturally.² Names that run in the Gikuyu families such as Ngumba (from Ghumba<Ghumbieg), and in Kamba families such as Mwathi (from Athi), are relics as well as reminders of the proto-Kalenjiin peoples that had settled in central Kenya.

¹ See further below. The strong proto-Kalenjiin cultural and political influence in central Kenya was later neutralised by a combined onslaught of Maasai and Gikuyu military alliance. Exodus ensued and those that were left behind were too weak to exert further cultural influence. Instead they themselves were subjected to an assimilation process that lasted until our own times. As Maasai influence took the upper hand, the Gikuyu adopted the Maasai age grading system and superimposed it on the three age sets earlier obtained from the proto-Kalenjiin.

² The following is Dirk Berg-Schlösser's (1984:47) summary of the same: "The Kikuyu people probably moved into their present area of settlement about 1500 AD coming from the area further north-east of Mt. Kenya. In the new home area they partly dislocated the original inhabitants, probably mostly members of the "Dorobo", a people of hunters and gatherers living in the forest. They also intermarried with this group, as they did with other neighbouring peoples, e.g. the Maasai and Kamba, so that today the Kikuyu are not a "pure" stock in any physical or genetical sense of the word". Also see Seligman (1966:102) who says, "Many of the Bantu Kikuyu are no more pure Negroes than are the Nilo-Hamitic but sedentary Nandi".

A substantial number of the proto-Kalenjiin sections, notably the Barabiu (Barabaig) and the Ghumba (Ghumbieg) that were not absorbed into Kintu culture, were gradually driven deep into Tanzania by the frontal sections of the rather voracious Maasai migrants who were expanding from northern and central Kenya into north-eastern Tanzania. The descendants of those proto-Kalenjiin sections that were driven there are still domiciled there, at the fringes of Tanzanian Maasailand.

Some of the larger proto-Kalenjiin sections that had earlier settled in central Kenya, together with the fresh arrivals from Burgei, and others up the corridor of migration, moved in a westerly direction up to Mt. Elgon. Their former territory of central Kenya had become a hostile environment for them. Their south-westerly migration from here had extended the corridor of migration that was to be used continuously up to the arrival of the colonising European powers in the late 19th century. The elements of each fresh wave of immigrants referred to themselves as *Punoot* and sometimes fought with the earlier arrivals.

The period between the 14th century and the 16th century, is significant in that it was the epoch that saw the mainstream Kalenjiin communities of today, the last lot to refer to themselves, and who still do, as *Punoot*, leave Mt. Kenya area and Burgei in south-western Ethiopia for the Mt. Elgon area. This oft-narrated account of the complicated migratory movements, is very close to the findings of a retired top U.S. Navy man who gave himself the task of finding out something about what he called the “Nilo Hamitic group”. Rear Admiral F.R. Dodge went further to attempt to describe the expansion of the Kalenjiin from Mt. Elgon. He is reported to have travelled up and down the places mentioned in the above summary:

“By my figuring”, he wrote, “The Kipsigis, Nandi and Suk (Pokoot) (K.-S.-N.-), were practically one tribe some twenty generations ago, taking a generation as about 32½ years. They lived at the north-east end of Lake Rudolf (L. Turkana). The Maasai were already split off and living to the eastward of them. About this time the Galla were being pushed west by the Somali and, as they approached, the Maasai had to move first, choosing to go southward along the east side of Lake Rudolf. Later the K-S-N group moved onto the Karamoja Plateau and gradually worked southward to the country just north of Mt. Elgon. Eventually the Karamoja and Teso came down from the north, whereupon the K-S-N group were forced to move out, about eight generations ago. The Suk split off around the north face of Elgon to about their present locations and the Kipsigis-Nandi went down to westward of Elgon and around south and up to the plateau, arriving there six or seven generations ago—say 1700. Here the Kipsigis, Nandi, Tugen etc. separated to their present localities and ran into the Maasai again” (DC/KER/4/1/1).¹

¹ Cited by T.L. Edgar (Kericho) in 1955.

The proto-Kalenjiin elements that had been left behind at Burgei, to the north-east of Lake Turkana, about 1000 AD were, two or three centuries later swallowed up by hordes of Ethiopia's Cushitic-speaking Oromo who were moving in from the east.¹ Those that could, eventually departed southward with their religion, language and culture still largely intact. The language, in particular, was not left unscathed as modern Kalenjiin has a lot of Oromo/Somali in it. The interaction with the Cushites seems to have been, to an extent, on mutual terms, the reason being that the Borana (Oromo) and the Somali languages have many words that appear to be typical Hamitic (Kalenjiin/ancient Egyptian type) and even exhibit a few grammatical idiosyncrasies that appear to derive from proto-Kalenjiin.²

It is instructive that the community that now lives in the general area that may have been the heart of Burgei, to the north-east of Lake Turkana, still speaks a language that appears to be an ancient cross between Cushitic (the Oromo type) and Hamitic (the Kalenjiin type). They are called Geleba or Merrile, but prefer their self-name of Dathainich or Dathainik, both of which versions, together with Merrile, are proto-Kalenjiin-sounding enough. Linguists have listed their language under Cushitic but admit that it is not a Cushitic language at all (e.g. Tucker & Bryan 1966:561).

Other living languages of the Burgei area that are conventionally classified Nilotic, Nilo-Hamitic or Nilo-Saharan and which are not, therefore, Cushitic, exhibit close enough affinity with the Kalenjiin language as to have been one language a thousand or so years ago. Such are Majang, Muguj, Nyangatom, Anywa etc. (Cf. Bender, 1975—general theme).


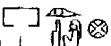
¹ Cf. Rear Admiral Dodge's account. Oromo is the self-name for the Galla mentioned above by Dodge. They also go by the name Borana on the Kenya side of the boundary.

² One grammatical feature shared between the Cushitic languages and Kalenjiin is the use of the singular form /t/ noun suffix. However, in Cushitic the /t/ suffix indicates that the noun is of feminine gender class while the Kalenjiin language uses this article as a definite article for singular nouns of the three grammatical genders. The plural forms of nouns that have the /t/ singular suffix generally end in /k/ suffix in both the Cushitic languages and Kalenjiin. In this respect Cushitic mirrors the Kalenjiin singular-to-plural system of inflection, except for the fact that Kalenjiin does not restrict this treatment to the feminine gender nouns as does Cushitic. It may be generalised that all Kalenjiin definite/indefinite singular noun forms, masculine, feminine or neuter, that end in /t/, must end with /k/ in their plural form and that for the Cushites—with a few exceptions—this rule applies only to feminine gender class nouns (Cf. Tucker & Brian 1966:511-513).




Another shared feature between the Cushitic languages and Kalenjiin occurs in the names for numbers: at least the numbers 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50 and 100 have similar names. However, in the important linguistic litmus test of "word order", Cushitic exhibits a great disagreement with the Hamitic group of languages i.e., ancient Egyptian, Kalenjiin, Maasai, Turkana, Teso, etc. All the Hamitic languages *begin* their verbal sentences with the verb, but Cushitic *ends* such sentences with the verb. A sentence like "the man sees the lion" i.e., Subject + Verb + Object (SVO), would be rendered in Somali (Cushitic) in a form that literally translates as follows: "the lion the man sees", i.e. Object + Subject + Verb (OSV). But Kalenjiin and the rest of the Hamitic family of languages, ancient Egyptian included, would render the same in what literally translates as: "sees the man the lion", i.e. Verb + Subject + Object (VSO)—see Chapter 6. Thus whereas Hamitic is basically a VSO language grouping, Cushitic is basically an SOV language grouping (the former may alternate between VSO and VOS, while the latter may alternate between SOV and OSV—but note that both groups are adamant about their preferred position for the verb [Cf. Tucker & Bryan 1966:19 & 541]).


On arrival at Mt. Elgon, the proto-Kalenjiin that approached from Burgei across the Mt. Kenya region, may have met with others who had approached from the Uganda side of Mt. Elgon, having followed the White Nile course up to Lake Victoria then turned eastward. These had survived the White Nile Nilotic influence and still wanted to reunite with their kin.

The ancestors of today's Kalenjiin later expanded from the nucleus of their Mt. Elgon abode. The easterly and south-easterly fanning out from Mt. Elgon area into the present-day abodes, and into the sub-ethnic entities of the modern Kalenjiin nation, according to Rear Admiral Dodge above, and many oral sources—and supported by the age-set method of reckoning—began about the 17th century AD. Population pressure, attack from enemies, and the seeking of greener pastures were the reasons heard more often in explanation for the outward and far-flung expansion from the slopes of Mt. Elgon.

The *Tto* of Kalenjiin oral tradition corresponds to present day Abusir in Egypt. Its classical Greek name was *Busiris*, while the ancient Egyptians themselves called it  *Ddw* (Gardiner 1927:604) or *Tto*.¹ The modern Arabic version *Abusir* and the classical Greek version *Busiris*, both derive from ancient Egyptian  *Pa-Ausar* or *Per-Ausar* (Budge, 1895:cxvii). An idea of the correct pronunciation is suggested by the Coptic ΠΟΥΣΙΡΙ *"Pusiri: the sanctuary of Osiris"* (B.Dict. 985b).

One of the military clans, from whose exclusive ranks the Pharaohs drew their soldiers, lived in the approximate region of *Tto* in old Saï tes, within and around the approximate area of the 9th Nome of Lower (northern) Egypt.² They were the *Sebenny* people whom Herodotus, the famed fifth century BC "Father of History", mentions in his *Histories* (Book II Ch. 166). This is the name that the proto-Kalenjiin migrants knew themselves by up to Mt. Elgon. Others of their own, who are still domiciled at the slopes of this mountain, still go by that name—or variations of it: *Sabiiny*, *Sapiiny*, *Sabaoot*, or *Sebei*.

Sapiiny and *Sebei* almost definitely relate to  or  *Sapi* or  *Sapi meh* referring to Sais, the capital of Saï tes (B. Dict. 1034a). The determinants of bow, shield and arrows that characterise the above hieroglyphic renderings, serve to confirm that indeed this was the location of a military clan.

¹ Budge assigns the value /t/ to the column  symbol and not /d/ as do both Gardiner and Faulkner. In any case we shall later see that all /d/ sounds in Ancient Egyptian have since been rendered /t/ in Kalenjiin—excluding the Tautoo branches of Tanzania.

² That *Tto* was in the 9th Nome is gathered from Budge, 1895:cxvii.

4.4 Assigning Time Frame and Reasons for the Departure from Egypt

According to Herodotus, the military clans—from among whom the Pharaohs came—were ranked at par in social esteem with the priestly clan, and every soldier was allocated a plot for the yearly crop. Although the priests often had massive influence over the Pharaohs, to the extent of occasionally usurping their power outright, it was the soldiering clans that traditionally produced the Pharaohs and not the priestly clan. For the reason that these two clans were ranked socially equal, there was the occasional rivalry. Herodotus narrates the story of the priest of Ptah who usurped power and began to demean the military clans, taking away their cultivation plots. The Assyrian king, Senacherib, afterwards attacked the priest-king and the military clans refused to defend him. However he was lucky because before the Assyrians could depose him, mice ate their weapons and they had to beat a hasty retreat (Herodotus II: 141).

The occasional military clan-priestly clan power struggles and mistrust of one another, e.g. kings mistrusting their own soldiers, which is characteristic of a declining, decaying power, had the negative effects of further weakening, destabilising the country and causing disaffection and setting the stage for massive outward migration.

The author's most elderly informants, men and women of *Nyoongi* and *Maiina* age-sets (now over 110 and 100 years old respectively on the average) insisted that the Myoot (the proto-Kalenjiin) left Egypt to look for greener pastures—literally-speaking—in the south. It is not in their psyche to associate those ancestors with the act of rebellion against the authority of the time—the Pharaoh. In fact, the Kalenjiin are an almost instinctively loyal and conservative people indeed of natural martial orientation (Cf. Matson, 1972:9).

That said, the following people must, however, be somehow accommodated among the proto-Kalenjiin waves of immigrants to Eastern Africa: about 250,000 of Pharaoh's soldiers once deserted his army and marched several month's journey south of Egypt. This occurred approximately between the seventh and sixth centuries BC. They were soldiers of Pharaoh



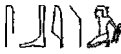

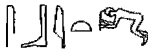
Psamitik I.¹ Herodotus refers to those deserters of Psamitik's army as *asmach*, Greek for "those who stand on the left hand of the king." Herodotus noted that those deserters went to Ethiopia—which in his time meant Africa south of Egypt—married local wives and settled. "The result of their living there," he wrote, "Was that the Ethiopians learned Egyptian manners and became civilised." (Book II Ch. 113).

Whether circumcision, certain cultural, religious, social and other formalised organisational institutions, are representative of higher civilisation, is best left to conjecture. However, the widespread claim to the effect that the early Kalenjiin introduced certain aspects of their culture to this part of Africa—especially the socio-religious aspect of circumcision and its related age-set system—is amply corroborated orally by the neighbouring communities as well as by the Kalenjiin elders themselves. Many of those claims have been documented over the last one century, or so, by various authorities working among these East African communities e.g. Seligman (1934:19). But of special importance is the corroborating evidence collected by eminent scholars who are themselves from within the communities that were reportedly so influenced, e.g.: Prof. Godfrey Muruiki on the Gikuyu (1974:39-40) and Prof. Gideon Were on the Abaluhya (1967, various).

That said, however, conspicuously missing in the modern Kalenjiin elders' oral recollection, is this question of having rebelled back in Egypt. They insist that their ancestors did not tell them about any rebellion on the part of those older ancestors who, they maintain, left Egypt thousands of years ago. But it must be remembered that people left Egypt, as indeed they did any other

¹ There were three kings named Psamitik of the XXVI dynasty 663-525 BC—name sounds like Kalenjiin *Psamitiik*, *Psamteek*? The Greek version suggests *Psamitiik*, for they called him, Ψαμμητιχος [*Psammitiik-os*]*-os*—the *-os* ending is a common Greek addition upon names (Chronology MEE 98 and B.Dict. 940 ff.).

country, in several successive waves. It must be conceded that one of the waves was that of the “army deserting” group. The possibility also exists that the elders over the generations have chosen to suppress the legend of rebellion and the stigma that they may have perceived to be associated with it to the extent that it was finally left out of the oral tradition altogether.

Intriguingly, the ancient Egyptian word for “military rebel” is akin to *Sabaoot*—one name by which at least one of the proto-Kalenjiin waves of immigrants was known. *Sabaoot* is an ethnic term that stands side by side, if not interchangeably, with *Sabiiny* (which is also the name of one of the ancient Egyptian military clans referred to above). The ancient Egyptian words for “rebel” that are akin to *Sabaoot* are:  *sbi*;¹  *sheb-t*;  *sbit*, and the Coptic ⲠⲚⲖⲓⲠⲟ (shebioo).² It is to be noted that the hieroglyphic renderings have been transcribed without most of the vowels owing to the current level of knowledge of the hieroglyphs and the widespread belief within the discipline of Egyptology that the hieroglyphic writings were generally devoid of vowel representation. The reader’s guess as to what to fill in by way of vowels is, therefore, as good as the author’s. Whatever one ends up with, is to be read together and along with the Coptic version for the word to come out. The Coptic rendering is more reliable because it employs vowels whose values are known. However, unlike ancient Egyptian and most of the Kalenjiin dialects, Coptic lost the Hamitic definite article /t/ in most of its nouns and *Shebioo* may have contracted from *Shebioot*.

As Egypt gradually lost its pre-eminent position as the superpower of the then “known” world, the apocalypse of which took place during the XXVI dynasty—between 663 and 525 BC—it was natural for the military section, out of the greater population, to progressively feel disaffected. The “civilian” sections could easily re-adjust to and continue serving in their traditional roles under foreign military powers. But as for the military segments, mutiny, disaffection and desertion, would be common among their lot during such times of decline because the occupying alien powers must, of necessity, view them with suspicion all the time. And it is the military clans that had lost the wars in the first place, anyway, notwithstanding the fact that loss may have resulted from misdirection and misuse by the commanding Pharaohs. The widespread frustration and the mass emigrations that followed from among their number were inevitable.

¹Alan Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar, Being an Introduction to the Study of Hieroglyphics*, Griffith Institute, 1927, p. 443.

²Budge’s Dict. *ibid.*, p. 735b. & Faulkner’s Dict. p. 220. It is also instructive to note that *Sabaoot*, of the Kalenjiin interpretation, also carries the notion “survivors” of war.

One such a military setback and the resulting frustration and disaffection, on the part of the declining world super power of the ancient world's army, was recorded by Herodotus. The Egyptian soldiers lost this one owing more to their arrogance and taking the opposing armies for granted, having held sway for at least a thousand¹ years, than for any other reason—failure of the Pharaoh's war medicine notwithstanding.

The Greeks, who had been studying them quietly—if in total awe, mixed with admiration—for centuries, were this time round more than able to take on their now-fast-fading mentor and civilising power of old.

“... For the Egyptians had as yet had no experience of Greeks, and despised their enemy; whereby they were so utterly destroyed that few of them returned to Egypt. For this mishap, and because they blamed (Pharaoh) Apries for it, the Egyptians revolted from him” (Herodotus IV: 159).

This was in the year 570 BC.



Before this historic military loss to the Greeks, the Egyptians had been weakened considerably by the forces of the Chaldean crown Prince—later to become the legendary king Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon—through a massive loss to Nebuchadnezzar's forces at Carchemish, Syria, in 605 BC (Asimov, 1967:122).² All the northern dominions of Egypt had been taken up by the then emerging powers of western Asia. The majority of these emerging powers had themselves been Egypt's possessions a while earlier (Asimov, 1967:75). The then rusting Egyptian empire had been pushed back to the present Sinai boundary. The buffer zones had therefore all been chewed up and any attack by the enemy would take place too close home. The situation, in fact, was such that one serious enemy attacked and the battle would quickly be brought right to the streets of the then capital of Egypt, Sais (near today's Tanta), which happened to be too close to the enemy-infested Mediterranean Sea up north.



It was during this precarious period of gross military imbalance against Egypt that one Egyptian Pharaoh pricked the ego of the king of a self-reasserting Persia (≈ modern Iran). The “offending” Pharaoh was named Amasis.³ His full name was rendered in the hieroglyphics as

¹ Cf. Isaac Asimov, 1967:75 and his “Table of Dates”.

² Almost 1000 years before this loss at Carchemish, Thutmose I of Egypt had conquered the same Carchemish and the Land of the Two Rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates, whereupon “he planted a stone pillar testifying to his presence” (Asimov, 1967:75).

³ The king's name was spelled, by the famous Greek historian, Herodotus, who recorded the occurrence not so long after the event, Αμωσις (*Amoosis*). But it is a common practice among Egyptologists to spell this name Amasis.

follows: . This ancient presentation has been transcribed by Wallis Budge as **Khnem-ab-Ra Aahmes**, but which, with our knowledge of the Kalenjiin language—which we shall soon attempt to prove to be a living descendant language of Pharaonic—was probably pronounced something close to **Chenam-ib araap Amasiis** (or **Chenam-ib wero Amasiis**). *Chenam* in Kalenjiin means “the maker (of things) with clay”, from (*kee*)*nam*, “(to) hold, (to) mould with clay, to join together” which is cognate with the ancient Egyptian  *khnem* “to join, to unite, to mould, to model” (Budge 1895:cix,1904:50). It cannot owe it to sheer coincidence that pottery is the chief attribute of the “god” Chenemu or Khnemu of ancient Egypt, with whom—on account of this name—Amasis may have been associated.¹


The “offended” Persian King was the great conqueror called, by the Greeks, Cambyses (in Persian: **Kambujiya**). The Egyptians Egyptianised and rendered his name thus: , which is transcribed by Budge as **Mesut-Ra Kambathet** but which, with reference to Kalenjiin practice, may have been something close to **Mesuundeï araap Kambateet** (or **Mesuundeï wero Kambateet**). This is translatable to “Darkness, son of his mother’s back.”² The Egyptians also called him , which is transcribed by Budge thus: **Mesut-Ra Kenbutcha**. This sounds like Kalenjiin **Mesuundeï araap**

¹ The author takes the liberty here with the names of the Egyptian kings of the Saïte period, i.e. the 26th Dynasty (664–525 BC), because these names were preserved in an almost correct state by the Greeks who were invited by Psamitik I to settle in Egypt. Herodotus also wrote a lot about the kings of the Saïte period. Owing to the relative accuracy in royal name preservation that is characteristic of this period, the names sound very Kalenjiin indeed. Names like Amasis, Psamitik, Psamis etc. have such a Kalenjiin ring and character that one cannot rule out the possibility that there are people somewhere on Kalenjiinland today who are named thus. Names and words that begin with the letters /ps/ such as Psirmoi, Psenjen, Pseelim, Psaita, *psirich* etc. are unique to Kalenjiin and are common even today especially among the northern and Mt. Elgon Kalenjiin: Marakwet, Pokoot and Sabaoot respectively. Other common first-syllable combinations of this type here are /pn/, /pt/, /pk/ etc.

² Was he born illegitimate, thus arriving to his “father’s” home on his mother’s back? The Egyptians believed that Cambyses was the son of an Egyptian princess, daughter of the overthrown Pharaoh Apries. She had been forcefully married off to Cambyses’ father, King Cyrus of Persia by Amasis. But the Persians believed that Cambyses was the son of Cyrus’ Persian wife and that Cambyses and his mother were embittered by King Cyrus’ love for his Egyptian wife and her tall sons, one of whom Cyrus would have liked to hand over his kingdom to (Herodotus III: 2). Either scenario does not deny that the controversial circumstances surrounding the House of Cyrus’ connection with the Egyptian Pharaohs through marriage were the fertile grounds upon which Cambyses capitalised to conquer Egypt.

Cambyses’ invading forces reached the capital of Egypt too late for the capture and punishment of Amasis—for Amasis had since died. The Pharaoh that the Persian army found sitting on Amasis’ throne was his son, Psamitik III (the Angkee araap Psamteek above) but who is called by Herodotus Psamennitus. Psamitik surrendered and was allowed to live “honourably”. But he later organised a revolt against his conquerors, in an attempt to regain genuine control over his country. He was discovered and he committed suicide by, according to Herodotus, “drinking bull’s blood”—story paraphrased from Herodotus’ *Histories, ibid.* Hieroglyphic presentation from B.Dict.

Kenbucha—translatable to “Darkness son of the Liar-for-Nothing”! This translation befits Cambyses’ character.

Pharaoh Amasis had succeeded a Pharaoh, mentioned further above, whom the Greeks called *Ἀπριης* (*Apries* and, sometimes, *Hopra*), by a popular military revolution following a disastrous military campaign against the up-to-then unfancied Greeks in Cyrene (Herodotus II: 161).¹ Amasis was in turn succeeded by his son  which name is transcribed by Budge as follows: **Ankh-ka-Ra Psemthek (Angkee araap Psamteek?)**. This was the Pharaoh who, as already narrated, was conquered by the Persian army led by their king, Cambyses.

By the time of the arrival of the Persian king in Egypt, the Pharaonic institution had been so weakened and its relationship with the military clans was so hopelessly strained. The Pharaohs of the XXVI Dynasty, many of them named Psamtik, had deposed the Cushite Dynasty whose kings came from what is today part of Sudan and who had ruled Egypt for about 70 years—730 to 663 BC (Snowden, 1970:114). Psamtik I used non-African mercenaries and organised a mop up campaign throughout Egypt, weeding out all provincial rulers who had served under the Cushites of the XXV Dynasty. Having successfully installed themselves as the unchallenged rulers of Egypt, the Pharaohs of the XXVI Dynasty then established their capital at Sais.

But ever feeling so insecure with their own people, they were unable to disengage themselves from dependence on foreign soldiery. These Pharaohs, beginning from Psamtik I through Psamtik II, Amasis III to the younger Psamtik III, had surrounded themselves with foreign troops as body guards against their own native troops. First there were the Ionian and the Carian mercenaries that Psamtik I had used to depose contending Cushite-installed minor rulers of the Egyptian provinces and for consolidating his rule over the entire country. Herodotus says that these Ionians and Carians were the first foreign troops ever to settle on Egyptian soil (II: 154).

Pharaoh Amasis kept the trust-in-mercenary policy, adding Greek soldiers to his bodyguard and a Greek wife to his household (Herodotus II: 181). The son of Amasis, Psamtik III, also kept the policy of reliance on foreign soldiers and so the soldiers, who were trying to defend Egypt at the time of the arrival of Cambyses of Persia, were the mercenaries.² That is how alienated from

¹ Cyrene is in modern Libya.

² However, Herodotus demonstrates convincingly his belief to the effect that the skulls left at the scene of battle between the Persians and the Egyptians were of two different kinds. The skulls of Persian soldiers were brittle and broke easily when one dropped a stone on them while the skulls of the Egyptian soldiers were hard and did not break as easily upon dropping a stone on them. He ascribes this hard-skull quality to the Egyptians as a race. If we may believe
Footnote continued at bottom of next page

one another the military institution and the kingship institution had become and hence further cause for emigration of sections of the military clans.

4.4.1 *Geographical Corroboration from the Traces of Greek and Hebrew Influences on the Kalenjiin Language*

If the Kalenjiin-to-be really left Egypt as a result of such disaffection with the status quo—namely that they were being replaced by Greek mercenaries—then reason must be found to explain the extent of the apparent Greek influence on the Kalenjiin language. Considering the significant number of Greek loan words that are present in the Kalenjiin vocabulary, they seem to have left Egypt after the Greek influence had been in place long enough for the conquered to borrow and to internalise words to the extent they did. But the Pharaohs' dependence on Greek mercenaries and the consequential opportunistic Persian conquest, were events that took place around the seventh and sixth centuries BC. The Greek influence was backed by political authority only from around the fourth century BC when Alexander “The Great” conquered Egypt.

However, it has been documented that the Greek were well established in Naucratis—a settlement in the Egyptian delta area—by the sixth century BC (Snowden 1970:103). The delta area is within the Sebben location of the military clan that reconstructed evidence and oral hints seem to link the proto-Kalenjiin to. The proto-Kalenjiin may, therefore, have been in close contact with the Greek community of Naucratis for many centuries before the Greek-speaking Alexander “the Great’s” triumphant entry of Egypt in the fourth century BC.


Indeed in order to have collected so much of Greek vocabulary, the ancestors of the Kalenjiin, in addition to such coexistence with Greek communities, must have lived under Greek and possibly Greco-Roman rule for a considerable length of time. However, the ancestors of the Kalenjiin seem to have left Egypt before the Roman rulers had banned the worship of and the sacrificial rituals associated with Isis in favour of Christianity, which the Romans did beginning from the reign of Constantine, 312/313 AD (Harris 1971:397). It was intensified during the reign of Theodosius (4th century AD) and most finally in the reign of Justinian (6th century AD) during which persecution any vestiges of the worship of Isis, such as social organisation by *maat* and totemism, but which safely continued in the south under Asiisianism, were eradicated (Cf. Van Seritma, 1989:276—see Chapter 11).

him, then we may also believe that Psamtik III may have had many indigenous men fighting for him as well as that his foreign bodyguards descended from foreigners who had intermarried with locals over a generation or two (Cf. Snowden 1970:104).

It is important, for the purpose of dating; to note that the ancestors of the Kalenjiin did not adopt Christianity and neither did they abandon the rituals and social structuring that were associated with the Isis kind of worship. Therefore, fixing the approximate date for the departure of the most significant batch of migrants at any point between the seventh century BC and the sixth century AD, that is having lived side by side with and later under Greek and Greek-speaking Romans for just over one thousand years, is feasible.¹

The ancestors of the Kalenjiin, who are often referred to here as Myoot, for that is one of the collective names for themselves that they used until recently, no doubt also met and coexisted with the Hebrews. The contact lasted for a period of time long enough for the Myoot to have borrowed and internalised a large number of Hebrew words. Of course some of the Kalenjiin words that are traceable to Hebrew may themselves have ultimately been derived from the ancient Egyptian language, the latter, therefore, being just a common source to both Kalenjiin and Hebrew. Whatever the case may have been, the Kalenjiin-Hebrew cognates point to a northern influence on the Kalenjiin language—a further living proof of their *Misiri* origin claim.²

¹ Some examples of possibly scores of words shared between Greek and Kalenjiin follow: Greek and Kalenjiin word *αρα* (*ara*), in both languages is used to introduce a question similar to the English “so” when it is used to introduce a question. This word in its sense of “after all” in Greek, is similarly applied in Kalenjiin; *νοεω* (*noeoo*), “understand”, “perceive”, “discern”, “think over” etc. corresponds to Kalenjiin *nai* “know” and *nayo*, “knowledge” (English “know” is ultimately traceable to Greek); *λογια* (*logia*) “oracles”, “words”, “messages”, corresponds to Kalenjiin *logooi*, “words”, “messages”, “news” etc. Add to this: *λογος* (*logos*) “something said”, e.g. “word”, “saying”, “message”, etc.; *αγκαθι* (*angkathi*) “thorn”, compares to Kalenjiin *kata*, meaning “thorn”; *ματην* (*matin*) “in vain”, “to no purpose” means the same in Kalenjiin; *υδρια* (*hudria*) “water pot”, “water jar” survives in Kalenjiin as *ter*; *σιγαο* (*sigao*) “keep silent”, “be silent” etc. is rendered in Kalenjiin *sisi-gee* and *φυσωω* (*phusao*) “blow out” corresponds to Kalenjiin *i-puus*, “breathe”. There are many more words shared by the Greek and Kalenjiin languages. However, some of the shared words seem to be of ancient Egyptian origin that entered Greek. Definite examples of such words are: *μαρτυριον* (*marturion*) “witness”, “testimony”, “evidence”, “proof” etc. which survives in Kalenjiin as *motir* or

motryoon—from ancient Egyptian  *mtr* and Coptic *ⲙⲁⲣⲧⲩⲣⲓⲁ* (*martiria*); *οραω* (*horaoo*) “see”, Kalenjiin *iroo*, the same in Coptic is *ⲓⲠⲣⲁ* (*ioorh*).

² The following are examples of Hebrew words in Kalenjiin (a vice versa situation may not be ruled out however): Hebrew *בָּרַק* *barak*, which means “lightning”, and *רָקִיעַ* *raki’a*, “heaven”, are obvious relations of the Kalenjiin *barak* or *parak* which is the latter’s word for “sky”, “heavens” and places of high elevation etc.; *תְּלִילִית* *telulit*, “mound”, which may be compared with Kalenjiin *tul-weet*; Hebrew *בָּעַר* *ba’ar*, “ignoramus”, “fool”, corresponds to Kalenjiin *berber*. So do the nouns created from this common adjective: *בְּעָרוֹת* *ba’arut*, “stupidity”, “ignorance” corresponding with the Kalenjiin *berberyet*, “stupidity”, “ignorance”—this Kalenjiin *berberyet* is also phonetically very close to the Hebrew word for “barbarism”, *בְּרִיּוֹת*, *barbariyut*. Then we have *אֶרֶץ* *eretz* “country” which corresponds to Kalenjiin *koor-eet* “land/division/country”; *כִּנָּה* *kinna* “name”, “call”, “designate” corresponds to Kalenjiin *kaaina* “name” (n); *קָטָן* *katan* “small” corresponds to Kalenjiin *kiteen/kitgiin* “small”; *כֹּל* *kol* “all”, “whole” corresponds to Kalenjiin *tugul* “all”, “whole”; *אָמֵן* *amen* “amen” corresponds to Kalenjiin *iman* “it is true/so be it” and is related to *אֱמֶת* *emet* “truth” which the Kalenjiin render *imanit* “the truth”; *רָאָה* *ra’a* “see”, “look” perfectly corresponds to Kalenjiin *i-roo* and *יָרָה* *yare’akh* “moon/month” is rendered *araawa* in Kalenjiin. There are many more Kalenjiin-Hebrew cognates and this relationship occasionally extends to noun formation such as is demonstrated by the shared adjective for “ignorant” and the shared noun formed from it, meaning “ignoramus”. The unique Kalenjiin (and related) Verb-Subject-Object (VSO) word order also corresponds to old Hebrew and other old Semitic branches’ word order (Loprieno 1995: 3. The Old Hebrew VSO preference was confirmed by Prof J.P. van der Westhuizen to the author in person and in a conference paper *Subject initial Position in the Shechem Amarna Letters*, 11th. Annual Conference of the Southern African Society for Semitics, September 1998).



PICTURE 11: The distant and close-up pictures of the pyramid of Ngundeng, the 19th-century king of the Nuer. The Nuer country is hardly 200 Kilometres north of the Kenya-Sudan boundary. The pyramid is thought to have been initiated by Ngundeng around 1900 AD and completed by his son Gwek. This pyramid is called Deng Kur and is the biggest in the Nuer country. Constructed of baked earth and ashes, it was estimated by the pioneering European colonial officers to be 50 feet high and 300 feet in

circumference—surrounded fully with ivory tusks planted into the ground. More tusks were buried in the centre. The pyramid culture was, therefore not confined to Egypt and is, in fact, thought to have originated far to the south as is evidenced by the Deng Kur pyramid. *The picture is from Seligman, 1932, and was taken by Dr. Crispin around 1900 AD.*

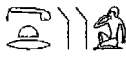

According to Diop almost all the black Africans can claim the Nile Valley to be their cradle-land. He says that the legends, the languages, the customs, the beliefs of all the African populations link them to the common original cradle, which is the Nile Valley (Cf. 1996:53). Indeed most African cultures, legends etc. are similar. Only language betrays subtle differences and in fact other linguistic classes are no longer readily traceable to the Nile Valley. The speakers of such languages may have lost their Nilotic tongues and adopted the speech of pockets of peoples that were more aboriginal to areas of Africa in which they now find themselves. A clear example of such development that is almost within memory is the case of the Tutsi. Other examples farther afield maybe the Zulu, the Xhosa, the Ndebele, the Sotho etc. all of whom are supported in this claim to the Nile Valley as cradle more by their cultural practices and legends than by their languages.

For the reason that much of Africa can lay claim to the Nile Valley as the common cradle-land, Diop (1996:40) proposes that ancient Egypt be considered to be to Africa what ancient Greece is to Europe, that is, take all cultural, historical and linguistic bearing from ancient Egypt. “We could even, at a pinch, consider (ancient) Egyptian as a dead language and, for geographical, historical reasons, build our humanities on Egyptian foundations—the same way the Greek language is at the foundation of humanities in western civilisation.”

4.5 The Kalenjiin Language after Egypt

The Myoot people brought their Pharaonic dialect with them southward and exposed it to other southern languages during which exposure dynamic lending and borrowing took place. But unlike what we shall shortly see happening to Coptic vis-a-vis the Greek language, the basic Hamitic structure of Kalenjiin was retained in spite of the assault it faced from several southern languages which had entirely different language structures and vocabulary. Kalenjiin has borrowed some of the vocabulary items from these languages just as it has lent out to them, but best of all the Kalenjiin speakers have kept the Pharaonic speech truly alive.

Probably owing to the said massive Greek influence, Coptic lost, among other features, the Hamitic definite singular noun suffixal article /t/. Ancient Egyptian texts exhibit this feature and, as in Kalenjiin, the definite singular nouns and gerunds are characterised by the suffixal article /t/. It has to be remembered that Coptic is lacking this suffix by omission; it is not that both Kalenjiin and

Pharaonic Egyptian have it by commission. For an example, Coptic Ⲙⲉⲧⲣⲏⲛ (*metrii*), “instructor”, “witness”, from Pharaonic Egyptian verb  *mtr*, “instruct”, is retained in Kalenjiin as: *motir*, “instruct” (especially as part of initiation into the next social grade or class); but the Kalenjiin refer to the witness/instructor as *motir-yoot* and the action of witnessing, or training initiates, as *motir-eeṯ* (which is ancient Egyptian  *mt(r)t*, “testimony” [F.Dict. 121]). Note that the appended suffix in the Kalenjiin context, and probably in the ancient Egyptian context as well could, in some cases, be very long. The /t/ suffix does not come alone; it comes with one or more vowels and even consonants in certain cases.

Although the Kalenjiin people have kept the Pharaonic tongue truly alive, for the reason of absence of writing and preservation over many centuries, the stock of the original Egyptian vocabulary in Kalenjiin has shrunk gradually (see Appendix 3 for a qualification of “lack of writing”). While most authentic Kalenjiin words can be traced back to ancient Egyptian sources, the reverse is not the case. The ancient Egyptian vocabulary is so vastly much larger than the living Kalenjiin stock that uncountable Egyptian words cannot be traced in modern Kalenjiin, especially the technical words to do with marine, lake, or river life and traffic.¹

The huge difference in the size of the available stock of words, as regards both languages, is to be expected because the Egyptian language was recorded and preserved over several thousand years during which time, then being so dynamic, it received and coined new words. The form of ancient Egyptian that has been preserved is cumulative; therefore, while the much shrunken Kalenjiin language of today is only a probable southern remnant of it. Considering the great extent of basic word sharing that exists between ancient Egyptian/Coptic and Kalenjiin—as will be demonstrated in the following subsection—it would appear, statistically speaking, that inside the vast Pharaonic mega-language, 86% of the entire Kalenjiin vocabulary is to be found.²

¹ To this effect, Dr Taaita araap-Toweett, the pre-eminent Kalenjiin scholar (of linguistics), pointed out, at a symposium convened by The Davy Koech Foundation in February 1994, that the Kalenjiin language, as far as he knew, had only one word for all fish, *njir-yoot*! However it has turned out that there are one or two other Kalenjiin words for “fish”, e.g., Coptic’s ⲕⲟⲩⲁⲐⲟⲩ *kulhot*, “a type of fish” (Crum 107) is preserved in the Keiyo (Soi) word for “fish” *kawalyaat*—from Distefano, 1985 basic words gloss. Pokoot word for “fish” is *koogh-wa*, plural *kagha* (Beech, 1911). Toweett may have been correct, therefore, to the extent that each dialectal group possesses only one word for all species of fish.

² The 14% deficit would represent words of recent coinage and those borrowed from the East African neighbouring languages which are, essentially, of non-Hamitic origin. Many of such words are within the context of agriculture and vegetables. Examples are: *isageek*, *isoik*, *inderemeek* etc., whose common initial /i/ syllable would tend to point to a Kintu origin.

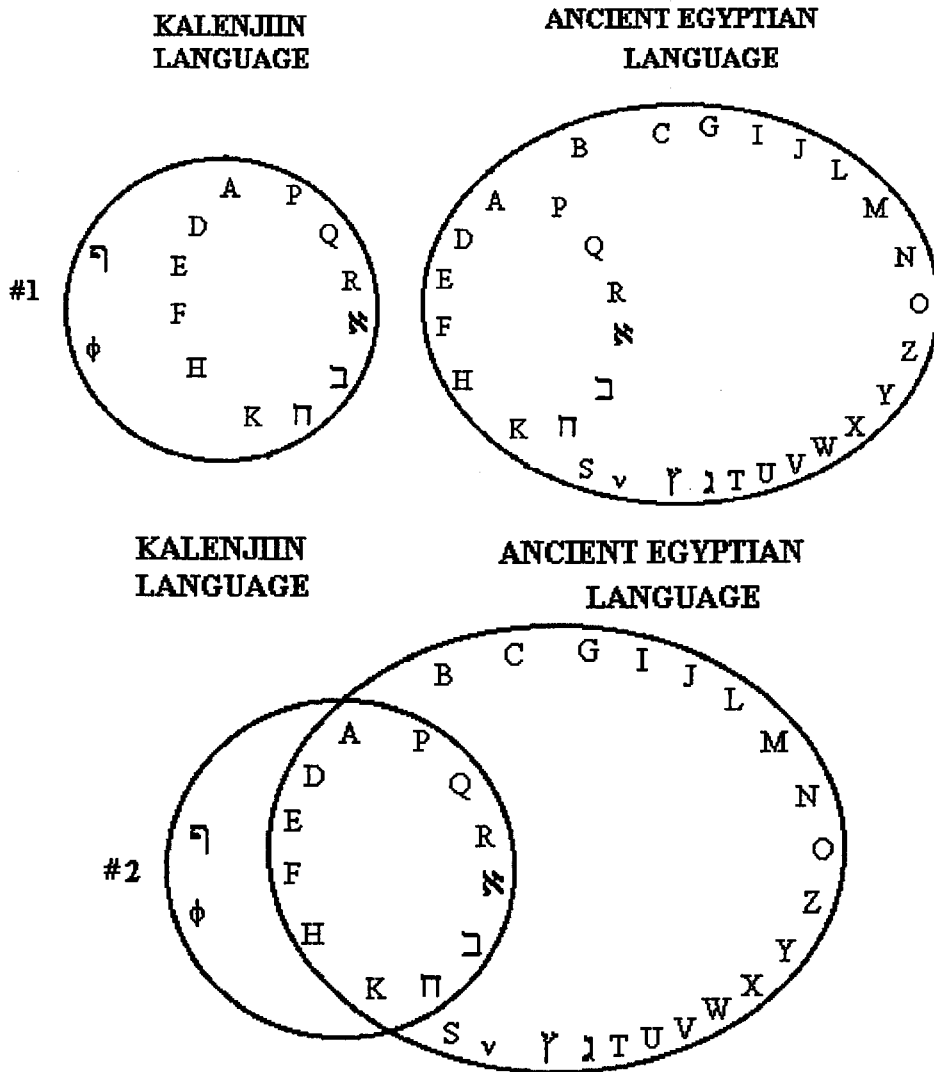


Figure 2: This mathematical model represents a purely hypothetical case based on a true scenario. The figure shows the nature of relationship between the ancient Egyptian language and the Kalenjiin language based on basic word stock sharing as demonstrated in Chapter 6. If every letter in this hypothetical case represented 1000 words, then ancient Egyptian would be having a stock of 32,000 words while Kalenjiin would be having a stock of only 14,000 words because it is much shrunken. Out of Kalenjiin's 14,000 imaginary stock, 12,000 would be known to and be derived from ancient Egyptian while 2,000 would be unknown to ancient Egyptian because they would have been acquired later either through invention or through borrowing from southern languages. But Kalenjiin, in its present stage, would have lost, or would be unaware of at least 20,000 ancient Egyptian words because they were acquired or invented after departure or have just been lost to Kalenjiin through attrition and atrophy over great lengths of separation time. #1 shows the relationship a priori, i.e. before comparative study work and #2 shows the relationship a posteriori, i.e. after the comparative work is completed and a certain level and nature of relationship has been established. What this means is that for every Kalenjiin lexical item, there is a theoretical 86% chance that it will be found in an ancient Egyptian or Coptic dictionary but the converse is not true. A search, therefore, is best begun from the shrunken "daughter" language and not the other way round.

Summary of Chapter 4: Who are the Kalenjiin?

We have seen that the Kalenjiin people's oral tradition to the effect that their ancestors originated from *Misiri* (Egypt), has not only been consistent but persistent all along to the extent that the same was recorded by the pioneering colonial officers and anthropologists upon the latter's arrival in East Africa. Notable among those who published their reports were Sir Charles Eliot, the governor of the territory that was later to be renamed Kenya, and Sir Claud Hollis, Eliot's man in charge of native affairs who was himself an anthropologist of consequence. Both men believed, from observation and from listening to what they called "distinct tradition to this effect" and were subsequently able to state categorically that the Kalenjiin and kin came "beyond doubt from the north" and that the "neighbourhood of Egypt and Abyssinia (Ethiopia)" rendered "several hypotheses plausible". The joint and separate submissions of those gentlemen are important because, among other reasons, far from being well disposed towards the Kalenjiin, their concession was actually in spite of themselves.

It is also very instructive the fact that the Kalenjiin-speaking people that those pioneering colonial officers interviewed orally through interpreters, were very unsophisticated folk who could neither read nor write and knew little outside their socio-cultural and territorial confines. The fact that they were able to communicate the key aspects of their heritage, including the important tradition of ancient Egyptian origin, to the first white men that they ever met in their lives, is remarkable in itself. It is an attestation as to the common-knowledge manner and depth of conviction that this aspect of oral tradition was held in and kept through the generations. This tradition is not, therefore, a latter-day creation of the educated Africans who are seeking to bask in the glory of ancient Egypt because of the perceived want of greater history with regard to their communities, or for any other reason for that matter. Neither is it part of what oral historians call feedback, namely that a people learn something from early visitors and incorporate it so successfully into their own lore that it would soon be forgotten that the idea was borrowed (Cf. Henige, 1982:82-83). Here, for all practical purposes, Eliot and Hollis were among the earliest visitors and, as such, they could not themselves have been fed on feedback.

Of importance too, as an element of proof of the origin tradition, are the settlements of the kin of the Kalenjiin that are scattered lineally in an approximate north-south axis along the very route that the Kalenjiin claim to have followed. These settlements testify to a slow migration that actually amounted to a gradual southern expansion rather than a translocational trek of the Boer kind. It is worth noting that the route, which is now described by the remnant settlements of the kin of the Kalenjiin, is similar to one of those that were described by Seligman in his

controversial theory of one-way north-to-south civilising influence of the Hamites. Proof of that route was further extended from the Southern Ethiopian highlands up to Mt. Elgon by the American adventurer, Rear Admiral Dodge, who personally walked that route in order to relive the experience, collect and corroborate evidence.

Seligman's one-way north-to-south civilising theory has little going for it by way of either physical or oral evidence but the corroborative value of his route theory is worth noting. All the same, if socio-cultural influence, such as is characterised by the introduction of circumcision, be considered an element of civilisation, then Seligman has support in the works of, among others, Professor Muriuki and Dirk Berg-Schlosser who have respectively collected oral evidence of such influence upon the people of Mt. Kenya area by the Hamitic speakers of the proto-Kalenjiin kind.

However, that the influence was not always one-way, namely that the Africans to the south also helped civilise and populate Egypt has been argued by Frankfort as we saw. In one instance he says,

"The basic proof that features of an ancient African civilisation survive today and that, consequently, resemblances between modern Africans and ancient Egyptians are not always emanations from Egypt, is supplied by certain Maasai arm rings. These are identical with two found in a grave of between 3000 and 2700 BC which almost certainly contained not an Egyptian but a foreigner from Punt or Somaliland" (Other cultural evidence cited elsewhere by Frankfort include the Pokoot wrist knife and many more shared items—1948:348).

Such cultural evidence first of all proves that two-way migration existed and, secondly, that the route, as described by Seligman can be thus ascertained. In an indirect but definite acknowledgement of this, the early western anthropologists proposed several classificatory names for the Kalenjiin and kin, and all the alternative names, including those that were invented later by African scholars themselves have, instructively, retained a common strain: "Nilo".

So if the migratory route makes sense, why would the oral tradition that holds Tto as the ultimate cradle-land not make sense similarly? We are able to locate the legendary Tto and it conveniently rests in the general area that was inhabited by the Sebben military clan of Pharaoh. Sebben, in its various renderings, is a name that has been acknowledged by Kalenjiin elders as being the original collective name of the proto-Kalenjiin up to the Mt. Elgon concentration area. We are also able to determine the Kalenjiin ring to the names of the kings from the Egyptian Sebben, or the general Delta area, which, however, is not to say much, given that the kings from other locations to the south had names with similar sounding ring. The latter group of names though was disadvantaged in that the Greek writers, who were a much later phenomenon, did not write the names in their fully vocalised script as they did for the names of the relatively more

recent Pharaohs of the 26th Dynasty who reigned from Sais (Delta) area. As we saw, the Saitic Pharaohs had invited a sizeable population of Greeks to settle in Naucratis, near Sais.

Another important piece of evidence to the effect that the proto-Kalenjiin lived in this area before is the appreciable number of apparent Greek loan words in today's Kalenjiin language. The equally appreciable number of apparent Hebrew loan words evident in Kalenjiin constitutes another testimony to the same effect. Any opposing view needs, therefore, to explain away the presence of the words in Kalenjiin that are derived from two unrelated non-African languages.

The possibility exists though that the same words could owe origin to ancient Egyptian itself, meaning that even as they exist in Greek and Hebrew, they are ancient Egyptian loan words. Nevertheless, given such a scenario, the origin claim of the Kalenjiin elders would still stand proven thereby, namely that the Kalenjiin language inherited the same multiply-shared stock from ancient Egyptian just as the two non-African languages, Greek and Hebrew¹, were able to borrow therefrom.

We have noted Eisee Reclus' view to the effect that the name "Hamite" might, after all, originate from the ancient Egyptians' name for their nation, and we have corroborated the same view here from the viewpoint of the Kalenjiin language. This, added to the "black land" essence of the word for "country" *Kemet*, spiced with Herodotus' eyewitness account to the effect that the Egyptians of his time were black, and corroborated by Batrawi and others' archaeological confirmations to the same effect, we should have no cause to feel at all encumbered by the unnecessarily confusing and sensitive issue of race. In any case, we see that even Seligman, one of the chief architects of the racial model vis-a-vis the Hamites, concedes that the ethnic communities that were touched by Hamitic blood were, contrary to his expectation, darker than the rest of the neighbouring African ethnic groups that he was observing in Sudan during the early thirties!

¹ Hebrew is considered "non-African" here only in deference to the modern general understanding and is not meant to preclude the possibility that all Semitic languages are indeed of African origin in the first place.

Chapter 5

And Who are the Egyptians?

Abstract



Chapter 5 attempts to define the ancient Egyptians as well as the modern Egyptians. We did describe the ancients' physical types as well as certain cultural traits a great deal while discussing the Hamite/Hamitic question in the previous chapter. Although we may be discussing the ancient Egyptians here, we will still be governed by the demands of the Kalenjiin's oral tradition that we are trying to prove. We are, therefore, going to discuss the ancient Egyptians in relation to sub-Saharan Africa in general and in relation to Nilotic Africa in particular, the last being a wider area that encompasses the Kalenjiin and kin.

Towards the end of this subsection, we involve the modern Egyptians both as a contrast to and as a continuation of the ancient Egyptians. This exercise is important because, on the surface of it, when we talk about the proto-Kalenjiin and the ancient Egyptians in the same breath, we may seem, at least to the uninitiated, to be associating together socio-cultural and genetic incompatibles: Arabs and black Africans. Because of this, we have a brief treatise on how Egypt

PICTURE 12: A very long narrow-sleeved linen dress from a 5th Dynasty (2500-2200 BC) tomb at Deshatesh. It is similar to what is described as a typical Pharaonic women's wear by Breasted here. It is clear from this picture that modern man has added little by way of innovation in textiles over the last 4500 years or so (Picture from the Petrie Museum of Archaeology, London—*Biblical Archaeologist*/December 1984). Compare the length of dress with that of Chapkwe, Picture 4.

became an essentially Arab and Islamic country, which happened long after the proto-Kalenjiin had left Egypt for the South. The treatise on Arabisation of Egypt would have been unnecessary if such involuntary perception of socio-cultural and racial dissonance would not come to the reader's mind so certainly the moment the Kalenjiin oral tradition of origin is mentioned. A discussion that inevitably partly constitutes an exercise in exclusion of the later invaders from the ancient Egyptian equation was thus found necessary.

A brief history of the Coptic language is presented, this language being one of the vital instruments, alongside ancient Egyptian and Kalenjiin, whose feature of consonance enhances the legitimisation of the subject of the entire thesis. Notes on transcription and a pronunciation guide are included as a smooth introduction to the linguistics based latter part of the section.

5.1 Ancient Egyptian Society as an Extension of Nilotic Africa

If we were to go by the mass of long since available literary material on the ancient Egyptians, we would think it unnecessary to make a fresh introduction, or even definition, of them as we did with regard to the Kalenjiin in the first part of this section. But perhaps the assumption that they are too familiar to need introduction would be unfair to readers who are now just getting introduced to a long-established field of knowledge. Besides, few sources discuss the ancient Egyptian society as an extension of interior Africa in general and as an extension of interior Nilotic Africa in particular, the way we intend to do in the following brief introduction and throughout the project. We introduce the ancient Egyptians as they relate to our theme, i.e., inasmuch as they go to corroborate the Kalenjiin people's claim of descent from them.

As a major element in the introduction of the Kalenjiin, much has already been said about the ancient Egyptians. It will, hopefully, be clear soon enough that we are only discussing the other side of the same socio-historical coin in what must amount to a continuous discussion. Further evidence of physical types, linguistic, and material culture will be of interest to us here.

The pre-eminent American Egyptologist, James Henry Breasted (1908:30), notes that the earliest graves of ancient Egyptians that were being opened early in the 20th century yielded pre-dynastic

“Egyptians who were dark-haired people, already possessed of rudiments of civilisation. The men wore a skin over the shoulders, sometimes skin drawers, and again only a short white linen kilt... the women were clothed in long garments of some textile, probably linen, reaching from the shoulders to the ankles. Statuettes of both sexes without clothing whatever are, however, very common... They occasionally tattooed their bodies.”

Breasted goes on to remark: “the representations of the early Puntites, or Somali people, on the Egyptian monuments, show striking resemblances to the Egyptians themselves.” From his brief statements, therefore, we get a glimpse of two typically black African attributes, namely that the ancient Egyptians' hair was dark and that they resembled other black people like the people of Punt and, or Somalia. And as we saw in the previous subsection, nudity as far as the Nilotic peoples in general were concerned, was nothing to be ashamed of.

Paul Jordan (1976:141) describes the same dress specifications for both sexes as above and also mentions the ancient Egyptians' propensity to nudity, which, as we saw with respect to the other Nilotic peoples, the Kalenjiin included, was the custom up until and long after the arrival of the colonial government whose officers described it in their anthropological books. Says Jordan: "People engaged in any sort of manual labour, including girls working in the corn fields, went practically naked."

Like the Kalenjiin up until only a few decades ago did, the ancient Egyptians found pride in wearing skins too. Perhaps as pastoralists, basically, who loved their animals almost to the point of worshipping them, no other material—excepting the skins of prestigious wild animals like lion and leopard; the colourful ones like those of the colobus monkey; the furry ones like those of hyrax, was more reassuring. Jordan (1976:141) notes that "skins must have been the earliest Egyptian form of clothing in pre-dynastic times and the skin of one animal in particular, the leopard, went on being worn—in a spirit of religious conservatism—as part of ceremonial priestly costume until the last days of ancient Egypt."

The emphasised leopard skin, with tail intact (called *siir*, pl. *siirek*), worn by men, hanging from the neck and falling on the back, is still common sight in Kalenjiinland during traditional celebrations. However the Kenya Government, with wildlife conservation in mind, has outlawed the ownership of wildlife trophies through legislation and only overlooks it when dancers dressed in these garments make an appearance to entertain dignitaries on national days.

Nevertheless, all the foregoing said, we need to remember that

"The historical Egyptians were great exponents of spinning and weaving linen cloth (although they are also known to have worn woolen clothes) and tools of the trade that have survived, as well as the wall paintings, show that their techniques differed little from the traditional crafts of today" (Jordan, 1976:141).



PICTURE 13: A bust of "goddess" Hathor, carved on both sides of this slip of wood from Gurob. It dates to the 18th or 19th Dynasty (1550-1200BC). From such images we can get an idea of what the Egyptians of the time looked like. Picture from *Biblical Archaeologist*/December 1984 (UC.16759).

Spinning and weaving are technologies that the Kalenjiin do not appear to have possessed in their East African setting, for they remained content with the pre-dynastic Egyptian type of skin garments up until and considerably into colonial times in certain areas. But the conversion to cloth was rather quick in

most areas, especially for the youth who loved sheets. From the speed of conversion to cloth, we

may suspect that a lingering knowledge of textile had all along remained with the people, either subconsciously or occasionally in practice. This argument is strengthened by the fact that the Maasai, who are not quick to change, uncharacteristically also turned to sheet linen immediately the Arab and European traders brought them and have since been reluctant to change to other types of cloth, such as trousers and shirts. Western-made beads also had met such an easy acceptance among the Kalenjiin and the Maasai alike. With these they made jewellery similar to those worn by the ancient Egyptians.

To add on top of the physical and cultural evidence of resemblance, Henri Frankfort (1948:348) has the following important statements, which also exclude ancient Egyptians linguistically and culturally from the Semitic family and declare them linguistically and culturally one with the Hamites and "half-Hamites" of sub-Saharan Africa. Hamites and "half-Hamites" are designations into which the early anthropologists, as we have seen, lumped the Maasai, the Kalenjiin etc. as well as the Bahima of Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi:

"Linguistic comparisons allow us to call this East and North African substratum of ancient Egypt "Hamitic"... The material and spiritual culture of ancient Egypt differs throughout from the ancient civilisations of Semitic-speaking peoples and shows striking similarities to that of the Hamites and half-Hamites of Africa."

But according to Breasted (1908:29) the ancient Egyptian language acquired a Semitic structure "although it was coloured by its African antecedents." It will be seen later on, however, that the ancient Egyptian language, as Frankfort, above, argues, is not Semitic in structure although it may have incorporated some Semitic loanwords just like all languages do borrow and loan out words. The latter stage of ancient Egyptian, Coptic, also exhibits little by way of Semitic characteristics but instead borrows heavily from Greek, although it remains essentially a typical language of Nilotic Africa.

Among the cultural items that modern Eastern Africa shares with ancient Egypt, according to Frankfort, is the *macien* or *kamar*, the respective Dinka and Kalenjiin names for the pet bull, or ox, with artificially deformed horns. In Old Kingdom tombs these bulls—which Frankfort takes the liberty to call *macien* and *kamar*—are depicted among the bulls or oxen brought to the dead man (Cf. Frankfort, 1948:165).

Correctly, if one may say, Frankfort (1948:348) goes on to declare that other Africans from elsewhere bore similar affinities too:

"On the whole, I have avoided adducing West African features and confined myself to modern peoples who show affinities to the ancient Egyptians in language or in physique or both. But Hamitic influence is found in Africa well beyond these limitations."

What Frankfort says above confirms our earlier assertion to the effect that ancient Egypt was a microcosm of Africa, ethnically speaking.

On his part, Breasted (1908:29) considers the ancient Egyptians a fusion “of Libyans and East Africans” and other Nile Valley peoples. Theirs was, therefore, according to him, not only a society that was microcosmic of Africa but it was also a society caught in an African melting-pot process that continued far into historic times. However, Breasted has here ignored the ageless desert route to West Africa through Timbuktu, which saw migratory traffic move in both directions between North-east Africa and West Africa. At least Frankfort, above, alluded to that fact even though he declares Eastern Africa’s current Nilotic populations to be his favourite example.

Again, according to Breasted (Cf. 1908:29), other additions into the Egyptian melting pot came by way of the Semites who entered Egypt through the Isthmus of Suez—the same route that the invading Arabs were to use several thousand years later.

We should not expect the ancient Egyptian populations to have been uniform either from the social or from the physical point of view at all times and from region to region. Like all other peoples of the world, they were subject to influence from their neighbours, especially upon the communities that lived along the borders. Ancient Egypt was divided into many nomes, but more famous were the divisions into two kingdoms, north and south. The northern kingdom exhibited distinct Libyan influence while we would expect the south to have likewise exhibited greater southern hinterland influence. The northern kingdom, headquartered in Buto, loved the colour red and its treasury was called the “Red House”, while the South favoured the colour white and its treasury was appropriately called “White House”. (Cf. Breasted, 1908:34).

5.2 The Modern Egyptian Society in General, the Copts and the Coptic Language

The Coptic language, together with the religious culture of the Copts of Egypt, who have now spread all over the world, continue to be a reliable source of information to this study. The religious and nationalistic tenacity of this ancient of peoples, in the face of overwhelming odds, continues to compound many in the world. "Today the Coptic Christian population of Egypt constitutes a substantial minority of about 7 million, although official government statistics reduce this figure" (MEE 98/23).¹ This minority population appears to like to identify itself with *ancient* Egypt to a greater degree than do the vast majority of modern Egyptians who, being Muslims—ninety per cent of the population—generally appear to love to regard themselves as Arabs.

The Copts, however, are cautious not to overemphasise their greater claim to Pharaonic ancestry, perhaps lest they should inadvertently paint themselves as the legitimate heirs to Egypt and the rest but tenants. They could easily alienate the majority population of Arab extraction and, in the process, attract an Islamic backlash that they cannot handle (Cf. Reid, 1985:242). They walk a tight rope in their own ancestral land therefore and often, in fact, fall prey to political extremists who would wish to ethnically, or religiously, cleanse the land.

The Egyptian Arabs' identification with Arabia, of course, links them back to the Arabian Peninsula, the cradle of Islam. It brings with it an indifference to Pharaonic Egypt but they nevertheless, "adopt the trappings of pharaonism to cater to European tastes" (Cf. Reid, 1985:235)² and tourism constituting such a large chunk of the economy, this is only understandable.

A conference was held in Cairo in 1974 on "The peopling of ancient Egypt and the deciphering of the Meroitic script". The great African scholar from Senegal, Cheikh Anta Diop and his associate from Congo, Theophile Obenga, attended it. The black duo expounded their conviction to the effect that the ancient Egyptians were black. This they did in front of a conference audience whose non-indigenous African attendees overwhelmed them in the ratio of about ten to one. The Egyptian delegates were six and they all reportedly opposed this view

¹ "Coptic" is an anglicised form of the Greek renderings *Kiptaios* or *Coptos*.

² Virtually all the currency notes in circulation in modern Egypt (during author's visit, 1993) are inscribed in English on one side and in Arabic on the reverse side. The side with English inscriptions invariably carries portraits relating to the ancient Pharaonic (non-Arabic) Egypt, while the side containing Arabic inscriptions, numbers etc.—and which is, therefore, meant to be of convenience to the Arabic-speaking user—invariably carries portraits of Islamic landmarks such as the magnificent old mosques. This, therefore, probably illustrates the fact that before non-Arab outsiders, the modern Egyptian Muslim who, for all practical purposes, wields all political power, presents "Pharaoh", but in an all-Arab context, they are Muslim Arabs who are proud of their Arabian Peninsula roots and their illustrious, conquering ancestors—who would not!

vehemently: "The Egyptians did not think that their ancestors were black and felt sure that movements of civilising influence in the Nile Valley went from north to south rather than the other way" (Cf. MacGaffey, 1991:515-519).

We are not told about the ethnic composition of the protesting Egyptian delegation, i.e., out of the six, how many were Copts (of native Egyptian ancestry) and how many were Muslim Arabs (immigrants from the Arabian Peninsula—see further below). All the same, perhaps because of the connotation of impurity, nobody, if she or he can help it, likes to be the one from a mixed racial heritage—especially at the greater ancestral level. And, in the experience of the author, when admittance has to be made by the modern Egyptians, the Greek, Roman, Turkish, and Arab input components might be mentioned, but not the black component. However, since they resemble the unambiguously mixed Arab-African population of the Kenyan coast most completely, we are left with the obvious inference to make as to what the taboo component was.

Volney, as we saw in the previous subsection, considers the indigenous component of modern Egyptians a product of black and white parentage, for that is the definition of the word mulatto, when he says: "They all have a bloated face, bulging eyes, a flat nose, thick lips, in short, a real mulatto face" (1787:74—Diop, 1996:122). The "white parentage" that Volney mentions here could only represent an element from outside of Africa. By simple deduction, given the earlier absence of the element of "white parentage", we are left with the black parentage as the indigenous element typical of the ancient population of Egypt.

That deduction is supported by the evidence of the ancient Egyptians' unambiguous depiction of themselves in their "gods" etc. on tomb walls, in statuettes, in other monuments, and on papyri as black people. The eyewitness account of the 5th century BC visitor to Egypt, Herodotus (Book II), supports the evidence that is enshrined in those monuments. We encountered, in the previous subsection, and need now to recall briefly, two instances in which Herodotus alluded definitively to the blackness of the ancient Egyptians. In one instance he tries to explain the origin of the Colchians and acknowledges their oral tradition that they came from Egypt, pointing out that their tradition of Egyptian origin had to be true because they were black like the Egyptians of his time. In the other instance, Herodotus infers that a black dove that Greek legend spoke about and to which they attributed the construction of the shrine of Amon in Greece, was, in fact, a black human priestess and not a dove. That because she was said to have been black, she had to have been Egyptian.

If we must respond briefly to the claim of the protesting Egyptian delegates to the said conference, who say that civilisation was a one-way business: from Egypt to the south, we will need to remember that this was Seligman's favourite view of which the German scholar,

Frankfort (1948:383) says: "Seligman has unfortunately retained the prejudice that resemblances between ancient Egypt and modern Africa are due to influences emanating from Egypt, even though he admits our inability to explain it."

According to Frankfort (1948:165-166) then:

"Egypt retained this heritage (of artificially deforming horns of special bulls and oxen—the *kamar*) of its prehistoric African origins, and modern times, when remnants of the Hamitic substratum of Egyptian culture still continue it (i.e. the Pokoot Kalenjiin whom Frankfort calls "Suk" etc.). (And so) the black African background which we have indicated does explain the extraordinary role which cattle play demonstrably in the spiritual life of the Egyptians."

There are other examples of ideas flowing from south to north—in the manner of the River Nile itself—some of which we have mentioned, e.g., the very idea of a pyramid, or what we have seen Martin Bernal (1987:15) refer to as elements of civilisation "whose African origins are uncontested."

As already communicated in the previous subsection, it is not the wish of the author to highlight or to unnecessarily dwell on the issue of the "racial" divisions of Africa. The evils of excessive racial and ethnic consciousness are well known. However, the question that must be lingering in every reader's mind here is that of the "racial, social and geographical distance" between the Kalenjiin-speaking people and the current population of the land that they claim was their cradle-land. It would be naïve to imagine that a topic of the nature that this thesis deals with could be discussed while surgically eschewing matters of ethnicity altogether. Even if the question is not asked explicitly by readers, it sure remains uppermost in their minds and must, therefore, be addressed.

That said, following are two examples, recorded by history, of how Egypt, a country that was originally devoid of Arabs; became an Islamic Arab country:

(1) "Unlike Syria and Iraq, Egypt seems to have had no Arab inhabitants before the advent of Islam. Arab colonisation began with the conquest, and was encouraged by the Umayyad Caliphs, notably by Hisham (reigned 724-43 AD), who in 727 authorised the planned migration and settlement of several thousand Arabs of the Yemenite tribe of Qays in the Nile Valley. During the eighth and ninth centuries large numbers of Arab tribesmen, mainly of Yemenite origin, migrated to Egypt, where many of them were settled on the land" (Harris 1971:457).

(2) "The great invasion of the eleventh century are on quite a different level (from the smaller migrant numbers of conquering Arab soldiers of 641 AD); especially does this hold of the migration of the Beni Hillal (and kindred tribes) who in 1048 were launched by the vizier of the Fatimid Caliph Mustansir against his master's more orthodox vassals in North Africa. Each man was provided with a camel and given a gold piece, the only condition being that he must settle in the west... This well exemplifies the process of Arabisation in North Africa, and it was to a large extent an eastern and southern reflux from the Hillalian invasion that had most to do with the Arabisation of the Nile Valley and is thus responsible for much

of the present-day distribution of the Arab tribes of the Sudan” (Seligman, 1966:151-152).

The influence of Arab blood diminishes progressively as one comes southward along the Nile Valley. This phenomenon may have a great deal to do with the huge distance between the northern entry point of Arab and other assorted immigrants and the southern region of Egypt. The obvious outward manifestation of this phenomenon was not lost to Seligman (1966:152):

“... The less mixed Arabs are found in the predominantly ‘European’ north and east, while in the south and west are those people who, although calling themselves Arabs, inhabit areas in which the Negro is or has been dominant, and thus carry much Negro blood.”¹

So much then for the Egyptian delegation’s denial that some of their ancestors were black.

5.2.1 The Coptic Language

The Coptic stage of Egyptian represents various dialects of the ancient Egyptian language, or languages, as spoken immediately before and during the early AD centuries. This language stage is not different in any profound way from the older stages of Egyptian, but it portrays major external influence. The influence, as we mentioned, further above, necessarily came with Greek—and Roman—colonisation of Egypt as well as with the Christian religion. This religion came into being in the first century AD and found an Egypt under Roman colonialism, supervised by a Greek-speaking administration. Greek was then the language of the administration and of the elite over much of the Roman Empire.

Consequently the Coptic language incorporates a lot of Greek loan words. Almost as a rule, such loan words seem to be of the technical-terms type (of the theological context). The influence was, in fact, hardly restricted to word borrowing alone. The Greek influence upon the Coptic language was so extensive that in some cases even the Pharaonic grammar was compromised. The Kalenjiin language is not entirely devoid of Greek loanwords either, as we demonstrated in the previous subsection. But the basically Hamitic grammar that underpins the Kalenjiin language was not compromised as in the case of the grammar of the Coptic language.

¹ Seligman “mischievously” equates the words “European” and “Arab” here, the message being: the less the Arab is mixed, the more he is European.

When St Mark brought Christianity to Egypt around 61 AD, the language he used in speech and in writing (or causing to be written what was to become the Gospel according to him) was Greek. However, he was himself originally an African Jew, born in Cyrene (Masri 1987). Cyrene was a major Libyan city of Mark's time. Mark communicated in Greek because anyone who "mattered" then spoke and wrote in the prestigious language of the time, Greek.

Towards the end of the second century AD, two Egyptian native scholars and teachers, Pantaenus and Clement, under instruction from the church, developed the Coptic Script. This was largely derived from Greek characters, but they added seven letters of their own—from the Egyptian Demotic script. The native letters were needed in order to represent Egyptian sounds that were strange to Greek. These two did not only translate St. Mark's teachings and the catechism, but they also translated the Old and the New Testament into Egyptian—becoming the first people ever to translate the text from Greek into their native tongue (Masri, 1987: ch.2 par. 19).

Thereafter the hordes of ordinary simple Egyptians, so reached by the Word, turned to Christianity:

"Their hearts and minds opened up to It for It embodied some of their already accepted beliefs, such as immortality, resurrection and the soul's judgement. Inscriptions in certain of the Egyptian tombs, such as those written in the tomb of Petosiris, for example, ring with a note very reminiscent of certain biblical passages" (Masri 1987: ch.3 par. 19).

Writings by Pantaenus, Clement, and others by subsequent scribes using the largely Greek script but in the Egyptian dialects of the time are referred to as Coptic literature. The language dialects used are considered as dialects of Coptic. Roughly dividing Egypt into five belts, east to west, starting from the north we have: Bohairic Coptic (Very common in the present Coptic literature); Memphite Coptic; Fayumic Coptic; Akhmimic Coptic and Sahidic Coptic. The Sahidic Coptic dialect is common in the more ancient texts.¹

The differences between these dialects are petty, considering the age covered and, for our purpose, the Kalenjiin language is more or less equally related to at least the two most used Coptic dialects in the present church, i.e. Bohairic and Sahidic. Throughout this thesis, therefore, the two dialects are treated as if they were one, just as little attention is paid to the petty dialectal differences that exist among the numerous dialects spoken by the various Kalenjiin sub-nationalities.

The development of Coptic was slowed down two centuries or so after the Arab invasion of Egypt. The forceful introduction of Arabic, as the national and official language of Egypt, took place as soon as the Arab rulers moved their colonial administrative headquarters from Arabia into Cairo,

Egypt. In reaction to this development, the Copts had moved their patriarchate nearer to the Arabs' new government seat in Cairo. According to the *Coptic Primer 1, 1986*, the Coptic pope, Gabriel II (1132-1146 AD), who is not remembered with great nostalgia among the Copts today, soon after the relocation of the patriarchate to the Arab rulers' new capital, decreed the reciting of the Lord's Prayer in Arabic. This he did reportedly in order to assuage, reassure and to placate the Arabic-speaking government, for the Arab government was at this time weary of the Christian Copts because other Christian forces from Europe were fighting Muslims up north for and in defence of Jerusalem. This was the time of the famed Crusades and Pope Gabriel may have found it wiser to adopt the conqueror's language and somewhat, in so doing, appear not to be too sympathetic to the cause of fellow Christians who were struggling (in vain) to contain Muslim onslaught on Palestine.

However, the Pope's order led to his flocks' gradual tendency to favour the use of the Arabic language for more of their liturgical texts. And the gradual translating of everything else Coptic into Arabic, in order to meet this desire, not only saw to the death of the Coptic language (*Coptic Primer 1 1986: 5-7*), but also to the faster waning of Christianity itself in Egypt. This was to the immense benefit of Islam—which was probably sweeter sounding and more exact in the Arabic language than Christianity could ever hope to be in that original language of Islam.

Added to this natural attraction of the Arabic language to Islam, was the tax benefit that the Arab government had allowed for all Muslims. The native Egyptians who wanted to keep their Christian faith, paid tax for it while those that converted to Islam were exempted from the religion tax promptly upon conversion (Harris 1971:209).

Although the taxation-for-faith treatment that was meted out to the Egyptian native Christians by the Muslim Arabs may sound cruel, it would appear much kinder compared to the treatment that was meted out to the native Egyptians of the Isis faith by the then newly converted Christians many centuries earlier. While the Arab Muslim rulers in their heyday “merely” taxed those that refused to convert to Islam, the Roman Christian rulers in their heyday beheaded those of the Isis faith that refused to convert to the then new official state religion—Christianity (Cf. Harris, 1971:397). But there was no shortage of those that had continued to perform—in brave defiance—the rites of Isis.²

¹ Adapted from A.H. Gardiner (1927:6). The classifications assigned to these dialects are recent and the actual speakers of the dialects did not know them by these names.

² Many modern Copts have told the author—although perhaps half in jest—that the modern Copts of Egypt are the descendants of wealthy native Egyptians. Being wealthy at the time of tax exemption for Muslims and the corresponding punitive tax for the Copts, they were able to buy their religious freedom by paying taxes, rather than abandoning their faith. And, indeed, the Copts of today are, on the average, visibly wealthier than their Muslim compatriots—thus, by this nature, lending credence to the popular theory of a wealthy past.

Footnote continued at bottom of next page

It is possible that there were those of the Isis faith that rather than pick one of the two choices available, i.e.: to convert to Christianity and forfeit all the rituals of Isis, or ignore the government order and get beheaded, chose their own third alternative: they fled the country and trekked southwards with their Isis faith and the associated rituals intact, swelling proto-Kalenjiin numbers as well as those of others that had emigrated earlier.

The Coptic language was in the process of dying for 700 years, beginning from the first two centuries or so after the Arab invasion and was, for all practical purposes, dead by the fifteenth century AD. The proud Coptic priests and monks, however, kept the Pharaonic language alive albeit only largely within the confines of the churches as a static if, for all practical purposes, only a holy language of liturgy. That is how it has survived to this day (Cf. *Coptic Primer* 1, 1986:7).

5.3 Pronunciation Help

Transcription from the Coptic script throughout the thesis has generally been done in the conventional manner, i.e. as practised by Coptic writers (e.g. Fr Malaty). There are a few exceptions to get used to however. The Coptic script has been transcribed into the Latin (Roman) alphabet assigning the vowels their absolute values as understood in East Africa.

The very common Kalenjiin (and Coptic) double /o/ is not read as /uu/ as is the rule where English words are concerned. There are many ways of pronouncing the Kalenjiin /o/ or double /o/ but it should do here to say that the Kalenjiin single /o/ is generally akin in its pronunciation to the /o/ of the British English “top”, and that double /o/ is a mere prolongation of this sound. If “foot” were a Kalenjiin word, for instance, it would have to be read like the English “fought”. The doubling of the vowels is, therefore, a quantitative and not a qualitative phenomenon.

Double /e/ as in *soteet*, “a gourd”, for instance, should not be pronounced like the /ea/ in ‘tea’ but should be pronounced like the /e/ in ‘tell’—only prolonged. Again there are several ways of pronouncing /e/, depending on the intended meaning, but the Roman script is inadequate for illustrating them.

Kalenjiin vowel /i/ should always be read as in the English word “till” and not as in the word “ice”. A doubling of /i/ is, roughly speaking, a mere lengthening of the same sound as in “till”. There are many ways in which this vowel is pronounced be it double or single, depending on the intended meaning.

The annihilation of the Isis faith in Egypt is compared in Appendix 4 and Appendix 6 to the colonial time assault on the Asiis faith in Kalenjiinland, and the involvement of the Roman emperors in the case of Egypt is discussed in greater detail.



The vowel /a/ is to be read as in the English word “tap” and any double /a/ appearing in a word constitutes a mere lengthening of the same sound.

Any /ch/ combination has the sound of the same combination in the English word “church”.

Any /ng’/ combination is to be read like the /ng/ in the English word “sing”. If it is a plain /ng/ combination, i.e. without an apostrophe (’), it is to be read like the /ng/ in the English word “finger”.

5.3.1 A Note on Sound Change and Transcription

Most Coptic grammar books teach that accent on Coptic words is on the last but one syllable.¹ Gardiner has observed that this was also relevant to ancient Egyptian. He observes that the accented syllable was always either the last or the last but one (penultimate) syllable (Gardiner 1927:429). The Kalenjiin accent, which is represented by a longer vowel sound, or a stress, rests on exactly that penultimate point as a rule and only the occasional exception sees the stress resting on the antepenultimate point. Hollis noted this fact vis-a-vis the Nandi dialect during the first decade of the 20th century (1909:156) and two years later Beech confirmed the same vis-a-vis the Pokoot dialect (1911:49).




The more ancient Egyptian script, the hieroglyphic writing, mostly ignored vowels.² The ancient Egyptian readers themselves knew what vowel to assign and where around the consonants while reading, by just understanding the context. Some Semites, e.g. Hebrews, through the Phoenicians, adopted this style. But this consonant-controlled style of writing is only suitable for the Semitic languages such as Hebrew. It is unsuitable for Hamitic and this situation has led to wrong or inadequate transcriptions of the hieroglyphs. A simple example that may be used for the illustration of this handicap is  *Kmt*. This, as we saw above, is an ancient Egyptian word, in the definite form, meaning “the country” (Gardiner 1927:611). The consonants, /kmt/, to a typical Hamitic family language like Kalenjiin, for example; could stand for any of: *kameet*, “his/her mother”; *komet*, “your mother”; *kimyeet*, loaf-like stiff millet or maize porridge—the Kalenjiin staple food—from ancient Egyptian  *kmh*, “loaf” (F.Dict. 279). It could also stand for *kemeut*, which may have originally either meant “the death of country”—“famine” or “drought”—or just “to die”. Other Kalenjiin possibilities around this consonantal frame, /kmt/, are; *kamut*, *kimut*, *komut*, *kumyaat*, etc. etc.

¹ e.g. Plumley, Mattar.

² This long-held position among Egyptologists, however, is open to further investigation.


However, drawing from the Kalenjiin *emeet*, “the country” or “the land”, and our knowledge of the Pharaonic rule of accent-on-last-but-one-syllable, we ideally ought to conclude that the consonantal frame *kmt* should correctly be transcribed as *kemeet*.¹

This potential for ambiguity is what led to the ancient Egyptians’ writing habit of resorting to the cumbersome drawing of small sketches of the intended object after the alphabetical presentation for almost every word. These sketches that come after alphabetical symbols are called determinants.

An example of a determinant symbol is the sketch of a food bowl  (or ) at the end of the word for “loaf”, *kmh*, .

The major Kalenjiin dialects have lost some ancient Egyptian sounds that they definitely had before. Some of the smaller Kalenjiin communities, however, retain a few of these sounds that have been lost to others in their respective dialects. The central Kalenjiin no longer have the harsh breathy /h/ sound as in “husband”, for example.² This sound is common in Coptic as it was in ancient Egyptian. All ancient Egyptian and Coptic words which begin with /h/, that are retained in the major Kalenjiin dialects, now begin with the first vowel after the /h/. For example, ⲬⲎⲚ (*hen*) meaning “in” (prep. as in “in the name of the Father”) is now merely *een* (or *eeng*) to most Kalenjiin.

As pointed out above, some of the smaller northern Kalenjiin sub-nationalities, e.g. the Marakwet group, still have that harsh breathy /h/ sound. *Him*, Marakwet for “sky”, is pronounced just like the English word “him” (*him* is also found in many Hebrew words that have something to do with the heavens or sky). The Marakwet also say *hu* for “come!” And, as we have seen above, the Pokoot are still the only Kalenjiin branch who still pronounce *hem*, “nationality”, as of ancient Egyptian times where, according to Reclus, the word “Ham” was in use.

The guttural /kh/ sound, which is represented by the hieroglyphic symbol  and the letter Ⲭ in the Bohairic Coptic dialect, as in the word, ⲬⲎⲚ (*khén*), meaning “in” (this being the Kalenjiin preposition *een*), does not exist in most modern Kalenjiin dialects any more. Instead where /kh/ was in the parallel ancient Egyptian word, Kalenjiin either ignores the throat sound and begins at the first vowel sound of the word or changes the /kh/ sound into a plain /k/ sound.

¹ In the Kalenjiin languages as we have seen, further above, *kemeet* is *emeet*. The ancient Egyptians had both *kemeet* and *emeet* (not *amait*, as transcribed by Budge—Hieroglyphic Dictionary p. 6). The Kalenjiin language has retained only *emeet*, although the ancient form of the noun, *kemeet*, may possibly be discerned in *kemeut*, “death of the land/country” as given above. *Kaam*, “mother” in Kalenjiin and *kameet*, “his/her/its mother” or *koomet*, “your mother”, may have been associated with the word for “country” in a Semitic radical consonantal frame manner. This would have arisen from the fact that “country” was also regarded as “mother”, i.e., “mother country”—following a discussion with H.E. Professor Chesaina, October 2000.

² Excepting, of course, the /h/ sound that is retained in songs and in their opening and closing signal *oleiyo-ho!* Included in this exception are those refrains that include *aa haiya* etc.

A good example of this is to be found in the ancient Egyptian *khe* which, placed before a verb, changes it to the infinitive. *Khe* is, therefore, the equivalent of the English word “to” in such infinitival context as in the examples “to cry”, “to fall”. This *khe* or *kh* of ancient Egypt is rendered *kee* in Kalenjiin. An example: , which is transcribed *kh*, as in *khpi*, “to walk” (Gardiner 1927:628) or “to go”, is rendered in Kalenjiin, *kee-pa*, “to walk”, or “to go”. The old /kh/ sound has been reduced in the latter tongue to mere /k/ sound.¹ Another example: *khsr*, “to drive away”, “to dispel” (Gardiner 1927:584, 586), is retained in Kalenjiin as *kee-ser*, “to drive away” in such a manner that the victims flee in all directions, in a disorganised way; or “to scatter”, “to disperse”.

The Coptic and ancient Egyptian /sh/ sound, as in “shirt”, has also been lost to the major dialects of the Kalenjiin language for sure, and where such sound occurred in an ancient Egyptian word, Kalenjiin replaces it with /ch/ as in kitchen, or with just a plain /s/. Example: (*shere*), “blessed” or “hail”, survives in Kalenjiin as *sere*, meaning; “blessed”, “prosperous”, “plenty” etc. However, the Keiyo dialect still has at least one example—if a fading one—of the /sh/ sound, as is to be found in a popular common proper name among the Keiyo people: Cheelashaw.

The major Kalenjiin dialects have also lost the /d/ sound as in “do”, and where an ancient Egyptian word had this sound, the Kalenjiin-speakers have replaced it with a /t/ sound in the parallel. *d-r-yt*, ancient Egyptian for “bird” or “kite” (F.Dict. 32) for example, is rendered *tariit* in modern Kalenjiin—which, however, is closer to Coptic $\tau\rho\eta$ (*t[a]rii*).

However, the Barabaig Kalenjiin-speakers of Tanzania still have the /d/ as well as many other sounds that are now lost to the major dialects of Kalenjiin of Kenya. Barabaig *hangd*, “cloth”, exhibits the sound capabilities vis-a-vis /h/ and /d/, both of which are now lost to the major Kalenjiin dialects. In most Kalenjiin dialects *hangd* is *angeet*.


Coptic too seems to have lost the /d/ sound. The /d/ sound in Coptic now seems to appear only in words that are said to be of Greek origin.



The /d/ sound exists in the major Kenya Kalenjiin dialects only in combination with other consonants but which must precede it, e.g. *leeldeet*, a member of the “thorn tree” species; *keeldo*, “a leg”, *tuumdo*, any of the “birth” ceremonies such as naming of a baby, circumcision, wedding etc.²

¹ Some Kalenjiin dialects, e.g. Terik, may use either *ke* or *che*, which still conforms to ancient Egyptian practice, considering that Egyptologists assign the symbol either a /kh/ or a /ch/ value.

² However, strictly speaking, this /d/ is, in fact, a mispronounced /t/. The /d/ is imposed by the preceding consonants. So *leeldeet* and *tuumdo* are *leel-teet* and *tuum-to* respectively. The consonantal /t/, /k/, /s/ and /p/ sounds, for some reason, are treated like a vowel and do not, therefore, influence the /t/ sound, e.g. as in: *aarteet*, “the goat”, *kerta*, “ration”, *ng'ookto*, “a dog”, *asta*, “dissipate” and *roopta*, “the rain” etc.

The very common Kalenjiin /ny/ sound, as in the country name “Kenya”, and which is pronounced like the /gn/ combination in the brandy name “cognac”, does not seem to have existed either in Coptic or in ancient Egyptian. This is hard to believe and it is tempting to attribute this omission to the work of the European Egyptologists who, themselves lacking that sound in their own individual mother tongues, have not been able to recognise it in the primary Egyptian sources. The impression, that ancient Egyptian had no /ny/ sound in its speech, will persist as long as we keep the habit of transcribing from hieroglyphics in the manner in which the Egyptologists have always done.

However the wavy symbol/character , which is read /n/ and which represented water, may have also stood for the sound /ny/—as understood in East Africa—to the ancient Egyptian. The Kalenjiin call a lake, or a large, still body of water, *nyaanja*. This is a common word in many other parts of East and Central Africa and is shared by Kintu and non-Kintu languages. The wavy symbol then may have originally represented the sound /ny/ as in *nyaanja*.

 | *mn*, “dwell” or be “established” in a place, provides another illustration to this argument.  | *mn* corresponds in meaning to the Kalenjiin *meny*, and *meny*, in all probability, has to be the fuller transcription of the hieroglyphic presentation.

For a Coptic example, we have: ⲢⲐⲟⲩⲓ (*nui*) “draw near”, which corresponds to Kalenjiin *nyoo(n)*, “come (here)”. So many are such parallels and the early Copts may have, in fact, used /n/ to represent both the /n/ sound and the /ny/ sound. The reader was then left to determine, from context, which of the two sounds to apply to a particular word that contained that letter.

Summary of Chapter 5: And who are the Egyptians?

We have noted that when all was said and done, the ancient Egyptians considered Africa to the south of them to be their cradle-land. This is the location that they reportedly called the “Land of our Gods”. One of the great Egyptologists, Faulkner, concedes the same by way of a dictionary entry (F.Dict. 293) and it is corroborated by non-other authority than the Bible (Ez. 29:13-14).

The physical attributes of the ancient Egyptians as described by Breasted, who likens them to Puntites, or the Somali, and declares that they were a fusion of Libyans and East Africans; Frankfort’s allusion to their “black African background”; Herodotus’ definitive eyewitness accounts, dating back to the 5th century BC, to the effect that those people were black, among others’ works, help complete a picture of the ancient Egyptians that is similar to those of the monuments, tomb wall paintings, papyrus paintings etc. that were left behind by them.

The modern Egyptians generally deny the black African genes in their blood against evidence to the contrary and knowledge of this fact is important for researchers who will want to carry out fieldwork there. However, from observing that population it is possible to infer the historical black parental stock with little room for ambiguity.

Some aspects of the ancient Egyptians' physical culture, such as the keeping of the ceremonial *kamar* bullock, which is still current in some parts of Kalenjiinland; the wearing of skin garments which was characteristic of the earlier dynastic periods, as well as the use of the ceremonial leopard skin, confirm an ancient cultural unity that is corroborated by the physical profile mentioned above. The Nilotic propensity to nudity has been reported with regard to Egyptians of certain dynastic periods. Early colonial officers and anthropologists noted the same with regard to the East African Nilotes.

The linguistic linkage will be addressed more fully in the subsequent sections but suffice here to say that Frankfort (1948:348) refers to the modern East African peoples "who show affinities to the ancient Egyptians in language or in physique or both."

By resorting to credible historical sources, we have ascertained, or re-emphasised, a known fact but which is not so obvious to laymen: that the Arabisation and Islamisation of Egypt is a relatively recent phenomenon. Therefore we need not find it shocking, or inharmonious, that the Kalenjiin ancestors should have insisted on tracing origin to what turns out to be an Arab land when their descendants do not appear to exhibit any evidence of even a single drop of Arab blood. Neither should we find their ignorance of Islam, or Coptic Christianity for that matter, an inconsistency. To the contrary we shall, in later sections, find that their ignorance of Islam and Christianity on the one hand, and their adherence to an older Egyptian religion on the other, augment credibility to their traditional claim rather than detract from it.

Although this work dwells much on the Kalenjiin people's connection to ancient Egypt, sight may not be lost of the fact that, ultimately, all races of the world—so we hear—originated from an area probably corresponding to East and Central Africa.

Chapter 6**Relating the Kalenjiin Language to the Ancient Egyptian Language****Abstract**

The central object of this subsection is to attempt to present the incidence of lexical (vocabulary) and syntactical (grammatical) agreement between the ancient Egyptian language (together with Coptic) and the Kalenjiin language, as spoken today, as part-evidence of the two sets of speakers' unity in antiquity. The consequence of incorporating a linguistics discussion is that if historical unity of language is ascertainable thereby, then historical unity with regard to the cultural aspects of life, of which language is the chief outward expression and preserver, must be ascertainable too. That, therefore, any seeming evidence of historical unity within the cultural area must be taken seriously in tandem with the proven linguistic unity in antiquity. A concise amount of linguistic evidence, as presented, should prove that there was a historical moment of cultural unity between the people of ancient Egypt and the ancestors of the Kalenjiin. An attempt is made to establish ancient Egyptian-Kalenjiin cognacy in the important linguistic "litmus paper" areas of: lexicostatistical analysis, word order analysis, gender discrimination, noun formation, reduplication, the causative, and negation.

6.1 The Relevance of a Linguistics Discussion to this Project

The core of this thesis discusses aspects of culture as manifested in religion. Religion is one cultural expression of the people and language is religion's most important vehicle. Religion and language belong together to one culture as culture belongs to them. All three are the expressions that enable us to identify and define an ethnic group as being this or that and to differentiate it from all the others.

Claude Lévi-Strauss, the eminent French anthropologist (1958:68-69), has related language to culture as follows:

"The relationship between language and culture is an exceedingly complicated one. In the first place, language can be said to be a result of culture: The language which is spoken by one population is a reflection of the total culture of the population. It is one of those things which make up a culture... and culture includes many things, such as tools, institutions, customs, beliefs, and also, of course, language... Language can be said to be a condition of culture because the material out of which language is built is of the same type as the material out of which the whole culture is built: logical relations, oppositions, correlations, and the like. Language, from this point of view, may appear as laying a kind of foundation for the more complex structures which correspond to the different aspects of culture."

We can extract at least five major points from Lévi-Strauss' statement in support of the inclusion of an introductory linguistics discussion in this project:

the cultures, religion and its underpinning divine personalities included, is to prove the ancient unity of the languages.

- (5) Lévi-Strauss: "Language, from this point of view (number 4 above), may appear as laying a kind of foundation for the more complex structures which correspond to the different aspects of culture." Here then is explained, in one sentence, the purpose of this comparative linguistics-based subsection: namely to lay the foundation for the comparative religious aspects of culture that will be discussed in the main text.

Any aspect of comparative linguistics, therefore, while serving as evidence of an ancient unity of a set of languages, also goes to serve as a vital tool in itself for the analysis of culture. This thesis, although it employs the cognacy in religious understanding, behaviour, interpretation and practice, as the major tool for determining the relationship between the major underpinning divine personalities, Asiis and Isis (together with the other "gods" and "goddesses" of ancient Egypt), still needs comparative linguistics analysis which should corroborate any findings both as its foundation and as its correlation. This awareness was prompted not least by such statements as that which came from the pen of the great African scholar, Cheikh Anta Diop ([1948] 1996:36) who says that the study of African languages is of great historical importance to the Africans for they have no ancient writings. That by studying how this language gave birth to another, we would succeed in building a sort of linguistic chain going from the earliest to the latest and thus get to know about a very important period of African history. "It would therefore appear that knowledge of linguistics is required for African historical investigations." A prominent western scholar was to echo him about twenty years later (1968). This was the American scholar who did a lot of work in Eastern Africa, Professor Christopher Ehret. He wrote a powerful statement in an East African historical journal. He says:

"There is no question that evidence drawn from the study of African languages is going to be a major source in the historians' reconstruction of the African past, especially the more ancient past. It can provide a wealth of data where the traditional historical sources fail, e.g. for those periods before writing was known which are beyond the reach of oral tradition. It can give identity to cultures for which archaeology can only describe the material possessions, and detail to cultural events for which the evidence of comparative ethnology can only suggest the bare existence. Nevertheless linguistic evidence has so far been hardly used at all in the writing of African history, probably because few historians know the variety of its uses" (Ehret, 1968).

The statement from Cheikh Anta Diop, the one from Professor Christopher Ehret, and the one further above from Lévi-Strauss, aptly summarise the essence and purpose of this chapter.

We may reinforce their stand with Katičić's (1970:1) views, with which we are already familiar, from Chapter 3, to the effect that the comparative method as the main tool of comparative linguistics serves to find out the data that are thought relevant for the establishment of genetic relationships. That the results obtained by such research permit the classification of the languages of the world in accordance with genetic criteria.

What we are seeking here is a genetic result with all the far-reaching implications of its positive findings to the understanding of history, anthropology, linguistics etc. with regard to the Africans in general and to the Kalenjin in particular.

6.2 The Standards of Proof set by Linguists

The larger portion of the first part of Chapter 6 constitutes a *lexicostatistical* comparative analysis while the latter part mainly constitutes a brief discussion on the concordant *grammatical* rules as observed between the Kalenjin language and the ancient Egyptian language. That part of the chapter complements the lexicostatistical study. The grammatical discussion is necessary because a language comparative study is not complete until a thing or two is said about the basic grammatical rules that govern the languages whose vocabulary items and other aspects seem a priori, and to rigorous analysis, to have a parallel relationship.

In going about the grammatical comparative exercise, we will naturally have to rely on the work of earlier scholars of Egyptology, most of them being of western origin. Coming from the rich west, they had the time and the resources to carry out prolonged, detailed and expensive research. But they also had a handicap in that being foreigners to Africa meant studying an extinct African people's language without the benefit of the intimate knowledge of any of the living neighbouring African languages that may be related to ancient Egyptian. The incidence of geographical proximity alone should have hinted to all and sundry that those living neighbouring African languages had to be related to the extinct language. An a priori examination should have raised suspicion that those languages almost certainly descended from one common language with the extinct ancient Egyptian if not actually descended from the latter. This should have immediately prompted serious comparative linguistics work. Yet they generally treated the ancient Egyptian language as if it was an isolated alien innovation that had dropped perpendicularly from the skies and subsequently died wholly and intestate on the same spot upon which it had dropped thousands of years later.

In this respect, an African philosophical mind found it necessary to point out as follows:

“(1) The comparative method shows that a language is rarely isolated in time and space, that is to say, that it is rare to come across a language which does not belong to a more or less large community, family or group, that is not more or less ancient. (2) This belonging of a language to a family is interpreted by profound similarities which are not fortuitous, nor acquired by borrowing words. They must be correspondences, similarities, resemblances which rest upon basic and inherited facts” (Obenga 1992:117-118).

This philosophical thought is not unique to Obenga. He is echoing others and his number two point will be found to be more or less identical to that of some western scholars who have stated as follows:

- (1) “The comparative method relies on the assumption of regular sound correspondences between related languages. Languages are said to be related if their sounds correspond regularly in morphemes having similar or identical meanings (sound itself is not enough).” (2) “The genealogical model requires that a language cannot have more than one parent language. This implies that if language A is related to language B, and B is related to C, then A must also be related to C” (Distefano, 1985:63. Also Cf. Katičić, 1970:7).
- (3) “Members of a language family have a historical connection with one another and descend in common from a single ancestor” (MEE 98/9).

A comparative linguistics study, of the ancient Egyptian language and the living neighbouring languages, by those early scholars would, therefore, have brought up the obvious similarities and, going by the linguistics rules of thumb that are articulated in the immediate points number two and three above, they would have ended up with an inevitable conclusion. Namely that because the genealogical model dictates that no language can have more than one ancestor language, that genetically related languages necessarily have a historical connection and descend from a single ancestor, the other genetically related African languages that surrounded ancient Egyptian were descended from a single ancestor with the latter and that there could be no two ways about it.

If those tireless western Egyptologists had tried to use the living genetically related African languages to enhance their work, Egyptological knowledge would be far more advanced and more certain than it is today. However, it is not too late and the neighbouring African languages continue to be an important potential stepping-stone. Their study along with ancient Egyptian, could still profoundly enhance knowledge of the extinct Egyptian language and thereby reveal the hidden treasure trove by the facilitation of more accurate decipherment of literary resources and other forms of ancient knowledge that now lie well outside our comprehension.

The author, being an African native speaker of a language that exhibits a tremendous extent of parallelism with ancient Egyptian, and being at the same time in a position to benefit from the

tireless linguistic work of the said Egyptologists, found himself in a position closer to the ideal. From that position of vantage, he was bound to come up with findings that conformed in certain respects with the earlier studies, yes, but being in possession of an additional tool, he would come up with many facts that had not come to light so far. Certain findings that were at variance with those of the early Egyptologists were bound to come up too. In the field of linguistics this was not to be unexpected as one expert concedes: "Despite the zeal and persuasiveness of certain linguistic theoreticians, almost 'charismatic' in their approach, there are few if any categorical or indisputable 'truths' in linguistic doctrine" (Ornstein 1987: ix).

The author, subsequent to a critical study of ancient Egyptian as documented by renowned masters of this field, and especially with an obstinate single-minded application of the said native Kalenjiin language, has come to respect the foregoing statement a great deal. Findings that in many respects contradict certain theories held dear by the early masters and bring yet unknown facts to light, are an attestation to Ornstein's statement, and are to be found in ample quantity ahead.

In order to prove that a genetic linkage exists between the living Kalenjiin language and the long dead ancient Egyptian language, the exercise must be completely scientific and must demonstrate "regular similarities, defined by correspondences between complete forms, morphemes, and phonemes" (Benveniste 1966—Obenga, 1992:101).

The philosophical grounding having been expounded to the extent we have and the standard of proof reaffirmed in the preceding sentence, we may now launch into a comparative analysis of the two languages. But first a word or two about linguistic classification.

Ancient Egyptian and its latter stage, known as Coptic, comprise an assortment of virtually dead dialects that the Pharaohs spoke. Pharaonic belongs to, or rather is considered by linguists to be the very definition of the Hamitic family of African languages. In this subsection, as much effort will be expended and as much proof will be supplied as space will allow towards proving that the Kalenjiin language is a member of the said Hamitic family of languages.

It was acknowledged in the previous subsection that western linguists and historians, supported by certain quarters of the African intelligentsia, had, of late, discouraged the continued use of the terms "Hamite" and "Hamitic" (Cf. Davidson 1989:47). Not much is said by such critics about the classification of the closely related languages that are spoken by the people whose older ethnic designation has been so vehemently protested. However, modern literature generally prefers for the Kalenjiin, Maasai, Teso, Turkana, Karimojong', Bari and Lotuko type of languages, classifications such as Para-Nilotic, Southern Nilotic, Nilo-Saharan etc. But it may be

remembered that Kalenjin, and the related languages, had been classified under “Nilo-Hamitic” by the older western scholars (Cf. Tucker & Bryan 1966:443).

It is also very important to note, once again, that virtually all the alternative classificatory names that this sub-Saharan group of languages has been assigned invariably contain the inevitable qualification: NILO. Of this adjective apparently everybody is agreed, namely that the people and the languages being designated and re-designated, basically originate from the Nile Basin.

On its part, the ancient Egyptian speech has often been classified under a controversial linguistic grouping called “Afro-Asiatic”, but for no technically sound reason. It is not genetically related to any Asian language. But on the other hand, it is most intimately and genetically related to fellow African languages, notably—though not exclusively—to those of the type now classified under “Nilo-Saharan” and the other language groups that bear the adjective Nilo. Happily, though, the trend now in the western linguistic circles is to discard the term “Afro-Asiatic” (Cf. Tucker & Bryan 1966:2). It finds no supporters in much of Africa and must, therefore, be surely on its way out entirely.

That said, however, it may be pointed out that the Afro-Asiatic linguistic notion is not entirely devoid of a territorial African reality. There are indeed a few languages in sub-Saharan Africa that would fit well into an Afro-Asiatic kind of mould whatever name one gave such a grouping. While going about such coining of names, however, we need to keep in mind one linguistic standard that dictates as follows: “the genealogical model requires that a language cannot have more than one parent language” (Distefano, 1985:63). These so-called Afro-Asiatic languages are, therefore, either African or Asian in origin but not both if we were to go by the above-quoted standard of the genealogical model. They are, however, certainly Afro-Asiatic, not in the “hybrid” sense intended by the inventors of the term, but in the sense that this family of languages is spoken both in western Asia (or the Middle-East), and in Africa. These are Amharic, Tigre, Tigrinya, Harari, Gurage and other languages of Ethiopia and Eritrea that are clearly Semitic in structure and basic lexicon but are culturally influenced by the African experience.¹

¹ Such languages have been re-baptised ERYTHRAIC, from which grouping ancient Egyptian has been duly excluded—A.N. Tucker and M.A. Bryan, 1966:2. The *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia* 1998, dictionary cautions that the term “Asiatic” is derogatory and, so one would think logically, the compound term “Afro-Asiatic” must be similarly derogatory.

6.3 Lexicostatistical Analysis

6.3.1 *The Basic Words*

As we described in Chapter 3, lexicostatistics involves judging degrees of linguistic relationship on the basis of the frequency of shared features. For the purpose of either simple counting or weighting, the researcher may elect to use any shared features within the areas of: vocabulary, inflectional morphemes, syntactic patterns and even cultural features. However, as Bennett puts it, the most commonly used type of data is lexical, i.e. vocabulary, because the number of data in this area is critical and counts of linguistic features other than lexicon are rare, owing to the fact that there simply are not enough phonemes or verbal constructions in some target dead languages (Cf. Bennett, 1998:34).

The most telling of all with regard to the nature of belonging of the Kalenjiin language to the Hamitic family of languages that is epitomised by ancient Egyptian, is, perhaps, the sharing of the *basic words* of language between Kalenjiin and Coptic/ancient Egyptian. Apart from the above-mentioned reason of relatively readier availability, basic words interest linguists because they are known to be highly resistant to change in response either to changes in social and political environment or to the lapse of time. The basic words of language relate to the vital elements of the day-to-day life, and are generally the first words, for any language, to be learned by children.

Professor Christopher Ehret (1971) who has studied eastern African languages and histories a great deal, and John Albert Distefano after him (1985), considered a stock of “ninety core vocabulary items, terms generally deemed by linguists to be most resistant to change and borrowing” (Distefano 1985:35), adequate for the purpose of computation of degrees of mutual intelligibility (via cognate counting) between eastern African languages. On the basis of that stock, the two variously found out, for example, that Nandi and Tugen (Samorr section) dialects of Kalenjiin shared 88-89 per cent of the basic stock of words. Pokoot and Nandi had 76-78 per cent in common while the more distant Tatoog of Tanzania came lowest, in this language group, at 43-50 per cent degree of basic-word affinity with Nandi.

Two other related language groups, but which are immediately outside the Kalenjiin grouping, the Maa(sai) and (Dho)Luo languages, fared as follows according to Ehret’s counting: the Maasai-Nandi basic word affinity was determined at 21 per cent while Luo-Nandi basic word affinity was determined at 20 per cent. Maasai and Luo had a basic word stock sharing between themselves of 18 per cent.

A word of caution is needed, however, if we were to accept the respective intra-Kalenjiin lexicostatistical comparison work of Ehret and Distefano. The concept is sound and much work was done but the two were severely limited by their relative unfamiliarity with the languages and the numerous dialects and sub-dialects that they tried to handle.

For instance, Distefano's (1985:255-273) basic word cognate counting between Nandi and Kipsigiis dialects of Kalenjiin yielded an 85% cognate relationship. But this resulted from obvious mistakes in the compilation of the gloss that he employed. According to him, Nandi and Kipsigiis differed in the following 14 items out of 90. He is largely mistaken and the following corrections are necessary:

(1) "Warm": KIPSIGIIS *belebi(ik)*, NANDI *lalang'*, correction: both say *lalang'*, *bele-biik* = "it burns people" = "hot" to both dialects.

(2) "Good": KIPSIGIIS *kararaneen*, NANDI *mie*, correction: to both *mie* = "good", *karaaran* = "beautiful", "nice" to both dialects.

(3) "Drink" v.: KIPSIGIIS *zet* (this is an outright mistake); both KIPSIGIIS and NANDI say *yee* for all liquids except milk. "Drink" where milk is concerned is *lu* and *yee* if used with regard to milk would be considered almost blasphemous.

(4) "See": KIPSIGIIS *keer*, NANDI *iroo*, correction: difference is almost genuine. The Nandi, however, may use *keer* depending on grammatical convenience, e.g. *a-keer-e*, "I am seeing" because *i-roo* does not lend itself to the continuous tense equivalent to "seeing".¹

(5) "Bark": KIPSIGIIS *magateet*, NANDI *perteet*, correction: both say *perteet*. *Magateet* is "skin" of a smaller animal e.g. goat.

(6) "Dog": KIPSIGIIS *ng'ookto*, NANDI *seseet*, no correction.

(7) "Woman": KIPSIGIIS *kwoondo*, NANDI *Koorgo*, correction: *kwoondo* is "a wife" and *koorgo* is "woman", or "female" to both dialects.

(8) "Breast": KIPSIGIIS *tigen* (?) NANDI *kineet*, correction: both say *kineet* (originally referring to "teat"; "breast" = *murungu* strictly speaking).

(9) "Seed": KIPSIGIIS *tendereek*, NANDI *kesuy*, correction: both use *keswo/kesui/* and *keswoot/kesweek*. *Tendereek* refers to the seeds of pumpkins, watermelon, gourds and the like.

¹ Hollis (1909:224), listed *iroo* as an irregular verb in Nandi that does not lend itself to the present tense where instead *-keer-* or *-onyi-* were used: *akeere* or *aonyii* = "I am seeing".

(10)“Skin”: KIPSIGIIS *muyto*, NANDI *iririo*, correction: to both KIPSIGIIS & NANDI *muy-to* is “ox-hide” and *iririo* is “skin of humans” and thin strips of any skin.

(11)“Go”: KIPSIGIIS *ba*, NANDI *ui*, correction: *ui* is “go” for one person and *ba* is its plural and the rule applies to both KIPSIGIIS & NANDI.

(12)“Sit”: KIPSIGIIS *bur*, NANDI *tep*, correction: KIPSIGIIS uses both *bur* and *tep*.

(13)“Give”: KIPSIGIIS *kuita* (*koita?*), NANDI *nemu*, correction: Distefano tried to compare different words here: “give out” and “take out” respectively. The right root word for “give out (to a named recipient)” is *-koch-*, “give (to speaker)” is *-kon-* and “give out (generally)” is *-koite-n*. These words and rules apply to both KIPSIGIIS and NANDI.

(14)“Night”: KIPSIGIIS *keng’or* (?), NANDI *kemboi*, correction: *keng’or* seems to be a misplaced word here: KIPSIGIIS say *kemoi* and NANDI say *kemboi* for “night”.

We can see from the foregoing that out of the 90 basic words chosen by Ehret and Distefano for cognate counting, Kipsigiis and Nandi differ on only two items: “see”—although only partially—and “dog”. They agree on the remaining 88 and this yields a 97-98% cognation and not the 85% that Distefano ended up with! The fact is that the Kipsigiis and the Nandi distinguish between one another more from intonation and less from syntactic structure, or the different words used in a given context. The same goes for the dialectal inter-relationship between the other central Kalenjiin groups, Kipsigiis and Nandi included. A comparative analysis exercise on the basis of basic words for them is ill advised because such exercise assumes and ideally works on the basis of the existence of a significant difference, which in this case is, for all practical purposes, virtually absent.¹

¹ Distefano divides Kalenjiinland in Kenya for linguistic analysis purposes into three parts: Central, Northern and Mt. Elgon. But he has recognised too many dialects including some spoken by a few score Ogieek families in the forests of Tinet, Timboroa and Mau. This author adopts the three divisions but based on reasons of dialectal similarities/differences, i.e. degrees of mutual intelligibility, and geography. The Central Kalenjiin group is considered to comprise: Kipsigiis, Nandi, Keiyo and the southern (Samorr) sub-branch of the Tugen; The Northern Kalenjiin group is considered to comprise: Pokoot, Marakwet constituent groups and Arorr sub-branch of (North) Tugen, while the Mt. Elgon Kalenjiin group is considered to comprise the sections collectively known as Sabaoot—grouped together with the Terik of South Nandi for obvious dialectal reasons. The Ogieek may be regarded as constituting small distinct dialectal pockets in forest settlements attached to the larger communities but they are such numerical lightweights that their speech is often overwhelmed by the adjoining more dominant dialects.

A better comparative luck between such close dialects as Kipsigiis and Nandi, may come by way of another common property platform, *a tertium comparationis*, outside the formal property of lexicon (Cf. Krzeszowski, 1990:4), and that is intonation for which, however, no form of notation has been put in place as yet in order to facilitate a comparative exercise based on it.

The list of *basic words* used in Ehret's exercise is described by Ehret as consisting of:

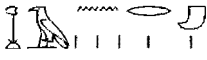
“names for major parts of the body and verbs for universally recognised actions like ‘to go’ and ‘to eat’... Word borrowing is rare in such parts of the vocabulary, and so the presence or lack of loanwords there is a measure of the strength of the influence represented by the loanword set” (Ehret 1971:9,29,94).

Under circumstances of long cross-cultural coexistence, and of vibrant engagement in trade, individual sets of human beings that speak different languages, may and do borrow and lend any number of trade, technical, and *general*, or *cultural* words and expressions from and to one another. But hardly would any one of them ever assimilate words of the *basic* type from the other languages in any significant quantities. Such words are too basic to drop, change, or adopt. The very basic word types have little to do with items of trade—with a notable exception of the numerals, of course. So interactions during trading activities do not necessitate the adoption and lending of words from this category.

A given ethnic community retains the majority of its basic stock of words for as long as it is in existence and for as long as it remains an entity distinguishable from the others. Ethnic communities that have lost their basic class of words in their entirety, or thereabouts would, logically speaking, have earlier on lost the more easily disposable cultural and secondary stock of words and are actually, therefore, in the condition of having dropped their own identities and languages altogether. They are in the position of having altogether adopted and assimilated other people's languages and identities as their own.

It is demonstrated below (Table 1) that 86% (77 items) of the Kalenjiin language's basic stock of 90 words, from the controlled list that was developed and used variously by Ehret and Distefano, are cognate to varying degrees with known words of ancient Egyptian dialects from the same category. 60% (54 items) of the 90 glosses on the list demonstrate a direct phonological and morphological resemblance, with the occasional minimal skewing with respect to the vowels here and there. Of the vowels nobody is sure anyway as far as the words in hieroglyphics are concerned. There may be an additional external consonant but if the presence of such additional external consonant does not appear to affect the apparent root, the pair being compared is considered completely cognate. Each of such pairs of words scores a full one point on the scale of cognateness. The words in the Coptic script, unlike those in the hieroglyphic script, can be

regarded as being closer to the ancient pronunciation pattern because they are already fully vocalised.

The aspect of simple metathesis, i.e. the transposition of letters or sounds in a word, is an understandable skewing which should not affect the quality of cognateness of a pair. The word “see”, for example, is rendered in Coptic $\text{IOP}\alpha$ (*iorh*), but in Kalenjiin it is rendered *iroo*. Here the /r/ and /o/ are transposed. Another good example of a metathesis case, but which is not included in the list of basic words here, is the word for “weapon”,  *khanre* (B. Dict. 532a), which is rendered *Karin*, *karna* or *karnet*(t), in Kalenjiin. Here the consonants /r/ and /n/ are transposed.

About 16% (14 items) of the 90 items on the list exhibit a convincing semblance but suffer a skewing of one important consonant. Such pairs are awarded $\frac{2}{3}$ point on the scale of cognateness. A case of semantic shift within reasonable limits, like the ancient Egyptian word for the “sun” *ra* shifting in Kalenjiin to mostly mean “day” with only vague or circumstantial reference to the original meaning, falls within this category that earns $\frac{2}{3}$ point. The circumstantial, or mitigating, evidence here is that *ra* also meant “day” in ancient Egyptian as it does in Kalenjiin. The sun *ra*, which occasioned the day, gave its name to “the day”. Clear evidence of semantic shift is, therefore, present here.¹

10% (9 items) of the 90 glosses on the list earn only $\frac{1}{3}$ point each because of the presence of multiple skewing by way of the loss of an important consonant or two and/or the introduction of a strange one or two. This especially if it can only be explained by the inclusion of one or more other reasonably cognate pairs which convey the same meaning.

14% (13 items) out of the 90 glosses exhibit a zero degree of cognateness. The 13 either represent glosses that are completely lost to one of the two languages being compared or this reflects the mere unavailability of the items within the resources at the disposal of the author. In the same way, a more endowed database would perhaps yield different results for those pairs that scored $\frac{1}{3}$ and $\frac{2}{3}$ of a point each.

In this connection, in order to relate to established theory what we will have achieved by way of the Kalenjiin-ancient Egyptian/Coptic lexicostatistical analysis that follows, we may remember, from Chapter 3, Krzeszowski’s statement to the effect that in cross-language comparison, there are three possibilities out of any comparison of given properties: identical in some respects and/or different in some respects, or there may be no equivalence at all. That if X represents an item being compared in both languages and L_i represents one language and L_j the

other, the three possibilities can be presented as follows: 1) $XL_i = XL_j$, 2) $XL_i \neq XL_j$, 3) $XL_i = \emptyset L_j$ (Cf. 1990:38). In our case here, a full score, which is represented by 60% of the selected Egypto-Kalenjiin lexical items, describes the $XL_i = XL_j$ scenario, while the $\frac{1}{3}$ and $\frac{2}{3}$ point scores, representing a total of 26% of the lexical items, relate to the $XL_i \neq XL_j$ scenario in differing degrees. The remainder 14% of the selected lexical items which bear no resemblance with respect to any characteristic, describe the $XL_i = \emptyset L_j$ scenario.

¹ We find a good example in Pokoot. The Pokoot call the "sun" *asiis* and also call the "day" *asiis*.

6.3.2 Basic Word List

Table 2: A Lexicostatistical Analysis, Kalenjiin–Ancient Egyptian/Coptic

English	Ancient Egyptian/Coptic	Transliteration	Kalenjiin	Score
1. I	ΔΠΟΚ/ΔΠ	anok/an	anee/anii	1
2. you		un B164a	inyee/inyin	1
3. we	ΔΠΟΠ	anon	echeek/acheek. cf. ichan/inendet ¹	1
4. all	ΤΗΛΟΥ/ΤΗΡΟΥ	tiilu/tiiru C424	tugul	1
5. many	ΠΔΩΘ/ΔΩΔΙ	nashe/ashai	chaang' cf. chaa (Barao) ²	$\frac{2}{3}$
6. one		ue/uee B153a	ageenge	
7. two	СΠΔΥ, II	snav, senui B673b	aeng'	
8. three	ΘΟΩΤ	shom't	somok	1
9. four	ΥΤΟΥ	fou	ang'wan	
10. five	(1) ΙΟΥ (2) ΩΘΕΤΟΥ	(1) tiu (five) (2) mehtiu (fifth)	muut (five ³)	1
11. big	(1) (2) ΟΟΥ	(1) au B2 (2) oou B2	oo/woo	1
12. small	(1) (2)	(1) netch (2) ketit (small, baby)	(1) nwach (short) (2) kiteen/kitigin, ming'in	1
13. long		kə i/qai F275 B760a	kooi (long/tall ⁴)	1
14. warm	ΩΩΔ/ΟΥΩΩΩ	hma/uhmom	oo-ma or lalang'	1
15. Cold	(1) ΕΡΟΥ/ΟΥΡΟΥ/ (2) ΧΙΝΑΡΟΥ	(1) hrosh/oorsh/erash C16 (2) ginhroosh (coldness) C530a	Koriis, kaitit	$\frac{2}{3}$
16. new	(1) ΕΡΡΕ, ΩΔΙ (2)	(1) brire(?), shai, C43 (2) uatch B150a	(1) leel, ren (Pook), rel (Pokoot) (2) iish (Tatoog) ¹	$\frac{1}{3}$

¹ of Cherang'any and Keiyo of Kamariny (Distefano, 1985:259).

² Barao are a "previously unrecorded" branch of Ogieek Kalenjiin living in Mau Forest—Distefano, 1985:38.

³ The ancient Egyptian scribes rendered "five" or (B.Dict. 868) whose sound, like in the case of many of the other numerals, is not known.

⁴ Other Kalenjiin: k3y (Pook); gaaw (Tatoog); Kaai (Ogieek)—Distefano, 1985:261.

English	Ancient Egyptian/Coptic	Transliteration	Kalenjiin	Score
17. good	ⲁⲙⲟⲓ, ⲙⲓⲟ	Amoi, miio	mice	1
18. dry	1) ⲡⲁⲁⲙ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ, 2)	1) haam ebol 2) khem (be dry) F190/Cf. B547a ²	(1) yaam, kiyaam (2) kemei (drought/famine)	1
19. black	ⲕⲬⲙⲙⲉⲉ	kiimme C109-110	tui ³ , kimiiso (black ox/black man)	$\frac{1}{3}$
20. white	ⲁⲗⲉⲧ	alev	leel	$\frac{2}{3}$
21. Red	(1) ⲡⲬⲣⲱ, ⲡⲩⲣⲟⲥ	piirsh (red-coloured substance, rust, red blight, red earth etc), purros C269b & 432b	pirir (something red)	1
22. green	ⲟⲩⲱⲧ, ⲁⲬⲕ	uwoot/liik (green, fresh) C493	iwoot (the wet season—of green grass), nyaliil ⁴	
23. eat	(1) (2) ⲟⲩⲱⲙ	(1) aam B28 (2) uoam	am	1
24. drink		hems B485b	yec, moos	$\frac{1}{3}$
25. bite	(1) (2)	(1) set B706b (2) usha B185b	sus, sa ⁵ sus-eet (biting n.)	$\frac{2}{3}$

¹ Most Kalenjiin branches say *leel* for “new”, which also means “white”. *Ish* of the Tatoog seems to have retained a semblance of one Coptic/ancient Egyptian version which is variously rendered: *shai* and *uash* here.


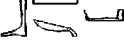
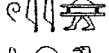

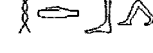
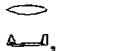

Khem is “to be hot, to be dry” comparable to *kiyaam* from Pokoot which is also the proto-Kalenjiin reconstruction by Distefano (1985:263) and *kemei* “drought/dry season/famine”. As for the Coptic ⲡⲁⲁⲙ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ *haam ebol*, the operative word is *haam* “dry” which corresponds to Kalenjiin *yaam*; the word *ebol* corresponds in function to the English “up” in “dry up” although *ebol* really means “out” as in “come out”.

³ Crum recorded ancient Egyptian proper names for individuals of notable blackness in Greek: Πικρίμις (*Pikiimis*); Πικαμέ (*Pkamei*); Τκαμέ (*Tkamei* = *Takamei*?) etc—p.110. These tally with the Kalenjiin practice as recorded by Hollis (1909): Kalenjiin for “black ox” and “black cow” respectively are *kimiiso* and *chemiiso*. The same could be extended to individuals of very dark complexion in relation to the general complexion of the community. Kalenjiin suggests that the root of the word is *mis* as the same is used in *tui-mis* “jet black”.

As the ancient Egyptians also referred to their land as “Black Land” *Kemet*, from B 243b (*kemmoi* as in Kalenjiin and Coptic for “darkness of night” or “night” *keemoi*?) an investigation as to whether the other old name for Egypt, *Misiri*, is formed from the same root *mis* as hinted by Kalenjiin may be called for. The author is, nevertheless, aware of the informal Coptic tradition that *Misri* or *Masri* may be traced to “Bom of Ra/Ri” but finds no credible support for it.

⁴ The *iwoot*, rainy season, of Kalenjiin, ushers in plenty green grass. That *iwoot* also referred to “green” in ancient times is now lost to the Kalenjiin and can only be inferred from studying Coptic and ancient Egyptian’s related words.


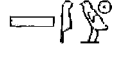
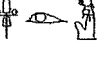
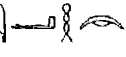

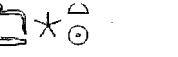


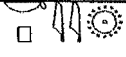





⁵ The *sa* version is Pook. Interestingly Sapiiny of Uganda and Tatoog of Tanzania say *kanyat* and *qanyad* respectively in the place of the more widespread *sus* (Cf. Distefano, 1985:363).

English	Ancient Egyptian/Coptic	Transliteration	Kalenjin	Score
26. see	ϣⲟⲟⲩⲛ, ⲓⲟⲣⲃ, ϫⲉⲣ	soun (look at/know), iorh (see), ger (examine)	suee-n, iroo, keer	1
27. hear	(1) ⲧⲕⲁⲒ (2) ϣⲟⲩⲙ (3) ϫⲉ ϣⲟⲩⲙ	(1) tikas (give ear, listen) (2) sootm (3) ge sootm C212, 363	kas (listen/hear)	1
28. know	ⲛⲟⲉⲓ	noei	nai	1
29. sleep	 ⲃⲟⲣⲛ/ⲣⲁⲒⲟⲩⲛ (Crum)	setcher/s-darro ¹ hoor(u)p/rasui	Ru, rru (Ong'om)	1
30. die	ⲙⲟⲩ	mu	me	1
31. Kill	(1) ⲙⲟⲩⲟⲩⲧⲧ (2) ⲛⲁⲣⲒ (3) 	(1) muut (2) pars (3) besh B223b	(1) muut (smite) (2) par-iis (3) bagach (Mt. Elgon Kalenjin)	1
32. go	(1)  (2) 	(1) ui (2) aua B32, 157	ui, wa, ba	1
33. come	ⲛⲛⲟⲩ, ⲛⲟⲩ ⲉⲃⲟⲩⲛ	niu, nu ehun (come in) ²	nyoon	1
34. sit	(1)  (2) ⲧⲙⲧⲟⲛ	(1) hdb F181 (2) te-mton	(1) tep (2) tepooten	1
35. stand	ⲧⲟⲟⲩⲛ, ⲧⲟⲓⲁⲉ	toun, toile	tonoon, teel	1
36. Give	(1) ⲧ (2)  (3) 	(1) ti (2) erta (give)? B436 (3) eqa B139b ³	(1) ti, tete (Marakwet), (2) root (give present) (3) -kooch-in (other Kal.)	1
37. speak	ⲙⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲙⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲩⲛ	mute mute chun	mwa (speak) mwaite(n) (announce)	1


¹ Budge's Hieroglyphic Dictionary 718b transcribes it *setcher* but the characters  and  respectively read *dar* and *ro* hence the author's *s-darro*.

² C219-221. It is probable that the Copts used letter *rt*, /n/ for both the sound of /n/ and the East African /ny/ as in "Kenya" or as in the /gn/ of Cognac.

³ *Mii* "give" of the Luo Language (Dholuo), is found in both Coptic and ancient Egyptian.

English	Ancient Egyptian/Coptic	Transliteration	Kalenjiin	Score
38. sun	(1)  (2) 	(1) ra (the sun, the day) B417b (2) shu B731b	(1) ra (today) (2) asiis-ta (the sun)	$\frac{2}{3}$
39. moon	(1)  (2) 	(1) ar-t-aabt (the moon) B68a (2) aech B29b	araawa, arawect	$\frac{2}{3}$
40. star	(1)  (2) 	(1) khakha (2) tchet-t B 528a, 913b	(1) kookel, (2) kechei-aat	$\frac{2}{3}$
41. water	(1)  (2)  (3) ⲙⲟⲟⲩ / ⲙⲁⲟⲩ	(1) inu B143a (2) pakha (a drink) ¹ (3) mou/mau	oino (river) maiyo (liquor) pei (water) peeka (water in Mt. Elgon Kal.)	$\frac{1}{3}$
42. rain	ⲉⲣⲟ	chroo (fine rain, dew)	roop (rain)	
43. cloud	(1)  (2) ⲕⲁⲟⲟⲁⲉ	(1) kepi (Coptic ⲉⲛⲡⲉ [chiipe]) B793b (2) kloole C104	pool, pool-teet ²	
44. night	(1) ⲣⲟⲩⲟⲩⲁⲉ , (2) ⲕⲁⲛⲙⲉ (3) 	(1) ruuhe (evening) (2) kniime/kmeine (dark of night) C110 (3) qerhu B776a	(1) oro (night—Tot) (2) keemoi (3) kee-ru (to sleep)	1
45. smoke		het B516b	iyect	1
46. fire		m'hatti B284b	maat/maata	1
47. ash	ⲕⲉⲣⲙⲓ/ⲕⲉⲣⲙⲉⲥ	Kermi/kermec	or	
48. path	(1)  (2) ⲙⲉⲣ	(1) her-t B130 (2) heir	or-ect	1
49. mountain	(1) ⲧⲟⲗ/ⲧⲟⲩ (2) 	(1) tol/tu (2) qaa B761a	(1) tul-wo (2) koi ³	1

¹ Faulkner p.93. transliterated as *pkh3*, which from Mt. Elgon Kalenjiin experience should be read *peeka* "water".

² The Kalenjiin *pool* seems to relate to the Canaanite Lord of the Clouds, Rain and the Storm, Ba'al adopted and rendered by the Egyptians  (B.Dict. 213b).

³ *Koi* is an old Kalenjiin word for "hill/mountain" or "highland" as preserved in Koi-legeen (Mt. Kenya), Koi-bateek (the highland/hill of bamboo which has given its name to Koibatek District). The word *koi* now generally means
Footnote continued at bottom of next page

English	Ancient Egyptian/Coptic	Transliteration	Kalenjiin	Score
50. tree		kht ¹	keet	1
51. leaf	 or 	seq or seqa B625b	sok, sokoo, sokoon	1
52. bark		paet-t (kinds of barks, woods used in medicine) B231b	peer, pteet	$\frac{2}{3}$
53. fish	ΚΟΤΑΒΟΤ	kulhot C107	kawalyat (Soi Keiyo), njir ⁻²	1
54. bird		dryt (bird, kite)-F323	tariit	1
55. dog	(1) (2)	(1) ash (dog, jackal) B10a (2) St (Set the dog-headed evil "god") ³	sese-et, ng'ook	$\frac{2}{3}$
56. louse	ΚΑΚΤΘ, ΝΙΚΑΚΤΘ	kakte, nikakte C102	nyoktoota (Omotik Ogieek Kal.), nyogduud (Tatoog) ⁴ isir-yaat is more widespread	1
57. person	(1) (2)	(1) sh/zi (person/man) ⁵ (2) met B331a	(1) chii (person/man) (2) meiwoot (Omotik Kal.) ¹	1

"stone". Budge's transcription of as *qaa* is a mistake and should be *qooi* from the word for "high" in both Kalenjiin and ancient Egyptian —F275.

¹ As in *kht k3* "high tree"—Gardiner, 1927:S 92. This *kht k3* "high, or tall tree" should probably be transcribed *keet kooi* as hinted by Kalenjiin for "tall tree".

² The rare Kalenjiin *kawalyaat* for "fish", is from Distefano (1985:268) who also gives *kwar-* as the proto-Southern Nilotic root for "fish". The Coptic ΚΟΤΑΒΟΤ (*kulhot*) supplied by Crum, refers to a specific type of fish, *clarias anguillaris*. Traditional Kalenjiin custom disallowed the eating of fish and presently being generally physically removed from fish producing areas, the words for "fish" and the separate species, can hardly be considered a basic word for them.

³ (B706b& var.) should either be transcribed *Set*, *seseet* or *suiyoot*. *Set* is the widely known form of the name of the evil "god" of ancient Egypt who was portrayed in the image of a dog. *Seseet* and *suiyoot* are the respective

Kalenjiin names for "dog" and "wild dog/wolf". The rendering which is transcribed *ash* by Budge may relate to the implied Kalenjiin name for the canine family, *kip-ois*. The root here is *ois* and the clan whose emblem (totem) is the jackal is called *Kip-ois*—"of *ois*". Budge's *ash* may be compared to *ois* with the fact in mind that the ancient Egyptian *sh* sound has generally contracted to a plain *s* sound in Kalenjiin and that Budge's transcription, like that of the other Egyptologists, is only an approximation, especially as to the vowel sounds.

⁴ Distefano, 1985:268. Distefano suggests a reconstruction of *nyok-* as the proto-Nilotic root for "louse". We may note that between Omotik and Tatoog branches of Kalenjiin, the ancient Egyptian word for "louse/lice" has been preserved as corroborated by Coptic.


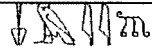
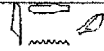
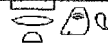

⁵ Gardiner p. 442 & 618

English	Ancient Egyptian/Coptic	Transliteration	Kalenjiin	Score
58. man	(1) ρω.αβ, (2)	(1) roome (2) remth	muren	$\frac{1}{3}$
59. woman	(1) (2) (3)	(1) khent (a lady in a harem, a concubine) B558a (2) s[a]-t B583a (3) rekha-t (wise woman, i.e. Isis) B430a ²	(1) kwoon-to (a woman, a wife) (2) chepyoseet (3) korgeet (a woman)	1
60. meat	Δϣ	af C23	pany, peento	
61. bone	(1) (2) (3)	(1) akhakh B9a (2) qas B765a (3) qrs B765a	kawa, kawcek (bone, bones) karaas (rib bone)	1
62. oil (fat)	(1) (2)	(1) mehti (oil, unguent) B318b (2) merh-t B315a	(1) mwaai-ta (2) mwar/mwarta (Northern Kal.) ³	1
63. horn	(1) κωπϛ (2)	(1) koons C422a (2) hen-t B488b	(1) kuino (2) kuin-ect	$\frac{2}{3}$
64. tail	(1) (2) (3) (4)	(1) er-er (rump, tail?) B129b (2) er-t (tail) B129b (3) set B706b (4) sir-pata (fly whisk) B647b ¹	(1) saruur (2) saruur-yet (also fly whisk)	$\frac{2}{3}$


¹ Distefano ascribes *meiwoot* for "person" to the Omotik (B) who are an Ogieek branch of Kalenjiin (1985:267). *Meiwoot* to other Kalenjiin generally refers to a hired labour for farm work, especially, but not exclusively, from the agricultural communities—the *meeek* (pl. for *meiwoot*)—as opposed to the *porop* of the pastoral communities.


² It is a finding of this study that the ancient Egyptian letter /h/ in some cases, at the initial position, corresponds to the sound *kar* or *kor* of Kalenjiin: e.g. *r-n* "name" corresponds to *karn-a*, "name" in Kalenjiin; *r-kht* "weapons" (F. Dict.146) is Kalenjiin *kariik* or *kirok-ta*, "weapons" or "a knobkerrie" or "a stick"; *rshwt* "joy" (ibid. 153) is Kalenjiin *karaaset* from the root *ras*, "be joyful", "be positively proud" (occasionally negative)—ancient Egyptian *rsh* "joyful" (ibid.153); *rd* "foot" which is close to Kalenjiin *kwariaat* "ankle".



³ Distefano, 1985:265. Distefano, following Ehret (1971), says that the proto-Nilotic word was *mwar*—which is highly convincing considering that the northern Kalenjiin: Marakwet groups, Cherang'any and Pokoot, have retained the forms *mwar* and *mwarta* which are readily traceable to ancient Egyptian.




English	Ancient Egyptian/Coptic	Transliteration	Kalenjiin	Score
65. feather		shu-t B733a	koroor, korooryet, songool-yet (of ostrich) ²	
66. hair		smai B600b	suumei	1
67. head	Ⲙⲟⲓ	moti (skull) C12	mot (Tot Marakwet) ³ met	1
68. ear		aten (itin?) ⁴	iit (ear), iitin (ears)	1
69. Eye	(1) ⲟ (2) ⲃⲁⲗ	(1) ar ⁵ (2) bal	kong ² , koon-ta	
70. nose		Sher-t B750a	ser-uit	1
71. mouth	(1) ⲓ (2) ⲣⲟ/ⲣⲉ/ⲗⲟⲟⲧ	(1) re/ro ⁶ (mouth/door/gate/opening) (2) ro/re/loou	rorii (laugh), le (utter) oor (opening/way) kurgat (door/entrance/gate etc.)	
72. tooth	(1) Ⲙⲕⲁⲕⲉⲗ (2) Ⲙⲁⲗ (3) 	(1) shklkel gnashing/grinding of teeth-C556b (2) shal C556b (3) khenr B552b	keel/keel-at	$\frac{1}{3}$

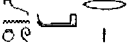
¹ The ancient Egyptian versions have to be read together to understand their relationship to the Kalenjiin *saruur* and *saruur-yet*.



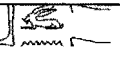








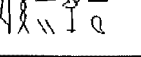











² It may be of interest to note that the name of the feathered head-dress is cognate between Kalenjiin and ancient Egyptian. The same word is another word for "feather" in ancient Egyptian and it is probable that that word for "feather" was dropped by the Kalenjiin language at some stage. However, the head-dress, or crown, still goes by the same name, *kuutwa*, ancient Egyptian  *kha-t* B 528a.

³ Distefano, 1985:271. Strictly speaking "skull" in Kalenjiin is *terta* which approximates ancient Egyptian  B 910 wrongly transcribed as *tcheru*.

⁴ Budge transcribes this *aten*, B 103a. However, since the reed sign  in  reads /i/ as in "it", this hieroglyphic word should be transcribed *itin* according to the western Egyptologists' own convention. However, Kalenjiin suggests *iit-in*, "ears".

⁵  *ar* "to see" B 68a, Coptic ⲉⲓⲱⲣⲏ (*eiyoorth*) and Kalenjiin  *iroo*, "look", "see", "behold", suggest that a common word for "eye" was, as preserved in hieroglyphics, originally  *ar-t* ibid. which perhaps should correctly be transcribed *roo-et*, the stem being *roo*.

⁶ B 416a.  *nu ra* "dribble at the mouth", B 351b, is Kalenjiin *nyoror*. This, together with *rorii* "laugh" and *le* "utter", seem to strongly suggest that the Kalenjiin lost a word for "mouth" whose root was "ro". It is common to interchange /l/ with /r/ sound. The Kintu-speaking Gikuyu seem to have assimilated this word because to "keep quiet" in Gikuyu is *kira*, which is favourably comparable to Coptic ⲕⲁ ⲣⲟ *ka ro* "keep silent", "leave mouth"—Crum, 288b. It is not unusual to find words that are cognate between Gikuyu, or any other central and eastern Kenya Kintu-speaking group, and Kalenjiin and, by extension, ancient Egyptian. One such word is *me-giro* "taboo" Kalenjiin *kir* or *ker* "close", "embargo", "ban" by declaring temporary taboo. This is to be compared with Coptic ⲭⲓ ⲣⲟ (*giroo*) "deprive", "prevent"—Crum, 288.

English	Ancient Egyptian/Coptic	Transliteration	Kalenjiin	Score
73. tongue	(1)  (2) 	(1) las (2) nes-t B389 ¹	ng'elyep-ta, mesiit (Mt. Elgon), ng'ushabd (Tatoog) ²	$\frac{1}{3}$
74. nail	(1)  (2) 	(1) bun (claw, nail, talon) B215b (2) sha-t (claw of bird, talon) B722a	(1) pun-tcet (Mt. Elgon) ³ (2) siiya/siy-cet	1
75. foot	(1)  (2) 	(1) keli (2) chalag/kalog (both feet)—C491a	(1) keel- (2) keel-yeek (feet)	1
76. knee		keli	kutung', keel = leg	$\frac{2}{3}$
77. hand	(1)  (2) 	(1) e B105a (2) toot	(1) ei (2) euut	1
78. belly		maht (bowels, intestines)	mo, mo-cet (bowels, intestines, belly)	1
79. neck	(1)  (2) 	(1) m'khaqt B285 (2) ahtit (neck, throat, windpipe) B77a	kaat/kaat-it, mookto (Soy Keiyo) ⁴	1
80. breast	(1)  (2) 	(1) kun(t) ⁵ (2) qenu B773b	kiina/kineet	1
81. heart		het (also mind)	muguulel	
82. liver		maesu-t B273b	Koow-et	
83. blood	(1)  (2) 	(1) khrooti (jugular vein) C631b (2) snof/snuf C348	(1) koroti (blood) (2) sun-cet (menstruation)	$\frac{2}{3}$
84. name	(1)  (2) 	(1) ran/ren (2) pekran (thy namesake)	(1) karna (2) paa-karna (namesake)	$\frac{2}{3}$
85. stone	(1)   (2) 	(1) gagoo, koh nshoot (2) qeh (kind of stone, flint) B777b	koi	1

¹ The three Kalenjiin versions have to be read together with the respective Coptic and ancient Egyptian versions to determine that the root here is *-le-*, *-ne-* or *-la-* from which the same languages obtained their root for "utter" *le*—a major function of the tongue.

² Distefano, 1985:272.


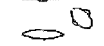


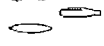

³ Distefano, 1985:272.


⁴ Distefano, 1985:269.


⁵ Lambdin, 1983:229.

English	Ancient Egyptian/Coptic	Transliteration	Kalenjin	Score
86. animal	(1) (2) τἄποοτε	(1) tibnu B868b (2) thnoue B868b	tiony	$\frac{1}{3}$
87. root	(1) ἀρηχ/ποττε (2)	(1) ariig/nune C227b (2) menit (roots, stalks, stems) B299a	(1) ereen (Northern Kalenjin) ¹ , tigiit-yoot (2) minuut (planted things, mīn=plant v.)	$\frac{1}{3}$

¹ This is in the dialects of Tot, Cherangany, Chesegon Soi, and Pokoot sections as given by Distefano, 1985:271. Distefano also gives *ereen* as the probable "proto" word. This happens to be the word nearest the Coptic ἀρηχ (*ariig*). *Tigiit-yoot*, however, is the more common word for "root" among other Kalenjin sections.

English	Ancient Egyptian/Coptic	Transliteration	Kalenjiin	Score
88. seed	(1)  (2) χιμεριε	(1) keshu B798a ¹ gin-site (sowing of seeds) C361b (site = seeds)	keswo/kesuy/keswoot	1
89. skin	(1)  (2)  (3) 	(1) ser (skin, a disease) ² B610b (2) meska B327a (3) khaut (skins, hides) B571a	(1) siir/siira (Pokoot & other Northern Kalenjiin) ³ (2) magata	1
90. child	(1)  (2) ρερε (3)  (4) ΔΑΟΥΟΥ, ΠΚΕΚΕΤ	(1) chrd F204 (2) sheere (3) msw ⁴ (4) aluu, pkekēt C101	(1) cherereet (a baby) (2) cherere (baby) (3) mooso (in Keiyo and other Northern) ⁵ (4) laakwa/lakweet, kipleekwa (baby) ⁶	1
Total full scores out of 90 = 54				60%
Total $\frac{2}{3}$ scores = 14 = 9				16%
Total $\frac{1}{3}$ scores = 9 = 3				10%
Total Cognition				86%
Total no-score = 13				14%
Total Cognition, Kal./anc. Egyptian on basic words score sheet is therefore: 86%				

¹ Seeds of plants like gourds, watermelons, pumpkins etc. are called in Kalenjiin *tender-eek* and this corresponds to ancient Egyptian  *tchernit* (or *dermit*) "a kind of seed or grain"—B 910b.

² This probably refers to skin rashes, *sir* v. in Kalenjiin. Small pox in Kalenjiin is *chee-sir-u*. This *sir* and the word for "skin" *siir* (pl. *siir-ek*) suggest that the ancient Egyptian , should correctly be transcribed *sir* or *siir*.

³ Distefano, 1985:271. *Siir* to the Kipsigiis and the other Central Kalenjiin speakers refers to animal skins with hair that are worn hanging from the neck and falling on the back of the wearer. An important example is the colobus monkey skin. Leopard skin is also popular.

⁴ Gardiner, 1927:443.

⁵ *Mooso* now refers to "baboon" more often—except among the Keiyo and others up north who use both the common *laakwa* and *mooso*. But the true name for "baboon" may have originally been *yegen* as retained in the name *Kip-yegen* "of the baboon family". The Maasai call "baboon" *o-yegeny*, lending force to this argument. A tiny species of ape goes by the same Kalenjiin word for "a baby" *cherereet* and it makes logical sense that that being the case, the larger species ought to correspond to "child". Animals, especially those that have been chosen for clan emblems (totems) are bound to be given euphemistic names. The commonly heard moral among the Kalenjiin that apes resulted from children who were cursed for misbehaving also helps to strengthen this argument.

⁶ *Kipleekwa* as Kalenjiin (Nandi) for "baby" is from Hollis (1909). However this word more often, in present day parlance, refers to the hare or rabbit. According to Hollis' (1909) "English-Nandi Vocabulary" section, the Nandi then called a baby *kipleekwa* while they called the rabbit or hare—as they still do—*kipleengwa*. As for the Coptic *aluu* and *pkekēt*, it is possible to see how a combination of the two leads to the Kalenjiin *lakweet* "child".

6.3.3 Word Arrangement by Semantic Domain

A comparative linguistics exercise such as is the business of this chapter could invite the risk, and especially the risk and the accusation of capitalising on some cases of fortuitous coincidence to conveniently arrive at the conclusion that the languages being compared were genetically related. One important means of avoiding running such gauntlet is to draw up a list of words in groups of belonging, e.g., to list together in one group a number of names for body parts and call that group the domain of body parts. Another grouping would be of items relating to, say body posture and movement such as “sit”, “stand”, “run” and “fall down”. It cannot possibly owe it to sheer coincidence that two languages have identical words for each of those body postures and movements.

In this exercise we seek to meet the standard set by linguists as expressed by Bennett (1998:35) as we read in Chapter 3: namely that it is desirable in a comparative linguistics engagement such as is the business of this chapter to include vocabulary from a variety of semantic domains and that linguists generally restrict cognacy to items whose similarity in form and meaning is too great to ascribe to chance and where borrowing and onomatopoeia can be ruled out, that regularity of correspondence, which is quantifiable, is an important factor (1998:28). The regularity of correspondence requirement is assured by the methodical arrangement of words into groups that convey meanings within the same general area: i.e. according to semantic domain.

The 100+ incidences of word sharing demonstrated below (Table 3) have been arranged in such a way as to preclude any prospect of legitimate charges of fortuitous coincidence as described above. Each group of the vocabulary, or lexemes employed here, has a common range of meaning, which constitutes a semantic domain. Such a domain is characterised by the distinctive semantic features (components) that differentiate individual lexemes in the domain from one another, and is also characterised by features shared by all the lexemes in the domain. The grouping of lexemes in semantic domains, as we have described, has the advantage of helping eliminate any charge of coincidence in relation to any pair of lexemes. Any such charge is immediately and automatically dismissed by the mere presence of other cognate pairs within the same domain. If, for an example, a critic should charge that the pair of cognates of ancient Egyptian-Kalenjiin word for “hair” *sma* and *suumei* owes it to a fortuitous coincidence, he or she would be hard put to explain how come the words for other major body parts like “head/skull”,

“hand”, “nose”, “breast” etc. all the way down to “nail/claw”, also resemble thanks to sheer chance!¹

¹ The major dictionaries that were consulted in the compilation of the cognate word list were:

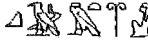

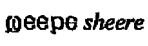
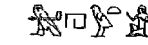
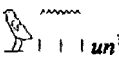

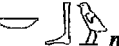
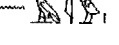

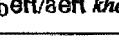
Budge, Sir E.A. Wallis 1920. *An Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary*. (First published 1920 by John Murray, London) Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1978. Abbreviation used here: “B.Dict.”

Faulkner, Raymond O. 1962. *Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*. Griffith Institute, Oxford. Abbreviation used here: “F.Dict.”

Gardiner, Sir Alan 1927. *Egyptian Grammar, Being an Introduction to the Study of Hieroglyphs*. Griffith Institute, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (first published, 1927).

Crum, W.E. 1939. *A Coptic Dictionary*. Oxford at the Clarendon Press.

Kalenjin Dictionary, C.C. Ng'elechei, Transafrika Publishers, 1979; Hollis A.C., 1909, *The Nandi Language and Folklore*, Oxford at The Clarendon Press; Distefano, John Albert, 1985, *The Precolonial History of the Kalenjin of Kenya: A Methodological Comparison of Linguistic and Oral Traditional Evidence*, UMI Dissertation Services, Michigan, USA and many miscellaneous Coptic Church documents and sermons.

Table 3: Semantic Domains			
Ancient Egyptian/Coptic	Meaning	Kalenjin	Meaning
Important Close Family Words			
1. ΠΑΙΩΤ <i>paioot</i>	my father/elder/God	<i>Paioot/poioot</i>	father, elder
2. ΜΗΤΗΡ <i>miuu</i>	mother	<i>iyoo</i>	mother
3.  <i>qemam-t</i>	mother, parent	<i>kam-eet</i>	his/her mother
4.  <i>chrd</i>	child	<i>cherer-eet</i>	baby
5.  <i>sheere</i>	son, child	<i>cherer-eet</i>	baby of human
6. ΔΑΥΤΟΤ <i>aluu</i>	child	<i>laakwa/ lakweet a/the child</i>	
7. ΠΑΙΔΕΤ <i>pketet</i>	child	<i>lakweet</i>	child
8.  <i>m'hau-t</i>	kin, family	<i>maat</i>	wider family
Independent Pronouns			
9. ΑΝΩΚ <i>anok</i>	I, me	<i>anee kwoo</i>	I am...
10. ΑΝ	<i>an</i>	I	- <i>an</i> me
11. ΑΝΤ <i>ang</i>	I, myself	<i>an-ee</i>	myself
12.  <i>un¹</i>	you	<i>inyee (in-nyee)</i>	you
13. ΑΝΤΟΚ <i>intok</i>	you (are)	<i>ok-week</i>	yourselves
14. ΕΚ	<i>ek</i>	you	<i>ok-week</i> yourselves
15.  <i>nth</i>	you (fem.)	<i>in-yeentet</i>	yourself
Genitivals			
16. ΟΠ/ΑΠ <i>oop/ap</i>	"belongs to", "of"	<i>oop/aap</i>	"belongs to", "of"
17.  <i>nebw</i>	lord/owner of...	<i>nebo, nebou</i>	owner of... the ruler of...
18. ΝΕΝ	<i>nen</i>	<i>our/s</i>	(<i>ne-nyoon</i> our/s
19.  <i>naaon?</i>	our	<i>(ne)nyoon</i>	it is ours
20. ΠΤΕ	<i>inte</i> , possessive prep. of...	<i>tiny-el/tin-too</i>	he/she has...
21.  <i>naat</i>	those who...	<i>noot/nooto/net</i>	it is the one/the very one!
22.  <i>khen/ hen</i>	in, e.g. in the name of...	<i>een</i>	in, e.g. in the name of

¹ B164a.

Table 3: Semantic Domains

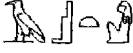



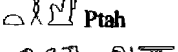




















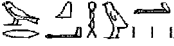

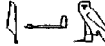

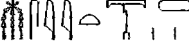






Ancient Egyptian/Coptic	Meaning	Kalenjiin	Meaning
Important Celestial and Terrestrial Words			
23.  As-t	Goddess Isis	<i>Asis/asiista</i>	sole God(dess)/the sun
24.  neter	divinity, deity	<i>netoroor</i>	the exalted, now God/Jesus
25.  Maat	divinity of ethics	<i>maat</i>	ethically binding relations
26.  Ptah	Lord/"god" of Memphis	<i>Ptaa-iyaat</i>	"the Lord", now Jesus
27.  paut ta, of the beginning	of the beginning	<i>po tua</i>	of the beginning
28.  Ri/Ra	"Sun God" Ra	<i>ra</i>	day
29.  hru-pni	today/this day	<i>ra-uni</i>	today/this day
30.  Rnnwt	serpentine goddess	<i>ereen-et</i>	a serpent
31.  Ka Kamur, Bull-God of Kamur	Kamur, Bull-God of Kamur	<i>kamar</i>	specially deformed-horn bull
32.  Set/Sutekh, dog-headed evil "god"	dog-headed evil "god"	<i>ses-eet/segit</i>	a dog/dog family totem
33.  kemet	country, Egypt	<i>em-eet</i>	country, nation
34.  kah land, earth, country	kah land, earth, country	<i>kaa</i>	home, homeland
35.  Ha ka Ptah, Ptah's shrine	Ptah's shrine	<i>Kaa-Ki-ptaa (iyaat)</i>	Lord's place
36.  kora	country (Greek?)	<i>koor-a</i>	country
37.  hoone	canal	<i>oinoloin-eet</i>	river
38.  an-t	watercourse, valley	<i>ain-eet</i>	river
39.  tol	heap, hillock	<i>tul-, tul-wa</i>	mountain, hill
40.  tu	hill, mountain	<i>tul-</i>	mountain, hill
41.  qeh	a kind of stone, flint	<i>koi</i>	stone, also hill, mountain
42.  kht	tree, wood	<i>keet</i>	tree
43.  kht koi tall tree	tall tree	<i>keet kooi</i>	tall tree (usu. keet ne kooi)
44.  errit	door, gate, judge hall	<i>or-eet/ar-eet</i>	a road, a path, entrance
45.  her-t	way, path, road	<i>or-eet</i>	as above

Table 3: Semantic Domains			
Ancient Egyptian/Coptic	Meaning	Kalenjin	Meaning
Kingship			
46. κωτ		<i>koot</i>	house <i>ko-ot</i> a house
			
47.  <i>pr-o</i>	great house	<i>paraa ko¹</i>	(of) large house
48. οτοτρο <i>uuro</i>	king	<i>oorgoi</i>	royalty
49.  <i>ur-gahu</i>	chief of district	<i>oorgoi-yoot</i>	the ruler/king
50.  <i>wr hk-w</i>	great of magic	<i>Oorgoiyoot</i>	King (the chief physician)
Vital Life and Death Words			
51.  <i>aam</i>	to swallow, to eat	<i>am</i>	eat
52. οτωϰ <i>uoam</i>	eat	<i>am</i>	eat
53.  <i>am'it</i>	flesh, food	<i>amit/am-dit</i>	food
54.  <i>msyt</i>	evening meal	<i>amisyet</i>	eating, a meal
55.  <i>kamut</i>	wheaten bread	<i>kimy-eet</i>	cooked flour meal
56. ϩΗϩΙΟϫ <i>shishiu</i>	conceive, desire, yearn for	<i>sich</i>	give birth to, achieve
57.  <i>iwr</i>	conceive	<i>ri</i>	conceive (of livestock only)
58. ϩΙ	<i>hi</i>	give birth	<i>yi</i> give birth
59. ϰΙΟ	<i>miio</i>	be hale	<i>miee</i> be hale, good
60.  <i>men</i>	be sick etc.	<i>mian</i>	be sick
61.  <i>men't</i>	pain, sickness	<i>myaneet/ miondo</i>	sickness
62. ϰΟΤΟϫΤ <i>muut</i>	kill	<i>muut</i>	strike viciously
63.  <i>met</i>	death	<i>meet, myat</i>	death, calamity, evil
64. ϰΟϫ	<i>mu</i>	death	<i>me</i> die
65. ϩϩϰ ϰΟΤΟϫΤ <i>ref-muut</i>	dead body	<i>muusto</i>	a dead body
66.  <i>ma'at</i>	dead body, mummy	<i>meet, myat</i>	death, calamity

¹ The more likely corresponding Kalenjin words are: *poror-oo*, "of large clan" which has almost become a nation or *poryo-oo*, "of large military regiment". These were "house" based words, so they still conveyed "large house".




























Table 3: Semantic Domains			
Ancient Egyptian/Coptic	Meaning	Kalenjin	Meaning
Some Major Body Parts			
67.  sma	hair	<i>suumei</i>	hair
68.  moti	skull	<i>met</i>	head
69.  e	hand	<i>ei, e-uut</i>	hand, a/the hand
70.  ti-gig	hand	<i>tigig</i>	shoulder
71.  sher-t	nose, nostril	<i>ser-uut</i>	the nose
72.  kuun	bosom, breast	<i>kiina</i>	breast
73.  ahtit	neck, throat, windpipe	<i>kaat-it</i>	neck
74.  aten	ear	<i>iit iit-in</i>	ear, ears
75.  maht	bowels, intestines	<i>mo-eet</i>	stomach/bowels, intestines
76.  soi	back of man or beast	<i>sua, sueet</i>	loins, waist, the waist
77.  kehte	loin, hip	<i>kweet</i>	buttock
78.  kt	vulva, vagina	<i>kweet</i>	vagina, esp. in Marakwet
79.  m'th	phallus (penis)	<i>monyis-eet</i>	the phallus
80.  seet	phallus	<i>monyis-eet</i>	the phallus
81.  qefen-t	vulva, vagina	<i>kapin-yeet</i>	the clitoris
82.  khps	foreleg, thigh	<i>kupees</i>	thigh
83.  keli (+Grk)	knee	<i>keel, keel-do</i>	leg, a leg
84.  ker	haunch, thigh	<i>kereeng'</i>	foot, leg
85.  sha-t	claw	<i>sity-eet</i>	a claw, a nail

Table 3: Semantic Domains				
Ancient Egyptian/Coptic		Meaning	Kalenjin	Meaning
Important Verbs				
86.	ϫϫϫ <i>chogi</i>	run	<i>choog</i>	to hurry hither
87.	 <i>khakh/chakh</i>	be speedy, swift, hasten	<i>chaak-ta</i>	make haste, hurry
88.	ⲡⲟⲩ <i>poat</i>	run	<i>laapat</i>	run
89.	 <i>ui</i>	go	<i>ui</i>	go
90.	 <i>ser</i>	to write	<i>sir</i>	write
91.	ϫⲓⲃ <i>sikh/sih</i>	write	<i>sir</i>	write
92.	ϫⲟⲟⲩⲛ <i>soun</i>	look at	<i>soeen</i>	look at
93.	ⲓⲟⲣⲁ <i>ioorh</i>	look, behold	<i>iroo</i>	look, behold
94.	ϫⲉⲣ <i>ger</i>	examine, study	<i>keer</i>	have a look at
95.	ⲛⲟⲉⲓ <i>noei</i>	know	<i>nai</i>	know
96.	Ⲙⲁⲣⲧⲓⲣⲓⲁ <i>martiria</i>	witness, testimony	<i>matir-yoot</i>	ritual/formal witness
97.	 <i>mtr</i>	instruct	<i>motir</i>	instruct; initiate
Important Feelings				
98.	ⲁⲘⲟⲓ, ⲘⲞ <i>amoi, miio</i>	good	<i>miee</i>	good, it is good
98.	 <i>qerrm</i>	pleasure (?)	<i>karram</i> (North Kalenjin)	it is nice/beautiful
99.	 <i>sharm'</i>	to be peaceful	<i>chaam-yo</i>	peace, love
100.	 <i>sharm</i>	'to greet, to salute	<i>chame-kee</i>	Kalenjin greeting
101.	ⲘⲘⲁⲩⲟⲟ <i>emashoo</i>	much, greatly-Crum	<i>miising'</i>	very much, very well
102.	Ⲙⲉⲣⲓⲧ <i>merit</i>	love	<i>murer-eet</i>	the beloved/bride ¹
103.	 <i>merut</i>	beloved woman	<i>murer-eet</i>	the beloved/bride

¹ A newly wed woman remains *murereet*, i.e. technically a bride, until her first childbirth from which time she will be called *kwoondo* "wife".

6.3.4 *Huntingford's Egypto-Kalenjiin Comparative attempt, 1926.*

The glamour of ancient Egypt both in relation to its contemporaries, and even for all time, was and is so overwhelming that it would not be surprising to find that many would expect various communities to want to wallow in that glamour. Such hypothetical pretentious communities would, given the wildest scenario of possibilities, conceivably do so, among other ways, by inventing a history that forces their origin back to that great civilisation. It is of course not possible for a whole community to tell a lie, let alone tell it so consistently in time and space. But because there exists, if remote, a human tendency to want to associate themselves with a greater past, listeners justifiably treat such claims with an understandable amount of scepticism, especially when the claim comes from the community involved or from one of their own members. A claim to the same effect by an outsider who is purely in pursuit of knowledge that the history of a certain community was genetically linked to that of ancient Egypt, would not be received with a similar amount of scepticism for he or she would be presumed to harbour neither group nor personal interest in historical confirmation to that effect.

Cognisant of this twin human psychological condition—the tendency to want to associate oneself with a greater, more glorious past, and the resultant tendency to view with suspicion anyone who claims such history—therefore, the author found the works of pioneering European researchers that linked the Kalenjiin to ancient Egypt important to cite here as objective support from disinterested if not, indeed, hostile parties. It is also important to note that the debate surrounding the origin of the Kalenjiin at the turn of the century was confined to the elite circle of sophisticated European scholars and that the Kalenjiin themselves were not only non-party to the debate but they were also unaware of it! They certainly were unaware, at the material time, of the fact that they were subject of very high level intellectual controversy of the international scope. The views of one or two of the protagonists in this debate were covered in the previous subsection in relation to the work of the German anthropologist, Merker. We saw in that subsection that Merker had asserted, around 1904, without as much as batting an eyelid, that the (Kalenjiin, as represented by its sub-group which he studied) Tatoog of Tanzania were, in the main, true representatives of the ancient Egyptian people whom he called Semites (Merker 1904 Ch. 1) thus kicking the debate.¹

¹ Perhaps we should take note here: After accusing the European Africanist of being more preoccupied with establishing a sort of abstract historical truth, and suggesting that the Africans should be indifferent to such works, the great African master, Cheikh Anta Diop, says: "In this connection, let us say in passing that only works done by Germans seem capable of attracting the attention of future Africans because of their seriousness and the great speculative interest they provoke" (1996:44).

Among the European scholars that later entered the fray was Huntingford. Huntingford was probably the first western writer to put down on published paper, for the purpose of comparison, words that were common between the ancient Egyptian and the Kalenjiin languages, which he did in 1926.

Huntingford opens one of his paragraphs in an article appearing in a 1926 issue of the journal *Ancient Egypt*,¹ thus: "Now, it is sometimes said that the Nandi (read Kalenjiin) and Masai are descended from ancient Egyptians." He goes on to say that the view was incorrect, that instead the Kalenjiin and the Maasai shared common ancestors with the ancient Egyptians through an intermediary race, the Galla (correctly called Oromo).² "I append, with much hesitation," he writes, "a short list of Egyptian and Nandi words which, it is just possible, may be akin. The resemblance in some cases is very striking, and it seems worth while to put the list on record." Huntingford's list is faithfully reproduced as Table 4 below.

It is evident from the foregoing that Huntingford seemed to think it prudent to distance away the Kalenjiin from their apparent heritage at the time even as linguistic evidence discovered by non other than himself, which contradicted his theory, stared him in the face. The urgency might have been made all the more pressing following the emphatic work of the said German scholar, Merker.

¹ October 1926, Part 1 page 10.

² In 1953, 27 years later, however, the same Mr Huntingford, having probably had the chance to do some homework, did excuse the Kalenjiin from Cushitic Oromo part-ancestry. He proposed that by the time the south-bound Kalenjiin and kin passed through the present Oromo (Galla) country in Central western Ethiopia, the Oromo had not yet reached that part of the world (Huntingford 1953a:10). Here he concedes that the Kalenjiin indeed came from further north of Ethiopian Oromo country, thus leaving Egypt the only logical conclusion—especially when his later concession is read together with his 1926 Egypto-Kalenjiin word list.

However, Huntingford, once he had so excused the Kalenjiin from Oromo part-ancestry, did not address himself to the largely unexplained phenomenon whereby Kalenjiin and the Cushitic languages—such as Oromo and Somali—have a great number of words in common. Neither did he completely retract the then entrenched western view, a view he had shared earlier, going by his writings, that the Kalenjiin and kin were a hybrid product of the Cushites and the Nilotic people.

Fixed in the mind of the anthropologist, before, during and long after Huntingford's time, was the assumption that the Kalenjiin and kin could not have been primordial stock in their own right. That they had to be the hybrid of others because, to them, these people (the Kalenjiin and kin) did not quite resemble any one of the existing "primary races" of East Africa in particular. They, instead, appeared to them to be a cross between the groups that they had classified as Bantus, Hamites, Cushites, Nilotes, and Negroes.

Table 4: Huntingford's List of Kalenjin-Ancient Egyptian Cognate words, 1926:

Egyptian	Meaning	Nandi	Meaning
	eat	<i>am</i>	eat
	ox	<i>ei (Suk egh)</i>	bullock
	hand	<i>e</i>	hand
	great (of age)	<i>oo</i>	great
	march	U	move
	cut	KES	cut
	arrive (that which is arrived at)	<i>in paipai</i>	rejoice/joy
	sky	<i>pet</i>	day/daylight
	abide	<i>meny</i>	live in a house
	be ill	<i>mian</i>	be ill
	mistake	<i>ng'em</i>	destroy
	flee	<i>rua</i>	rush
	place	<i>ka</i>	house



timber

ket

tree



retreat

KET

go back



write

sir

daub/write



nose

ser

nose



love

murer

(girl) lover/bride

Signed: G.W.B. HUNTINGFORD (1926)

6.4 Ancient Egyptian-Kalenjiin Syntactic Analysis

The foregoing constituted such a detailed effort to try and supply proof, by use of the lexical (vocabulary) comparative method, that the ancient Egyptian language (including its Coptic stage) on the one hand, and the Kalenjiin language on the other, were one and the same language in the distant past. That whole effort aimed to prove that much of the hard-to-borrow, or to lend, basic or inherited vocabulary items and many other cultural words, were shared by the languages or, for that matter, language stages being compared. Now it is time we set out to investigate the extent of cognacy with respect to the grammars, or syntactic structures of those respective languages, or language stages.

First, we need to prove that the way in which the words, which are shared as demonstrated, are arranged in order to build up sentences, i.e. word order, is the same for both languages. For if the basic vocabulary stock is similar and again the way the words are arranged in order to make a meaningful grammatically correct sentence is similar, then we must be talking about: (1) the same language or (2) the different phases of the same language.

6.4.1 *Word Order*

The study of word order is central to syntactic (or grammatical) analysis. The genetic relationship—or the absence of such relationship—between one language and another, may be further proved by comparing the natural word order, or sentence structure, as employed respectively by the two languages whose historical, or present relationship is being investigated. Although word order analysis may be central to syntactic analysis, it is not enough on its own and our work must take cognisance of and take the following “caution” into consideration: “Even though two languages form words or organise sentence elements in the same way, they are not necessarily related to each other...” (Cf. MEE 98/9). What this cautionary statement implies is that a listing of languages according to a typological characteristic such as word order may cluster languages together that are by all other measures unrelated and nothing by way of affinity may be read into such relationship.

Hamitic languages, such as ancient Egyptian, Coptic, Kalenjiin, Maa(sai) and Teso, unlike English, Kiswahili, and perhaps any other non-Hamitic language from the Eastern Africa region that one could think of; begin the *verbal* sentence with a *verb* (Cf. Tucker & Bryan, 1966 various).

But, as already said, during the following discussion, we shall keep the above caution regarding typology in mind and continue to provide, in addition, examples of other concordant relationships. These should by their very nature and by their predictability in behaviour, only point to historical membership of one family according to the experts' own definitions that were outlined at the beginning of the subsection. After that it will have been proven as a matter of inevitability that the shared word order characteristic was no typological coincidence but that it only provided further proof of genetic relationship.

The word order characteristics of languages is so important for the purpose of categorising languages into families and as litmus indicators to linguists that further investigation of other shared phenomena should be instituted. The leading lights in the linguistics discipline have recognised as much and

“In the Language Universals Project at Stanford University, for example, the American linguist Joseph Greenberg and his colleagues have shown that languages that share a basic word order (such as subject-verb-object or object-verb-subject or object-subject-verb) also share other features of structure” (MEE 98/10).

And if languages share other features of structure, on top of word order affinity, then they are necessarily members of one family.

Ancient Egyptian (Gardiner 1927:14) and Coptic basic word order for a verbal sentence, is Verb-Subject-Object, VSO, although Coptic fails the test occasionally probably owing to the massive contamination by Greek. The important VSO characteristic is also typical of the Kalenjin language (Tucker & Bryan 1966:19 & 541). The occasional variation of this basic Hamitic structure is Verb-Object-Subject (VOS)—but the verb has to come first in either case.

In contrast, the word order for the Kiswahili language (representing the Kintu family) as well as for the English language, for a similar verbal sentence, is as follows: Subject-Verb-Object (SVO). But English and Kiswahili, on further investigation, exhibit little else in common by way of features of structure. They do not, therefore, belong to one family. Many languages share the SVO word order characteristic, this being only a typological classification, but they do not necessarily all belong to the same family.

One other important distinguishing phenomenon is the relative confinement to a given geographical area of the VSO-characterised languages. This should weaken the suspicion of a fortuitous coincidence such as is demonstrated by the word order characteristic shared between Kiswahili and English, two languages that are geographically far apart.

In contrast, geography supports the observation that old Semitic was a VSO language. It has been documented that ancient Semitic languages also shared this VSO syntactic order but that

two of the important living branches of Semitic: Hebrew and Arabic, have since acquired the habit of SVO syntactic order. It is also on record that the living African branches of Semitic, namely those of Ethiopia (Tigre, Tigrinya, Amharic, Harari and Gurage) have since acquired the SOV syntactic format probably under the influence of the Cushitic adstratum (Loprieno 1995: 3). But the Chadic family of about 140 languages and dialects spoken by more than thirty million speakers in sub-Saharan Africa—in the general proximity of Lake Chad—is one of the language families listed under the (controversial) Afroasiatic group whose family's unmarked word order is, like in modern Semitic, SVO (Loprieno 1995:5).

All these former VSO languages have something in common with the typically VSO Hamitic language family: geographical and historical contiguity.

Soon to follow is a tabular illustration of the unique VSO word order characteristic that is native to ancient Egyptian and the Kalenjiin language alike. The examples used are taken from Allan Gardiner # 27, 29, and 66 (1927).

Meanwhile, as we have pointed out, Coptic in spite of the massive Greek influence that it was exposed to, still exhibits the unique verb-first word order characteristic although less faithfully. Some examples may shed a bit of light on the unique Hamitic word order phenomenon from the Coptic side. (1) A VOS example: `ⲉⲗϥⲓ ⲛⲟⲩϥⲟⲗⲟⲉⲗ ⲛⲭⲉ Ⲙⲧⲁ *eiaschi inusoloel inje Eva* “and Eve received her adornment” literally translates as follows: “(and) **received adornment herself Eva**”.¹ Kalenjiin translation of this when retranslated literally into English, reveals a semblance with Coptic as follows: (*ago*)*sich salanik inee Eva* “(and) **received adornment herself Eva**.” Compare the respective literal translations of the Coptic and Kalenjiin phrases in bold.² (2) A VSO example: ⲛⲉⲭⲉ ⲛⲭⲟⲉⲓϥ ⲛⲁⲧⲣ *peje Pjois nav* “The Lord said to them” (Plumley, 1948:78) reads “said the Lord (to) them”. Kalenjiin: *Kileenji Ptaiyaat icheek...* “said the Lord (to) them”.

¹ *The Midnight Praise for Sunday Eve* as transcribed and translated by Fr Tadros El-Bakhouri (1988).

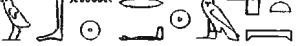

² Kalenjiin *salanik* are praises heaped on a hero and the word literally means verbal “decoration”, verbal “adornment”, “praise names”, or a song devoted to the praise of an individual. An individual's *salanik* often have nothing to do with his or her own heroic achievements but everything to do with the achievements of the deceased person after whom he or she is named, i.e. the living individual's earlier earthly life. On rare occasions even an unrelated but outstanding living hero can lend his hallowed nickname and praises to be given to a baby (see *Maat* and Reincarnation discussion ahead). Apart from the word order, the main Coptic words used here also exist in Kalenjiin: Coptic *ea-schi* “(she) received” corresponds to Kalenjiin *-sich*; Coptic *inu-soloel* “adornment” corresponds to Kalenjiin *salan-* (also *koole*, “decoration” of the military kind). Compare the underlined Coptic roots with the given Kalenjiin roots.

Table 5: Word Order

Hieroglyphics, transliteration and translation by Gardiner, 1927	Category	English literal translation, normal Kalenjiin and re-translation by author ¹
1. <i>in n-k st ssh</i> the scribe brings it to thee	Eng. Literal trans. of Egypt.	brings to you it scribe
	Correct Kalenjiin	<i>ib-uun siriin(det)</i> ²
	Lit. trans. of Kalenjiin	brings to you scribe
2. <i>heb-n n-n nb-n nfr shet hr-s</i> our good lord has sent to us a despatch about it	Eng. Lit. trans.	has sent to us lord ours who is blessed a despatch about it
	Correct Kal.	<i>kaako-yook-weech ptaiyaande-nyoon ne-peruroot ng'olyoot agopo kyet</i>
	Lit. Kal. Trans.	has sent to us lord ours who is blessed a word about it (the thing)
3.	Eng. Lit. trans.	knows scribe counsel on day this.
	Correct Kal.	<i>ingen siriindet katigoonet(een) ra-uni.</i> ¹

¹ The words chosen for the Kalenjiin sentences here are those that fit in grammatically according to modern usage. Otherwise most of the words used in the ancient Egyptian sentences here exist in Kalenjiin with similar although not necessarily appropriate meanings, e.g.: *ra*, Egyptian for "sun" or "day" is retained in Kalenjiin for "day" but is no longer applicable for "sun"; Egyptian *pt*, "sky", "heaven" is retained in Kalenjiin for "day" although another Kalenjiin name for the Deity is Che-*peet* which suggests that "the heavens" once went by the word *peet* as in Egyptian; Egyptian *nb* (*nebo*) "lord" corresponds to Kalenjiin *nebo* (owner or *nebou* "the ruler") but *kiptaayaat* here is more appropriate and is conveniently traceable to ancient Egyptian. *nfr* which is translated by Gardiner as "good" is translated here by the author as "the blessed" and linked to Kalenjiin *neperuroot*, "the blessed" because *nfrt* (according to Faulkner's dictionary) means "happiness, good fortunes" and *nfrt* translated by Faulkner as "what is good" corresponds to Kalenjiin *neperuroot* "what is blessed". contains the consonants *nfr-t*, which makes the Kalenjiin *neperuroot* the more representative full transcription of it.

² Kalenjiin assumes that the person being addressed is aware of the item being brought and reference to it by way of a pronoun is therefore omitted. Kalenjiin does not have an exact equivalent of the English pronoun "it". However, *kyet* or *kiyooton* "the thing", can be used in the place of the pronoun "it".

<i>rkh ssh skhr m hrw pn.</i> the scribe knows a counsel on this day.	Lit. Kal. Trans	knows the scribe a counsel on day this.
4.  <i>wbn ra m pt.</i> the sun rises in the sky.	Eng. Lit. trans.	rises sun in sky.
	Correct Kal	<i>togostoo asiista eem parak</i> (written <i>een parak</i>) ²
	Lit. Kal. Trans	rises sun in sky
5.  <i>nn n-k st</i> it does not belong to thee	Eng. Lit. trans.	not yours it ³
	Correct Kal	<i>ma neng'uung' (kyet)</i>
	Lit. Kal. Trans	not yours (the thing)

6.4.2 Gender Prefixes

Like ancient Egyptian and Coptic, Kalenjiin is a sex-determining language. That is to say it classifies names of objects into masculine, feminine, and neuter genders.⁴ Examples: “toothbrush” in Kalenjiin is a masculine class noun and is rendered *kipsiitait* or, more often, *psiitait*; the “rhino” (whether a specific one was male or female) falls into the masculine class, *kipsiricheet* or *psiricheet*.

To the Kalenjiin, “a leather string”, *tapsiin-yet* is a feminine class object. So are names of some of the especially beautiful and graceful creations of nature such as *taapteet*, “a flower”; *cheplangeet*, “a leopard”;⁵ *talaalda*, “a cheetah” and *taapurpuuryet*, “a butterfly”. Nevertheless, among several

¹ The Kalenjiin word *Ka-tigoon-et* used here is from *tigoon*, “counsel” (v), detectable in Coptic $\tau\omicron\tau\omicron\kappa \Theta\eta\Delta\iota$ (*tuok enai*—Crum 1939:444) which is in turn derived from $\tau\omicron\tau\Delta\Theta\iota\tau$ (*tuait*—Crum 1939:444) “teach” and $\eta\omicron\Theta$ (*noei*—Crum 1939:444), “know” (Kalenjiin *nai*). The Greek appear to have borrowed from here too—or was the reverse the case? The Greek $\delta\epsilon\iota\kappa\nu\nu\nu\alpha\iota$ (*deiknunai*) meaning, “show”, “teach”, “demonstrate”, seems to be as phonetically akin as it is in meaning to the above Coptic $\tau\omicron\tau\omicron\kappa \Theta\eta\Delta\iota$ (*tuok enai*) and can only be related through historical borrowing from or lending to the Pharaonic equivalent.

² The ancient Egyptian *m* for “in”, as used in the sentence, corresponds to Kalenjiin *een* when the word that follows it begins with letter /p/ or /b/. So *een peet*, “in the day” becomes *eem peet*. *Een parak* becomes *eem parak*, “in the sky”. The choice of /m/ for “in” in the Egyptian sentence was due to such phonetic assimilation by the following /p/ of *pt* (Lambdin 1983:xvi) just as it still does in Kalenjiin. Otherwise one of the words for “in” in Egyptian was similar to the Kalenjiin *een*: mn (*en* (Budge 1895), Coptic *hen* hen (*hen*) or hen (*khen*). The assimilation of /n/ into /m/ when it comes before /p/ is, therefore another shared characteristic between Kalenjiin and ancient Egyptian. However the Mt. Elgon Kalenjiin have kept the ancient Egyptian *eem* and use it irrespective of the phonetic environment following it.




³ Gardiner’s literal translation runs: “not to thee [it]” (1927: 54).

⁴ Neuter, for our purpose, will cover those words whose gender we are uncertain about.

⁵ To the Merkwheeta and probably others to the north of Kalenjiin country, “leopard”, *meril* (*meliil*), appears to fall under the neuter gender. *Meliil*, or *meliilo*, appears to be the original all-Kalenjiin word for “leopard”, *cheplangeet* (from *cheep-laany-keet*, lit. “she, the tree climber”) being a descriptive euphemism for it.

Παρθένος (*parthenos*), but which must carry its gender marker: † Παρθένος (*ti-Parthenos*).¹

An interesting point to note here is that where Coptic, in particular, consigns a word to feminine gender, for example, Kalenjiin does the same for the corresponding word even if the word does not bear any visual semblance to the Coptic one. †ፕፕሻሻ (*tipsishi*), “soul”, for example, may not resemble very closely its Kalenjiin equivalents, *che-sawiil* or *tamirmiir-yet*, but all are classified feminine. †ፕሮጫፊ (*tichrombi*), “dove” does not resemble Kalenjiin *cheep-tuug-eet*,² the corresponding noun, yet both are feminine gender nouns. More examples could be cited.

Ancient Egyptian is not as clear as Coptic and Kalenjiin as regards the gender marking characteristic and some established positions among Egyptologists (such as that the feminine marker comes as a suffixal /t/) are still debatable as we shall see shortly under the topic “Noun Formation”. However, a few examples may come from the Kalenjiin-sounding Pharaohs’ names such as  Psamtek,  Psamut, and  Ptolmis (B.Dict. 940-942). The last is better known as Ptolemy, a probable Egyptian, or Egyptianised, name for the succession of Greek generals that ruled Egypt after Alexander “The Great”.

Kalenjiin appears to have gradually dropped the habit of affixing a gender particle to every adjective and verb. This was a typical Hamitic habit, which is evident in ancient Egyptian, Coptic as well as in the living Maa(sai) language. When Hollis carried out his research between 1904 and 1908, he found out that the older section of the Nandi still insisted on prefixing discriminative gender particles to certain words. He wrote:

“The particles *akut* and *angut*, which are prefixed to a few substantives and to one or two classes of pronouns to form the plural, appear to have in former times also marked the gender, *akut* being used for the masculine and *angut* for the feminine; but the distinction has now been nearly lost sight of, and *akut* or *angut* are used somewhat indiscriminately by the present generation. Old people however, still generally use ‘*akut-kwanda*’ for *the fathers*, ‘*angut kamel*’ for *the mothers*; ‘*akut ng’o*’ (m.) and ‘*angut ng’o*’ (f.) for ‘*Who?*’” (Hollis 1909:158).

¹ This is perhaps the term that the Kalenjiin use for all virgins and youth in general, *parnoot*. But the word appears to have undergone metathesis, i.e., /n/ has somehow exchanged places with /t/. The Coptic examples used here are mainly from Mattar (Chapter 3).

² Also *sorooryet*, neuter.

6.4.3 Noun Formation

The one physical attribute that makes ancient Egyptian nouns resemble Kalenjiin nouns so strikingly is the common use of letter /t/ suffix for certain classes of nouns. It is certain that as far as the Kalenjiin language is concerned, the nouns that have a /t/ suffix belong to the class called by the pioneering anthropologists, such as Hollis and Huntingford, as well as the linguists Bryan and Tucker, *secondary* noun forms. They are secondary as opposed to nouns in the *primary* form that do not have a /t/ suffix of the grammatical sense.¹

The grammatical /t/ ending attached to the secondary nouns is the rough equivalent of the English indefinite and definite articles “a”, “an” and “the”. Kalenjiin distinguishes between “man” *chii* and “a man” *chiito*. The former is in the primary noun form and has no grammatical /t/ suffix while the latter is in the secondary noun form and has a grammatical /t/ suffix. The distinction between primary and secondary noun forms will become clearer when some more examples are listed shortly.

Dr Taaita araap-Toweett in his *Kalenjin Nouns and their Classifications* masters’ thesis (1975) introduced the terms *inclusive singular nouns* (i.s.n.) to refer to all Kalenjiin singular nouns that are in their primary form and do not, therefore, have the grammatical /t/ suffix. Toweett invented the term *exclusive singular nouns* (e.s.n.) for nouns in singular form that generally have the grammatical /t/ suffix. Whether we use the pioneers’ terminology or Toweett’s, the difference is not substantial enough to alter the course of our discussion here.


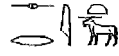
The Kalenjiin singular secondary nouns are formed by affixing the /t/ grammatical suffix as follows:

- 1) to a noun in its primary form e.g. *ko* “house” (primary) which then becomes *koot* “a house” or “the house” (secondary)
- 2) to an adjective in its root form e.g. *leel* “white” (adj.) which then becomes *leelinto* (*leelindo*) “whiteness” (noun)
- 3) to a verb in its root form e.g. *pir* “beat up” (verb) which then becomes *pireet* “a beating” or “the beating” (noun).

¹ “Secondary” and “primary” noun classification names are terms used by G.W.B. Huntingford in a 1940’s introduction to a later reprint of Hollis’ book, *The Nandi, Their Language and Folklore*, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1909, and by Tucker and Bryan, 1966. *Linguistic Analyses, The Non-Bantu Languages of north-eastern Africa*. Oxford University Press.




The author's finding which, like all the other discoveries of relationships between the Kalenjiin language and the ancient Egyptian language (including Coptic), is original, establishes that ancient Egyptian adjectival and verbal conjugation to form the noun also parallels the Kalenjiin system under the above number 2 and 3 respectively. Number 1 is discussed below. What is most significant about this behaviour is that it is predictable and, as we saw above, predictability is one of the linguists' important standards of proof of genetic affinity. The many examples given below confirm that predictability for both languages.

As for affixing a /t/ ending to the primary form of nouns in order to generate the secondary form with respect to ancient Egyptian, we immediately stumble upon a difficulty. Although it is quite a challenge to be able to state that the system of primary noun conjugation did not conform to the one employed by the Kalenjiin language, it is not easy to make a categorical statement to the effect that the system was the same as that followed by Kalenjiin. But we will soon surmount that hurdle in a systematic manner. The explanation for this may be found within the ancient Egyptian system of writing. Most words were written in their primary form and, given the context, the reader would make out while reading where he or she should inflect to reflect the right tense or noun class. Gardiner (1927: #267-272) has noted this difficulty with respect to verbs.

Occasionally, the ancient scribe would show distinction between the primary and the secondary noun e.g.  *sr* or *zr* (but perhaps pronounced *chir*) stood for "sheep" in general, the way we may say "cow", while "a (particular) sheep" would be indicated with a [∘] /t/ suffix in the Kalenjiin manner as follows:  *sr(i)t*. (F.Dict. 235).¹ This corresponds to Kalenjiin primary and secondary forms *kechiir* "sheep" and *kechiiryet* "a sheep". But this brings us to another controversial area.


Most Egyptologists originally thought, and many still think, that ancient Egyptian was genetically related to the Semitic languages (e.g. Gardiner 1927 #26, Loprieno 1995:5). One prominent characteristic of a Semitic language such as Hebrew, or Arabic, is the use of the /t/ suffix to indicate a feminine class noun. The Egyptologists, therefore, went ahead and classified all ancient Egyptian nouns that ended with a /t/ feminine gender class nouns in conformity with the standard Semitic practice. These were, theoretically speaking, an awful lot of nouns indeed considering that ancient Egyptian behaved like Kalenjiin where almost all verbs, adjectives and

singular nouns, except proper nouns, are bound to end up with a grammatical /t/ suffix in their secondary nominal form. Most of the examples used in this section illustrate this fact as a by-the-way and it does not take a renowned expert to prompt the Egyptologists to take another look at this incredible oversight. Why should a word be of the masculine gender in the primary noun form, adjectival, or verbal form, and then transmigrate to the feminine gender class in its secondary, or definite nominal form?

The ancient Egyptian scribe may take some part of the blame himself for this. Two clear examples will illustrate this new orthographical view that this author is introducing. For the convenience and beauty of presentation, he would insert a /t/ at the end when he meant that it should be pronounced first. 1) The word  *sn*, “brother”, had its natural opposite, “sister”, which he wrote thus:  and which the Egyptologist promptly transcribes *snt*, the /t/ coming at the end because that is where the ancient scribe had put his [◊] /t/. However, fortunately, Coptic comes to our aid here. In Coptic, “brother” is *soon* or **Ϣⲁⲛ** (*saan*) as in ancient Egyptian and “sister” still goes by the same old word but the letter /t/ comes first and is pronounced first: **ⲧⲁϢⲟⲛⲉ** (*tasoon*[e]). 2) A similar confusion, owing to the ancient scribe’s concern for aesthetics, has persisted in respect of the word for “father”. “Father”, or “my father”, “the elder”, “the priest”, or “the ancestor” in ancient Egyptian, in Coptic and in Kalenjiin is one and the same word **ⲡⲁⲓⲱⲧ** *paiyoot*. But the ancient scribes executed this one as follows: , which the Egyptologists have promptly transcribed *atf*, *itf* or *it* (Gardiner, 1927:555).² But Coptic and Kalenjiin indicate that the [◊] /f/ should be pronounced before the other letters—although it is actually written last—and that its value was closer to /p/ and certainly not /f/.³





In our discussion on the one important Hamitic grammatical or inflexional morpheme, the /t/ suffix, we are going to have to recall an observation as well as a standard set by linguists that we read in Chapter 3, namely that the class which is least of all exposed to borrowing is composed by grammatical morphemes. The morphs, which serve as their expression, are mostly homogenous



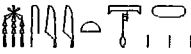
¹ Faulkner indicates that the latter noun with a /t/ suffix represents a ewe (female of sheep) although the first form represents any sheep. This typifies a long-running misconception among Egyptologists as the following discussion endeavours to demonstrate.



² Gardiner (1927:55) translates  as “father”, “name of a class of elder priests”. We will see in Chapter 13 that the Kalenjiin use the same term for the priest of Asiis.



³ Coptic words from Crum’s *Coptic Dictionary*, and various church liturgical stuff. *Saan* survives in Kalenjiin as a popular kinship term for “brother-in-law” or “son-in-law”.





as to their origin. This has been observed to hold true even in extreme cases of ‘language mixture’ (Cf. Katičić, 1970:129).


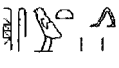
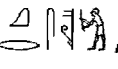
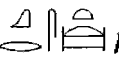



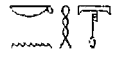

As mentioned above, Kalenjiin generates in a standard and predictable way, by means of an inflexional morpheme, the secondary types of nouns from primary noun forms, adjectives and verbs (the gerund equivalents). The suffixation with the morphemic article /t/ is also a prominent feature of the ancient Egyptian language—certainly it is as concerns the formation of nouns by means of inflecting adjectives and verbs. The rule of thumb was, and is still one and the same: somehow append a ^o /t/ suffix to the nominal, verbal or adjectival form, and you have your secondary form of noun, or gerund! A few examples will follow:  *au* “large” (adjective), becomes  *au-t* “largeness” (noun) (B.Dict. 2b). This corresponds to Kalenjiin *oo* or *woo*, “large”, and *oo-into/oo-indo*, “largeness”.  *bin* (adjective) “bad”, “evil” becomes  *bint*, “evil” (noun) (F.Dict.:81). This is either Kalenjiin *bunyoön* (adjective), “enemy” which becomes *bunyoot* “an/the enemy”, or *boon* (adjective) “witching”, which becomes *bondit*, “an/the evil”, or “the witchcraft”.


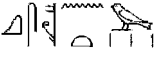
 *am* (verb) “eat”, becomes  *am-t* (noun) “food” (Gardiner 1927:612 B.Dict.: 120b). This is Kalenjiin *am* (verb) “eat”, which becomes *amiit* “food” or *amdit* “the food”. Also consider  *msyt*, “evening meal” (Gardiner 1927:612) and Kalenjiin *amisyeet*, meaning any meal. These are from the Egyptian/Kalenjiin verb-root *am* “eat”.

 *mn* “be ill”, becomes  *men-t*, “sickness”, “disease” “wound” (Gardiner ibid. 615, B.Dict.: 296). This is Kalenjiin *mian* “be ill”, which becomes *mian-eet*, the state of being sick and *mion-to/mion-do*, “sickness”, “disease”, “illness”.

 *metu*, “to speak”, “to talk” becomes  *met-t*, “speech”, “decree”, “word” (B.Dict.: 335a). This is Kalenjiin *mwa*, “speak”, which becomes *mwaet*, “speech”, or *mwaitaet* “announcement”. Also consider Kalenjiin *amda* (*amta*), “preach”, “inform”, which becomes *amdaaet* (*amtaet*), “sermons”, “lessons”, and “information”.

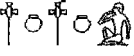



The following are further examples from Raymond Faulkner’s *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian* (1962). They clearly demonstrate predictable noun formation by adding a ^o /t/ suffix to verbs and adjectives in the Kalenjiin manner.  *s-r* “be wise” becomes  *s-rt* “wisdom, understanding”;  *k-i* “think about” becomes  *k-t*

t “thoughts, a plan, a device”;  *shms* “follow, accompany” becomes  *shmswt* “following, suite”;  *krs* “bury” becomes  *krst* “burial”;  *mri* “love” (verb) becomes  *mrwt* “love” (noun) or  *mrwty* “the well beloved” (noun).  *knh* “dark” (adjective)  *knmt* “darkness” (noun).

Revs. Burnette and Gerald Fish’s recent research in Kalenjiinland, which culminated in their book *The Kalenjiin Heritage, Traditional Religious and Social Practices* (1995), probably saved the Kalenjiin words *kisanei* and *kisoneito* from outright extinction. The near-loss of the word to the Kalenjiin language serves as a good demonstration of how words can be lost when the relative cultural requirement ceases to be observed for one reason or another. The stem of the word *saan* “experience extreme pain”, “bitterly regret”, “come to grief”, is still in use. But the special derivatives in the primary noun form (*kisanei*) and secondary noun form (*kisoneito*) were about to be forgotten because the *kisanei* cleansing rituals that followed major catastrophes in the past, such as the anthrax epidemic, are no longer observed. A similar word existed in ancient Egyptian and behaved in the manner of its Kalenjiin cognate as follows:  *ksn* “painful”, “painfully”, “irksome”, “wretched” etc. With the addition of the grammatical ^o /u/ suffix it became, in the noun form,  *ksnt* “trouble”, “misfortune” (F. Dict. 281), which is Kalenjiin *kisoneito*.¹

¹ The practice of Kalenjiin *kisoneito* went as follows: after a major catastrophe such as that occasioned by anthrax, the nearest road junction to the epicentre of the problem would be marked and passers-by would be obliged to throw a leaf at a designated spot each time they came upon the junction. After some time there would result a mountain of leaves. Today’s practice of laying a wreath of flowers such as is going on presently at the site of the bomb blast that killed and maimed many people near the US embassy in Nairobi, is a successor to *kisoneito* type of ritual although it is now an import from the west. The practice of laying wreaths at funerals, or at the tombs of departed statesmen, or at the tomb of “the Unknown Soldier”, are current practices reminiscent of *kisoneito*. Some of the old epicentres of catastrophes on Kalenjiinland still bear names that point to that ancient practice e.g.: *Kapsoguut*, “the place of leaves”, as informed by the author’s mother by way of confirmation of the Fish’s findings. The author’s enquiry as to why Kisanana trading centre in Koibatek District of Tugenland came to be named so came to nought. The word for the Kipsigiis equivalent of *kisoneito* here is *kimng’ooche* (o.i. the Hon. Morogo, the local political leader). But since Kisanana is situated at a meeting point of major roads, one suspects that it may have been a “place of leaves” some time in lost history, following a now-forgotten tragedy—but this is only an educated guess!

6.4.4 Reduplication

“Verbs signifying continuous or repeated human actions, habitual occupations, sounds, colours, and violent movements are apt to be created from bilateral or trilateral stems by the repetition of two of the radical consonants. Thus are formed quadrilateral verbs like  *ndnd* ‘take counsel’ from  *nd* ‘ask’...  *ptpt* ‘crush’ (simplex unknown)...  *swtwt* ‘walk’, ‘promenade’ (simplex unknown)...” (Gardiner 1927:210).

The above statement, from Gardiner, needs to be expounded on and enriched a little with the Kalenjiin parallels because:

- (1) Kalenjiin conforms to this habit
- (2) Kalenjiin vocabulary is a ready source of the probable simplex forms where Gardiner could only say, “simplex unknown”.


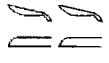
Reduplication is a feature that is common in many languages, even to some that are not genetically related to the Pharaonic tongues. Gardiner has cited Hebrew as one of such languages (1927:211). To this we could add some Kintu languages, among them, and very significantly, Kiswahili.


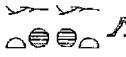
Reduplication involves the repetition of a verb or a part of it in order to portray repetition of an action. As far as Kiswahili and Kalenjiin are concerned, such repetition would tend to imply that the victim, or the beneficiary of the action, suffered or benefited less from the action upon it than would be understood if the simplex form of the verb had not been reduplicated.

Examples: the above cited ancient Egyptian words, *nd*, “ask” and *ndnd*, “take counsel”; *ptpt*, “crush” and *swtwt*, “walk (about)”, “promenade”, are paralleled as follows in Kalenjiin: Kalenjiin *neet* means “teach” and is comparable to ancient Egyptian *nd* above; *neet-a-neet*, to be compared with *ndnd*, bears the notion “teach several things” or “teach severally” or “impart knowledge to several different people (or groups—but none too seriously).”

Pet, “split”, is the suggested Kalenjiin simplex form for the above-listed reduplicated form *ptpt*, “crush”. In the simplex form, the Kalenjiin *pet* implies “splitting” into chunks that are relatively larger and fewer. The Kalenjiin reduplicated form *pet-aa-pet* or *petpet* implies that the victim is to be “split or crushed into several tiny little bits”.

Swtwt, “walk”, “promenade” as listed for Egyptian above, parallels Kalenjiin *soitaat*, meaning, “walk around sight-seeing”, “explore the area” and is from the simplex form *soi-ta* “look around”.

Ancient Egyptian  *tem*, “cut” in the simplex form, yields the reduplicated form  *temtem* (B.Dict.:878a). These are paralleled by the Kalenjiin words *tem*, “cut” (esp. Nandi) and *tem-aa-tem*, implying “cut severally or extensively (but none too deep).”



Ancient Egyptian simplex  *khet* “to be behind someone or something, to follow, to retreat” etc., becomes in the reduplicated form:  *khetkhet*, “march after, follow” etc. (B.Dict. 567-568). This is paralleled by Kalenjiin *ket*, “drive” cattle etc. which one does by following the animals from behind, and *ket-yi*, “repeat”, “retrace”. The Kalenjiin reduplicated form *ketaaket*, among other meanings, implies the notion “driving animals (or vehicle) severally with little by way of order or purpose.”



Thus in the Kalenjiin context at least, reduplication, while it signifies repetition of an action, has the effect of reducing the import or impact of the action.



6.4.5 The Causative

The grammatical aspect of causative is where one example of grammatical discordance between ancient Egyptian and Kalenjiin lies. But the discordance that is going to be reported here happens to be so consistent and predictable from case to case that it actually amounts to concordance. Causative is a grammatical analysis terminology that defines word forms that deal with causing someone or something to do something or behave in a certain way e.g. “make to cry”, “make to sit”, “make to move” etc.



Ancient Egyptian *prefixes* the consonant /s/ to a verb-stem and thereby gives it a causative meaning (Gardiner 1927:211). Kalenjiin instead of prefixing the /s/ to the verb-stem in a similar manner, *affixes* the very same /s/ to the *end* of the verb-stem. This interesting divergence in behaviour may either imply that this part of the word, in a hieroglyphically written form, should be read last unlike the Egyptologists are wont to do, or that the Kalenjiin speakers, later, for some reason; reversed the position of causative particle /s/. Examples:

 *s-mn* “make to remain”, “establish”, from  *mn*, “remain” (Gardiner 1927:211). This is Kalenjiin *-meny-sii* (not a common causative form but it is grammatically correct), “make to live in a place”, from *meny*, “live in”, “be established in a place”.

 *s-hetep*, “make to be at peace, to pacify, to unite with etc. from  *hetep*, “be in peace, happily”, “rest”, etc. (B.Dict.:517b, 614a) corresponds to Kalenjiin *-teep-sii*, “make to sit on top of”, “make to stay”. This is from *tep*, “sit on” or “stay”, “remain” etc.





 *s-aur* “to make pregnant” from  *aur*, “to be pregnant”, “to conceive” (B.Dict.:642).





This is Kalenjiin *-riy-sii*, “make to conceive” of animals, e.g. nowadays by artificial insemination. This is from *ri*, “to conceive” (of cattle, sheep, goats only). Also compare with Kalenjiin *bur-ansii* from *bur*, “to be pregnant” (of a pre-circumcision girl).

 *s-arq*, “to make an end of”, “to finish”, from  *arq*, “to complete”, “to conclude” (B.Dict.:131a, 645b). This is Kalenjiin *-rook-sii*, “bring to an end”, “bring to conclusion”, “complete”, “finish” etc. from *rook*, “be completed, concluded” etc.

6.4.6 Negation

The particle of negation, the equivalent of the English “not”, or “do not”, in ancient Egyptian, Coptic and Kalenjiin alike, is *m-* and it comes at the beginning of a phrase or sentence in all three languages, e.g. Coptic: $\text{ⲙⲟⲙⲟⲛ ⲣⲟⲩⲟⲛ ⲛⲉⲛ ⲡⲏ}$ (*momon roome khen pii*), “there is no man in the house”. This literally reads “not-present man in the house”. The Kalenjiin equivalent, to use the same words, is *momii muren een pi-yuut*,¹ literally: “not-present man in the homestead”.

An example from ancient Egyptian may go as follows:  +    *m-am a* “not (you) eat me” (B.Dict. 266a)², i.e. “do not eat me”. This is Kalenjiin *me-am-aa(n)*. Literally translated, this is, as in ancient Egyptian, “not you eat me.”

The other common particle of negation in ancient Egyptian in the place of  *m-* was  or just  which the Egyptologists have transcribed *nn* or *n* (Gardiner, 1927:80). It is quite possible that the combination  was read *mana*, as suggested by the present article of negation in Mt. Elgon Kalenjiin.

¹ *Roome*, “man” in Coptic is sometimes spelled *roomen* as in ⲣⲟⲩⲟⲛ ⲕⲏⲟⲩⲉ (*roomen Kiime*) which literally means “man black” i.e. “black man” in reference to “an Egyptian” (Crum 110a). This Coptic *roomen* then is here matched with Kalenjiin *muren* and may constitute a good example of a phenomenon that linguists call a metathesis case, where a word, over time and space, has its letters, or sounds, transposed.

The Kalenjiin word for “house” which should ideally be used here is *ko*, which also has the same meaning in ancient Egyptian and Coptic. The choice of *pi-yuut* here was made in order to match the Coptic *pii*. That *pii* now means “compound”, “household” or “homestead (*pi-yuut*)”, instead of just “house”, in Kalenjiin, serves as one example of the phenomenon that linguists call semantic shift, where a word, while it retains context, changes—within reasonable range—in its meaning.

² Budge does not supply the transcription and the author has supplied his own here in the Egyptologists’ conventional manner, otherwise the correct transcription should be closer to the Kalenjiin parallel.

Summary of Chapter 6: Relating the Kalenjiin Language to the Ancient Egyptian Language

With the help of some material from a literary giant of the 20th century, the French anthropologist, Claude Lévi-Strauss, who is regarded as the first person to apply the theoretical approach known as “structuralism” to anthropology (OIE 1997/1), and an extract from a scholar who has done a lot of work in the geographically relevant area of Eastern Africa, Christopher Ehret, we have demonstrated the essence of, and justified, the inclusion of an introductory linguistics discussion in this work. Otherwise the home theme dwells on the aspect of religious cognacy as proof of a people’s oral tradition of origin.

The two scholars have argued, in effect, that the historical development of a language can be used to explain the whole cultural and historical development of a people just as culture and history can explain the structures of a language, language being one of its components, apart from constituting its pivotal foundation stone.

A key part of the exercise employed at least two hundred ancient Egyptian/Coptic-Kalenjiin lexical items of the basic and of the cultural nature, arranged in two respective disciplined scientific ways that have been prescribed by linguists for the determination of genetic relationships or otherwise between languages. One list constitutes a lexicostatistical table that analyses comparatively the basic words of language, this being an established *tertium comparationis* that linguists use for determining genetic relationships between languages; the other being a list of the major cultural and basic words that are arranged in semantic domains, i.e., in groups that are governed by ranges of similar meaning, this being an exercise whose main purpose is to eliminate the element of mere coincidence and fortuitous chance.¹ The cited work of Huntingford supplied additional evidence from a disinterested alien party. That it was compiled with the help of individuals from a then virtually wholly illiterate and largely ignorant (all in the western sense) Kalenjiin community, adds to its credibility as an objective measure of cognacy rather than that it takes away from it.

After demonstrating the cognacy of the selected ancient Egyptian/Coptic-Kalenjiin lexical items, we went ahead to attempt to prove that even the key grammatical rules that were followed in the application of such and most other lexical items by the languages being compared were, basically, identical.

¹ The 200 are part of a collection of over 1000 ancient Egyptian/Coptic-Kalenjiin cognate pairs in the possession of the author.

We demonstrated that the basic word order employed by ancient Egyptian, Coptic, and Kalenjiin, was the same, namely VSO or VOS. The most outstanding shared feature here is the verb-first word order characteristic of the languages that were once called Hamitic and Nilo-Hamitic. This represents such a localised idiosyncrasy that even other Nilotic languages such as Dholuo are excluded.

We also demonstrated that at least the Coptic stage of Egyptian and the Kalenjiin language commonly employ the /t/ feminine gender marker as a prefix to feminine class nouns as much as they both do the /p/ masculine gender marker for nouns that are classified as masculine.

We also demonstrated how Kalenjiin and ancient Egyptian follow an identical rule in generating definite (or secondary) nouns from substantive nominal forms, from verbs and from adjectives, namely that they both add a /t/ suffix to such grammatical forms.

We also reported an identical use of reduplication between the ancient Egyptian and the Kalenjiin languages. So also have we noted the interesting consistent divergence in the use of the causative particle /s/, which the Kalenjiin language places at the final position of the verb while ancient Egyptian places the same (causative particle /s/) at the initial position of the verb. We concluded the exercise by a short demonstration of the uniform usage of the negative particle *mo* by ancient Egyptian, Coptic and Kalenjiin.

All these grammatical areas of convergence are within the many and varied *tertia comparationis* whose minimum fulfilment is demanded by the linguistics discipline if one were to reach a conclusion that two languages had a genetic relationship. Needless to say, what we have ended up with, as cognates, are too many to owe it to fortuitous chance.

SECTION C

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPTS, BELIEFS AND MYTHS REGARDING THE HOLY, THE SUPERHUMAN BEINGS AND FORCES

A General Introduction to Section C



This section ushers in the phase of detailed discussions on the so-called gods of ancient Egypt and the religious systems and organisations that they stood for—or vice versa. The discussions constitute the large part of the comparative work vis-a-vis these and the religious structure maintained by the Kalenjiin under Deity whom they call Asiis. In this exercise, which draws from the discipline of comparative religion, the linguistic, cultural and historical perspectives are given greater prominence over pretences of quality of belief if ever there was such a phenomenon as “quality of belief” or “quality of religion”.

For the purpose of the comparative exercise that follows, we will keep in mind comparative religion in its simplest form as defined by an East African scholar: as the study of the interrelationship of the various religious traditions and of the way in which religious themes and ideas are diffused in these traditions... an attempt to achieve a

generalisation by comparing similar kinds of phenomena gathered from various religious traditions and disciplines, covering various parts of the world (Cf. Kasiera, 1990:7-8).

Our “generalisation” objective here is to be able to state finally that, on the basis of the data presented, with regard to the belief in the Holy and the loath for the unholy and the profane, including their nomenclature, the Kalenjiin people’s religion bears a general resemblance to ancient Egyptian religion. That, if that is the case, then their legend of *Misiri* origin stands proven on this account.

It is to be understood however that although comparative religion, as defined above, does not restrict comparison work to two religious systems but encourages a global view, our approach here is designed to prove the Kalenjiin people’s oral tradition to the effect that their ancestors came from Egypt by discussing their concept of the Holy, their belief, myths, legends, and religious practices vis-a-vis those of ancient Egypt and to point out any areas of similarity that will constitute the proof of origin that we are looking for. Any inclusion of the apparently non-African religious systems in the discussion is either intended to make matters clearer by way of contrast or such systems are believed to have been materially influenced at inception by the related African religions, making them a legitimate target for our purpose. This is not, therefore, the regular idle comparative religion exercise as it is intended to help prove an oral tradition of whose several aspects religion can only be one.

Our choice of “gods”, “goddesses” and their underpinning systems as well as legends, myths and other narratives for discussion here, is influenced by our objective. Besides it has been recognised by some of the highest authorities in the discipline that there are no set rules and limits as to what one may include in comparative work. We are at this stage familiar with an opinion from a highly regarded authority, from our Chapter 2, that “no author of such anthology can hope to satisfy all of his colleagues or, even less so, all of his readers. No matter how ‘objective’ an author may be in collecting, classifying, and presenting religious documents, his choice is ultimately a personal one” (Eliade, 1967, vii).

One of the best approaches to comparative religion, according to the author, as is declared early in the thesis, is *apologia*, or defence of a faith from its perceived adversaries in the manner of Origen and his classical *Contra Celsum* (see Appendix 5 for more on this) in which Origen defends the then nascent, still-sectarian and still-Gnostic Christianity, against attacks from Celsus, the 2nd century Greek philosopher. In the process of defending Christianity, Origen launches into a comparative religion exercise: Greek philosophy Vs Christianity, as does his intellectual adversary, Celsus, who approaches from an offensive angle.

In the present section the author attempts to highlight and demonstrate Egypt’s claim of pivotal contribution to world religion, then goes on to incorporate the Asiisian religion into the discussion. All is done in the spirit of purposeful comparative religion, where the immediate intention is to prove the interlinkage between Asiisianism and ancient Egyptian religion, and finally to be able to say something conclusive about the Kalenjiin people’s tradition of Pharaonic origin.

The apparent Origen-like defence of the African theological thought in general and the Asiisian one in particular constitutes an attempt to stimulate a lively, warm and fertile discussion that should not degenerate into a statistical, barren tally of cold facts.

In order to be able to engage in a comparative analysis exercise in the first place, we need to establish its legitimacy as an exercise that is applicable to the systems that are to be compared. Comparative analysis work can only be carried out between systems that appear to intuition a priori to have at least a few basic features in common. Such work may also be justified even between pairs that appear to intuition a priori to exhibit consistent opposition and contrast, i.e. if between them they seem to exhibit consistent similarities and/or dissimilarities analogous to what the students of comparative linguistics, as we saw in Chapter 3, call *tertium comparationis*. There has to be in place a common religious language which enables the systems and symbols that are to be compared to agree or, indeed, to more or less *consistently* disagree. If two sets of belief systems, values and symbols that are presented for comparative analysis appear to intuition a priori to be so completely alien to each other that there would be no ground for comparison, i.e. their orbits never meet, any comparative work vis-a-vis the pair would be futile (Cf. Williams, 1992:5).

By introducing and indulging in the following comparative analysis phase of this project, therefore, the author implies that he has satisfied himself a priori that there are adequate grounds of agreement within the two (or multiple systems where necessary to drive the point home) religious systems, and their respective symbols that are being compared, to legitimise the exercise.

The formula adopted here is as follows: introduce an ancient Egyptian “god” or “goddess”, describe his or her essential and typical attributes, manifestations, religious doctrine and symbols associated therewith.

Next follow up these with a Kalenjiin/ancient Egyptian comparative linguistic, cultural and religious analysis of the respective words, observances, attributes, doctrines, narratives, and symbols. However, where comparative analysis can serve best if immediately executed within the main body of the story, this is entered into on an as and when basis.

The keen student of ancient Egyptian culture and religion sooner than later realises that each individual Egyptian man or woman of antiquity believed Deity to be One. That in fact the multiple forms of the Deity's manifestations and representations that he or she often depicted, represented the many facets of Deity and not the plurality of Deity. The other awareness that soon strikes the keen student is the fact that some Egyptologists, in their quest to understand ancient Egypt as one homogeneous entity, have projected the nature of polytheism on the Egyptians of that time because they seem to witness many "gods" in the Egyptians' supposed pantheon, which "gods" they then try to generalise, space out and spread all over the country, thus giving the impression of a polytheistic society. Besides, it is vital to distinguish between serious religion and mythology. The one can be as monotheistic as any can be while the other one can portray the image of a polytheistic society. If we can keep this fact in mind and further understand ancient Egypt as a shifting dynamic mosaic of nations and nationalities, then we may be able to appreciate that each one of the citizens, as an individual, recognised only one deity; the rest of the names in the supposed pantheon being mere mythological figures meant to be allegorised. Therefore no one was truly polytheistic, i.e. believed in more than one of the "gods" that existed within the wider territorial boundaries, as the Ultimate at the same time. Experience with the monotheistic Kalenjiin will demonstrate that many different regional names for and attributes of Deity do not imply plurality of the Ultimate Principle.

In order to appreciate this fact better, the three major "gods" whose belief systems covered the entire country as a sum total, are discussed separately and jointly, where applicable, in greater detail below. These were Ptah, Ra, and Amon.¹

With regard to Asiis as Deity to the Kalenjiin, we see Asiis in all the major ancient Egyptian divinities and vice versa. Asiis can therefore be compared with any of the ancient Egyptian divinities, and not only with the apparent namesake Isis, for the reason that any of the divinities of Egypt represented all the rest in a complicated compounding process that we shall continue to attempt to unravel. The Kalenjiin appear to have brought with them to the south such a composite character as sole deity in the said name Asiis.

¹ Cf. Fanie Vermaak, Tutorial Letter 104/1999, Department of Semitics, UNISA. In the cited letter, Thoth is included as one of the four major "gods" of Egypt and is allocated the city and precincts of Hermopolis in the same way as Ptah, Ra and Amon are allocated the cities of Memphis, Heliopolis and Thebes respectively. Hermopolis was the Greek name meaning "the city of Hermes", their name for Thoth of Egypt. However Thoth was more of a national divine figure, or concept, that stood for the wisdom, intelligence and creativity of deity as "God's scribe", judge, inventor of mathematics, geometry, concept of measurements—including of time—giver of laws and other complex forms of knowledge throughout the land. Although his image was greatly celebrated in Hermopolis—hence the naming of the city so—his presence was, nevertheless, decisively pervasive countrywide with attributes little shared by the other divinities although he was always one of their manifestations. He may have eternally appealed to philosophical minds as an early "Moses", but he never quite established himself as the sole ultimate Principle of any locality, nor even nationally at any period. He merely served all the other major "gods" and "goddesses", as the manifestation of their intelligence.

The religion that recognised Ptah as sole God was centred in Memphis and covered much of Lower Egypt. The religion of Ra was centred in Heliopolis, closer to the Delta area. Ra worship is associated with the recognition of Osiris, Isis, Set, Horus and Nephthys who may appear to us as separate divinities but who were really the various manifestations and convenient bundles of the attributes of whoever was the “real God” to the locals—may be Ra, and yet may be not. Amon was the sole ultimate divine Principle to the southern Egyptians, including other African nations to the South, and as far as Egypt was concerned, the centre of the celebration of Amon was Thebes.

Chapter 7

Asiis in Ptah and in other Ancient Egyptian “Gods”

Abstract


Chapter 7, within Section C, is largely devoted to Ptah, one of the most ancient and important of ancient Egyptian “gods” whose name partly means just that, primeval. We explore the etymology of the name Ptah with regard to the ancient Egyptian, Coptic and Kalenjiin languages. Under Ptah we go deep into what the Egyptian meant by “God”, “Goddess”, “god”, “goddess” or “gods” and “goddesses” as most often rendered. We re-examine the question of polytheism for which Pharaonic Egypt is infamous, and, with proof, question its justification.



We discuss other minor “gods” as they related to Ptah, either by membership in his trinity, in his Ennead, or by fusion with him, such as Chnum, Sakhmet, Nefertum etc. We explore the philosophical significance of such relationships and how, by relating the same to Kalenjiin culture, they enhance our theme.

7.1. Ptah









Ptah


The discussion on religion and the “gods” here begins with Ptah, conveniently so for the name happens to convey, among other parallel meanings, the notion “of the beginning” in Kalenjiin, ancient Egyptian and Coptic alike. These are respectively: Kalenjiin *aap-taa* or *po-taa*, which compares to ancient Egyptian  *paut ta*, “primeval time”, “remote ages” (B.Dict. 230b), and Coptic ⲁⲎ ⲧⲉⲑⲟⲧⲉⲧ (*hen-tehuet*) “in the beginning” which, in turn, compares to the Kalenjiin *een taa-it...* “before...”, “in front of” or “antecedent to...”

That is not to say, however, that this “god” was otherwise, apart from the simple literal meaning of his name, less deserving of such a frontal spot in the context of his time and place of worship. As a matter of fact, the priests of Memphis called him:  the “exceedingly great god, the beginning of being” and also  “the father of fathers and power of powers”. The priests taught that Ptah “created his form and gave birth to his body, and established unending and unvarying right and truth upon the earth” (Budge, 1895:cvii).

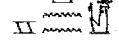
According to the priests of Ptah, Ptah preceded all “gods” and matter. He created even the “gods” Nun and Tenen.¹ He was the eternal heart or mind and, as we have seen above, was self created. The priests further taught that “All Egypt existed by and through Ptah, and as the overlord of the two lands, the theologians called him “HETEPI” and “KHNEMI”—two untranslated terms” (Budge, 1934:15).


The two ancient Egyptian terms, however, appear in ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs, are found in Coptic and in Kalenjiin alike with similar meanings and Budge’s view that they remain untranslated, to that extent, should be qualified. *Hetepi* is probably related to  *tepi*, “he who is on, over, above someone or something... leader, chief, captain” (B.Dict. 828b). This corresponds to Kalenjiin *tep-sii* “place on top of”, or “cause to be placed on top of”, or “cause to sit down/enthroned”. *Tepii* or *tep* also means “stay”. This is often heard in the form *tep-ooten*, “sit down”, or *tep-een ng’echereet*, “sit on throne/chair”, “preside”. Kalenjiin *tep-ooten* can be recognised in Coptic ⲧⲉⲙⲧⲟⲛ (*ti empton*), “sit down”. The same word is also recognisable in ancient Egyptian  *htp* “be gracious, contented, pleased, be at peace, become calm, go to rest” etc. (F.Dict. 180).

The other of the untranslated terms, according to Budge, *Khneimi*, may relate to Ptah in his aspect of creator, in which role he bore the attributes of Khnemu, the potter, creator “god” of Elephantine.  *Chnmw* (F.Dict. 202) or *Khnemu*, who was often presented in the posture   or  etc. but more often in the process of working a potter’s wheel, “worked with Ptah in carrying out the work of creation ordered by Thoth, and is therefore one of the oldest divinities of Egypt; his name means ‘to mould,’ ‘to model’” (Budge, 1895:cix).

The root of *Khnemu* as preserved in the hieroglyphs is  *nehem* and in Coptic it is ⲛⲟⲩⲉⲙ (*nuhm*) (B.Dict. 385a). The same in Kalenjiin is *nam*, and in all the three languages, the meaning corresponds to the following notions: “take hold of, take care of, join, enfold, unite, seize etc.” *Khnemu*, as we mentioned in Chapter 4, may relate to Kalenjiin *cheenam* or *chenamei*, “the


¹ Tatenen is associated with the beginning and antiquity is his hallmark. He was considered an embodiment of the depths of the earth and combined with Ptah in Memphis to form Ptah-Tenen. Ptah-Tenen was depicted in human form with ram’s horns and a crown of feathers. The name Ta-tenen is thought to mean “risen land” as he was associated with the hill that at the command of the Creator, rose out of the waters of Nun (Cf. David, 1980:145 also Gen. 1:1-9). This name

 *Tatenen* (B.Dict. 821a), said to mean “risen land”, Kalenjiin *yeto tonoon*, *ol-ta tonoon* or even *ol-ta toroor* “risen earth” or “high land”. And, discerning from this “deity’s” virtual embodiment of the notion of ultimate antiquity, the name may also bear some cognacy with the Gikuyu word for “ancient”, *tene*. On the more serious theosophical level, however, Tatenen may have embodied the notion, or nature of Deity’s primacy and antiquity.

moulder (with clay)". The infinitive form of the word in this pottery context is *keenam*, "to mould (with clay), to join together" which corresponds to ancient Egyptian  *chnm* (F.Dict. 202).¹

Although Khnemu was assigned a separate identity from Ptah's by the priests, he was really a manifestation of Ptah and both he and Ptah were probably manifestations of whichever divine personage was considered the real Deity by the Egyptians. But the Egyptians in their diverse geographical confinements and over time (i.e. diversity in space and time), appear to have described almost every "god" as the supreme one. It is, therefore, easier to discuss them as if they were separate divine beings for this reason and also in accordance with the practice of Egyptologists.

An example to this effect is one where Khnemu was assigned as great powers and primacy as Ptah. They may have been one and the same "deity" for, rather like Ptah, Khnemu was described as "Maker of things which are, creator of what shall be, the beginning of beings, father of fathers, and mother of mothers" (Budge, 1895:cix).

The Apis Bull was also from early times associated with Ptah and called "the renewed life of Ptah", or "second Ptah" as evidenced in an inscription of the XXVI Dynasty  *Hapi whm en Ptah*, lit. "Hapi, a repeat of Ptah".² This Apis bull, Hapi, known as the "god" of River Nile, was worshipped from ancient times in Egypt as the personification of strength and virility and of might in battle (Budge, 1904:350). He was later combined with Osiris, under the belief that upon the death of the Apis bull, he went to reunite with Osiris and then re-emerged in the form of a new-born calf from the underworld that was ruled by Osiris (Cf. Budge, 1904:196-197, 350).


The combination of Hapi and Osiris, or the reappearance of Osiris as Hapi, gave the name Osir-Hapi or Serapis and its cult. The Greeks later equated Osir-Hapi (or Serapis) and Osiris with their Hades (Cf. Budge, 1904:349). The Serapis cult stole the imagination of the Greeks and then of the Romans and finally engulfed the entire vast Roman Empire that had succeeded and expanded the Greco-Roman possessions. Serapis was adopted throughout the Roman Empire as the male counterpart of the more fanciful "deity", Isis, whose theology was to consume the Europeans like no other except the Christian movement that eventually replaced it (Cf. Budge, 1904:349).




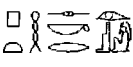
¹ A more hazardous guess is that *Khnemu* may also be related to the Kalenjiin, *ne-mii* or *ne-mii-te*; Coptic ⲁⲛⲏⲧⲉⲣ ⲁⲛⲏⲧⲉⲣ (*hinev-miite*), "the one present", "prevailing" or "ever present". Going by this, the two terms, *hetepi* and *khnemu*, together were probably meant to imply, "The one who was reigning from the beginning, is reigning at present, and who shall continue reigning forever."

² This is a transcription and literal translation put together by the author from Gardiner (1927) and Budge's Hieroglyphic Dictionary, 1920.

Although the cult of Serapis does not seem to have given Ptah a prominent role, Ptah was in it nevertheless because Hapi, or Apis, which fused with Osiris to form Serapis, was considered an embodiment of Ptah (Cf. Hornung, 1982:136).

According to Frankfort (1948:167), this formula was transferred whole from the southern interior of Nilotic Africa, e.g. the Shilluk are said to worship their first king Nyikang. He is referred to as father, ancestor, or *ret* (king) and is incarnate in a fetish-like object and also in the living ruler. But he is also an omnipresent spirit and lives among his people whom he protects and to whom he manifests himself in various forms. When a bull turns out to be exceptionally fine, it must necessarily have been chosen by Nyikang to be his vehicle. Such beasts are therefore considered sacred to Nyikang and in fact do embody him and are eligible only for sacrifice. "It is clear how these indefinite beliefs could have formed the basis of the theological structures which we find in the cults of Apis, Mnevis, and Buchis" (Frankfort, 1948:167).

The argument that ancient Egypt got its religion from the lands to the south of it, is engraved for posterity in the epithet that we have already seen:  T3 ntr "God's Land" (Faulkner's Dict. 293) which referred to the land lying to the south of Egypt.

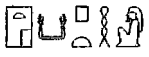


The ancient Egyptians would sometimes create a triune of "gods", i.e. make one "god" out of three and thus reveal that their "gods", as we know them under their names and the associated attributes, were really hypostases, or manifestations of one another (Cf. Hornung, 1982:56) as we have put above. In this way, a combination of Ptah , Seker  and Osiris , produced "another form of Ptah called Ptah-Seker-Ausar  wherein the creator of the world, the sun, and Osiris, as the god of the dead, were represented" (Budge, 1895:cviii). Such fusing of deity by combining their names, serves to point to a monotheistic philosophy rather than a polytheistic one.

However, according to Morenz (Cf. 1960:140), the fusing of deity represents a syncretism, or results in—what is really the same thing—one deity indwelling another in a dynamic inhabitation that does not limit the independence or mobility of either partner. Perhaps it is better to say that each of the fusing parties is enriched in a synergetic manner so that, from the experience of coming together, each party is left richer than it was before. But, and this is the point missed by Morenz here, these parties were not independent "gods" before and neither do they become independent after the fusion. They are merely different names for the same Deity, each name stressing one attribute more than another etc. It is the diverse camps of believers that come together from their diverse viewpoints where each previously viewed Deity in slightly different ways, glorifying or stressing one attribute or the other as compared to another camp of believers. The combining of

their doctrines, therefore, enriches their collective spirituality and not their supposed “gods” because they are, in the first place, monotheistic, rather than henotheistic, even in their diverse socio-cultural plurality.

This can be explained by the following simple analogy: the coming together of Muslims and Christians by way of reconciling their idiosyncrasies, may only enrich the spiritual experience of both parties of human believers. But neither Allah nor Jehovah will be enriched by this union because Allah and Jehovah are one and the same being in the first place. It is the respective adherents who view themselves as different but in reality view the same God from the perspectives of two different prophets, their respective clergy, and corresponding cumulative experiences of centuries (Cf. Clarke, 1992:140).

As we have observed, Ptah was one of the most ancient of ancient Egyptian “gods”, saints and heroes. After Menes, or Min, the Pharaoh of the first recorded dynasty, 3100 BC, who is credited with unifying Upper and Lower Egypt into one entity for the first time, had accomplished the feat of unification; he bequeathed his own “god” to the entire united nation. His “god” was Ptah and his capital was Memphis where he constructed a huge shrine for Ptah. Of this shrine Herodotus says, “Besides these works, he also, the priests said, built the temple of Vulcan (i.e. Ptah, also called by the Greeks Hephaestus) which stands within the city, a vast edifice, very worthy of mention” (Herodotus, Book. II).

Memphis is thought to have acquired its sacred name,  *Het Ka Ptah*, from the shrine of Ptah. This is habitually translated by Egyptologists as “House of the Double of Ptah”. The same in Coptic is ⲬⲚⲉⲡⲏⲧⲁ (*Ekepta*) (B.Dict. 1018), and may have actually been *Kaagiptaa* as suggested by the Kalenjiin language and by the name “Egypt” itself. Memphis was otherwise called  *Aneb-het'et* (Budge, 1905:cxxxv), sometimes transcribed *Ineb-Hedj* (Watterson, 1984:165). The name Memphis came later after the “beautiful pyramid”  *Men-nefer* (Budge, 1895:cxxxv), was constructed by Pepi 1 of the Sixth Dynasty. The Copts called the pyramid *Menfe* and this was later turned into Memphis by the Greeks (Watterson, 1984:165).

The origin of Ptah as a “deity” is unclear but, according to many Egyptologists, he may be a deified human hero of more ancient times, possibly an engineer and an awesomely endowed stone worker. He was credited with the invention of crafts, and his High Priest was called “Lord of the Master Craftsmen” (Cf. Waterson, 1984:163). Hephaestus of the Greeks, and the corresponding Vulcan of the Romans, played the same roles as Ptah, the patron “god” of the Egyptian artisans.

The attributes of the Greek Hephaestus as the lord of craftsmen and Vulcan of the Romans as both lord of the crafts and lord of the volcanoes, are combined in a statement from Aeschylus, 460 BC as follows: “But on the mountain-top Hephaestus sits forging the molten iron, whence shall burst rivers of fire, with red and ravening jaws, to waste fair-fruited, smooth, Sicilian fields.”¹

It is no coincidence that the attributes of Ptah mirror those of Hephaestus of the Greeks and Vulcan of the Romans. It has been claimed by Herodotus, who is an authority well beyond reproach, that the Greeks “borrowed” most of their “gods” from the Egyptians. The Greeks in turn influenced the Romans, perhaps initially indirectly through Greek-influenced Etruscans who ruled Rome and other Latin environs around the 6th century BC (Cf. Clarke, 1992:137, Long, GME 1993).² The fact, as far as the Greeks were concerned, was recorded by Herodotus (Book II.)—around 440 BC—in unequivocal terms:

“Almost all the names of the gods came into Greece from Egypt. My inquiries prove that they were all derived from a foreign source, and my opinion is that Egypt furnished the greater number. For with the exception of Neptune and the Dioscuri, whom I mentioned above, and Juno, Vesta, Themis, the Graces, and the Nereids, the other gods have been known from time immemorial in Egypt. This I assert on the authority of the Egyptians themselves. The gods, with whose names they profess themselves unacquainted, the Greeks received, I believe, from the Pelasgi, except Neptune. Of him they got their knowledge from the Libyans, by whom he has been always honoured, and who were anciently the only people that had a god of the name... The Egyptians were also the first to introduce solemn assemblies, processions, and litanies to the gods; of all which the Greeks were taught the use by them. It seems to me a sufficient proof of this that in Egypt these practices have been established from remote antiquity, while in Greece they are only recently known.”

Apart from the indirect influence on Roman worship through the Greeks that we alluded to above, some religious influences were direct Egypt-to-Rome exports, e.g. “Davenport states that

¹ Aeschylus, 460 BC, *Prometheus Bound*.

² However, Long gives doubtful and undue credit to Indo-European sources for some of the Greek/Roman “gods”. He, for instance, attributes the genesis of Zeus to Indo-European origin. But Herodotus tells us—by exclusion from the following list of non-Egyptian Greek deities—that Zeus (Jupiter) was one of the ancient Egyptian “deities”—Amon, or Khnemu, in fact. The attributes of the “gods”, where they resemble those of ancient Egypt, and this fact considered together with Herodotus’ concession, lead us to Egyptian originality.

the worship of Priapus, amongst the Romans, was derived from the Egyptians, who, under the form of Apis, the Sacred Bull, worshipped the generative power of nature” (Stone, 1927:23).¹

A 710 BC inscribed granite slab adds to the much-acclaimed primordial nature of Ptah. The Memphis stone describes Ptah as self-begotten and creator of the nine “gods”. The group of nine “gods” is referred to as the Ennead (these are listed further below). The “God” Atum created these nine “gods” by masturbating on the inspiration of Ptah. That is according to the mythology of Memphis (Cf. Armour, 1986:124).

The Memphite inscribed stone further says that Ptah was the originator of all good things, food, provisions, divine offerings, justice, labour, movement of the body etc. He was called “the Lord of *Maat*, King of the two lands (North and South Egypt), the god of the beautiful face in Thebes, who created his own image, who fashioned his own body, who has established *maat* throughout the two lands” (Armour, 1986:124).²

He was both the origin of intelligence and the means to disseminate it. He was “lord of the years, measurer of time, but timeless himself.” “I am yesterday, today and tomorrow for I am born again and again. I am the lord of resurrection who comes forth from the dusk and whose birth is from the House of Death.” Says Ptah of himself. He is consequently associated with the dead as suggested by his mummy-like dress (Cf. Armour, 1986:124).

As a “god” who resurrects daily from the House of Death, he is reflecting the attributes of Osiris, and as a “measurer of time” Ptah is assuming the attributes of Thoth. These, added to the sum of Ptah’s attributes as listed further above, Ptah becomes, therefore, all the “gods” put together—a theological philosophy of “many in one” that veers towards monotheism if not a manifestation of it. Certainly he was treated as if he was the sole deity, or at least certainly as the one at the top of divine hierarchy:

“At Memphis shrines and temples were erected for many deities; but it was always the temple of Ptah which was considered to be the most important, worthy of enlargement and embellishment by the successive generations of kings. It is the name given to the temple of Ptah during the New Kingdom—the Mansion of the Soul of Ptah, which in Egyptian is *Hoot-Ka-Ptah*—that eventually was taken by the Greeks and applied to the

¹ Priapus of Greek mythology was a god of fertility, protector of gardens and herds. He was the son of Aphrodite, goddess of love, and of Dionysus, god of wine, or, according to some accounts, of Hermes, the messenger of the gods. He was usually represented as a grotesque individual with a huge phallus. The Romans set up crude images of Priapus in their gardens, to serve as scarecrows (MEE 98/24). Where Priapus is the ancient Egyptian Apis, then Aphrodite is Isis and Hermes is Tout.

² *Maat*, mentioned here, is discussed in Section D as an ancient Egyptian concept and as a “god”. The same is contrasted with a socio-cultural phenomenon, called *maat* in Kalenjiin too, whose manifestations are still felt throughout the social and religious outlook of many Kalenjiin people.

whole land as far south as Aswan, thus giving rise to the name by which we call the country, Egypt. In the Late Period, *Hoot-Ka-Ptah* was probably pronounced 'Hi-Ku-Ptah' which the Greeks turned into *Aigyptos*... This great temple of Ptah now lies under the modern Egyptian village of Mit-Rahina" (Watterson, 1984:165).

To this monument foreigners paid tribute incessantly. All other countries of "the world" paid tribute to him who commanded respect by force of his sheer stature as the pre-eminent "god" and "god" of the capital of Egypt, which, at the time, was also effectively the capital of the "world": Memphis. Other nations brought gold, malachite vases, silver etc. to him (Cf. Watterson, 1984:165).

With the benefit of the knowledge of the Kalenjiin language, *Hi ku Ptah* or, as it is more known to Egyptologists: *Ha-Ka-Ptah*, should be understood to mean the "place/homeland of Ptah". This in Kalenjiin is *Kaa-aap-pTaa*, *Kaaptaa*, *Kaa-gip-taa* or *Kah-Kip-tah*. *Kah* or *kaa* means "home", "land" or "homeland" in Kalenjiin, Coptic and ancient Egyptian alike, and *aap* means "of" in all those three Pharaonic dialects.

Kah, "place", "land", "homeland", and *ke*, "soul", are easily confused, one for the other. Many Egyptologists translate the *ka* in *Ha Ka Ptah* to "soul", which would still be agreeable to Kalenjiin, considering the Kalenjiin *ke*, but one would find *kah*, "place", "land", "homeland", more convincing. And *kah* may, anyway, have developed from *ke* in the first place (the ancient Egyptian/Kalenjiin word relationships and place-name etymologies are treated in greater detail in Chapter 6 and in Appendix 1).

The Greeks corrupted the name, from whatever form they had found it in, to *Aigyptos* or *Kiptaios*, and when the Arabs came conquering, they referred to it as *Qibtiya*. It is this name in those forms, as preserved in the two foreign languages that confirm most conclusively that in its fuller form, Ptah was actually *Kiptah*, and *KahKiptah* or *Kaagiptah* meant "home or homeland of Ptah", as suggested by the Kalenjiin language.

Kaagiptah was the probable name of the temple and temple area from where Ptah's cult was administered. This area may have been the actual home of Ptah when he was alive on earth ruling, and that is how the Kalenjiin and, retrospectively, the ancient Egyptians, would come to name such a place *Kaagiptaa* or *Kagiptaiyaat*.

7.2 Ancient Egyptian/Kalenjiin Monotheism and the Accusation of Sun-worship

7.2.1 Monotheism in the Context of Ptah Worship

The 14th century BC (18th Dynasty) Egypt witnessed a classical formulation—or the truth rather is that a record of such formulation which is traced to that period exists by way of the Leiden hymn to Amon. It is a great witness to Egyptian monotheism and a veritable hint as to the origin of the Christian “God-in-Three-Persons” fundamental theological principle.

‘All gods are three: Amun, Re, Ptah: they have no equal. His name is hidden as Amun, he is perceived as Re (literally, “he is Re before men”), and his body is Ptah. Their cities on earth remain forever: Thebes, Heliopolis, and Memphis, for all time.’¹

Piankoff (1957:12-13), in his introduction to *Mythological Papyri, Egyptian Religious Texts and Representations*, recognises the principle of monotheism on the part of the ancient Egyptian priests when he points out that where a “god” was recognised as “the Eight”,


“the One manifests itself as a plurality of Eight, remaining itself the One... Ptah on the Great Throne is the divine potentiality of creative power who manifests first as Two, the Watery Abyss, Nun with his female counterpart Nunet, giving birth to Atum—the Totality, the All. Ptah the Great is the thinking and creative principle who manifests himself as Horus, the Heart, i.e. the source of thought, and as Thoth, the tongue, the divine creative Word. And finally, the accomplished creation appears as the Lotus Nefertem (the Accomplished All) out of which rises the Sun.”²

The myriad names for Deity could result in the impression that these were different individual divinities when, in fact, the ancients had meant to allocate a different name for every major attribute and function of their sole Deity as opined by Piankoff above. The independence and the apparent distinctness of the different manifestations were maintained so much so that the different names tended to give the impression that those different manifestations of Deity were indeed different “gods” and “goddesses” that competed for primacy. As we have observed, in whatever name and attribute Deity appeared, he or she was the “supreme”, even to the extent of being honoured as the Only One. But there was a widespread exception and Ptah was often the beneficiary, coming close to universal recognition in that some other regions would seem to have held him to be of greater antiquity than their own “regional deity”. As an example, a hymn to Amen-Ra (the “god” that combines Amon and Ra), which is attributed to the priests of Amen-Ra of the 20th or 21st Dynasty (approx. range 1200-945 BC), illustrates the recognition of Ptah over

¹ Zandee, *De hymnen aan Amon* pl. 4, 21-22 (stanza ‘300’)—cited Hornung, 1971:219.

² Piankoff (1957:12) points out that the oldest theology of Egypt was that which was espoused by the priests of Ptah of Memphis.

Amen-Ra in primacy: "Thou (Amen-Ra) art the beautiful Child who wast made (i.e. begotten) by Ptah, and the beautiful Child who art beloved" (Budge, 1904:7).

From the papyrus of the *Contendings of Horus and Seth*, transliterated and translated by Gardiner (1931:13, 24,25) being part of the collection in the library of Chester Beatty, we learn that  "Ptah, the Divine Spirit",¹ was regarded the demiurge, i.e., the creator who fathered Ra, Osiris and the entire Ennead, of which claims Gardiner (1931:13) considers "quite unprecedented attributions."

It is clear from the foregoing that Ptah was considered spiritual and not material. This is an observation that no one should, with all facts and fairness in place, disagree with. Ptah, to his followers, was the philosophical meeting point of religious thought and spiritualism. And it is probable that one of the important "gods", or "goddesses" that, in national terms, appear to rank with Ptah, may as well have been the Egyptians' sole deity, either regionally or nationally. But, at any rate, every individual Egyptian thought in terms of and recognised only one Supreme Being as the sole creator and provider. The scribe behind *The Contendings of Horus and Seth*, as a citizen of Egypt, definitely held Ptah to be the sole Deity. Theirs, at the individual level, therefore, was no case of henotheism, polytheism, pantheism or even monolatry for all these referents assume the recognition of several ultimates, or in the existence of other ultimates besides one's own. The word "ultimate" is important here as it was possible to believe in a hierarchy of divinities, which was still monotheism if one believed in the existence of only one ultimate divinity who sat atop the pyramid of divinities and was thought to have created all the rest as well as all things. Each individual believer of this nature, therefore, was monotheistic in his or her own right (Cf. Morenz, 1960:135). Theirs was a large empire that paid tribute to one Pharaoh and the concept of unitarism under such a monarchical hierarchy, was bound to be extended, in the psyche of the people, to the empire above. Breasted (1912:315) has argued, citing such reason, that "monotheism is but imperialism in religion."

Kamalu (1990:40), who considers Amon to have been the real God of the ancient Egyptians, says:

"Certain parts of the Book of the Dead might seem to evince the Egyptian religion as plainly polytheistic... but these begotten gods were merely symbols of the one and only God, Amon... Like traditional African religion in general, Egyptian religion is almost as Champollion-Figeac describes: 'a pure monotheism, which manifests itself externally by a symbolic polytheism.'"

¹ Author's own translation of part of line 8, page 14 of the Chester Beatty Papyrus No. 1 as reproduced by Gardiner (1931:24).

Having said all the foregoing, it is important to acknowledge that we may continue to hear about the “polytheism” of ancient Egypt, but this misconception only owes it to a combination of two or three factors: the lack of appreciation of the vastness of the territory, the disregard for the fact of plurality and social dynamism of the citizenry, and the ignoring of the hugeness of the time span covered by the notion “ancient Egypt”. It is important to bear in mind that each distinct socio-cultural and geographical region, from age to age, stressed the primacy and importance of its own cult-centre, priesthood and the *exclusive* creative role of its principal “god”. But these theologies contained the same basic concepts (Cf. David, 1980:89) and, ultimately, we end up with a monotheistic ancient Egypt, either in regional, national or epochal terms, which recognised only One Deity, Who, however, went by many regional names as well as possessed the occasional unique or specialised regionally recognised attribute.

The One Deity, Whoever it was, was the actual Deity either worshipped in a particular region or in the entire country at any point in time—and all the other supposed gods were what we should regard as any of the following: angels, saints, prophets/prophetesses, heroes/heroines, or symbols of that sole Deity’s varied manifestations. For instance, as Piankoff states above, also Breasted (1912:43), as far as the priests of Ptah and their followers were concerned, all the “gods” of the ennead were made up of a primeval Ptah and eight emanations or manifestations of himself. These were not, as far as the Memphites were concerned, “gods” that stood in rivalry with Ptah; rather they were Ptah’s supports as well as members of his own body. They constituted a broken-down and simplified symbology by which the Memphites understood the whole Ptah. This symbological approach to the conceptualisation and the teaching of religion is present in some contemporary churches by way of pictures and sculptures of Jesus Christ, Mary and the saints.

Indeed the icons (the sacred paintings of human forms) of today, and the sculptures that the more orthodox of Christian denominations line up their church walls and alleys with, looked at by an ignorant population of 4000 years to come, would lead them, just like the early Egyptologists before them, to conclude that the 21st century Christians worshipped many gods too!

It can be argued that even the churches, synagogues and other structures and buildings that are devoted to the specific activity of worship by the followers of any faith, no matter which, are symbols in themselves. That is, even if their walls and precincts were absolutely bare of other images such as stone sculptures, wood carvings, crosses and paintings; the fact that they are dedicated sites and confines for the specific function called prayer, and considered sacred, renders them symbols. The unkind word for “symbols” is “idols” and no human race has been known to completely unchain itself from the tendency to resort to religious symbols; not even the Asiisians themselves who conduct their major prayers in the open. The fact that such prayers take place in dedicated sites, and before the altar of Asiis, *kaapkorosuut* or *mabawaiita*, renders any claim of freedom from the use of physical symbolism untenable.

To this effect, Mahatma Gandhi no doubt uttered an unchallengeable truth when he once said, “I think that idol worship is part of human nature. We hanker after symbolism. Why should one be more composed in a church than elsewhere? No Hindu considers an image to be God. I do not consider idol-worship a sin” (Cf. Pancholi, 1982:25).¹

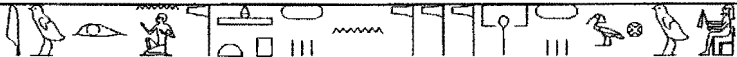
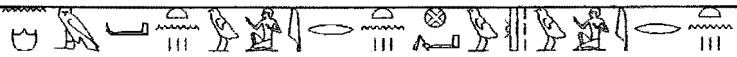
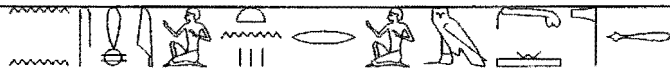
In the above statement about symbolism, the Mahatma was defending the Hindu worship of what was said to be 330 million “gods”. To a Hindu, the millions of “gods” are really the manifestation of the many aspects of one truth—*Brahman*, “God” (Cf. Pancholi, 1982:25).

It has, however, become fashionable for too long to regard the ancient Egyptians, who “worshipped” a much smaller number of “deities” than the Hindus, as polytheists. So much so that it is almost unimaginable to write about ancient Egypt without talking about its plural “gods”—pantheon. The present work partly contributes to this unfortunate picture, regrettably. Otherwise it is psychologically impossible for a human being to owe loyalty to more than one absolute deity. As already pointed out, a people who recognise one ultimate leader on earth, such as a Pharaoh, an *Oorgoiyoot*, or even a president; are bound to extend the same notion of hierarchy to the “Empire Beyond”, and recognise one ultimate all-powerful deity, even as they believe, if at all, that lesser ones exist around Him or Her (Cf. Tylor, 1871:ii, 248).

¹ The concept of symbology and African exports of certain symbols and symbolisms to other parts of the world is continued in greater detail in Appendix 5.



The following passage from the Papyrus of Ani, which was written 1500-1300 BC, is intended here to demonstrate, with primary evidence, that the ancient Egyptians were monotheistic worshippers. Ani has died and his soul has been brought before the “gods” for judgement and the soul is trying to impress the “gods” by telling them about its good deeds while it was still on earth embodied in Ani. This confession is taken from *The Book of the Dead, Papyrus of Ani*, E. A. Wallis Budge, 1895, Plate XXXII, Appendix, line 12.

Table 6: A Monotheistic Statement

Original	
Transliteration by Budge	1. <i>au ari na neter-hepu en neteru perkheru en aakhu</i>
English by Budge	I have made offerings to the gods, and sacrificial meals to the shining ones.
Original continued	
Transliteration by Budge	2. <i>nehem ten ua ar ten khu ua ar ten</i>
English by Budge	deliver ye me then ye, protect me then ye,
Original continued	
Transliteration by Budge	3. <i>enen sma - ten er a embah neter aa</i>
English by Budge	not make accusation ye against me before neter ea (the Big God).

The transliteration spelling *aakhu* at the end of the first line above, which Budge translates as “the shining ones”, meaning “the spirits” corresponds to the Kalenjiin *aiik* or *oiik*. The fact of its cognacy with the Kalenjiin word for “spirits” is confirmed against an entry in Budge’s *An Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary* (1920:24a) where he has translated the same word as “the spirit-souls of the dead”—which happens to reflect perfectly the true Kalenjiin meaning of *aiik*. Ancient Egyptian and Kalenjiin, therefore, are in full agreement about the word *aiik*, “spirits of the departed”, and not only that; there is an agreement in the recognition of the need to appease them by sacrifices too.

However, the pioneering missionaries and their early Kalenjiin converts, used the otherwise revered word, *aiik*, for “demons” and “devils”, in their translated literature, ignoring the appropriate word for the latter which is *masambwaan*. This ingenuous misapplication of the word sees to it that any Asiis faithful attempting to apply it in its proper context and openly pouring libation to the *aiik* in a ritual called *kii-taata*, can be easily branded a “devil worshipper”—because the missionaries equated *aiik*, “spirits” with “devils” and “demons”.

Ancient Egyptian *Neter*, of the last line of the illustration, is cognate with the Kalenjiin *Netoroor* “the exalted”, “the Almighty One”, or *Netiliil*, “the Holy One”. It refers to the One Deity as compared to the usage on the first line where the three symbols  indicate plural “gods” who must not accuse the deceased Ani before the (single) “Big God”  of the last line. This constitutes plain proof that although the Egyptians spoke of “gods”, such “gods” were under one “Big God”, i.e. “One Deity” analogous to the above-mentioned *Brahman* of the Hindus and, therefore, they were ultimately monotheistic worshippers in spite of the appearance of pluralism in their practice.

The root of the Kalenjiin word *Netoroor* is *toroor*, “exalted”, “high”—hence the name for Asiis that is used commonly by Kenya’s northern Kalenjiin sections, *Toroorrot*. The Maasai also use a more or less similar word to *Neter* in the form *Naiteru kop*, “the Creator of the earth”. The Maasai’s *Naiteru* is in the feminine gender, just like most of the other names for Asiis.

Some Egyptologists have always known, or suspected, that the ancient Egyptians were, after all, monotheists, e.g. Breasted (1912), Budge (1895, 1934 etc.) and Piankoff (1957). And, indeed, on the basis of verifiable record, such as the above-cited papyrus of Ani, 1500-1300 BC, the Egyptians would be the earliest known as such in the world. However some of the Egyptologists have continued, against logic and facts on the ground, to maintain a line that conforms to the well-sold image of ancient Egyptians as the very definition of polytheists. Yet polytheism, according to Funkenstein, writing in the *Journal of the History of Ideas*, has been dismissed from serious philosophical negotiation not only by the monotheistic traditions but also by the secular anthropologists of the 19th century who abstained from calling polytheism a “downright error or depravity of the human mind but still saw it as a lower stage in the progress of religious expression” (Funkenstein, 1994:99). This thought of hierarchy of religious thought, or evolution of religion, was well associated with the works of Tylor (1871).

But can anyone really, after seeing all the evidence of the ingenuity of the ancient Egyptians, honestly barely manage to disguise the association of those Egyptians with “downright error or depravity of the human mind”? An example: Shafer (1991:3), says, “of ancient Egypt’s (devout),

all but a very few were polytheists.”¹ However, a dissenting western Egyptologist, Budge (1934:5) writes:

“When the Egyptian called his god ‘One’ or the ‘One One’, or the ‘Only One’, he meant exactly what he said and what the Muslim means today when he says, ‘There is no god but God’. And that god was the sun in the sky from whom he received light and heat and the food whereupon he lived. The Egyptian in his hymns called many gods ‘One’, but these gods were all forms of the sun-god, and as I understand it, he was a monotheist pure and simple as a sun-worshipper.”²

7.2.2 Sun-worship

The misleading outlook that gave the impression that the ancient Egyptians worshipped the sun, was equally characteristic of the Kalenjiin people’s Asiisian religion as the hasty observations jotted down by some early visitors indicate (e.g. Hollis, 1909:40, and Orchardson, 1918 in D.C. KER/3/1). It may be a mistake, as it certainly is, but it is one of those shared appearances that go to uphold the Kalenjiin people’s oral tradition, of ancient Egyptian origin, whose veracity we are pursuing. Apparently after being misled partly because the Kalenjiin called the sun *asiis-ta* and the Deity Asiis, and partly because prayers were directed to the East, and preferably undertaken as the first golden rays of the sun broke the morning horizon, such an observation as the following was made. Orchardson, being one among others that were so misled, once made a passing reference to a custom that he had observed among the Kipsigiis thus: “A custom corresponding closely to Christian Baptism combines both the sun-worship and spirit belief...” (D.C. KER/3/1, 1918).

Orchardson was yet to understand, which he clearly did subsequently—as quotations from him, further on, will attest—that the Kipsigiis only considered *asiista*, “the sun”, to be the most important physical manifestation and not a representation of Asiis, let alone that the sun was Asiis, the Deity. The sun was just one of the possessions of Asiis, in fact, as were the moon, the earth etc.

Some people refer to Asiis with the definite nominal form *Asiista*, which is a grammatical error because this word in the definite nominal form, *asiista*, can only refer to “the sun”. According to a silent Kalenjiin grammatical convention, it is to be understood that certain nouns that relate to the principal natural elements that occupy the earth, the space and the heavens, refer to the divine

¹ An ontologist, Harwood (1999:491), argues, inter alia, that the thought of monotheism is an impossible proposal while polytheism is barely feasible. One reason being that if we think of a perfect—in all ways—and maximally great deity who is unique then we must account for the source of evil as evil is inconsistent with divine perfection and maximal greatness.

² Writing earlier, in 1895 (cxxviii), Budge had included the Jews with the Muslims in his argument: “Looking at the Egyptian words in their simple meaning, it is pretty certain that when the Egyptians declared that their god was One and
Footnote continued at bottom of next page

force behind those principal natural elements if uttered in the indefinite form. The same words refer to the visible or audible phenomena that are associated with those principal natural elements when uttered in the definite form. Asiis, therefore, according to this rule, refers to the Deity, while *asiista* refers to the sun, the one object that is most readily associated with Deity by the Kalenjiin.

Another example to this effect comes by way of the phenomenon of Wind. *Kooriis*, “Wind” refers to the aspect of Deity that is behind the wind, but the wind that we can feel and hear, is called *koriisto*. *Iilat*, “Thunder” in the same manner, refers to the aspect of Deity that “controls” the thunder that we hear as a welcome distant rumbling noise as well as the cracking lightning that we see, hear and fear. What is visible, or audible, is called *ileet*, the rather irregular definite form of *Iilat*.

To illustrate this further, some elders, with the intention of cursing someone, may invoke “Wind”, *Kooriis*, with a request to despatch *koriisto*, “the wind”, or *cheptapisyeet*, “a tornado”, to carry off and destroy the perceived offender. Some may invoke the name of “Thunder”, *Iilat*, with a request for him to send “the lightning bolt”, *ileet*, down to strike the perceived offender dead, or do something evident or visible to acknowledge his anger and thus show the just way.

It is possible and quite normal to hear people speak deridingly of the sun if it has become too hot or has destroyed vegetation. But the sun that may be so condemned can only be *asiista*, in that definite form, and never in the indefinite form of *Asiis*. In summary, then, all the names of these principal natural elements, if they are to be uttered in their indefinite forms, must be done so in reverent hushed tones for then they refer to an aspect of Deity. But the uttering of the same words in their definite form can be as casual and as loud as the speaker may wish.

What we should learn from the foregoing is that the Asiisian religion is not one of Nature Worship. The Kalenjiin do not worship, or even revere these elements directly for themselves. Neither do they worship through them distinct deities that they supposedly animate; rather they see *Asiis* and the actions of *Asiis* through them (Cf. Tylor, 1871:255).

With that clarification in place, we may record the finding of Gerald and Burnette Fish (1995:4) with regard to, on the one hand, the distinction between Deity and the visible object associated with Deity and, on the other; the related—or resultant—misconception and misnomer of “sun-worshippers”

“*Asiis* is the name most commonly used by the traditional Kipsigiis for their deity. However, we found that sometimes *Asiista* was used also. *Asiista* is the Kalenjiin word for the sun, but when it was used to indicate ‘God’ there was no indication that the object seen in the sky and called ‘the sun’ was the object of their worship. Rather, it was

that he had no second, they had the same ideas as the Jews and Mohammedans when they proclaimed their God to be ‘One’ and alone.”

understood that both Asiis and Asiista gave the idea of the spirit or personality behind the object called 'the sun'."

Contrast the foregoing with (Budge, 1895:cxix): "Ra was the name given to the sun by the Egyptians in a remote antiquity... Ra was the visible emblem of God."¹

Being but a retired Christian missionary couple from USA to Kipsigiisland, the Fishes understandably added the following corollary to their enunciation above of an indigenous theologically sophisticated understanding that they had found in place among the Kalenjiin. This corollary we shall compare to an ironically somewhat similar observation—or rather, reaction—by the great British Egyptologist, Wallis Budge, 60 or so years earlier, vis-a-vis ancient Egypt and the theology of Ptah. The Fishes concluded: "Perhaps this is why their (Kalenjiin's) prayers were answered, even though they prayed in the name of Asiis and not in the name of Jehovah God" (1995:4).

In his effort to drive further home the point that the ancient Egyptians were, ultimately, monotheistic worshippers, Wallis Budge (1934:15&16) quoted from the priests of Ptah, Memphis, who espoused the essence of Ptah as follows:

"... The mind of the universe, the cause of causes, whose thoughts produced every material thing and being in heaven, earth and the underworld. The gods were merely forms of his thoughts and he was therefore God alone. Light was an emanation from his heart, his influence pervaded all nature, through his breath of life every creature lived and almighty power resided in the word of his mouth...."

Budge's (1934:16) interesting corollary, which is to be compared with that of the Fishes, goes thus: "That such lofty spiritual conceptions were evolved by the priests of Memphis about 4000 years before the Christian era is a matter of wonder."

Here Budge has implied that the theological philosophies of the priests of Ptah were as sophisticated as those of the Christian era. The Fishes, on their part, imply the same vis-a-vis the Kalenjiin form of worship, namely that because the prayers to Asiis were underpinned by such lofty theology, they reached their destination and were answered just as well as they (the Fishes) believe that Christian prayers do reach their destination and are equally answered.

The westerners, the Fishes and Budge, 60 years and several thousand kilometres apart, were making a rare gesture of concession to the African theological thought. That their respective observations were similar, at the philosophical level, suggests that there was an element of

¹ A discussion on the correlation between Ra and Asiis, on a semantic level, is further ahead, under Ra in this subsection and under Isis and Asiis in the next.

fundamental similarity in the respective indigenous African theologies that they were studying: Kalenjiin and ancient Egyptian.

While the discussion on monotheism is still fresh in our memory, we may note here that in no other preserved form is ancient Egyptian religion clearer as being one akin to that practised by the Kalenjiin today than that religion as it was understood and espoused by Pharaoh Akhenaton of the 14th century BC (18th Dynasty). Intuition suggests that Akhenaton's belief is what is continued in the Asiis faith of the Kalenjiin of today. Akhenaton, or Ikhnaton, is an exciting Pharaoh, at least to some Egyptologists, e.g. Silverman (1991:82) who concurs with Egyptologist Hornung (1982:246) in the conviction "that Akhenaten's beliefs introduced monotheism to the world... Akhenaten did pioneer a concept that was to have profound effect on the development of the world's religions" (Silverman, 1991:82).

Akhenaton's fame, thus, is based on the belief that he was the first of the ancient Egyptians—and of anyone in the world, Moses notwithstanding—to proclaim monotheism and to actively pursue the concept of One Creator, whom he called Aton, to the exclusion of all others. So moving were his songs to Aton:

"The life-giving power... the constant source of life and sustenance... its immediate agency is the rays of the Sun... It is in these rays that Aton is present on earth as a beneficent power... he fills every land with his rays, and makes all men to live... (All this discloses a discernment of the presence of God in nature, and an appreciation of the revelation of God in the visible world such as we find a thousand years later in the Hebrew psalms—Breasted)" (Breasted, 1912:333-334).

Science was later to prove Akhenaton's belief correct at the chemical and physical level of the elements. It has since been scientifically proven that all life emanates from and is sustained by the rays of the sun. The sun is undoubtedly the prime mover of all life on earth. But it is important to note that Akhenaton worshipped that power behind the sun and of whom the sun was the chief agent and symbol, and not the sun itself. As we saw above, this philosophy is still the pillar of the modern Asiisian belief. Indeed if one were to look for one single object in the whole world, indeed in the whole universe, that would symbolise most the life-forming, life-giving, and life-sustaining power of Deity, one would find it in the object we call the sun—the astrologically acknowledged centre and definer of this universe.

All religions, pretences aside, seem to recognise this primal position of the sun in the ideal personification of the creative and sustaining attributes of Deity. A rather honest statement by a western writer, Eliza Gamble (1927:180), therefore, may come in handy at this stage: "In Christian countries, during the past eighteen hundred years, the greatest care has been exercised to conceal the fact that sun-worship underlies all forms of religion."

Egyptian religion at all times, including up until the stage of Asiianism in the East African context, identified Deity, who may have gone by any name, in any manifestation and answered to any set of attributes; with the sun. All Akhenaton did was articulate it so well and this, combined with the fact that his documents have been discovered in more or less complete dossiers, has led many to associate him with the founding of monotheism but which philosophy was evidently so much older than him. The theology of the Priests of Ptah of Memphis, which we have alluded to, was not less sophisticated in monotheistic terms than the theology that was later articulated by Akhenaton at Amarna.

The use of visible objects as aids in the conceptualisation of the invisible is present in most religions. Even Judaism, which seeks to portray itself as being so monotheistic that all representation of the divine is to remain prohibited to its followers at all times, has had at one time or other, in its long history, to restrain some of those followers from resorting to such visual prayer aids. An example of such cases of tendency to resort to such aids among the Israelites was the golden calf of Exodus 32. Deuteronomy 4, which came subsequent to this experience, outlaws the practice and Deuteronomy 4:19 specifically warns against the worship of celestial bodies such as the sun, the moon and the stars. But a much later biblical personage, Jeremiah (44), as only one example, had to remind the people of these laws. Jeremiah's verse 44 condemns the resort to physical and visible aids such as offering prayers to and sacrificing to the Queen of Heaven by the Israelite womenfolk in the cities of Judah, in Jerusalem and in their exile in the Egyptian cities—including Pathros, which was either Southern Egypt or the general area South of Egypt. The chief symbol of the Queen of Heaven, who indeed was, as we shall see shortly, Isis of Egypt, was the sun—just as it still is the chief symbol of Asiis of the Kalenjiin of Eastern Africa.¹

Citing recent archaeological evidence which has proved that the Israelites venerated the sun, engaged in “human sacrifice and cultic prostitution”, as well as worshipped Asherah as the consort of Yahweh, and even maintained a form of zoolatry by way of bull-worship in the highlands of Samaria, Gnuse (1999:317-318) concludes: “We now think the biblical authors condemned actual practices—not Canaanite intrusions into Yahwism, but early polytheistic Yahwism.”

However, it is essential to appreciate that visual prayer aids, be they celestial or terrestrial phenomena, such as the sun and the mountains, or manmade objects such as the calf of Exodus 32, do not involve the actual worshipping of such images, but they are understood as reminders of Deity by those that resort to them.

¹ Instructively, the biblical Pathros may include parts of today's Eastern Africa.

The Hindus are strong and prominent in the use of visual prayer aids, hence their well-known image in the west and, through the west, among many in Africa, as the very definition of today's polytheists and idolaters. This image has been conjured up over many years of listening to Judaeo-Christian philosophies as Judaeo-Christianity sought to portray itself as a movement that was completely free of polytheistic and idolatric tendencies.


A leading light in Hinduism, Vinoba Bhave—after Gandhiji—in defence of the Hindu practice, has said: “the worship of an image is the art of embracing the whole universe in a little object.”¹ And a Hindu scholar, Pancholi (1982:21,25), goes further:

“As the image is God's *murti*, or form, made manifest for his worshippers, it is treated as one would treat God himself. This statue, as God's representative in personal form, is fundamental to the meaning of *Puja* (worship, most commonly held at an alcove set aside for prayer in a Hindu family home) and is always preserved in rituals... Symbols or images are merely external aids for the upward march of the soul.”²

¹ Cited by Pancholi, 1982:21.

² Going to the temple, *Mandir*, is far less important (than the home-based prayer sessions) and plays no part at all in the religion of some Hindus—Pancholi, 1982:22.

7.3 The Early Kalenjiin Converts call both God, the Father, and Jesus Christ, Ptah

Ptah was the oldest being that the priests of Memphis could imagine. Nothing preceded him. That is how he earned the title *Ptah*, which fact we learn from Coptic Τ&ΒΤ (*taht*), the aforementioned ancient Egyptian  *Paut ta* and Kalenjiin *po-taa* or *aap-taa*—all of which mean “of the front”, “of before”, or “of the beginning”. In fact the Kalenjiin *taa* bears both these notions: “the beginning” and “the future”. *Taa* is where the people came from and it is also where they are going to in time. The phrase *tese taa*, which means “going on”, or *kibeendi taa* which means “we progress into the future” as well as *een taa*, which means “in the beginning”, are Kalenjiin phrases that incorporate *taa* and which thus illustrate well the “beginning and the end” notion in *Ptah*.

The Christian concept of “the beginning and the end”, in relation to God, may have been influenced by this ancient African philosophy. Plutarch, the 1st century Greek philosopher and historian did report that the base of the statute of Isis, who has been called “the mother of all mysteries”, at Sais, bore the inscription, “I am everything that was, and is, and shall be, nor has any mortal ever uncovered my veil” (Cf. Walker, 1983:13).

The African Gnostics who considered Isis their patron but also revered Ptah (Walker, 1983:18), no doubt took this concept, of the beginning and the end, from the Isis and Ptah structures and later injected it into the Christian philosophy that they helped found, or rather, according to reputable scholars cited here, virtually *founded*. This is also confirmed irrevocably by the ancient Gnostic documents recently recovered at Nag Hammadi, Egypt (Cf. Walker, 1983:12, Bauval, 1999:97-100). More can be read in Appendix 5 about the African Gnostics and their pivotal role in laying the philosophical base of Christianity, which fact Pope John Paul II has, to a critical extent, recognised on behalf of his church in his publication, *The Church in Africa* (1995).




The “of beginning and the end” word, *Ptah*, is one of the ancient Egyptian deity names that found their way into Christian divine nomenclature early in the 20th century in Kalenjiinland. The evangelising missionaries from Europe and America wanted a venerated local title that would qualify the name Jesus Christ as “Lord” with all the notion and veneration due to Him conveyed in it. The Kalenjiin offered the title *Kiptaiyaat* and this is, when broken into morphemes, *Ki-p-taa-yaat*, lit. “He-of-front-the”. This could mean any of: “He of the front”, “He, the foremost,” “He of

the beginning”, or “He of before”. It is often pronounced *Giptaiyaat*¹ or, simply, *Ptaaiyaat*. As we have seen, the root of the word is *taa*, “beginning”, “front” or “before”, and *-ptaa-* means “of the beginning”, “of the front” “of before”, or “the foremost”. For the purpose of the present discussion, translated simply, *Kiptaiyaat*, or *Ptaaiyaat*, means “The Leader” or “The Overlord” and the early Kalenjiin Christian converts were not wide off the mark when they offered the *Kiptaiyaat* title as an equivalent of the English word “Lord”.

It is the finding of the author that, unknown to the missionaries, their non-Kalenjiin-speaking African assistants, as well as to the collaborating Kalenjiin converts, the notion and the esteem in the name, *Kiptaiyaat*, *Giptaiyaat* or *Ptaaiyaat*, had either been derived from Ptah, or Ptah had been derived from it in greater antiquity. At any rate it only referred to the Holy and never at any stage to the profane.

The Kalenjiin translation of the Bible goes on to replace the word “Lord” in both the New Testament and the Old Testament with *Kiptaiyaat*, “the Lord”. So although *Kiptaiyaat*, or *Ptaaiyaat*, when it stands alone, i.e., without qualification, now refers to Jesus, it can also refer to His Father as it indeed does with respect to the Old Testament.

At the time when the Kalenjiin offered the title *Kiptaiyaat* for Jesus, or “the Lord”, it had been in use as a most revered title for military commanders as well as for retired leaders who were serving as elders and advisers. This fact the Kalenjiin converts certainly knew and, essentially, being members of a martial community, they could not have offered a more fitting title—in their own eyes—to denote the Holy. It was in keeping, in any case, with the Old Testament habit of referring to Jehovah as “Lord of hosts” or “Jehovah of hosts”, i.e., “leader of the armies”, which the Kalenjiin traditional *Kiptaiyaat*, or *Ptaaiyaat*, at the earthly level, was. This reference is found in Amos, e.g. 3:13, Jeremiah 11:20, 11:22 etc., in Malachi so profusely, and in Zechariah etc.

¹ Although the h-sound symbol  comes at the end of the word, the Kalenjiin form *Ki-ptaa* or *Gi-ptaa* as well as the etymology of the name *Egypt*, suggest that  was pronounced *Gyptaa*, something closer to the Kalenjiin rendering and to the name *Egypt* itself. The symbol  in this name, therefore, seems to have the value *Ki* or *Gy* and is to be pronounced first although it may come at the end of the word. But, as mentioned before, the Kalenjiin often omit the initial *Ki-* or *Gi-*.

An African-American friend of the author's, Mr Sababu Shabaka, told the author that in America they pronounce Ptah, “Peter” or “Pitaa”. The Arabs of modern Egypt pronounce it even more horrendously: Bitaa! The /i/ sound between /p/ and /t/ does not exist. Sababu got the right Hamitic pronunciation of Ptah easily after the author pointed out to him the more correct pronunciation of the name. Put the lips together, then open them as you pronounce tah. It is acceptable to begin with /i/ as in “it”: iPtah. The initial helping /i/ may be omitted upon accomplishment. The same rule goes for other Hamitic words which begin with ps, pk, pr, pch, pl, pn.

As for the Egyptian Arabs, they have no /p/ sound in their language. So as you fasten your seatbelt at the end of your flight to Cairo, prepare to be asked for your bas-borrt at the air-borrt but things will be faster if you have diplomatic baberrs (passport, airport, diplomatic, papers)!

However, later biblical versions, such as *The Holy Bible, the New International Version* (1984), use the term “Almighty” in the place of “Lord of hosts” and “Jehovah of hosts”.

Importantly though, the Kalenjiin Bible (1969), in Amos 3:13, for example, calls Jehovah all these: *Kiptaiyaat* Jehovah, *Kamuktoiindet nebo lugoosiek*, i.e. both *Kiptaiyaat*, “Lord”, and “The Almighty one of the armies”.

The use of the name Ptah, in its various forms and with respect to its cognatic linkage to both ancient Egypt and modern Kalenjiinland, may best be demonstrated by examination of its use in connection with the military. The Kipsigiis sub-nation’s army was always divided into four permanent and hereditary regiments, four being the most sacred number to the Kalenjiin. Other Kalenjiin sub-nations followed differing arrangements from place to place although in their final poise for attack once in enemy territory, their armies would also split up into groups of four files. The leader of one of the four Kipsigiis military regiments was referred to as *Kiptaiyaat aap Poryeet*, “the Regimental Commander”, while the grand commander of the four regiments was the *Kiptaiyaat neoo nebo Porioosyek*, “the Grand Commander of (all) the Regiments”. The leader of all the serving and the retired regiments, *Kiptaiyaat neoo nebo Murenik*, “the Grand commander of all Men”, was answerable to the Council of Elders that ruled the land on behalf of the *Oorgoiyoot*.¹

The ancient Egyptian military, like the Kipsigiis one, when either still existed in its time and place, was always composed of four regiments. One such Egyptian regiment was named Ptah, after this “god”. Maspero has commented as follows regarding the ancient Egyptian army:

“Both spearmen and archers were for the most part pure-bred Egyptians, and were divided into regiments of unequal strength, each of which usually bore the name of some god... The army of Rameses II at the battle of Qodshu comprised four corps, which bore the names of *Amon, Ra, Ptah* and *Sutkhu* (Set) ... The effective force of the army was made up by auxiliaries taken from the tribes of the Sahara and from the Negroes of the Upper Nile” (Maspero pub. 1871-1916 Vol. IV:312, Cf. Maspero, 1892:75-92).

The above description of the ancient Egyptian military divisions by Maspero is to be compared with the corresponding 1939 description of the Kipsigiis military arrangement by Peristiany (1939:161).

“The *puriet* (*poryeet*) is another of the social groupings into which the Kipsigis are drawn from the moment of their birth. There are four Kipsigis *puriosiek*: *Kipkayge, Ngetunyo, Kasanet*, and *Kebeni*. The *Kipkayge* with the *Ngetunyo* and the *Kasanet* with the *Kebeni* are united together without any possibility of saying which one is a subdivision of the other.”

¹Adapted from Peristiany, 1939:Chapt. IX.

He goes on to say, by way of footnote, that the names of the four *poryoosyek* (pl. of *poryeet*) were “said to be those of four Kipsigiis heroes who came into being at the time of the creation of the earth by Asis.”

Thus we see that where the Kipsigiis tradition has it that the regiments were named after four original heroes who were directly created by Asiis at the very beginning of being, the ancient Egyptian regiments were named after four “gods” of whom we shall later learn were really deified heroes. These were also considered to date back to the beginning of being.

It is perhaps not surprising that the military regiments were kept at four, four being the sacred number to the Kalenjiin and, as pointed out above, to the ancient Egyptians alike. This phenomenon is demonstrated in Appendix 5 by way of a discussion on the quarternity principle and the concept of the cross.

The Kalenjiin did not have a military regiment named after Ptah as did the ancient Egyptians, but all the leaders of regiments at locational, regional and territorial levels, as stated in the Kipsigiis example above, were respectively referred to as *Kiptaiyaat*, i.e., Ptah, “the Leader/Lord”.

The act of going to war, often with the aim of plundering, was called *Seet*, which word coincides with the name of one of the ancient Egyptian regiments that was named after the “god” Set or Sutkhu.¹

The sacred figure four was also employed in the battlefield as an offensive strategy by the ancient Egyptian army as by the Kalenjiin army. Peristiany describes the Kipsigiis army’s *night-attack* offensive strategy in the following manner:

“During the day time the warriors walk in single file, but when night falls, *they separate into four kwanak* (columns), commanded by the four *Kiptaynek ab puriosiek*, and each *kwanet* is subdivided into smaller files, each led by a *Kiptaiyat ab murenak*, while the whole army obeys the *Kiptayat neo nebo murenak* (also called *Kipt. neo nebo puriosiek*)” (Peristiany, 1939:167).

Peristiany’s description of the Kipsigiis army’s attack strategy may be compared with Maspero’s description of the ancient Egyptian army’s corresponding offensive strategy: “The (ancient Egyptian) soldiers, each carrying a small linen bag, came up in squads before the commissariat officers, and each received his own allowance. Once in the enemy’s country the army advanced in close order, the infantry in columns of four...” (Maspero, 1896:220).

¹ But no pretence is entered into here that the strictly monotheistic Kalenjiin appeared to know or recognise Ptah (or Set for that matter) as a god in the East African setting. Knowledge of this fact, of the ancient divine correlation between a “god” and an “overlord”, may have died with the earliest immigrants from Egypt. And, like all the other deity names that have since been retained as mere vocabulary, the name Ptah was preserved and used in reference to an exalted office not altogether unrelated to the old notion.

The above facts have gone to confirm plainly that the element of the Holy in the expression “Ptah”, was understood in an identical sense between the Kalenjiin and the ancient Egyptians. The military notion that went with it as well as its association with the sacred figure four, confirm to us that we are not discussing a coincidence but a continuation.



When it came to seeking a Kalenjiin name for the Creator—God the Heavenly Father as seen by the missionaries—the name Asiis, which referred to the deity recognised by the Kalenjiin as the sole creator and ultimate provider at the time, was rejected off hand. Perhaps it was thought to be too reminiscent of the indigenous religion, which the missionaries from the west had come to replace with their own. A name that was further removed had to be sought.

The Catholic-to-be Kalenjiin of the time selected the name Cheptaleel for “God”. Cheptaleel was but another Kalenjiin title for Asiis. It was, however, preferred to the then most exalted of names in the heart and mind of the Kalenjiin, Asiis. This latter, as pointed out above, may have sounded rather too inextricably linked to what was supposed to be the “pagan sun cult” then under siege. But Cheptaleel, naturally, had much to do with the supposed “sun cult”, being one name for Asiis.

The Protestant-to-be Kalenjiin opted to put a greater distance between themselves and any supposed notion of the “pagan sun cult”. So they selected the name “Jehovah” to represent God as re-introduced by the missionaries. Jehovah was the westernised form of the ancient Hebrew “Yhwh”. The acronym Yhwh had stood for the unutterable name that meant “He Who Is” with regard to the Hebrew god of the wilderness, of volcanoes and of the tumultuous seas. Yhwh in Moses’ time, as is well known, was famous for wrath and vengeance, hence the fear and the need for an embargo against uttering his name (Cf. Walker, 1983:43). Nevertheless, this name, in the erroneously transliterated form Jehovah, has been carried on and spread over much of the Christian world notwithstanding that there is no reference to it in the New Testament.


7.4 Ptah and the Pharaonic Concept of Divine Trinity

As far as Ptah’s faithful of Memphis, ancient Egypt, were concerned, Ptah was at the head of a triad in heaven. His divine trinity was composed of himself, his wife and son. The wife was named Sekhet, or Sakhmet and, in keeping with the ancient Egyptians’ habit of referring to a man’s wife as his sister, Sakhmet was also referred to as the sister of Ptah.

Sakhmet was rather ruthless, hot tempered and was usually portrayed wearing the head of a lioness. Her name  is thought to convey the meaning, “the mightiest one” because *s-khm* was the word for “power”, “authority” (Cf. Hornung, 1982:63). This translation can be confirmed with Kalenjiin *kiim* or *giim*, which, in any case, is cognate with ancient Egyptian  *gem*, “strength, power, might” (B.Dict. 807b). Going by this deduction, Sakhmet may, therefore, have philosophically represented the corporeal manifestations of the physical power of Ptah.

But as Ptah’s chief consort, Sakhmet would lead Ptah into ruthless and punitive decisions against mortals. She was the sun’s (Ptah’s) destructive eye, but also attacked hostile powers; she disseminated but also cured diseases (Cf. Hornung, 1982:282). Although she thus had the capacity to dispense good, her portrayal as a negative influence seems to predominate.

If Sakhmet was portrayed as both good and evil—possessing an ambivalent nature—then the very sound of her name, from the perspective of the Kalenjiin language, as well as from corroborating ancient Egyptian language sources, should entice us into a further and deeper search. The probable result is a discovery of a clever play with words in the invention of names on the part of the ancients. From a Kalenjiin language perspective, the name may either be read as *Sach-met*, “of the split head” or *Che-sach-met* “she of the split head”.¹

The symbol  in Sakhmet’s name, which represents a sistrum¹ and which, according to Gardiner, possesses the value *skhm* (1927:509), may actually be representing the sound *sach-m* because the

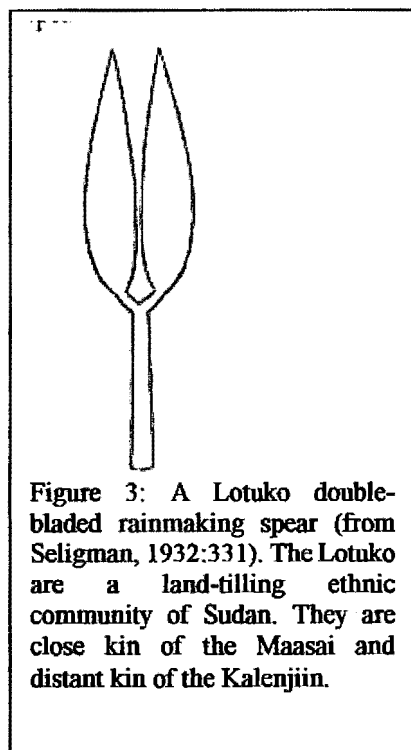






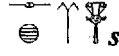


Figure 3: A Lotuko double-bladed rainmaking spear (from Seligman, 1932:331). The Lotuko are a land-tilling ethnic community of Sudan. They are close kin of the Maasai and distant kin of the Kalenjiin.

¹ This is how the form *Chesachmet* is arrived at: as we learned from Coptic and Kalenjiin examples in Chapter 6, where ancient Egyptian feminine gender counterpart names of male names are concerned, the letter  /t/ is uttered first even though it may come last in the parallel hieroglyphic representation, as it often does. So here we have the name *Tie-sach-me(t)* which is contracted to *Chesachmet*, “the lady of a split head” or “she whose head is forked”—signifying her split personality. For the theory to make sense in the context of the etymology of the name Sakhmet, we need to ascertain that the ancient Egyptians also called the “head” *met* as do the Kalenjiin, and sure enough the Bohairic Copts call the “skull”  (*moti*)—*Crum’s Coptic Dictionary* p. 12. This may imply that there occurred a semantic shift wherein the word for “head” ended up meaning “skull” in a deterioration process understood by linguists.

sistrum was played by “rattling” which in ancient Egyptian is  *seshsh*, “to rattle a sistrum” (B.Dict. 621b). This is Kalenjiin *-sach* as in *i-sach*, “you rattle” or “you shake”. Now, it so happens that *sach* in Kalenjiin as well as in ancient Egyptian, also means “(to) split” as confirmed by Budge’s dictionary entry:  *shesh* “to split, be opened” (B.Dict. 731a) or  *steh* also “to split, to open” (B.Dict. 629a). The symbol  here, which represents the notion “to split”, is also present in the word for sistrum owing to the fact that rattling of it sounds like the word for “split” as well as the fact that some sistrums had split, or forked heads, in the manner of letter Y. The sistrum word is, for this reason, hieroglyphically presented as follows:  *skhem* “sistrum” (B.Dict. 616a).

The ambivalent characteristic of Deity as represented in the character of Sakhmet, is what is implied when the Kalenjiin talk of “Benevolent” and “Evil Thunder”, which is briefly discussed here, further below, as a general concept of trinity, and discussed at length under the “Trinity of Asiis” in the latter part of this section.

The ambivalent personality concept is well illustrated by the ambivalent character of *Iilat* (Cf. Kipkorir, 1973:14), the “Thunder (or Rain) God” to the Kalenjiin. Being an aspect of Asiis, *Iilat* is conceived of as two persons in one, one being benevolent while the other one is associated with evil but at the same time, like Sakhmet, is credited with the ability to dispense justice. The audible (rumbling thunder) and the cracking, visible agent (lightning) manifestations of *Iilat*—and, by extension, Asiis—go by the definite form of the word, i.e., *ileet*. The Malevolent *Ileet* agent is thought to attack with a forked sword, forked like the sistrum emblem of Sakhmet, while the Benevolent *Ileet* agent defends with a single-bladed sword. This concept and drama was recorded by Hollis in Nandi in 1909:

“The thunder-gods are not worshipped, nor are offerings made to them... The crashing of thunder near at hand is said to be the bad *Ilet* trying to come to earth to kill people, whilst the distant rumbling is the good *Ilet*, who is protecting them and driving away his namesake. Forked and sheet lightning are said to be the swords of the bad and good *Ilet* respectively” (Hollis, 1909:41 & 99).


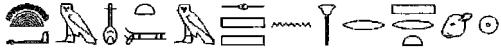
The stacks of sacred spears to be found in the shrines of the rainmakers of the Nilotic and Hamitic-speaking South-eastern sections of Sudan often include at least one forked spear, approximately of the blade design shown in the illustration here. This forked spear symbol signifies recognition of the dual nature of deity as well as the realisation of the inevitability of evil coming alongside good. The mythological forked spear that the ancestors of the Kalenjiin assigned to the

¹ A sistrum is a musical instrument of ancient Egyptian origin, consisting of a metal frame with transverse metal rods that
Footnote continued at bottom of next page

Malevolent *Ileet* corresponds to the forked spear of the Nilotic and Hamitic-speaking rainmakers of Sudan. Both go to suggest a possible etymology of the Egyptian “deity” name Sakhmet, namely that it refers to the ambivalent nature of Deity as proposed above.

The dual nature of Deity is also recognised by the Oromo of southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya. The priest of the Macha branch of the Oromo, who goes by the name *borana*—not to be confused with the Kenyan Oromo who go by the sub-ethnic name Borana, although the latter may well owe descent to the former—is endowed with both the powers of blessing as well as the powers of cursing. This is how the Oromo explain his dualistic nature: he is said to have a tongue that is dark blue or black on the underside but is of normal colour on the upper side. Because deity is thought to be black, hence the name, *Waqā guracca*, “God black”, the black underside of the priest’s tongue is thought to utter the blessing while the pinkish, or reddish, upper side carries the threat of his powers to curse, which he may well apply if the unfortunate need arises (Cf. Baldick, 1997:126).

The apprehending of the Holy as a duality, i.e., as a composite of the Holy and the unholy, is manifestly widespread, at least in Africa, as we observed in Chapter 2, but probably world-wide too, the “western” religions’ uncoupling of the two into two separate antagonistic entities, God and Satan, being the “odd man out”. To cover more of Africa with regard to this concept, we may recall from Chapter 2 that the Shona of Zimbabwe similarly convey their dual concept of the Deity by their two names for Deity as: *Chirazamauya*, “the one who provides for good and bad”, and *Chirozva-mauya*, “the one who has power to destroy the good and the bad” which concept, as we saw, Van der Merwe (1957:8) aptly summarises as follows: “The VaShona seem to believe that God could also be the author of Evil.”

The negative pull on the side of Ptah, represented by the character of Sakhmet, was countered by the other member of the triad,  Nefertem, the son of Ptah and Sakhmet. Nefertem, unlike his mother, Sakhmet, was soft, kind of effeminate and was associated with fragrance, perfume and flowers—especially the lotus flower. He represented the youthful stage of Ptah, or Ra who, as the “sun-god”, burst forth into being from a lotus flower before the nostrils of Ra  (Budge, 1895:cxxi).

Nefertem pleaded on behalf of the mortals’ souls, before Ptah. His actions and desires were thus opposite those of his mother. He always tried to persuade Ptah to influence positive happenings for the benefit of wretched man. The character of Nefertem, therefore, embodied the positive, beautiful, loving and caring aspect of Ptah. No wonder, as we saw further above, the name Nefertem meant “the Accomplished All”, i.e. “the excellent one”. The name was derived from the name of the “god” Atum whose name, as we have pointed out, meant “the Totality, the All.” (Cf. Piankoff, 1957:12).

This triad arrangement, complete with an interceding positive “god” on one side of the chief deity, and a negatively charged, rather evil-intentioned member on the other side—who was, however, capable of dispensing some good—was repeated over and over in other regions of ancient Egypt, even where the local chief deities were not embodied in Ptah.

As we have observed, the triad of Ptah was somewhat similar to the Kalenjiin mythological divine triad in terms of collegiate function. Asiis, according to some myths, existed as, or in a triad. The other members, as mentioned above, were “Benevolent Thunder (the rumbling one)’ and Malevolent Thunder (the explosive one associated with lightning)”, i.e. *Ileet ne-mie* and *Ileet ne-ya* respectively. The two forces pulled in opposite directions and, like Nefertem and Sakhmet, the one attempted to influence Asiis positively, while the other attempted to lead Her to make negative decisions that were harmful to man and all other living things. The resultant action, or lack of it, by Asiis; was attributed by the mortals to the influence of one of the two, depending on the desirability of the act, or the absence of the expected action.

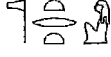
All positive happenings, however, were attributed directly to Asiis Herself. It may, therefore, be said that the rumbling positive *Ileet ne-mie* represented the good, caring and benevolent nature of Asiis. Going by the author’s informants, there was no negative side to Asiis: none of the aged informants ever dared to mention Asiis in the negative light. *Ileet ne-ya* was entirely responsible for all evil things, sins, murders, thefts, rapes, incest etc. Some of the harm was inflicted through and in concert with ill-meaning spirits of some deceased ancestors.

Nevertheless, arbitration was also "*Ileet ne ya's*" (Evil Thunder's) other main role. And in this role, *Ileet ne ya*, in its physical manifestation as lightning, was well appreciated, especially because it was believed that property that had been acquired unjustly from other members of the community, was certain to be struck by lightning. If the property so acquired was in the form of animals, then such animals were struck dead. If the theft was in the form of illegal boundary extension, lightning would leave in its wake scratch marks along the line where the correct boundary should follow. Lightning is even today still called upon to play this arbitrating role when there are disputes involving otherwise recalcitrant parties. Many claim to have seen the linearly laid scratch marks that were left behind by lightning on plots whose boundaries had been disputed and other signs of the retributory works of *ileet*.

Departed spirits, some of whom visited destruction upon the living, like the *Ileet ne-ya* did, were not part of the trinity of Asiis. The evil, or ill-meaning spirits of departed relatives who had been failures on earth, or those who had themselves been failed by the living prior to or after they had died, usually endeavoured to cause disease and death. Like all spirits, good or evil, they resided below planet earth and not above. According to the informants in the Kalenjiin oral field, they were not, therefore, part of Asiis who, although omnipresent, symbolically resided in the heavens. No prayers were directed to the departed spirits. Only requests to leave the living alone through symbolic propitiation such as by offer of milk and beer in token quantities were directed to them, and quite incessantly too. Some restless spirits would occasionally be appeased, in spite of being undeserving for one reason or another, by being reincarnated in newborn babies of their particular lineages (see Chapter 12).

The eminent British ethnologist, AC Hollis, recorded the existence of the Asiisian triad, described above, at the time of unmitigated worship of Asiis in 1909 AD, in his book *The Nandi, their Language and Folklore*. Three of the other notable early western anthropologists who came to Kalenjiinland were Beech, Orchardson, and Peristiany. They studied the Pokoot (Beech) and the Kipsigiis (Orchardson and Peristiany) early in the century. Orchardson and Peristiany do not mention the thunder members as part of a triad in their books. Instead the spirits of deceased ancestors are recorded as being important although they were not worshipped because the Kalenjiin, in the East African setting, were never ancestor worshippers.

Beech recorded the Pokoot belief that *Iilat* was the servant of *Tororrot* (Asiis). As part of his routine chores, *Iilat* carried water, which caused rain when it spilled accidentally (1911:15-20). Since this water-bearing *Iilat* aspect was the manifestation of the benevolent *Ileet* essence of *Tororrot*, and yet there still was the punitive cum-arbitrator manifestation of *Tororrot* in the distinct form of *Ileet* of lightning, it is to be understood that *Tororrot* had both the *Ileet* forces under Her as subordinates. Even then they were, indeed, aspects of Herself. This was, therefore, also a case of three persons in

one: a trinity. In ancient Egyptian, *Torrorot* was styled,  *Trt*, translated by Gardiner (1927:614) as “goddess”.

The century—or so—old lady sage, Cheboleet cheepo Terik of Matobo, Kericho, Kipsigiis, was emphatic in some of her several interviews with the author that, to the Kipsigiis, there were two *Ileet* assigned precisely those opposing roles. It is probable, therefore, that some of the early writers, who wrote on the Kipsigiis, forgot to pursue this key issue with their informants.¹

The Maasai, being but another fellow Hamitic-speaking cousins of the Kalenjiin, recognise two sides to the Creator, *Enkai*.² *Enkai* is spoken of as if “She” is two separate superhuman individuals. *Enkai Narok*, “Black *Enkai*” is benevolent while *Enkai Nanyokie*, “Red *Enkai*” is the revenging and evil God(dess). The latter is associated with evil things like droughts, livestock and human diseases etc.

Strictly, or literally speaking, *Enkai* means “Sky” or “Heaven”. The Oromo of Southern Ethiopia also regard the whole expanse of heaven to be Deity whom they call *Waqaa guracca*, which could mean either “black sky” or “Black God” (Cf. Baldick, 1997:116). So the Maasai and the Oromo, like many other communities, such as the natives of North America and their Heaven Deity, Aronhiate; the Zulu of South Africa and their Sky Deity, conceive of the Ultimate in terms of the whole expanse of heaven or the skies (Cf. Tylor, 1871:255-256). This view suggests, or is symbolic of the omnipresence, boundlessness and limitlessness of Deity.

The view of Deity as a being composed of essentially two opposing natures, beneficent and destructive, is a typical characteristic of the religion of the Hamitic-speaking peoples. It is comparable to the view of Deity by the Hebrews who recorded in the Bible that Yahweh declared thus: “I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the Lord, do all these things” (Isaiah 45:7).

That the people he calls savages and barbarians could have developed such dualistic ideals that were the equivalent of the antagonistic forces of God and the Devil of the West, was a contention that was highly distrusted by Tylor. He suspected that the concept was introduced to the Africans and the Native Americans respectively by the early Christian missionaries who came to their land. If that was not the case, he opined, then the European anthropologists who had described the dualistic concepts

¹Here the narration is put in the past tense although the worship of Asiis is still being practised in several pockets of the Kalenjiin nation today. One of Cheboleet’s great mythologies with regard to Asiis (Cheemarus) and *Ilat*, is narrated under Asiis/Isis story.

²Like the Kalenjiin Goddess, Asiis, *Enkai* is also perceived in the female form, as the deity’s name begins with a Maa[sai] feminine prefix *en-*.

associated with these “savages” had mistaken and exaggerated “savage ideas in this direction” (Tylor, 1871:316, 317).

A closer look at the dualistic concept of Deity that was advanced by the Kalenjiin, as recorded by Hollis in 1909 (above), and corroborated variously by others after him, reveals certain subtle role apportionment between the dual, or ambivalent, aspects of Deity that are wholly strange to Christian thought. The devil in Christianity retains his evil character and plays that role only; seeming to be totally confined to working havoc on the morals of the mortals, luring, trapping and then abandoning them to eternal punishment for such deeds as he may have mislead them into committing.

The devil of the Kalenjiin mind, on the other hand, also strives to waylay and mislead morally yes, but he is at the same time capable of arbitrating, showing right and punishing the unjust. This devil, in his manifestation of Evil Thunder, seems to have an ambivalent nature in his own right although evil rules the greater part of him. He comes closer to Shiva of Hinduism to whom we shall pay some brief attention shortly and, as it must have become apparent, differs subtly—but not wholly—from the Christian interpretation of the devil.

The Oromo of Southern Ethiopia appreciate the good that accrues from the love of the Creator, *Waqaa guracca*, but to the Creator they also ascribe the not-so-good; punishments and death included. They believe in predestination although they contradict this by praying and sacrificing profusely. They say, “a person does not stop praying, and God does not change what he has decided.” The fact of their belief in the ambivalence of Deity is made out from their attitude towards the work of Deity through lightning that kills. They say, “People are right to praise God when someone is killed by lightning (since, it is believed, lightning kills only the cursed, the community rejoices).”¹

The dualistic view of Deity as being composed of two opposing natures, i.e., is ambivalent, also characterises the Hindu religion. *Devi* or *Durga*, the great Goddess of Hinduism, is comprehended in two natures: she goes under various names according to the forms she takes. As Parvati, mother of Ganesha and Kartikeya, she is the beautiful, benevolent goddess of the mountains and opponent of the demons. As Kali, a goddess of fertility and time, she personifies the opposing forces of creation and destruction, and assumes a malevolent aspect: a hideous old woman, with a necklace of skulls, a belt decorated with severed human heads and a protruding tongue. As *Durga*, she is the fierce goddess, often identified with *Kali*, depicted with eight or ten arms, riding a tiger or lion, and slaying the demon who comes in buffalo form. In those two conflicting personalities, she complements and completes the Ultimate in the manner of Sakhmet of ancient Egypt (Cf. OIE 1997/2).

¹ Baldick, 1997:130, citing George Cotter, *Proverbs and Sayings of the Oromo People of Ethiopia and Kenya with English Translations* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1992).

The Asiisian trinity can also be compared to the *Tri-murti*, “trinity”, of Hinduism, where the ultimate, Brahma, exists with and as (1) Shiva the god of destruction and dissolution who, however, also tramples on the forces of ignorance and chaos, and keeps creation in balance. He is iconographically represented in the form of a bull called Nandi. (2) As Vishnu, the benevolent one who is the preserver of the cosmos and the restorer of moral order.

Vishnu, the manifestation of the absolutely benevolent aspect of Deity, is popular owing to his power of reincarnation. He is said to have appeared over the ages in nine animal and human earthly *avatars* “incarnations”. Each time he came back to intervene after the world had degenerated into chaos and was facing self-destruction. The most popular of his incarnations, is his appearance as Krishna and Buddha, the eighth and ninth incarnations respectively. The Hindus are still awaiting, but claim to already witness enough evil in the world to usher in the tenth incarnation of Vishnu as the apocalyptic Kalki who, this time round, must perform a final act of complete destruction owing to the fact that the world has degenerated morally beyond salvation (Cf. Pancholi, 1982:30).

What strikes the casual observer, however, is that, outwardly, Hindu religious worship seems to be directed towards the numerous personal “gods” and “goddesses”, the revered inanimate anthropomorphic occupants of family prayer alcoves and temples. But when all is said and done, we are back to a triad; of Vishnu, Shiva, and the Great Goddess (in the names Shakti, Durga, or Kali). Each of these is the object of monotheistic devotion. The varied levels of esteem enjoyed by and the devotion to the three individual aspects of the Hindu Deity among the individual sections of the Hindu society, has led to the appearance of seemingly independent individual cults, Vaishnavism, Shaivism, and Shaktism. These constitute, in practice, the three major forms of Hinduism. But when viewed as one movement, the position of the Great Goddess here, we may note, is analogous to that of Asiis, and the positions of Vishnu and Shiva are analogous to the positions of the Benevolent *Iilat* and the Malevolent *Iilat* of Kalenjiin mythology respectively.¹

The two divinities that come under the female Godhead Shakti (Durga or Kali) are both male and we will also see, under the Isis and Asiis discussion, Chapter 9, that one of the two (mythological) subordinate male divinities in both religions, Asiisianism and Hinduism, is the husband of the female head. This also mirrors the ancient Egyptian Godhead arrangement where the “storm god”, Osiris, like the “storm god” *Iilat* of Kalenjiin mythology, who is the husband of Cheemarus (the mythological Asiis), is the mythological husband of Isis.

¹ Cf. *The Oxford Interactive Encyclopedia*, 1997.

7.5 The Ennead

Apart from the triad units, or triunes, almost each Egyptian locality associated its chief deity with the creation of nine supporting “gods” and “goddesses”. And, interestingly, one locality’s chief deity would find himself or herself playing the role of a mere supporting deity in another locality.

Following is the list of the Ennead, the nine “gods” and “goddesses” created by Ptah and produced by Atum by means of self-impregnation according to the Memphite theology:¹ Shu, “god” of air; Tefnut, “goddess” of mist; Geb, “god” of Earth; Nut, “goddess” of sky; Osiris, “god” of the dead and of resurrection; Isis, wife of Osiris; Set, enemy of Osiris; and Nephthys, wife of Set. This list, although it represents the usual composition of the Ennead, is not canonical, and in fact it would change from age to age, some ages expunging Atum from the process of creation and substituting another “sun-god” in his place (Cf. Hornung, 1982:222).

A notion of the “ennead” may have been entombed and forgotten over the generations in the Kalenjiin concept of *Sogool-daiik*, meaning “the group of nine”. The *sogoldaiik* party of nine (*sogool*) scouts always led the *luget*, “army raiding party”. This is what Peristiany (1939:167) wrote about the *sogoldaiik*:

“Before the *luget* marched, nine *sogoldaik* (scouts) were sent in advance, to report on the road and on the movements of the enemy. The number of *sogoldaik* is symbolic, as it is said that nine is the greatest number of children a woman can bear and thus, here, that the *luget* following on the footsteps of the nine *sogoldaik* will capture the greatest possible number of cattle.” and expounding under footnote, *Sogoldaiik* is “from *sogol*, nine, and *oik*, spirits (?)”

Sogoldaiik may have a lot to do with the invisible world, but certainly the *-aiik* particle does not refer to spirits. It only qualifies *sogool*, “nine”, and gives it the meaning “the group of nine”. But Peristiany did not miss the point on the symbolic essence of the number nine. It represents, in this case, the totality of the Kipsigiis nation: namely that the soldiers on the march were representative of that nation in its entirety.

That nine was considered as both the highest and the ideal number of children that a woman could and should bear in her reproductive span is almost a sure reference to the ancient mythologies of Deity giving birth to nine children even if, in the Kalenjiin context, the genesis of this standard may have long been forgotten. But this is a widespread concept as among the Kintu-speaking Gikuyu, the children of a woman should ideally be nine and any extra on top of this is a bonus that only comes to brace the first nine. Ten, with reference to children in Gikuyu, for instance, is *kenda muhiuru*, “nine

¹Some of the members of Ptah’s Ennead will be discussed in detail while any that do not interest us vis-a-vis the thrust of this thesis will be left out. There are several more “gods” however who were not in the Ennead but whom we shall discuss as they are of great relevance to the study.

full”, meaning that the woman had fulfilled her full obligation of giving birth to nine like the mythological first mother of the Gikuyu people, Mumbi, did.¹

Fancying Ptah presiding over the nine-”god” ”cabinet”, reminds us of another Kalenjin title for Asiis: Asiis *Chepokelyensogool* (*Tie po keelyen sogool*), i.e. ”Asiis, the Girl (or Lady) of Nine Legs”. This is a common expression and the aforementioned Ian Orchardson, the famous British-born honorary Kipsigiis man who was known to the Kipsigiis of his generation by his nickname of Chemosusu, duly recorded it earlier in the century while writing about the Kipsigiis. G. S. Snell, a British administrator, writing about the Nandi in the fifties, also recorded this salutation to Asiis. The phrase-name must be very old indeed and may date back to Egyptian times as no one, in Kalenjin country of today, seems to know what the ”nine legs” stood for.²

The author’s Maasai informant, Lekaken ole Koros, once told him of an interesting Maasai moral conception of figure nine. It may constitute a hint as to how figure nine came to be considered sacred in the first place. The number nine is sacred to the Maasai too. Their fines for genocide consist of nine animals. The figure is also applied in several other areas of Maasai culture and religion. Ole Koros told the author that nine is important to the Maasai because it signifies the totality and sanctity of the human body. The human body has nine orifices: the two eyes lead into an orifice each; there are two nostrils; two ear-holes; the mouth; the male/female genitalia and the anus: total, NINE.

¹ But it is important to note here that most conservative African societies disallow the naming of the actual number of children that one has. So even if a woman had nine children, she would just say ”blessed” if asked how many children she had. But it is acceptable to declare a smaller number, say two, when one means three, four or more. It is thus only acceptable to declare the old ideal of nine when one means ten or more.

² Orchardson discusses Kipsigiis religion in various documents in the National Archives under DC/KER/3/1, particularly during the period 1918-1927, and in his posthumously published book *The Kipsigiis* (1961). G.S. Snell mentions the same salutation to Asiis in his book *Nandi Customary Law* (1954).

Summary of Chapter 7: Asiis in Ptah and in other Ancient Egyptian “Gods”

Perhaps it struck one earlier on as an oddity that we were indulging ourselves here in the affairs of other “gods” of Egypt instead of dealing solely with Isis whom we were ostensibly comparing with Asiis of the Kalenjiin in accordance with the title of this work. But perhaps it has subsequently come out clear that while the Kalenjiin viewed Deity under one name but with multiple attributes and manifestations, the ancient Egyptians preferred to view the same being under different names and attributes, often in such a way that each major attribute went under the name of a specialised divinity determined along the lines of his or her typicality. However each Egyptian divinity bore the attributes of the others in an all-in-one or self-contained manner, differing quantitatively and qualitatively only where the said specialisation began. For instance Ptah was all “gods” in one but only excelled in his essential quality of portraying the primordiality as well as the unsurpassable craftsmanship of Deity. That was Ptah’s divine constituency. Ra, for his part, was all the “gods” in one, but being so closely associated with the sun that died and resurrected daily, he best portrayed the capacity of Deity to defeat death and resurrect and, by being born again and again, he portrayed best the Deity’s powers of regeneration etc. It was not out of the blue therefore that the cult of Osiris, which hinged on the concepts of defeat of death and resurrection, was to later grow from, and, in fact, virtually eclipse Ra. Osiris, as we have seen, and as we will continue to learn, was only a humanised, simplified extension of Ra. He was an aspect of Ra that was more or less, in the manner of the relatively more recent Jesus Christ, assigned human existence and eventual suffering, painful death and then the defeat of that death through resurrection. Such human and superhuman qualities of Deity the believers could conceptualise, understand, identify with, fashion belief on and hinge their hopes upon.

We saw that the idea of Deity’s maximum endowment with the motherly instinct as well as the concept of excellent motherhood, were embodied in the aspect of Deity that the Egyptians named “Isis” and, to an extent, in her manifestation as Miot. She was the “Mother of all Gods”, from which expression we gather that she was absolutely antecedent, an attribute that the apparent circular logic of the ancient Egyptian mind also assigned to Ptah. But by a quote from Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*, we gathered that Isis “in One form expressed all Gods and Goddesses”. Other “gods” such as Amon and Min, embodied and enhanced the essentially phallic and fertility-giving aspects of the One Deity.

We have noted the fact that the Kalenjiin, and the ancient Egyptians alike, have been respectively accused of sun-worship. Indeed there exists the common use of names, which are in themselves cognate between the two languages, interchangeably for Deity and for the sun. These are *ra* and *asiis(ta)*. The fact that the respective believers similarly oriented prayers to the east, only served to escalate the sun-worship accusation. But we see the logic clearly the moment we come to appreciate that the sun was only a convenient symbol—the most competent and obvious symbol in fact—for Deity, but it was not regarded as the ultimate principle, the would be object of prayers.

From reading the comments made by eminent scholars and theologians who have studied the ancient Egyptian and the Kalenjiin religions respectively, we learn that the less ignorant of them have been able to cast aside the theological and intellectual prejudice and thereby managed to grasp the subtleties that underpin the respective philosophies of the people whose religions are being studied. In them they have managed to see a monotheistic non-nature worship system that was as theologically sound as any other world monotheistic movement.

Given the foregoing arguments, therefore, a comparative analysis of the attributes of any of the Egyptian divinities vis-a-vis those of Asiis, is a legitimate exercise in comparative religion with respect to the beliefs of the two peoples, the ancient Egyptians and the Kalenjiin. But if we were to confine ourselves to comparing Isis and Asiis only, we would have little to say beyond the similarity in names and one or two other shared attributes. We would not be comparing the respective religious systems as full packages.

We have, and this is important, demonstrated that the well-known word for Deity, *Ntr*, with regard to ancient Egypt, and which was used with reference to any other beings that were assumed to be of divine nature, i.e. saints etc. could be given an etymological explanation in the Kalenjiin and Maasai languages. In Kalenjiin it means the “exalted one” and in the Maasai language it means “the Beginner (of things)”, or the “Creator (of earth)”. The Egyptologists’ misrepresentation of it as meaning “god” has partly led to the accusation of polytheism on the part of the ancient Egyptians because so many beings of diverse nature were referred to as *Ntr*.

That said, we have seen that various Egyptological authorities have come to accept that the so-called gods of ancient Egypt were all spiritual and conceptual and not historical beings. That means that they were invented or partially recruited from real human heroes and heroines in order to fit in a line of moral teaching about the virtues of Deity and about righteous living, depending on the spiritual and moral expediency demanded by the situation. This was in line with a pedagogical technique that was later to be favoured by the Gnostic founders and shapers of Christianity—about whom much more is said in Appendix 5. They called the technique “allegorical exegesis”. According to its principles, the lesson learned from a reported event was more important than the historical factuality or otherwise of the event. To them, if a purely invented story taught a moral lesson effectively, then the end had justified the means.

We have also seen that the enlightened school of Egyptologists, represented notably by such an Egyptological heavyweight as Budge, has acknowledged the monotheism of the ancient Egyptians. An illustrated example of one individual’s appeal to all other “gods” not to accuse him before the Great God was supplied in support of this argument. We have cited certain Egyptologists’ contention that such evidence of Egyptian monotheism predates the proclamation to the same effect in Deuteronomy 6:4, by at least one thousand years.¹

We have seen that the name “Ptah” was derived from a root common between the ancient Egyptian, the Coptic, and the Kalenjiin languages. The root *taa* or *tah*, which at once means the “beginning”, “before”, the “front”, i.e. the “future” and “foremost” in these languages, is attached to the preposition *ap*, *pa*, or just *p*- which mean “of”, to arrive at “Ptah” which then connotes, “of the beginning” and “of the end”; this, again, in all the three languages alike. The name goes to emphasise the primordially, or the absolute antecedence of Deity, and Ptah is, therefore, the philosophical embodiment of that primordial aspect of Deity whether the Deity be known by any of the localised or specialised names: Isis, Ra, Amon or Khnemu etc. It is also a name that conveys the aspect of Deity as “Lord”, “Lord of hosts” and “Lord of all” as confirmed quite conclusively and, one might say, innocently; by the translators of the Bible into Kalenjiin. We have noted the importance of the fact that the first Kalenjiin proselytes easily and naturally elected to call Jehovah and Jesus Christ, in their sense of “the Lord”, *Kiptaiyaat*. We have suggested that this was the fuller version of Ptah, which is also clearly apparent in and confirmed by the Greek and Arabic respective renderings of *Kiptaios* and *Qibtiya*. We have also noted the Kalenjiin’s habitual

¹ However, Hornung (1982:246), who does not have much respect for Budge’s understanding and endorsement of Egyptian monotheism, asserts that because the ancient Egyptian religion did not expressly exclude all other “gods” when it spoke of one Deity, “never became a monotheistic faith, even in its most ‘philosophically’ tinged utterances” (1982:53). He excludes the short period during the reign of Akhenaton, the first to utter prayers that expressly excluded other “gods” but *Aton* or *Aten* symbolised by the sun’s disc and its rays: “Now, for the first time in history, the divine has become one, without complimentary multiplicity; henotheism has been transformed into monotheism.”

shortening of *Kiptaiyaat* to *Ptaiyaat*, which is really *Ptaa* with the Hamitic definite article *-t* affixed to it. This should confirm to us that the name “Ptah”, in the ancient Egyptian context, was an abbreviation of something closer to the fuller *Kalenjiin*, Greek and Arabic renderings.

Of far-reaching implication too is the ease with which the name versions *Kiptaios*, *Qibtiya*, *Kiptaiyaat*, *Kagiptaa* etc. could, just as well as Ptah, be explained etymologically as the source of the country name “Egypt” itself.

The importance of the brief etymological exercise with respect to the name Ptah here, is to bring the *Kalenjiin* language, culture and history into relevance and legitimacy with regard to the comparative discussions that follow.

If the notion “Ptah” lays emphasis on the primordially aspect of Deity, then the Deity’s creative faculty is represented by the manifestation known as *Chnmw*, *Khmemi* or *Khmemu*, “the moulder”, i.e. “the creator” whose name we have compared with the *Kalenjiin* *Chenamei*, the maker of items with clay—a truth confirmed eternally by the reputation of *Chnmw* as the creator of humans etc. from clay. His trademark is, fittingly, the potter’s wheel.

That Ptah may have been a historical super-craftsman, who was posthumously deified, does not abstract from his role as the personification of Deity in the latter’s role as the ultimate builder and craftsperson. Ptah was deified, if that was indeed the case, because he best conveyed such attributes of Deity and later generations had chosen to view such technological capabilities of Deity through him.

We noted, with the help of the unassailable evidence from Herodotus, that these attributes of Ptah were later absorbed whole along with the entire concept—meaning the entire religious package—by the Greeks and Romans who, back in their homelands, merely re-baptised Ptah Hephaestus and Vulcan respectively.

With regard to the undeserved infamy of ancient Egypt as the ultimate land of idolatry, we argued that physical symbolism, which is what it was, is no idolatry in the real sense of the word. The habit is indeed still present in all religions even today, beginning right from the very structures in which the activity of worship is performed. That is, if such structures are built for, or are dedicated to that purpose. The moment you declare a structure so sacred that no one should step in with shoes on, for an example, you are already deep into the ill-defined idolatry that others are so cheaply accused of. Such dedicated prayer structures may even include the plain prayer mound, *kaapkoros*, that is not man made but is set aside by Asiisians as sacred and used only for collective prayers. The false idolatrous appearance begins from the act of dedicating or consecrating the object, structure or site. But these objects, structures or sites, are vital for the performance of the rites as prayer aids or facilitators and they do not become so vital that they take the place of Deity.

If they did, that would amount to true idolatry. It is our theological naïveté that allows us to pass judgement on other people's prayer aids, calling them objects of worship; actually haughtily contending that they worship these handmade objects. To genuinely believe that a Hindu faithful actually worships a figurine that he has just made with his own hands and placed in his family alcove, as a "god", betrays our own theosophical naïvety and not that of the Hindu faithful in question.

An attempt was made to relate the Kalenjiin worship and culture to the Pharaonic cosmogonical structures of enneads, triads, and dualities. In this attempt we cited such examples as: the Kalenjiin's reference to Asiis as the "Lady of Nine Legs"; the mythological perception of Asiis as being composed of the triad of: Asiis, *Ileet ne mie* and *Ileet ne ya*; and the dualism apparent in the ambivalent nature of the *Ileet* element. This last was compared to the split temperament of ancient Egypt's Sakhmet.

The characteristic struggle between two divinities either from a triadic or from a dualistic superstructure; one representing the forces of evil, and the other one representing the positive or benevolent forces, has been shown to characterise Nilotic and other African cosmogonies. The original division of society into two dualistically opposed though complimentary moieties was cited as an example, or as an element of Kalenjiin dualism. And so was the ritualistic use of such items as the sacred double-bladed rain spear by related peoples; all in support of the "Sakhmet" concept, and which name, quite instructively, could be given a convincing etymological explanation from the vantage point of the Kalenjiin language.

We mentioned Egypt's hegemonic socio-political and cultural expansion into Mediterranean Europe and much of western Asia beginning from the Middle Kingdom—but noted that it probably took place even earlier than this by a period of about a millennium, and that cuts back right into the Old Kingdom times. We revisited the question of hegemonic ancient Egypt by way of advance preparation for and the justification of the use, as bona fide ancient Egyptian relics, of certain theological concepts and ritualistic practices from the Christian, Jewish and other religions that are associated with the geographical expanse outlined. An analysis of any socio-cultural element from this region alongside the corresponding Kalenjiin element would, in many ways, therefore, be considered as an indirect but still legitimate Egypto-Kalenjiin comparative analysis. Among such Egyptian exports are the bull sacrifices, sacrifice and veneration of rams, circumcision, the concept of the "storm god", the phallicism expressed in architecture, such as in the construction of minarets and domes that bear semblance to the obelisks of ancient Egypt and to the equally phallic *kimoonyjoguut* and round houses of much of Africa, etc.

Chapter 8

Asiis in Ra, in Amon-Ra and in Miot

Abstract

In Chapter 8 we discuss Ra as a solar “god” of ancient Egypt and explore the interesting interchangeability between the words *Ra* and *Asiis* for the “sun” and for the “day” in some Kalenjiin dialects, as is the case with ancient Egyptian with regard to the same word *Ra*. We discuss how that may have arisen from the fact that at one time both words, *Ra* and *Asiis* referred to Deity as symbolised by the sun, the object that creates the day.

We also discuss other ancient Egyptian “gods”, such as Min as he relates to Nilotic phallicism; Amon; Amon-Ra, the fusion of Amon and Ra; the triad of **MIOT-AMON-KHONS**, and the “gods” linked to the Semitic people and which exist in the Kalenjiin language, culture and religion within context: *Ilat* and *Baal*. We also take a brief look at other historical developments in present Kalenjiinland that run parallel to Israelite narratives, especially with regard to circumcision, the mountains and the rivers as holy symbols. Such parallelisms corroborate the northern traditions of the Kalenjiin.



Ra

8.1 Asiis in Ra

Ri, Re or Ra is a famous ancient Egyptian “sun-god”. This name also referred to the sun as a physical object. We saw under the discussion on Ptah that according to the priests of Ptah of Memphis, Ptah begot Ra, among others, by instructing Atum to self-impregnate. But at Thebes, the modern Luxor and Karnak, where the Ra worship was at its highest during the Middle Kingdom, about 2133-1786 BC, it was Ra or (in fusion with Amon) Amon-Ra, who took the upper hand as the supreme “god”.

The evidence of more ancient worship of Ra exists and is thought to date back to the predynastic period (Cf. David, 1980:33). This is thought so because, among other reasons (such as have been uncovered by archaeological work on very ancient sites), by the 5th dynasty, c. 2500-2200 BC, Ra worship was already so established. Temples of Ra, “the creator and maintainer of the Universe”, were built near pyramids, reflecting the unique relationship between Deity and king. The king was habitually called “son of Ra” from the 6th dynasty on (Cf. O’connor [a], GME 1993).

A people that saw and honoured the sun as the emblem of Deity, such as the ancient Egyptians and the Kalenjiin, were bound to associate and even appear to merge Deity, who may go by any name

and attributes whatsoever, with the sun. Thus almost all the “gods” of Egypt ended up being merged with or submerged in Ra, which tendency must lead us to accept that the ancient Egyptians were at least henotheistic if not outright monotheistic (Cf. Breasted, 1912:43).

The conception of Deity as Ra, of the sun emblem, which was often associated with Heliopolis (On) in Lower Egypt, was promoted very effectively by the Egyptian kings beginning with the said 5th Dynasty. However, by the time of the onset of that 5th Dynasty, the whole of Egypt had already adopted the worship of Ra—building on the religious achievements of the previous dynasty and before. The greatest pyramids, also the world’s largest man-made structures, are associated with the Kings who worshipped Deity in the name and attributes of Ra in the preceding 4th Dynasty. Pharaoh Chephren, of the 4th Dynasty, about 2600 BC, seems to have been the first to incorporate the name Ra in his official name, indicating that he was the son of Ra. This association with Ra, for the kings, was maintained for the remaining 2500 years, or so, of Pharaonic Egypt (Cf. Watterson, 1984:67).

By the 11th Dynasty, the dynasty that founded what is called by Egyptologists the Middle Kingdom (Middle Kingdom lasted 1991 to 1786 BC), Thebes was the capital of Egypt, the centre of political power having moved upstream southwards from Memphis and the surrounds within Lower Egypt. The Middle Kingdom laid a firm foundation and Egypt was soon to become the world’s greatest and wealthiest power, and the Pharaohs of the ensuing era that Egyptologists call New Kingdom, were to become rulers and cultural leaders over several other countries in the Mediterranean environs up north. These included: Babylonia, Assyria, Palestine, Syria, Phoenicia, Cyprus, Hatti, Mittani, and virtually any island country, including the Greek Islands, that goes by any name whatsoever today, around the Mediterranean and the Aegean seas. To Egypt’s south, her fellow African “possessions” included Nubia, Ethiopia and others that do not appear by name in today’s maps (Cf. O’connor [a] GME 1993, Breasted, 1912:313).


Being the religion of the capital, under any dynasty, usually expanded the influence of the capital’s “god” over others in far off regions. That is how certain locational “gods” rose to the level of national “gods” at various periods during the long history of Egypt. Capitals and centres of political power shifted up and down the Nile, and the shifting affected the fortunes of one or the other cult, either positively or negatively. And, as we have mentioned, the cult of Ra was the great beneficiary of the spectacular fortunes of the Middle and the New Kingdom, both of which cumulatively raised him to the status of something of a national “god”.

Represented in art with a man’s body and a falcon’s head surmounted by a solar disk, Ra was believed to sail across the sky in a boat each day and under the world at night. But the ancients also compared Ra’s daily movement across the sky to the flight of a falcon, hence the use of a falcon’s image to represent Ra. The sun disk with the outspread wings of the falcon became the commonest

symbol of Egyptian religion. As a falcon, Ra bore the name Hor (Horus), or Harakhte, which means “Horus of the horizon” (Breasted, 1912:9).






Ra was the self-engendered Eternal Spirit, who first appeared on the waters of *Nun* (the whole earth before creation was an ocean named *Nun*), as a beautiful child, floating on a great blue Lotus flower. The Egyptians loved the fragrance of the blue lotus (*Nymphaea cerulea*) and associated it with the sweat of Ra. Ra later created “gods”, the four winds, and the inundation waters of the Nile from his sweat. From his tears, *remyt*, he created mankind. As was later to be written in John 1:1 in respect of God according to the Christians, the vastly more ancient Ra theologians, had Ra creating all other things by mere word. By uttering the names of things he created them (Cf. Watterson, 1984:59).

Having created the world by naming its parts, Ra became King of “gods” and men. He reigned with his daughter, Maat, at his side. Maat wore a long upright feather in her hair. Because Maat stood for truth and justice, this feather was the one used to counter-weigh a dead man’s soul prior to being let into heaven and before the presence of Ra (Watterson, 1984:60).¹



Ra personally took care of the daytime lighting as the sun. In order to provide lighting at night, he created the moon and gave it to the charge of Tout, the “god” of time and intellect. From then on periods were measured using the lunar rhythm. And indeed the Kalenjiin call the moon (and month) *araaw-eet*. This is ancient Egyptian  *artaabt* (B.Dict. 68a) and quite close to *Ieru* the “moon-god” of the Berbers of North Africa who also happen to call the “rain-water” *Lilleu*, rather obviously Kalenjiin *Iila* or *Iilat* which is also found in Semitic languages. The “moon” or “month” in Hebrew is also called לַיְלָה *yare'akh*. The Kalenjiin, the Berber, the Hebrew, and the ancient Egyptian versions of the moon’s name, all appear to associate the moon with Ra, as his eye, or with the sense of sight (see below).

¹ However, this was a universal practice and the receiving “god” could be any of the known major “gods” of ancient Egypt. On the religious funerary literature covering the walls of Ramses VI’s tomb, the deceased king, who was a noted worshipper of Ra, as denoted by his name, is shown presenting the “goddess” Maat, in miniature form, out of his outstretched hand to Ptah (from the examination by author of the pictures of Piankoff, 1954, Plate 137 and others).


8.1.1 Relating Ancient Egypt's Ra to the Kalenjiin's Asiis on a Linguistic Level

Having discussed Ra, as worshipped in ancient Egypt to that extent, let us now note its relevance to the Kalenjiin language and culture. The word  *ra*,  *hrar* or  *hru* (B.Dict. 417, 450) meant both “sun” and “day”, in ancient Egyptian as it does in the Kalenjiin language. But that *ra* also refers to the sun in Kalenjiin as it does “day”, requires some exercise in deduction; for it is not readily discernible. “Today”, or “this day”, in ancient Egyptian was   *hrw pn* (Gardiner, 1927:34). The Kalenjiin equivalent is *ra-uni* or *ra-ini*, literally “this *ra*”, i.e. “this day”. From the same *ra*, we get *abako-ra*, which means “day in day out”, or “repeatedly” etc.

Now, it is probable that in earlier Kalenjiin times, *ra-uni* either meant “this sun”, or “this eye”, or both in literal terms. The “eye” argument enters the range of possibilities because, in Kalenjiin mythology, the sun is the daytime eye of Asiis while the moon is Her night eye. That appears to have been the case in ancient Egypt, and as famous as Ra was, he may just have been the symbolic eye of another “god”, or “goddess”. At least evidence exists to the effect that the Ptah cult members regarded Ra as the eye of Ptah as we saw above.

A word that is common to Kalenjiin, ancient Egyptian, Coptic and Hebrew languages alike, strongly supports this line of argument. The word “look (vb)”, in Kalenjiin is *i-roo*; in ancient Egyptian it was  *ar*; (this should read *roo*, getting the hint from ancient Egyptian word for “mouth” and its symbol  used here); Coptic $\iota\omega\rho\alpha$ (*iorh*), and Hebrew, רא *ra'a*.

Because it is no longer common to hear the Kalenjiin speakers call the sun *ra*, it is necessary to prove that this was in fact the case in the past. To prove this, a Kalenjiin phrase like *petuut aap ra*, can be used as an illustration. *Petuut aap ra* would sound like “the day of this day” because *ra* has become so associated with “today” that such an innocent old expression may sound ungrammatical—especially in Kipsigiisland—but not so in Tugen and Nandi where the expression is in common daily usage. The phrase is actually employed to mean, “the day of this sun”, which is a sensible grammatical expression that seeks to emphasise “today”. One can also say *petuut aap asiisi*, in place of *petuut aap ra*. *Asiisi*, “this sun”, and *ra* are interchanged here, suggesting that they mean the same thing.

Asiis in the Pokoot dialect of Kalenjiin also means “day” even as it refers to Deity who is, however, as we have seen, more commonly called *Torrorrot* in Pokootland—a relic, as noted earlier on, of ancient Egyptian  *Trt* “goddess” (Cf. Gardiner, 1927:614). We are now, up to here, certain that both *asiis* and *ra* refer to “day” as well as to “sun”, and we can push this further and say that Asiis, the Deity in Kalenjiin, and Ra the Deity of ancient Egypt, were one and the same. We will revisit the latter part of the equation under the discussion on Isis/Asiis in the following subsection. It


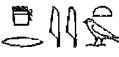
serves well to remember, however, from the discussion on Ptah that Deity, whether we are talking within the Kalenjiin context or within the ancient Egyptian context, went by many names, sometimes as trinities and/or enneads; but that each one of the two societies maintained that Deity was One.

Some Kalenjiin names and words incorporate *ri* or *ra* with direct reference to the sun, confirming that the sun used to be called *ra* in Kalenjiin too as it was in ancient Egyptian. The proper name Ki-p-koo-rir, for example, incorporates Ri. Kipkoorir is a boy's name which means "the little thing of dawn" i.e. he was born as the golden rays of the dawning sun began to show above the eastern horizon. That action by the sun, and only at that dawning moment, is called in Kalenjiin *-rir*.¹

There are many other words which incorporate *ri* or *ra* and are, therefore, living evidence to the effect that the Kalenjiin once called the sun *ra* or *ri*. For example, *ka-r-oon* or, more correctly: *ka-rir-oon*, Kalenjiin for "morning" resonates with the ancient Egyptian word for "sun".


Coptic ⲁⲣⲓⲣⲉ (*hirre*) which, according to Crum's *Coptic Dictionary*, is to "flower or blossom", is cognate with Kalenjiin *rur*, "blossom" "ripen" etc. and the inventors of these words may have been inspired by the semblance between the flowering of plant and the blossoming of the sun at dawn.

The action of flying is called *tiriren* in Kalenjiin and it may similarly have a bearing to an ancient likening of a bird's flight to the then presumed daily flight of Ra or Ri, the sun, across the sky.

Ancient Egyptian  *heri* "to fly", "to ascend" (B.Dict. 498b) also contains the *-ri-* element. So do some words for the fliers themselves, the birds, such as *tariit*, Kalenjiin for "bird" in general which is cognate with ancient Egyptian  *d-ryt* and Coptic ⲧⲣⲓ (*tri*). The latter is translated as "kite" in Crum's dictionary (it should probably be pronounced *tari*).

The Somali, a Cushitic-speaking community, who share many words, as well as cultural practices (but no common border), with the Hamitic-speaking Kalenjiin, call the sky *iri*. And both the Somali and Kalenjiin have one word in common for "rain", *rop*. This "raining", therefore, according to the ancients, was due to the action of Ra above.

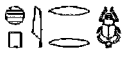

The sky is so deep as it is infinitely far away. A similarly deep, or "bottomless" body of water, is thus called *riir-eet* in Kalenjiin. This may have been named so either because of the "bottomlessness" or because of its resemblance to and reflection of the sky.

The home of Ri or Ra was the "sky", and the Kalenjiin call the "sky"—or the heavens, and physically elevated places in general—*pa-ra-k* (the place) "of Ra"?  *pa ra*, "the sun" in ancient Egyptian, can naturally be linked to the above Kalenjiin *parak*.

¹ This is one of those word stems that make no meaning without the inclusion of a prefix and/or suffix e.g. *koo-rir* "to dawn", *i-rir* "dawn (v.)", *i-rir-i* "it is dawning". We know that it is a stem because it is the part of a word that remains constant while prefixes and/or suffixes are affixed in order to change meaning in a process called inflexion.

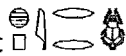
Finally, and more significantly, the Kalenjiin people who belong to the Sun clan, Kipasiiseek, “of the sun”, are sometimes also referred to as Kaaparagook¹. This roughly means “those whose home is the sky”. Here the *pa-ra-g-* element from kaaparagook is directly equated with *pa-asiis-* element of Kipasiiseek and, once again, we come across a living demonstration to the effect that Asiis was a coequal of Ra, or that they even were the same divinity at some stage before the former outshone the latter in the Kalenjiin context.²

During the Theban days of Egypt, Ra had three different names, one referring to him in the morning, another referring to him at midday, and the other referring to him in the evening.

(1) His name in the morning was *Khepri* from *Kheprer*, the beetle that pushed the sun across the sky (Watterson, 1984:69). The name of the scarab beetle , which is transcribed by Egyptologists *kheprer*, may however have been *khiprur*, which in Kalenjiin would mean “the one which is blossoming”, “is ripe” or “roasted”. It would make more sense assigned that meaning and probably so in Coptic too. The Kalenjiin call the beetle *kiptaruruut* (*ki-p-ta-rur-uut*), which translates roughly to either the one “who longs for it to blossom/ripen” or the one “who appears to be roasted.” Kalenjiin *rur* means to “blossom”, “ripen” or be “cooked/roasted”. Coptic $\rho\epsilon\alpha\rho\iota\pi\epsilon$ (*re hrire*) “blossom” is, no doubt, this same word, and $\sigma\tau\alpha\lambda\lambda\ \alpha\rho\iota\pi\epsilon$ (*uam hrire*) literally “flower-eater”, being the Coptic name for “beetle”, according to Crum’s dictionary, serves to confirm the hypothesis. The beetle was probably named so because its brittle body naturally feels like hard, crispy, roasted meat. Ancient Egyptian  *rwd*, “hard”, “vigorous”, “flourishing” (Gardiner, 1927:577), considered together with the foregoing Coptic and Kalenjiin cognates, may give an idea as to why the beetle, and thus the blossoming dawn sun, was named so.

¹Address is “by women only”—Hollis, 1909:5. The Kipasiis clan is traditionally remembered as the priestly clan among the Kipsigiis. In some parts of Baringo they were referred to as the Talai, and the prophets came from among them. The Kipsigiis believe that the Kipasiis and the Kipsamai were the two original clans of Kipsigiisland. The rest of the clans are relatively new arrivals, while some are splinters from the original two. The Kipasiis of Nandi were listed by Hollis (1909) among those clans that solely came from “Lumbwa” (Kipsigiis). Kipasiis had the power to bless while the Kipsamai were endowed with powers to curse, when this was necessary.

² It may be of interest to note that Ra in connection with the sun and time, is such a basic word to human speech that it even exists in many Kintu-based languages of Africa in various forms: *reu*, *rero*, *liua*, *leo* etc. Only the most basic of basic words are shared between the Hamitic-speakers and the Kintu-speakers. Others that are shared in this manner are *baba* and *mama*, “father” and “mother”. These latter are so basic that they are to be heard in other parts of the world outside Africa and are a pointer to the fact that, at the end of the day, all human beings descend from common ancestors.

Another plausible possibility is that  *Kheprer* of the Egyptologists should actually be transcribed *Khipirir*, which means in Kalenjiin either “the red one” or “the dawning one”.



(2) Ra at midday was plain *Ra*. This agrees with both ancient Egyptian and modern Kalenjiin day/time words as we have seen above. In Sahidic Coptic this is ⲁⲠⲁⲓ ⲁⲐⲐⲩ (*hrai hou*) “today”, which sounds like Kalenjiin *ra ou?* “today which day?” Coptic *hou* means “day”. That the word for “day” in one descendant language means “which day?” in another one, can be explained away as a case of mere semantic shift by linguists because the new meaning has remained within the same old semantic domain, in this case, of time.

(3) Ra in the evening was referred to as *Atum*. Now *Atum* in Kalenjiin context may relate to “giving birth” physically or ritually. If we would attempt to explain the naming of Ra of the evening as *Atum* from a Kalenjiin language and cultural standpoint, we would resort to the root word *-tum*, “give birth” and its derivative *ituum*, which means to pass a candidate through an initiation process—a form of birth. Implied here, therefore, is the ancients’ belief that the evening sun gave birth to the sun that was to appear the next morning either physically or symbolically. The west, which symbolised death, was known to the Egyptians as “the House of Death” as well as “The House of Birth”. The sun died in the west, was justified (i.e. tried like all who died and purified) and was reborn there. It helps that the Coptic word for “justify” ⲧⲉⲗⲗⲁⲓⲛⲟⲩ (*[u]maeio*), and ⲧⲉⲗⲗⲁⲓⲛⲟⲩ (*temtham*), ⲧⲉⲗⲗⲁⲓⲛⲟⲩ (*tmesio*) “bring to birth”, are cognate with the Kalenjiin word *tuum*, and we may suspect, with justification, that *Atum* came from these words in their ancient Egyptian stage. The word root *tuum* of Kalenjiin also means the completion of a process after which the object, or individual so affected, becomes whole, i.e. justified, and this happens to be the meaning of *Atum* in the ancient Egyptian context (Cf. Piankoff, 1957:12).

A rather seemingly more farfetched, but still plausible (logically speaking) guess, is that *Atum* was not *Atum* at all but really *Amut*, which in Kalenjiin means “yesterday”. The ancients may have considered that “yesterday”, *amut*, gave birth to “this morning” *kariroon* (*kheprer*), which matures at midday to “today”, *ra*, before waning in the evening and thus becoming another *amut* which then gives birth again at the western House of Death and Birth; and the process continues *ad infinitum*.



8.2 Amon, Amon-Ra and Miot

Amon, who was often portrayed in human shape, wearing a cap surmounted by two tall plumes, and a sun's disk, had his symbol of a special ram . His name, as presented in the form  implied the "Hidden One", but he was of many names (Budge, 1904:21). He was identified as the "sun-god" who created the universe and who was the source of all life. He was the protector of the nation and its King. He controlled the life spans of mortals on individual basis: Those he liked he favoured them with longer life.

In the form of Amon-Ra, Amon was also the parent of earthly rulers. For example, he slept with Aahmes, wife of King Tuthmosis I, King of Upper and Lower Egypt, and the then prophesied future great queen, the only queen to be called Pharaoh, Hatshepsut (r. 1503–1481 BC), was conceived. It was customary those days for royal conceptions, especially of future rulers, to be attributed to the chief "god" through direct divine intercourse, via some spirit medium or, in the process called theogamy, the deity would take the form of the reigning Pharaoh in order to beget a child upon the queen.

Any child born of such divine intervention would later be legible for ascendancy to the throne basing legitimacy on the nature of such birth. Robert Armour (1986:28 and various) writes that the mother thus honoured would be loaded with titles by the chief "god" and would thereafter "occupy a special place among women."¹

Queen Hatshepsut, who was conceived in the divine manner narrated above later, at her monumental prime, added two obelisks at the Amon-Ra worship headquarters, Karnak, to the deity's great temple and which was to become "one of the most imposing religious structures made by man". More rulers subsequently added temples and other monuments to this site, thus contributing to its unrivalled magnificence (Cf. Armour, 1986:28).

¹ If the then prescribed divine birth for a Pharaoh, and the subsequent elevation of the mother to "a special place among women", bear uncanny semblance to the later pivotal events that were associated with the birth of Jesus and the consequent elevation of Mary, it only goes to confirm the extent of influence of the ancient Egyptian culture throughout the Middle East of the time. This issue is revisited under the Isis/Asiis comparative analysis in the following subsection.



PICTURE 14: The magnificent 3500-year old temple of Amon built by Queen-turned Pharaoh Hatshepsut of the 18th Dynasty (reigned 1479-1458 BC)—Picture from *Archaeology*, Internet version, September 2000.

During the Middle Kingdom, c. 2133-1786 BC, when the “god” Amon and his Theban priests increasingly dominated Egyptian religion, Ra was assimilated with this “god” whose movement was located at Thebes, having originated further South along the Nile. The composite was then called

 Amon-Ra.

During the 18th Dynasty (reigned 16th – 14th century BC), Amon-Ra became chiefly the royal “god”, the protector of the kings whose line he had placed on the throne of Egypt in the manner described above. The 18th Dynasty had come to power soon after the expulsion of the foreign usurpers of power, the Hyksos, by the indigenous Pharaohs Seqenenre Tao and Kamose of the closing part of the 17th Dynasty. The Hyksos had ruled Egypt for about 200 years (1750 to 1550 BC) under dynasties 13 through part of 17.

The Egyptian worshippers of Amon, having managed that feat of driving away the foreign power usurpers, believed that they owed it all to their Deity, Amon, who surely had, consequently, to be held above all other divine beings for He was the unchallenged Almighty. Not only did they regard Amon as being responsible for their victory against the Hyksos but also as the reason for their considerable military successes against their enemies in Asia (Cf. David, 1980:144).

Pharaoh, previously the “son of Ra”, had now become the son of “his father Amon” and, as we have mentioned above, on this unique relationship with Deity—as direct “Son of God” above all ordinary human beings—rested his right to claim the throne of Egypt. The royal burial places of the great religious centre of Abydos were abandoned and royal burial shifted to Thebes, near to Amon-Ra’s religious centre. Political power had thus shifted to Thebes (Cf. David, 1980:146).¹


In the discussion on hand, Amon is treated alongside and occasionally as one with Amon-Ra, partly for the reason that they were hard to separate, apparently so even to the adherents themselves. Amon-Ra possessed a separate identity from both Amon and Ra and yet both the latter were meant to


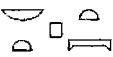
¹ Chronology from *The Oxford Interactive Encyclopedia*, 1997.

have fused in order to form Amon-Ra. The composite Amon-Ra, in the same breath, possessed all the individual characteristics of the two constituent “gods”(Cf. Hornung, 1982:97), and that is how sophisticated and potentially confusing ancient Egyptian monotheism could be.

In order to assure Amon absolute supremacy—and his son, Pharaoh, as well—the priests had found it not only the wise thing to do but also a political imperative to co-ordinate the Amon attributes with those of Ra, the protector and supporter of royalty since the beginning. Thus Amon absorbed all the qualities and features of the older “god” (Cf. David, 1980:144).

Then the necessity came to promote and justify Amon-Ra as creator of mankind and a ruler of both the Egyptians and their subjects. To promote this aspect of Amon-Ra, it was essential that his priesthood should establish claim of Thebes, his religious centre, to be the place of creation. In order to do this, all earlier important cosmogonies had to be ousted by the Theban creation myth. The primordial mound of Thebes, the mythical first landmass to rise out of the waters of Nun at creation by Amon, received urgent currency and Thebes became the holiest and the model of all cities (Cf. David, 1980:145).

However, the ancient capital city name Thebes, the chief seat of Amon (and Amon-Ra), has been associated with the Greeks. The claim goes that the Greek visitors named the city Thebes, otherwise then called by its native inhabitants *Waset*, after a town of their own which went by a similar name (Cf. Watterson, 1984:139). This is doubtful and further research is necessary towards this end. *Tebees* in Kalenjiin means “wide” and, sure enough, “at Luxor the Nile is wide and majestic and the mountains on either side are farther away leaving a large fertile plain which once contained the proud city of Thebes...” (Bratton, 1961:8). We find corroboration of this in the ancient hieroglyphs by way of “the name of a lake at Thebes” called  *Tep* (B.Dict. 828a).

According to Budge, in *The Gods of the Egyptians*, 1904, the name “Thebes” was derived from an old Egyptian settlement called *Apt* which, in turn, was named after the “Mother Goddess” Miot in her aspect of Isis, in which form she was called  *Apt*. His argument goes that the place was named *Ta-Apt*, presumably meaning the “place of *Apt*”. The Greeks are then perhaps, going by this argument, supposed to have corrupted *Ta-Apt* to *Thebes* (29). Budge’s guess is sound, considering the “Queen of Heaven” name of Isis , which, with some hints from the Kalenjiin language, should probably be transcribed *Tie nebou peet* or *Tie nebo Peet* “Lady/Mistress/Girl of the sky/day” often shortened to *Tie aap Peet* and contracted further to *Chepeet*. The latter version—usually spelled *Chebet*—is a common name for Asiis in Marakwet and a popular one throughout Kalenjiinland for girls who are born around midday, when the sun is at its hottest.

This etymological argument from a Kalenjiin language standpoint comes reasonably close to validating Budge’s *Ta-Apt* guess as the origin of the name “Thebes”. However the “width” aspect

of geography, also defended from the vantage-point of the Kalenjin language, seems to be the more convincing argument not least because it is still visible and in place for all to see.

8.2.1 The Divine Associates of Amon

Amon became head of the Triad of Thebes. The other members of his triad were Mut, or Miot,¹ his consort and Khons, their son who was depicted as a falcon-headed “god” and associated with the moon.² Miot, Amon’s wife and Khons’ mother, was a protective woman, charming, forgiving, and a mother *par excellence*. She was depicted in the form of a vulture and, as a symbol of excellent motherhood; her emblem often donned the heads of other divine mothers *par excellence* as a headdress.

The name of the “vulture-goddess” Miot, meant “Mother” in ancient Egyptian. This name may be the very one which the Myoot, the proto-Kalenjiin, brought all the way to Eastern Africa. It was the name they chose to answer to originally. When the early European ethnologists asked for their original collective “tribal” name, they said that they were the people of Myoot, the source, or meaning of which name has since puzzled people.

Miot may truly have meant “mother” as the Egyptologists transcribed and translated it. The *-io-* part of the word means the one who “gave birth to me”. In Kalenjiin, “give birth” is *yi*, which is an obvious cognate of Coptic Ⲙⲓ (hi).³ And, in reference to the other “giver of birth”, the father, the Kalenjiin and the Copts alike, add the prefix *pa-*, this being the possessive adjective “my”, to form *pa-iy-oo(t)*. For “mother” the Kalenjiin, and almost all the other Eastern Africa Hamitic speakers, call her *iy-oo*. Compare this with Coptic Ⲙⲓⲛⲟⲩ (miyu), “mother”.⁴

¹ Budge, 1934:162, spelled this deity name Miot in a caption on the cited page. Other Egyptologists, Budge included in other instances, spell it Mut. Miot being a Hamitic name, the last or the last-but-one vowel sound should be accented—which amounts to lengthening the syllable—hence the spelling preferred here, of Myoot, in reference to East Africa’s early Kalenjiin.

² The Kalenjiin in their Eastern Africa setting, do not seem to have viewed the moon as a symbol of divine proportions although it was considered the night eye of Asiis, the eye of the day being the sun. However, young children were taught to sing: *Pelepele Araawa, Iam kiy koiisin, Aam kiy koiisan* “Welcome, Moon! May whatever you eat bless you, May whatever I eat bless me too”. The author grew up singing this song to the new and to the full moon. He does not remember the unkind version recorded by Hollis, (1909:123), which he translates thus: “Welcome, Moon! May anything that thou eatest choke thee, Whilst anything that I eat, may it do me good”. However the adults’ prayer to the moon, translated by Hollis, as reproduced below, is interesting and is living evidence to the effect that the moon was also held in some sacred esteem by the Kalenjiin.


“O kindly Moon, thine influence benign

Withhold not from our children and our kine,

And through thy life’s short span of thirty days,

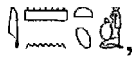
May nought but blessings issue from thy rays.”

³ The *yi* of Kalenjiin is nowadays used almost exclusively with respect to the bearing of young by animals and may be regarded impolite if used with respect to human procreation. However, when Kalenjiin elders are tracing family lineages and the need to say A begat B who begat C and C begat D, the word used for the verb “beget” is *yi*.

⁴ Incidentally, “his/her mother” in Kalenjiin is *kam-eeet* which can be discerned in ancient Egyptian  *qemam-t* (B.Dict. 771a). This cognacy, being within the narrow semantic domain of “motherhood”, should serve to heighten the quality of the incidence of cognatic correspondence between the Coptic Ⲙⲓⲛⲟⲩ and the Kalenjiin *iyoo*.

Asiis, Deity according to the Kalenjiin, may have initially been associated with Amon too. The other name, or salutation to Asiis is, Asiis *Cheepo-Amuni* (Toweett, 1979:34), which means Asiis, “She (or Girl/Lady) of *Amuni*”. This praise name does not mean, however, that the Kalenjiin worshipped Amon together with or instead of or above Asiis in recent times.¹

The more common Kalenjiin salutation, which is easy to confuse with the one above, is Asiis *Cheepo-Namuni*. It may be that Khnemu is the one being referred to here, i.e. the ancient Egyptian creator “god” (whom we have already mentioned) who fashioned people from clay. It was explained, further above, that *nam* was a Kalenjiin verb meaning to (hold, catch but also) make things from clay.

If *Cheepo-Namuni*, or *Cheepo-Amuni*, actually relates to Amon, then it must be a pointer to Asiis being seen in the role of the ancient “goddess” who is regarded by Egyptologists as the female counterpart of Amon, and whom they call Amounet (David, 1980:146, Hornung, 1982:84). Her name , which is transcribed *Amen-t* by Budge (B.Dict. 51b), was probably pronounced something closer to *Tiep-Amon* or *Tiepo-Amon* which Kalenjiin experience teaches us that it must soon sound more like *Cheepo-Amon*, “the Girl (or Lady) of Amon”. As demonstrated in Chapter 6, it is the finding of the author that Coptic and Kalenjiin may actually provide a hint to the effect that the letter ^o /t/, when the ancient Egyptian scribe put it at the end of a feminine gender adjective or noun, was often meant to be uttered first.

¹ We may note here that the Maasai have a phrase, *aa-omon*, “I pray”. This too may have originated from Amon. Certain hymns during prayers at the *Kaapkoros* (place of prayers) shrines of the Kalenjiin incorporated *aomon Ngai*, which means “I worship thee Enkai” in Maa(sai). The Taita, a Kintu-speaking people of the Coast Province of Kenya, also utter *amin Ngai!* when they want to be taken seriously on peril of their soul.

8.2.2 *The Amon Movement's Monotheism, Spread and Influence*

So vigorously campaigned for, in the manner we have narrated, Amon of Thebes grew stronger and became independent of the previously all-powerful “god” Min (who is discussed below). In the otherwise politically opportune composite form, Amon-Ra, he virtually eclipsed Ra to the annoyance of many and, reportedly, especially to the chagrin of the later Pharaoh Akhenaton about whom something has already been mentioned.

At the height of Amon's supremacy, worshippers sang to him hymns that left no doubt that they considered him the sole Creator: He was the “august god, who heareth petitions, who cometh at the cry of the afflicted poor, and giveth breath to him who is bowed down” (Breasted 1912:350).

“Lord of truth, father of gods,
 Maker of men and creator of animals,
 Lord of that which is, Creator of the tree of life,
 Maker of herbs, sustaining the cattle alive.
 ...Sole and only one, maker of what exists,
 From whose eyes men issued,
 From whose mouth the gods came forth,
 Maker of herbs for the cattle...¹

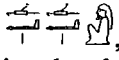

As is clear from the foregoing hymn, the poor, for some reason, were wont to identify themselves with Amon and even, in their quest to be seen as a monotheistic people—an ideal that all aspired to anyway—to deny vehemently the presence of “gods” other than Amon. In one of the hymns on papyri that are preserved in Berlin, and which hymn is attributed to a scribe of the Theban necropolis (burial area), Amon is declared to be greater than Ra, a direct comparison of the “gods” that was indeed rare even by the supposedly polytheistic standards of ancient Egypt. Amon is addressed as him

“Who cometh to the silent,
 Who saveth the poor,
 ...Thou art the sole god, there is no other,
 Even Re, who dawneth in the sky...”¹

¹ Ostrakon 5656a in the British Museum, published in Birch, *Inscriptions in the Hieratic Character*, pl. xxvi—cited by Breasted, 1912:346.

However, in another hymn, which is attributed to a painter of a tomb scene in the necropolis of Thebes, Amon is addressed both as Amon and as Amon-Ra: "Thou, O Amon, art the lord of the silent... Thou, Amon-Re, Lord of Thebes... When men cry unto thee, Thou art he that cometh from afar" (Breasted, 1912:351).

The faithful of Amon had, by degrees, ascribed to Amon all the attributes of all the major old "gods" of Egypt and the

"titles which among western nations are given to God were added to those pantheistic epithets which Amen had usurped... Among other titles the god Amen was called the 'Only One' , but the addition of the words 'who hast no second' , is remarkable as showing that the Egyptians (of the 18th Dynasty and onwards) had already conceived the existence of a god who had no like or equal" (Budge, 1895:cxxvii).

It is compelling to note down the fact, at this stage, that wordings that are similar to those above that were used in Egypt about two thousand years before Christ, with reference to the oneness of Amon, and of all the other individual divinities of Egypt, were to be repeated with reference to the oneness of Yahweh over one thousand years later as follows: Deut. 6:4 "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one." Deut. 4:35 "You were shown these things so that you might know that the Lord is God; besides him there is no other." The same message in similar wording is repeated in Deut. 4:39. In Isaiah 45:5 we come across the following declaration: "I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God." This same message is repeated quite incessantly in other verses of Isaiah, e.g., 45:6, 45:21, 22 etc. (Cf. Budge, 1895:cxxviii).

In the same book of Isaiah, we see Isaiah prophesy the acceptance of Yahweh by Egyptians and other African nations to the South of Egypt, i.e. the people of Cush and Ethiopia (of Sheba), all pointedly under conquest and duress. He prophesied that after being vanquished, all their sweat and produce would be to the benefit and enjoyment of Israel, thanks to Cyrus (the Persian king) who was to crush the African nations. And not only would these nations be vanquished, but they would also be given as ransom (or sacrifice) to spare Israel (Isaiah 43:3-4). When all was done, the African nations mentioned, would forsake and denounce their own religions, and "they will trudge behind you, coming over to you in chains. They will bow down before you and plead with you, saying, 'Surely God is with you, and there is no other; there is no other god'" (Isaiah 45:14).²

¹ Berlin Statuette, No. 6910—cited Breasted, 1912:349-350.

² "I gave Mizrayim for thy ransom, Kush and Seva instead of thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou wast honoured, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life..." (Isaiah 43:3-4—*The Holy Scriptures* [Jerusalem Bible]).

The account of Isaiah, like most oral traditions that do the rounds for long periods before being reduced to writing, seems to suffer much revision, telescoping and embellishment. He is associated, as a prophet, with the 8th century BC as a contemporary of the Hebrew kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahazad, Hezekiah and Manasseh and, yet again, he is made to prophesy things from the standpoint of the capture and exile of the Jews to Babylon by Nabuchadnezzar. In the same breath, he is presented as a contemporary of Cyrus II of Persia, in fact as a witness to Cyrus' capture and acquisition of Asia Minor, Babylonia, Assyria, Syria, and Palestine around 539 BC. Isaiah also witnessed the liberation of the Jewish exiles by Cyrus, which latter events are dated almost three centuries after the time of Isaiah's earlier contemporaries, Jotham, Ahazad and Co. (Cf. OIE 1997/6).

Biblical scholars have, however, tried to account for this apparent extraordinarily long life span of Isaiah's by attributing his work, the longest work ascribed to any prophet of the Old Testament, to several authors ranging between the 8th century and the 4th century BC (Cf. Gnuse, 1999:315-336, also Coats, GME 1993). Knowledge of this fact is important because the prophesy of the fall of Egypt, other African nations, and some countries of Western Asia, and the eventual subjugation of their peoples, should not be consumed uncritically. For otherwise the uncritical mind would swallow the unsophisticated impression that what befell the Africans was in accordance with the wish of God who handed Isaiah the accurate foreknowledge of and the sequence of events that were to take place up to four or so hundred years after his death.

The dreadful consequence of it all is the acceptance by the conquered peoples of the lowly station that, according to the prophesy, was destined for them by the Maker: as the workers of and ransom of Israel—the justification upon which the enslavement, colonisation and exploitation of the Africans was later to be partly based. The new spirit of African Renaissance is definitely not about the abandonment, or poor understanding at best, of one's own socio-cultural history, and the simultaneous blanket adoption of the cultures and the acceptance of self-harming discriminatory ideas of others at the expense of one's own.

Perhaps the import of this stance regarding scriptural abuse can be illustrated better by Matthew Henry's commentary on Genesis 9:21-27 which verses deal with the drunken nudity of Noah and the reported curse on Canaan by Noah for the reported fault of his father, Ham, who had chosen to mock rather than pity his drunken father, Noah. These verses have been used to justify genocide, slavery, colonisation, exploitation and dispossession, and Henry's Bible commentary¹ admits as much:

¹ Date could not be obtained. However, Henry talks about slavery and Turkish rule of parts of Africa in present tense. This should date his commentaries back to the 19th century at the latest.

"Noah declares a curse on Canaan, the son of Ham; perhaps this grandson of his was more guilty than the rest. A servant of servants, that is, The meanest and most despicable servant, shall he be, even to his brethren. This certainly points at the victories in after-times obtained by Israel over the Canaanites, by which they were put to the sword, or brought to pay tribute. The whole continent of Africa was peopled mostly by the descendants of Ham; and for how many ages have the better parts of that country lain under the dominion of the Romans, then of the Saracens, and now of the Turks! In what wickedness, ignorance, barbarity, slavery, and misery most of the inhabitants live! And of the poor negroes, how many every year are sold and bought, like beasts in the market, and conveyed from one quarter of the world to do the work of beasts in another!... The fulfilment of this prophecy, which contains almost a history of the world, frees Noah from the suspicion of having uttered it from personal anger. It fully proves that the Holy Spirit took occasion from Ham's offence to reveal his secret purposes. "Blessed be the Lord God of Shem." The church should be built up and continued in the posterity of Shem..." (Henry on Gen. 9).

The knowledge of the fact that much of such prophesy, as that of Isaiah, took place subsequent to the events that were "prophesied", is as critical as the need for all the economically, spiritually, socially and intellectually under-represented peoples, to search actively for their own home-grown literature that would give them an equally exalted station as any other peoples in the supposed pecking order of humanity. For there is no society in the world that, in its own homegrown mythology and legends, puts itself second to another, or, worse still, allocates itself the roles of slaves and sacrificial lambs of another.

From what we have read above about ancient Egyptian monotheistic aspirations, Isaiah's virtual monotheistic activism ought not to come to us as a championing of a novelty for it comes over a thousand years after the documented, unquestionable fact of monotheistic inclination among the Egyptians.¹ Besides, Gnuse (1999:317), a modern scholar, for just one example, admits, citing others' concurring views, that "Biblical scholars now affirm that Israelite or Jewish religious development evolved in progressive stages or 'leaps' in the pre-exilic period until its culmination in the absolute monotheism of the Babylonian Exile" (586 – 539 B.C.E.).²

¹ Another Hebrew prophet whose story seems to suffer similar telescoping, embellishment and apparent revisionism at the expense of Africa, in the manner of Isaiah's prophesies, is Ezekiel. Ezekiel is made to prophesy events that had already taken place before and during his lifetime, especially with regard to the defeat of Egypt in Western Asia, the result of which, in the first place, had made it possible for the capture and the subsequent destruction of Jerusalem by Nabuchadnezzar and the exiling of the Jews, including Ezekiel, who then "prophesies" the defeat of Egypt—speaking from such exile. The powerlessness of Egypt—owing to the loss of much of its Asian buffer territory to Babylon—to defend Jerusalem from the Babylonian invasions, is noted in 2 Kings 24:7.

² In the introduction to his *Religion* journal article, "the Emergence of Monotheism in Ancient Israel: A Survey of Recent Scholarship", Gnuse (1999:315), suggests that Jewish monotheism developed while in exile and is post-exilic rather than pre-exilic. It may have even been "a totally post-exilic phenomenon", he says. The theory here is that the drive towards monotheism came as a reaction to the turmoil of exile, an experience that was so traumatic that the victims were led to categorically deny the existence of other gods but one. "People surrounded by foreign religions had to make a clear decision not to participate in those foreign cults. In the post-exilic era, priestly laws separated the Jews from others and encouraged pure monotheism" (Cf. Gnuse, 1999:317, 319). Gnuse cites "recent archaeological discoveries and a reassessment of the testimony of the biblical text." The antecedence of Egyptian monotheism is thus rendered more and more unchallengeable by such new evidence.

The influence of the religion of Amon was apparently as extensive as it was powerful in its heyday. We find Amon used as a personal name within the early Hebrew and Greek nations. The 7th century BC city governor mentioned in 1 Kings 22:26, named Amon, is one example while King Amon, son of King Manasseh of Judah, whom Mathew places as the sixteenth up the lineal descent of Jesus Christ, was another prominent one from the same era.

The story told in 2 Kings 21:20-22 accuses King Amon of following in the footsteps of his father, Manasseh, and worshipping idols—perhaps the Mesopotamian ones of Manasseh, including those of his namesake, Amon, from Egypt for, after all, had his father, Manasseh; not named him “Amon”? King Amon then, perhaps owing to this excuse that he had extended by two years too many his father’s 55-year reign, which was characterised by “idolatry” is assassinated by his own supposedly iconoclastic court officials. But because the young king was apparently otherwise popular, the murder is avenged by the masses—who, clearly, may not have seen anything so sacrilegious in worshipping the likes of Amon, a divinity after whom Manasseh, their departed king, had named his own successor after.

That the masses were on the side of the assassinated “polytheistic” king, is part proof of the fact that the “Yahweh alone” segment of the Israelites formed a minority religious and political movement, standing in opposition to the royal cult and the “common religion”, or “popular familial forms of religion” that characterised the pre-exilic Israelites. So at what point does monotheistic literature enter into the Israelite cultural and historical experience? “During the Babylonian exile, old oral traditions were drawn together to create Deuteronomy and the historical narratives, and monotheistic assumptions were then projected back into Israel’s history” (Gnuse, 1999:319).

The name Amon is frequently mentioned in the Old Testament of the Bible, for the Ammonites were rivals of the Jews in Palestine. Genesis 19:38 lists them as the children of one Amon whose famous ancestor was Abraham’s brother, Lot, through the latter’s incestuous intercourse with his own younger daughter that produced Amon’s immediate ancestor, Ben-Ammi (Benne-Ammon). This came after Lot’s similar incestuous incident with his elder daughter that produced Moab, the ancestor of the Moabites (Genesis 19:37).¹

¹ The Bible tests the faith of its believers quite stringently here, the bottom-line being that Lot must remain innocent of what passes these days for child abuse. It is the two “Eves”, as usual, who scheme to get him to do it, partake of this “fruit”. In a drunken stupor, he fully erects, comes on top of each of the daughters at their prompting, and has full coitus with them. He completely forgets each incident afterwards. The test of faith is even more stringent where those who have had the experience of getting drunk are concerned. It is possible to forget what transpires during a period in which one will have passed out—but then in such a condition, one is not in a position to erect, let alone get on top of a woman and proceed to achieve orgasm! The most stringently tested, of course, are those who have been victims of parental sexual abuse themselves. This is what a modern-day researcher and therapist, Pat McClendon, says about such victims: “‘Approximately 40% of all victims/survivors suffer after-effects serious enough to require therapy in adulthood (Browne and Finkelhor, 1986)’, (Courtois, 1988:6). Some of the after-effects can include: inability to trust (which affects the therapeutic relationship), fear of intimacy, depression, suicidal ideation and other self-destructive behaviours, and low
Footnote continued at bottom of next page

The said Ammonites, whose genealogy is clouded by such an incestuous blot, were to be massacred later by a descendant of Abraham, Jephthah of Israel (Judges 11:33). Jephthah is himself not accorded a much more “honourable” descent than his victims; he is listed as an out-of-wedlock son of Gilead by a prostitute (Judges 11:1). The point here is not so much to disparage the implied justification of a genocide through inference of an ancestry that was tainted by an incestuous activity as it is to draw attention to the presence of a nation named after Amon in western Asia whose origins date back to the time of Abraham, approximately 2-3000 BC (Cf. Roberts, GME 1993).

The presence of the religion of Amon, for this is what is implied, in western Asia during Abraham’s time, pushes the influence of Egypt in those parts to earlier than the Middle Kingdom, 2050 – 1750 BC, which is otherwise credited with spreading it there. Perhaps Abraham was a contemporary of Egypt’s Old Kingdom, 2700 – 2200 BC.¹

There was another community in a country south of Egypt also named after Amon, the Ammonians that are mentioned by Herodotus in his *Histories* (440 BC, Book II). According to Herodotus, the Ammonians considered the Ram a sacred animal and, therefore, did not sacrifice it, except only one, and for the whole nation, once a year during the festival of Amon, and then only just to obtain fresh fleece for covering the statute of Ammon.

It is, therefore, of great irony the massacring of Ammonites who also may have held the ram in awe (assuming that they were really adherents of Amon as were the Ammonians of Africa), by Jephthah, the descendant of Abraham who had in his time also sacrificed the forbidden animal, the ram. Could the sacrificing of a ram by Abraham be a later biblical editor’s cryptic reference to the slaughter of the Ammonites by successive generations of Abraham’s descendants? This question ought not to be considered misplaced, not when one takes into account Isaiah 43:3-4, which biblical passage we have cited further above, where Yahweh is reported to have promised to sacrifice other nations to ransom Israel, that is, sacrifice them in the place of Israel.²

self-esteem, guilt, anger, isolation and alienation from others, drug and alcohol dependency, and eating disorders” (McClendon’s Website).

¹ Chronology: *The Oxford Interactive Encyclopedia*, 1997. The capital city of modern Jordan, Amman, owes origin to Ammon, or Rabbah Ammon, the chief city of the historical Ammonites.

² On one occasion, reported in Genesis 22:2-13, Abraham nearly sacrificed his own son, Isaac, in the place of a ram. One of Abraham’s descendants, Jephthah, fared worse than Abraham for, in his time, he actually sacrificed his own only daughter as a token of gesture to Yahweh for facilitating for him to perpetrate what these days would be called holocaust or genocide against the Ammonites. This incident of human sacrifice is reported in Judges 11:31-39. A similar incident is remembered of a mythical Greek king, Agamemnon, another warmonger who sacrificed his daughter (Iphigenia), by way of appeasing some “god”. This prompted his wife to murder him in revenge. However, in the strange twist of events that followed, her own son, in connivance with his sister, avenged the murder of his father by murdering her along with her accomplice lover (Aeschylus 450 BC). Abraham’s near-slaughter of his son is another of the Hebrew narratives that have counterparts in Africa. A Macha (a section of the Oromo) legend has it that a man was about to sacrifice his son to obtain
Footnote continued at bottom of next page

However, Tacitus P. Cornelius, in his *Histories*, 70 AD, gives another reason why the Israelites sacrificed rams. According to him, they were doing so in continued rebellion of Egypt after they had been expelled from that country allegedly for being the cause of a terribly disfiguring scourge that had inflicted Egypt. Because the Egyptians honoured the ram, associating it with Amon, the Israelites chose to sacrifice it in derision of Amon, or in an attempt to distance themselves as far as possible from practices that were associated with Egyptian belief. As to the Jewish distaste for pork, he says: "They abstain from swine's flesh, in consideration of what they suffered when they were infected by the leprosy to which this animal is liable"—thus suggesting that the scourge that led to their alleged expulsion from Egypt was leprosy (Book V).

In the same paragraph, Cornelius conveys the mistaken impression that the Israelite habit of sacrificing oxen was also a continuation of their defiance of Egypt whose citizens "worshipped" the ox as Apis (Hapi). However, this may have only been an Egyptian relic in the then new Israelite religion because the Egyptians themselves sacrificed oxen periodically and the older writer, Herodotus, in his own *Histories* (c. 440 BC, Book II), testifies to witnessing the same personally. As a matter of fact his description is corroborated by the bull sacrifice scenes depicted on the tomb walls of King Mereruka in Sakarra, Egypt, which this author personally verified in 1993. The Kalenjiin *sageet aap eito* "ox sacrifice", as described by James Massam, 1927, conforms to the same in important detail.

As we saw earlier, the Greeks called Amon "Zeus". However, the name "Amon" seems to have existed and survived among them also in its original form of Amon, hence the survival, inter alia, of the name "Philemon", Greek for "Lover of Amon", into Christian times. The following may give a hint as to how the name "Philemon" was coined: Philemon and Baucis, of Greek mythology, were a poor old couple who entertained Zeus (Egyptian Amon) and Hermes (Egyptian Thoth) hospitably when the two "gods" visited the earth in disguise and were repulsed by the rich. For their generosity in poverty, Philemon and Baucis were saved from a Noah-like deluge and their hut was transformed into a temple. They were also granted their request to die at the same time, and were changed into trees whose boughs intertwined.¹

rain following a devastating draught. Just as the knife was put to his throat a lamb descended from the skies, bearing the *chachu* and the *kalacca*. Rain fell, and the boy survived to become the ancestor of rainmakers. *Kalacca* is a phallic symbol-of-authority. It is made of metal and is won by priestly men (*borana*) on the forehead in a manner reminiscent of a rhino wearing its horn. It symbolises their power and ability to curse even as, being priests, they are endowed with powers of blessing. The *chachu* is a woman's leather band decorated with cowry shells. It is a counterpart of the Kalenjiin women's similarly cowry-decorated *mamoosyet* and equally signifies inviolable feminine authority. It is the object used for blessing among the Macha. In ritual role, therefore, it is a direct opposite of the *kalacca* (Cf. Baldick, 1997:120, 126).

¹ Cf. OIE 1997, "Philemon".

It is clearly evident, from the foregoing, that during and for a considerable length of time after the mythical times of Philemon and Baucis, the Greeks still called Zeus by his original name Amon, otherwise Philemon would have been nicknamed “Lover of Zeus” and not “Lover of Amon”.

The myth of Greek deluge hints at a possible scenario to the effect that when the Egyptians introduced the religion of Amon, only the poor—we have seen that even in Egypt, Amon especially appealed to the poor—were at first amenable to conversion and quickly accepted the temple of Amon to be built in their hearts. Afterwards the Egyptian economic gleam, military and intellectual might, and other imperialistic forms of attraction and coercion, forced the religion of Amon (Zeus) upon the larger Greek society; sweeping them off their feet like a deluge.

The Greeks thus adopted and later called Amon Zeus. We have noted, further above, that Herodotus believed that the principal “gods” of the Greeks came from Egypt. In other words, the religion of the Greeks came from Egypt, because “gods” move with whole systems and packages of religion and cults, not on their own as mere names. Religions follow social, economic, cultural and political domination. We have seen this happen in times closer to the present when Western powers colonised much of Africa and their religion, Christianity, followed in the wake of their military conquests and thrived during their subsequent social, economic and political domination.

The Romans, when they came under virtual Greek cultural and ideological domination in turn, adopted and identified their Jupiter, whom they also called Jove, with the Greek Zeus, or rather they acquired their new religion from the Greeks who had acquired theirs from the Egyptians. In doing this, the Romans retained, to some degree, distinctive character for Jupiter. Unlike Zeus, for example, he never came to visit humankind on earth (GME 1993, “Jupiter”). The spreading Egyptian religion of Amon, therefore, seems to have allowed syncretism, by way of fusion, local re-naming and other forms of adaptations.

In what is known of Greek mythology, Zeus was the principal “god” of the pantheon and the ultimate ruler of heaven and earth and of all “gods” and humankind. As for Roman mythology, Jupiter was the king of the “gods” and the lord of life and death.

After adopting the Egyptian religion of Amon, by accepting Amon under the name Zeus, the Greeks seem to have practised a form of monotheism even as they mentioned many divinities in their ordinary conversations. The writings of Aeschylus, 450 BC, reveal this fact a great deal. Aeschylus’ world is dominated by an omnipotent and rigorous Zeus, as the supreme God in the land of the Greeks. His works portray the fact that he believed that wrongdoing and arrogant behaviour brought their own punishment, even after a long delay, and that, rather like early Hebrew thinkers,

curses were handed down from generation to generation.¹ A few lines from Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, illustrate this:

To Zeus, and Zeus alone,
 He shall be found the truly wise.
 ... 'Tis Zeus alone who shows the perfect way
 Of knowledge: He hath ruled,
 Men shall learn wisdom, by affliction schooled.
 ... In visions of the night, like dropping.

... Zeus-if to The Unknown
 That name of many names seem good-
 Zeus, upon Thee I call.
 Thro' the mind's every road
 I passed, but vain are all,
 Save that which names thee Zeus, the Highest One,
 Were it but mine to cast away the load,
 The weary load, that weighs my spirit down.

... Ah woe, ah Zeus! from Zeus all things befall-Zeus the high cause and finisher of all!-
 Lord of our mortal state, by him are willed
 All things, by him fulfilled.

... And now all hail, O earth, and hail to thee,
 New-risen sun! and hail our country's God,
 High-ruling Zeus.

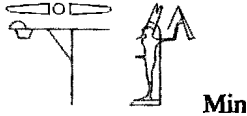
According to Plutarch's *Alexander*, when the Macedonian King, Alexander, had conquered Egypt, he made a long arduous and potentially hazardous pilgrimage to the temple of Amon, thus confirming that their Zeus was in reality Amon. In his trip, he was allegedly led by ravens across the uncharted sands of the Egyptian desert, while a very rare rain in the desert wetted and stilled the sands under his feet. On arrival at the temple of Amon, the priest of Amon called Alexander the "son of Amon", i.e. "Son of God" and a "god", much to his pleasure. As reported in Plutarch's *Alexander*,

¹ Cf. *The Oxford Interactive Encyclopedia*, 1997.

Alexander then paid homage to Amon by generous sacrifice and then showered rich gifts upon the priests (Plutarch, 75 AD).

The danger and the long journey that Alexander braved and endured, together with the rich sacrifice and the generous gifts that he lavished upon the temple of Amon and its priests, attest to a firm Greek allegiance to Amon. No doubt is left, reading Plutarch's description of Alexander's exploits, that in the latter's spiritual scheme of things, Amon came first; without equal, without rival. It was quite in accord with his love for Amon that after his death, Alexander was depicted with the ram's horns (Cf. Badian, GME 1993).

8.3 Min, Menu, Menes, Munyas or Momyiis of Nilotic Phallicism?



Min

Amon is said to have initially been a variation of Min or Menu, the creator “god” worshipped principally at Gebtu, or Koptos, Egypt, and who was associated with fertility of the land, fertility and virility of the human beings and animals. Min had a shrine at Khent-Min (presently called Akhmim).

The Greeks assimilated and then equated Min with their own “god” Pan. They, therefore, renamed Khent-Min Panopolis (Cf. Morenz, 1973:265).

Pan of Greek mythology was the god of flocks, herds, woods, and fields. He was represented as an ugly but merry man with the legs and usually the horns and ears of a goat. Pan frequented lonely rustic areas and inspired terrible fear in travellers who encountered him (hence the word “panic”). He was playfully lecherous—in fact he was regarded as the personification of lust—and continually chased the nymphs, the beautiful maiden “goddesses” that inhabited the rivers and the oceans. Thomas Bulfinch says that because the name “Pan” in Greek signified “all”, Pan came to be considered a symbol of the universe and personification of nature; and later still to be regarded as a representative of all the “gods”, and of “heathenism” itself. The Romans, as “usual”, adopted the worship of Pan from the Greeks and worshipped him under the names Sylvanus and Faunus: “Sylvanus and Faunus were Latin divinities, whose characteristics are so nearly the same as those of Pan that we may safely consider them as the same personage under different names” (Bulfinch, 1855:Ch. XXII).

The archetype of the above, the ancient Egyptian “god” Min or Menu (possibly Moni or even Momyiis), was often depicted as a man of pitch black skin, standing upright, wearing on his head a cap surmounted by two tall plumes. In his portraits, his legs are never seen, seemingly being wrapped up in mummy bandages. One arm, bent at the elbow, is raised and outstretched, its hand open; above it floats a flail. The other hand is tucked under his robe, from which projects his penis, huge and erect (Cf. Watterson, 1984:187). Some other “gods”, e.g. Amon, and even some Pharaohs, were occasionally depicted in the ithyphallic (erect) style of Min, signifying virility and the wish for fertility throughout the empire.

The now familiar Greek visitor to Egypt of 2500 years ago, Herodotus, drops a hint regarding the deification of the ruler, the founder of the 1st Dynasty, according to the reckoning of

the Egyptian historian Manetho. King Menes (whose pivotal reign we briefly alluded to under the Ptah story further above) is given mention by Herodotus in the following manner:

“Further, the Egyptians (said they) first used the appellations of 12 gods (of second rank) (which the Greeks afterwards borrowed from them, according to Herodotus); and it was they who first assigned to the several gods their altars and images and temples, and first carved figures on stone. They showed me most of this by plain proof. The first human king of Egypt, they said, was Min. In his time, all Egypt save the Thebaic Province was a marsh; all the country that we now see was then covered by water, north of Lake Moeris” (Herodotus, Bk II).

The worship of Min, the “god” of fertility and patron of circumcision, in Egypt, is said to be very ancient and may even predate the 1st Dynasty, i.e. up to and even before 3100 BC—the timeline otherwise associated with the reign of Menes.¹ As the “god” of fertility and vegetation, he was usually associated with thick clouds and thunder and it was claimed that he could even bring rain to the desert. This portrayal would lead one to theorise that this “god” may have originated from further south, where populations depended more on rains for their agriculture, unlike the case would be along most of the Egyptian Nile Valley where they depended on irrigated agriculture and the annual inundation of the valley. On their part, the Egyptians could do without direct rainfall on their land. The people who first glorified this thunder-associated “god” must, therefore, have had to depend on the rains that Min’s agent, thunder, signified; for their vegetation, agriculture and livestock.

“At both Gebtu and Khent-Min, Min was worshipped in the form of a sacred white bull, a symbol of his virility. And wherever he was worshipped, lettuces were offered to him, for these vegetables, whose white sap is reminiscent of semen, were considered to have aphrodisiac qualities” (Watterson, 1984:188).

Among the Kalenjiin, plants that produce white sap are generally considered sacred. But all that the elders remember is that this preference owes it to the fact that the sap of these plants resembles milk and no reference is made to its semblance to semen. A stress on the resemblance to semen would render the practice a typical aspect of phallicism. All the same, such plants symbolise fertility, an aspect of phallicism, for the reason that milk is associated with reproduction and plenty. Such plants, among others, are used during all ceremonial occasions, including during prayers at the *Kaapkoros* “Place of Prayers”, or “House of Prayers”. They were also used during the now-discontinued bull sacrifices, *sageet aap eito*, at which only the white bulls were sacrificed as in the more ancient era of Min (See Herodotus’ *Histories*, Book II).


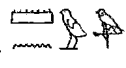

¹ Chronology according to *Oxford Interactive Encyclopedia*, 1997.

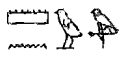
Examples of the plants that have a milky sap are *sinendeet* and the banyan-like fig tree, *simotweet*. The Kalenjiin hold these to be most sacred. Plants that produce a poisonous—although milky—sap, such as the cactus, *kurees-yet* are, however, not considered sacred.

The practice of circumcision so associated with Min of Egypt has its origin in the natural human marvel at the reproductive organ, leading to an obsession which some have called phallic worship. Lee Stone (1927:54) belongs to this school and we get this from that author:

“There can be no doubt that the rite of circumcision as it is now practised among the Jews is a remnant of that most ancient of all religious cults, Phallicism. Circumcision antedates the Jews by thousands of years, and was practised in Egypt long before Moses made of it a sacred rite.”




Stone (1927:55) goes on to inform that Pythagoras, Herodotus, and Diodorus Siculus were compelled to submit to circumcision before they were admitted to study in the Egyptian temples. “To the Egyptians, the circumcised phalli were the symbols of national honour.”¹

Now, the king who is reputed to have united Upper and Lower Egypt is thought to be Min himself, later deified. The better-known version of the King’s name is the transcription of the Greek rendering Μηνις as *Menes*. This rendering would seem to bear some distant semblance to another reading of the name “Min”  as *Amsu* (Cf. Budge, 1904:324). *Menes* and *Amsu*, considered alongside 1) the ithyphallic attribute of the “god” 2) the hieroglyphic presentation  *Mnw* for the same “god” Min (bearing in mind that the wavy symbol  seems to correspond in most instances to the East African /ny/ sound as in “Kenya”), the suggestion that the correct rendering should be *Momyiis* “of Penis”, or *Mumyas*, “of Lust”, as preserved in Kalenjiin, cannot be considered overly presumptuous proposals.


Another guess based on logic, again from the vantage-point of the Kalenjiin language, culture and religious practice, is that the hieroglyphic presentation  should be read *Meenyjo*, this being the name of the secluded abode where the newly circumcised healed up and received instruction. In the past such abodes seem to have been confined to mountains and hills, as is still the practice among the circumcising Southern African nations of Xhosa and Ndebele and who

¹ Some of the nations that traditionally practised circumcision are given as: Chippewas on the Upper Mississippi, Mexicans, Central Americans, and some of the South American natives, as well as among the natives of the Islands of the Pacific Polynesia and Melanesia (Stone, 1927:55). Many other Africans observed this rite: all the Hamitic speakers of Eastern Africa, Ethiopians, Somali people, Kenyan Kintu-speaking groups, a few Southern Africa Kintu-speaking groups, all Arabs and the people they converted to Islam. So great was the African influence therefore in prehistoric times. Their seafaring branches, or their clients, dispersed the practice so wide.

popularly refer to such seclusion abodes as “Mountain Schools”. The old Kalenjiin “Mountain School” will be discussed shortly.

Min probably has something also to do with the Kalenjiin word, *miin*, “plant (seed)”, and the Coptic ⲙⲓⲛ (*miin*), “seed”.¹ A suitable etymology for the Kalenjiin word for “penis”, *monyiseet*, may be found here.² ⲘⲉⲦ (*seet*) is Coptic for “penis” and when this is related to Min, the ithyphallic “god” of fertility, and the idea of “seed”, the Kalenjiin *monyiseet* sticks out as a possible resultant compound word thereof. Consider also the following ancient Egyptian words for “penis”:  *m'tha*,  *hems* and  *sma* (B.Dict. 291, 485, 599) which, when read together with the Coptic equivalent above, strongly suggest the Kalenjiin version.

Since we are talking about “fertility”, “seeds” and “planting”, consider also the Kalenjiin word for “planting” (noun), *miin-seet*. Under normal grammatical rules of the Kalenjiin language, the noun generated from the verb *miin*, “plant”, should have been *miin-eet*. Why did it have to be *miin-seet* instead?

Because of the close unity of the ram-headed “god” Amon and Min, the possibility that the correct pronunciation of  *Mnw* was actually *meeng-ich*, Kalenjiin for “ram” (definite form is *meeng-it*) is great. It is important to note, in this respect, that there is a specie of sheep that still bears the name Amon although only as a generic terminology. *Argali*, the largest of the wild sheep of Eurasia, *Ovis ammon*, is found on the central Asian plateau. It weighs around 158 kg. and has long horns with a 1.5 m curve.¹



PICTURE 15: A phallic symbol, *kalacca*, won on the forehead by the quasi-divine head of a Borana age grade, the *Abba gada*, (from Van de Loo, 1991:359).

It is our intention now to scale our way up towards the “Mountain School” that we alluded to above. In the Kalenjiin district of Kericho, there is a sacred hill that was possibly indirectly named for the “god” Min: Tulwaap-Monyiis. Certainly virility and fertility ceremonies that were akin to Min’s festivals were held on the slopes of this hill. The name means either “the Hill of Mr Phallus” or “the Hill of penises”. The inhabitants of the slopes of this hill, and the surrounding

areas, pronounce the name in such a manner that the former interpretation marginally beats the

¹Gospel According to Thomas, p. 6.

²Some Kalenjiin communities, e.g. the Nandi, use this word for the uncircumcised penis only.

latter. The /m/ is stressed, indicating that there was a /p/ and possibly /ki/ before the /p/, which /m/ has assimilated as happens when an /m/ comes after a /p/ in any Kalenjiin compound word. The original form would, therefore, either have been *Tulwaap pMonyiis* or *Tulwaap Kipmonyiis*; “Hill of Mr Phallus”.

But the pronunciation of *Monyiis* in the plural indefinite sense, referring to many of that male organ, is only so minimally different from the same when uttered in the context “of *Monyiis*” (*pMonyiis*), that the truth could be hiding in either. Both have a strong /m/ sound as to actually warrant the use of double /m/ *M-m-o-n-y-i-i-s*. But these are just semantic trivialities that should not alter the phallic essence of the hypothesis.

This obscene *Tulwaap Monyiis* name of the hill is usually reserved for use by men, or women, when away from members of the other sex, or for use by all and sundry during the festive circumcision ceremonies, when all manner of obscenity and indulgence is allowed in public. At all other times the hill must be referred to by any one of the following names: *Tulwaap-Ng'eetiik*, “Hill of the Uncircumcised ones (who are undergoing circumcision)”, *Tulwaap-laagoi*, “Hill of Children” or, more commonly, *Tulwaap-Sigiis*, *Tulwaap Psigiis* or *Tulwaap Kipsigiis*. These ones could mean any of the following: “Hill of Birth Rites”—which circumcision is all about—“Hill of the One that Gives Birth”, “Hill of the Prolific One”, or just “Hill of the Kipsigiis People”.

Initially all the four major Kalenjiin sub-groups of the south and, later, specifically, Kipsigiis *tumiin* circumcision ceremonies, were held periodically around this hill. This is according to the tradition so firmly held by a large section of each of the Nandi, Tugen, Keiyo and by virtually all the Kipsigiis.

The Myoot, upon arrival at the foot of this hill, seem to have decided to name it in the tradition of ancient Egypt as related to hills that had been selected for the holding of circumcision festivals.² One such hill located south of Egypt, entered history for the same reason as *Tulwaap Monyiis* did. Herodotus wrote about the Egyptian hill, and the sacred city around it, as follows: “... and also those who dwell about the holy *Nysa*, where Dionysus is the god of their festivals...” the editor adds that this might be the mountain called (by Arabs) Barkal in upper Nubia: “this is called ‘sacred’ in hieroglyphic inscriptions.”³

The Eastern Africa “Hill of Circumcision” is the last major beacon physically marking the final parting point of the Myoot according to an oral tradition so firmly held. The last four sub-

¹ *The Oxford Interactive Encyclopedia*, 1997.

² Although Herodotus attributes the same ceremonies to Osiris whom the Greeks adopted and called Dionysos, i.e. “the Son of God” in Greek.

³ Herodotus’ *Histories*, Bk III as translated by Adley, Volume II p. 125.

nation founders to part ways were the ancestors of Kipsigiis, Nandi, Tugen and Keiyo. The sub-nation that was left to occupy the area around this hill of fertility was itself thereafter called *Ki-p-sig-iis*, “of the Prolific One”, “of the Thing of Birth”, or “of the Fertile One”. The group indeed subsequently multiplied faster than all the other Kalenjiin sub-ethnic groups and are now the single largest sub-nation of all the Hamitic-speaking nationalities of Eastern Africa.

The hillock adjacent to Tulwaap Sigiis is called Kipkooiyo, or Pkooiyo, and the inhabitants of the slopes told the author that this was the hill around which the girls were circumcised for the first time ever. It was not a Myoot custom to circumcise girls prior to this, they claimed. According to them the first women to be so initiated were circumcised simultaneously with the men of the *Maina* age group who were in turn the first Myoot to be circumcised as adults or adolescents.¹

The culture of letting loose obscenity and immorality during the ceremonies preceding circumcision in Kalenjiinland are traceable back to Egypt, in association with the “god” Min. Of the Egyptian practice, Budge (1934:64) tells us: “The priesthood of Menu was a very powerful body, and they condoned sexual excesses... During Menu festivities... people—especially the lower classes—engaged in sexual excesses. These public festivities were numerous...”

The western anthropologist, Dr Peristiany, had the opportunity to attend a Kipsigiis circumcision ceremony early in the 20th century and his account echoes that of Budge most conclusively:

“Everybody is in very high spirits. During the night tribal custom is not enforced with its usual rigour, and, although there is nothing in the form of a promiscuous orgy, married women are said to be free to dispense their favours on whom they please. On this point consensus of opinion is universal... I was present at this ceremony but did not witness these acts, though they were repeatedly pointed out to me by the elders. The only light was provided by the fire, and the surrounding bush, into which the couples were said to retire, was as dark as night” (Peristiany, 1939:9).

Budge (1934:63) goes on to say that Min was universally worshipped all over Egypt and Nubia the centre for his cult being Khemis (Chemis sometimes), Coptos: “... He was the tutelary god of all nomads and hunters, and the whole of the Eastern Desert as far as the Red Sea was his domain...” He tells us that the temples of Min were of the round type, similar to the ancient Ethiopian churches and present day dwelling houses in Sudan.

¹The previous practice to this is said by the old men of the slopes to have been similar to the Jewish one, namely that boys were circumcised when eight days old. This was later denied by an older man who also said that women’s circumcision was as old as the nation itself, going all the way back to Pharaonic days. And, instructively, it has been said that the Jews used to circumcise boys at puberty, similar to, or after the ancient Egyptian custom, and this is the existing practice among the Kalenjiin.

We may add that the Kalenjiin and many other African communities in Kenya and in the rest of Africa in general, always build houses of the round design too. The practice is only ending now with more and more people constructing stone houses whose floor plans are basically composed of rectangles and squares. Some measure of revival of the old basic architectural design is a probability, considering the amount of interest people show in such houses of late. Besides, Cheikh Anta Diop, the man who called for African renaissance about mid 20th century, has exhorted young Africans to make a return to the old basic architectural designs of Africa: "Every young African in a way is duty bound to build in accordance with this style (the remarkable villas built in Djenne fashion with curved lines) or other equally African styles in order to vivify art forms that are our own or that have become so adapted to our needs that we can claim them as ours" (Diop, 1996:43).

Kalenjiin people who have constructed western-style right-angled houses usually do not allocate any place for the *kimonyjoguut* (*ki-mony-jog-uut*), the piece of wood that should stick out at the apex, signifying that a man is head of that home and that he is alive, or is duly represented if otherwise. In the olden days when *kimonyjoguut* was mandatory, upon the death of a husband, the protruding piece was removed for the period of one year and all got to know, without asking, that the head of the family had recently passed away.

This is how the British anthropologist Hollis (1909:15), describes this piece of wood: The central pole must be tall "... if, as is frequently the case, the central pole is not tall enough, it is surmounted by a stick, and the erection, which is styled *kimonjogut*, is frequently almost phallic in appearance."¹

¹ In the spelling of *kimonjogut* (*kimonyjoguut*) the letter /y/ is deliberately added but which is usually barely distinguishable and is actually forgotten as in Hollis' example above. One can also split the word into morphemes, so that the root could be recognised easily. The root is probably *mony*, which is "penis". We are still in Min's territory!

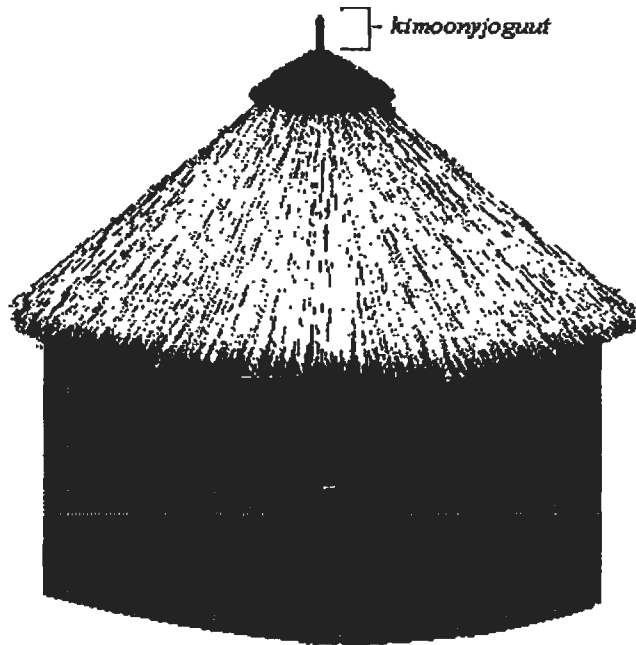




Figure 4: A sketch of a traditional Central and Southern Kalenjiin house with a *kimoonyjoguut* stick at the apex. Upon the death of a husband, *moning'ot-yoot*, the *kimoonyjoguut*, together with the inside pillars of the Eastern side of the house, called *njoor*, as well as hearth stone members facing the East, are removed. Upon the death of the wife, the pillar of the Western side, *koima*, of the house, together with the hearth stone members to the West, are removed. But, significantly, a wife's death does not cause the removal of the *kimoonyjoguut*, thus confirming the phallic essence of this piece of stick at the apex of houses. The survivor's house will remain without the dismembered parts until the deceased's survivors are cleansed and his or her property cleansed as well and blessed in a ceremony called *kiil kariik*, "oiling (cleansing) of the weapons (property)." If possible a new house is constructed for the survivors. Otherwise the parts that were removed are replaced after the cleansing, and life goes on (Cf. Orchardson, 1961:106-107).

Lee Stone (1927:6) emphasises the phallic essence of such architectural components similar to the Kalenjiin *kimoonyjoguut* and, with the support of the example of the *linga*, the male reproductive organ, and *yoni*, its female counterpart, which are essential aids in Hindu worship, he makes a forceful point to include more symbols—from Hinduism and from other religions—that we often take for granted: "However ignorantly employed, towers and steeples, columns and minarets have a close connection with the phallus, while the horizontal buildings or enclosed surfaces from which they spring trace back to the kteis, the female reproductive organ."

The inclusion of **minaret** in the above list of phallic symbols attracts us to the **min-** part of the word. As scholars have noted that minarets were pre-Islamic (Lockwood, 1989:484), the **Min** aspect of possible origin ought to gain more weight and the following argument implies that the word should be spelled M-I-N-N-A-R-E-T or M-O-N-Y-N-A-R-E-T, or even, as suggested by the Kalenjiin language, M-O-N-Y-N-A-A-R-Y-E-E-T. That it is pre-Islamic, and actually not an

Arabic word, but an African one, is confirmed by the existence of the hieroglyphic word:

 *maanra-t*, “watchtower, beacon-tower” (B.Dict. 274b).¹

The **-naret** part of the word **min[n]aret**, also interests us, considering the Kalenjin word for “crown”, *naaryeet*. Lockwood (1989:483) noted such link with the crown thus: “In addition to its ritual function, the minaret in various circumstances took on the symbolism of social and imperial power, as in the Qutb minaret at Delhi.” The closest to the Kalenjin *naaryeet* that we can find in ancient records are:  *Nefer-ha-t*, “a kind of crown”, “diadem” and  *nesrit*, “the name of one of the royal crowns” (B.Dict. 371a, 393a), (Cf. F.Dict. 132). A reading between the two renderings may suggest *naaryeet* of Kalenjin.

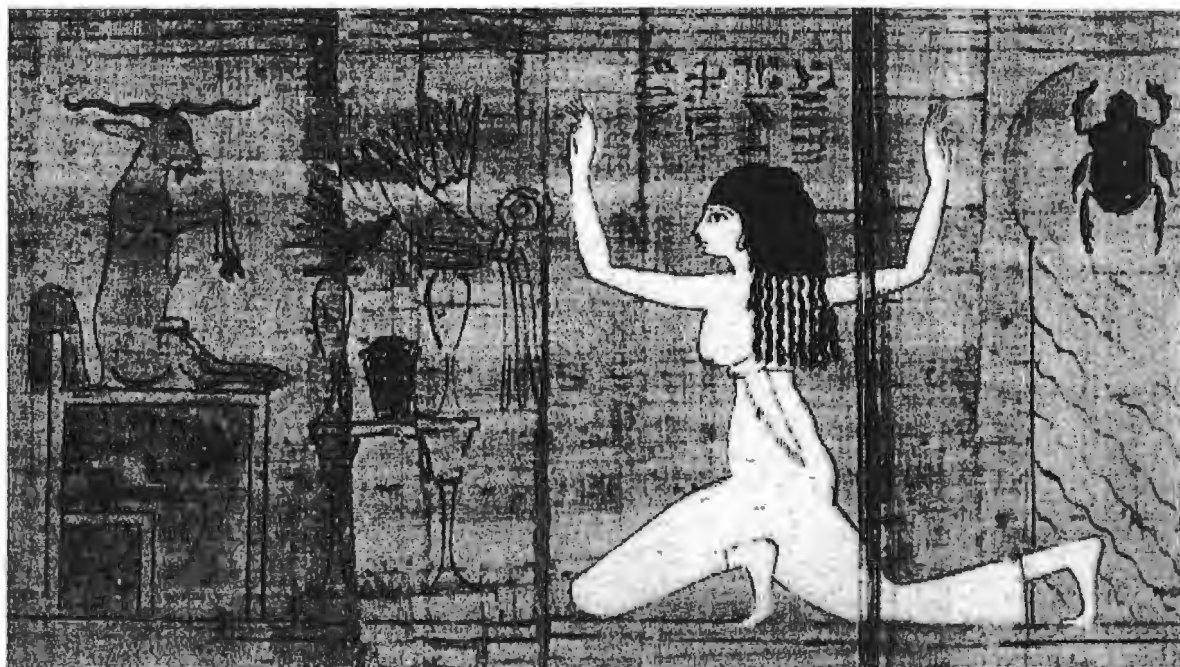
One other word from this semantic territory of Min: the house constructed in the bush, or forest, in preparation for and by newly circumcised boys wherein they heal up, receive education as they await and are processed through the successive stages of *tumiin* ceremonies leading to manhood, is called *meeny-jeet*, or *meeny-jo*. *Meny*, or *meeny*, seems to be the stem here and belongs in the semantic group of fertility and virility words associated with the Min concept.²



PICTURE 16: Tulwaap Sigiis, famous as the “Hill of Circumcision”, where boys were initiated into manhood. To the right is the smaller counterpart of it called Tulwaap Pkooiyo where the women’s initiation rites were conducted. About five kilometres behind the photographer is the Lake Victoria-bound Pchooryaan (Kipchooryaan) river, flowing from right to left, looking at it from the hill. A tiny stream emanating from the hillside joins Pchooryaan further down its course. The photographer is standing near the Londiani junction on the Nakuru-Kericho road (Picture by the author).


¹ The Arabic form, *manaar*, somewhat confirms Budge’s rendering *maanra-t*.

² *I-meeny* is to expose the glans penis by rolling up the foreskin. Needless to say this is the common sight in the *meeny-jo* where the boys, who have just lost their foreskins, heal!



PICTURE 17: A picture of a scene from the long papyrus of Her-Uben. The sun has set on her life (signified by the scarab inside the sun disc behind her) and she finds herself pleading before the Deity, Amon-Ra (represented by the ram, Amon's symbol). The papyrus of Her-Uben is spectacular and up to now part of it is still prominently displayed at the Museum of Cairo (author's visit, 1993). Her all-white figure stands out sharply in the papyrus, but the trained eye takes hint from her prognathic facial profile with a receding rather than a pugnacious chin to determine that she is actually a black woman. The wish of her life is to meet her Lord Osiris who is waiting in the next underworld compartment, overleaf... (Cairo Museum—Rambova/Piankoff, 1955).



PICTURE 18: A picture of the last scene on the papyrus of Her-Uben (12th – 10th century BC, Cairo Museum—Rambova/Piankoff, 1955). Her-Uben finally arrives at her underworld destination and to her eternal reward: she encounters her resurrected Lord, Osiris, in the typical posture and attribute of the ithyphallic “god” Min, lying on a hill. The triangular mass on which Osiris/Min is lying, and which rests on a serpent, is the hieroglyphic symbol , which represents a hill, or mountain.¹ The ascending scarab, with the sun disc below it, signifies the resurrection of the “sun-god” Ra from the House of Death and Birth, which is controlled by Osiris. The artist of about 3000 years ago spares us the spectre of the face-to-face encounter between Her-Uben and Osiris/Min, but the rebirth of the sun in time for the next dawn, makes the rest of the story self-explanatory. Osiris here wears a blue wig and beard. The exposed parts of the body, arm, face etc. are black (Cf. Piankoff, 1955:76).

¹ Circumcising Africans typically associate their rite, which is considered a virility and fertility imperative, with hills and mountains. Tutwaap Moryiis, the old “Hill of Circumcision” or the “Hill of Mr Penis” of Kipsigiis, is one example. The Xhosa and Ndebele communities of Southern Africa still go to the mountains in large groups for circumcision.

8.4 Min, Ilat and Baal: The Semitic Resonance

Min was at some stage equated with Baal, the Semitic “Lord of the Clouds and Thunder”, and it is instructive that the ancient Egyptian, and also Kalenjiin word *tul*, “hill”, is the same word used for the rumbling of thunder, as a verb, in the Kalenjiin language (Hebrew and Arabic have this word too, in the form *tel* “mound”). It would appear that mountains and hills were necessarily associated with thunder, rain, and their “god” Min. These were also the chief characteristics and attributes of the ancient Phoenician, Hebrew, Syrian etc. “god”, Baal.

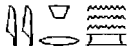

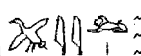
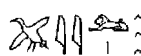
The Myoot left Egypt with the Semitic “god” name “Baal” in their vocabulary as well and which they then, or subsequently, appear to have associated with Min or, at least, *Nyos* (Nysa of Herodotus?).¹ Currently, among the Kalenjiin, the word refers to “cloud”, *bool-deet*, *bool* or *bool-da* in daily speech. The Kalenjiin who had over the years since Egypt refined their monotheism, do not seem to have recognised *Bool* as deity in their Eastern Africa setting. However, in the mythology of Cheemarus (who may be Asiis at the mythical level) and *Illat* (the thunder “god”), *Bool-deet* plays the role of the heavenly messenger.

The “Mountain of Circumcision”, Tulwaap-Monyiis, was not the only landmark that was apparently named for a “god”, or whose naming was inspired by other socio-cultural and geographical phenomena associated with ancient Egypt and the Middle East in general. The other major landmark with a probable Middle Eastern name (which is to be found in Kipsigiisland) is a symbolically important river that marks the Kipsigiis’ eastern border. The river is, instructively, a short walking distance away from Tulwaap Monyiis. This is the all-important River Kipchooryaan (Ki-p-choor-yaan or *Oin-aap-Chooryaan* > *Oinoopchooryaan*). The root is *choor*, “descend fast”. It does not take too much imagination to discern some semblance between this Kipchooryaan (usually pronounced Pchooryaan) and (River) Jordan.

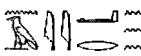

¹The following archaic Kalenjiin children’s rhyme is very instructive: *Oo ng’oo? oo Teega, Teega ng’oo? Teegan Kuluny, Kuluny ng’oo? Kuluny Nyosi, Nyosi ng’oo? Nyosi Bool, Bool ng’oo? Boole Yaagai, Yaagai ng’oo? Yaagai Kure(s), Kure(s) ng’oo? Kure Tii, Tii ng’oo? Tii Kongo, Kongo ng’oo? Kongo Ngwee, Ngwee(ng’) ng’oo? Ngweeng’ araap Matentem Bolisyoo (kong’weeng’indeege Mutugaa)!* The rhyme, whose purpose or meaning no one knows, seems to list rulers of the past in chronological order. The end of the rhyme as sung by the author’s generation seems to indicate, by the use of aeroplane (*indeege*) and motorcar (*mutugaa*), that the last bosses were the British who had those things. The older generations end theirs at *araap Matentem Bolisyoo*—whoever that was.


The rhyme starts with “who is big (supreme)?” and ends with “who is fast(est)?” So it is clear we are talking about leadership and excellence here. Most Kalenjiin speakers know this rhyme. The relevance of this rhyme here is it’s featuring of *Nyosi* (Phallus), which we here equate with Min, and *Bool* (Cloud), which we here equate with Baal. It is also being preserved here in order to facilitate future follow-up by other researchers.

Indeed “Jordan” of the Hebrews is said to come from the Hebrew word *yarad* or *jarad*, “to descend”, which a fast flowing, or any river, does at some point or other along its course. This happens to be the meaning of the Kalenjiin word *choor*. It is clearer in the word *choor-ten-kee*, “roll down self (away) mightily”.

It is also probable that Jordan, or *Yoordan*, is from Egyptian  *iaar* (B.Dict. 142b) or  *itrw* or, as in Coptic, **ⲉⲓⲉⲣⲟ** (*eihero*), simply meaning “river” or “big canal”, but all of which must roll down. The *Pchooryaan* of Kipsigiisland comes close to Coptic **ⲡⲓⲟⲟⲣ** (*piour*) and ancient Egyptian  *pair* “the river” (B.Dict. 231b). Taking hint from the Coptic *piour*, the ancient Egyptian  should probably be read *pyaar*, or *pyoor*, which can easily change phonetically to *pchaar* or *pchoor*—hence *Pchoor-yaan* of Kalenjiin. The *-yaan* suffix is a morpheme indicating singular indefiniteness as, for example, in *or-aan*, and *or-yaan* “path, road” and “ash” respectively.

The etymology of the name of River Arror in Marakwet District belongs here and can be explained in the same way.

It has been claimed that the river name “Nile” is of Semitic origin. According to Cordell (GME 1993), the word “Nile” was “probably derived from the Semitic root *nahal*, meaning ‘river valley,’ which later took the forms *Neilos* in Greek and *Nilus* in Latin.” The author, however, finds one important piece of evidence that should disturb this long-held theory. The ancient Egyptian word for “canals”, “rivers”,  *naieeru* (B.Dict. 343a) appears to be a more convincing origin of the name “Nile”. The letter  /r/ easily interchanged with /l/ as it still does in some Kalenjiin dialects such as Arror, Sabaoot and Terik.

To further support our dissenting etymological view, we may look at another “river” word. A “small river” in Egyptian was  *netu* “stream, canal” (B.Dict. 400a, Cf. F.Dict 125). We know this was either *ain-eet/oin-eet*, as in Kalenjiin, or *uin-eet*, taking hint from the cognacy between Kalenjiin *aino* or *oino*, “river”, and Coptic **ⲟⲩⲓⲛ** (*uin*), “water channel?” (Crum). The Kalenjiin *ain-o* (as in *Ain-aap-koi* “stony river”), but often, *oino*, “river”, and Hebrew *ain*, “spring”, appear to be sure cognates of the Egyptian equivalent. However, since it appears earliest in ancient Egyptian records, it is within the lexicon of Middle Kingdom Egyptian, 2240 – 1740

BC¹, i.e. long before the “official” arrival of Semites in Egypt—certainly before they had become consequential enough—we must award origin to the more ancient users.

The similarity between the story of the first Kalenjiin circumcision event after many years of wandering in the plains of Kenya, and the first one of the Israelites after their wandering in the desert for forty years, is astounding. Joshua, the immediate post-Mosaic leader of the Israelites, circumcised grown ups as well after postponing it for all those years, soon after crossing River Jordan at Cibeath, Haaraloth. The heap of foreskins from the mass circumcision is said to have added up to a hill at the pre-Israelite sanctuary of Gilgal.² Significantly, the river that they had crossed prior to reaching the mass circumcision spot was “Jordan”.

The last major service by Moses to his people while they were still wandering in Palestine was performed on Mt. Pisgah, which was situated on the land of their biblical cousins, the Moabites. Deuteronomy 3:27 records that Yahweh ordered Moses up this mountain, which was then a sacred spot for animal sacrifices (see Numbers 23:14). It was from the commanding view point atop Mt. Pisgah that Yahweh is reported to have shown Moses the Promised Land from which Moses’ people were to rid of the indigenous inhabitants with divine help and then divide the land amongst the Israelite “tribes”. Mt. Pisgah was also known for the springs that flowed from it (Joshua 12:3 and 13.20).

Now, quite intriguingly, the events and experiences of the Israelite fugitives from Egypt *up north* in Palestine seem to form an uncanny mirror image of sorts of each other with what the Myoot came to experience in the Rift Valley *down south*. Tradition has it that the major branch of the Myoot also wandered all over the plains of the Rift Valley, for several decades after leaving Mt Elgon, where they had lived with the rest at first. It is said that they lived for a relatively short period in each of the following places: Kakamega, Kitale, Moiben, Tok (Tugen), Timboroa, Solai (the Maasai leader, Sulacha’s place), Nakuru, Elementaita, Naivasha, Nakuru again, then in Mau—the famous Tulwaap Sigiis area.

They crossed the river, which we have already mentioned, named “Kipchooryaan”, before reaching the hill around which they performed circumcision and named Tulwaap Monyiis in remembrance of the mass circumcision and probably for Min too who was probably as yet unforgotten as the patron deity of the circumcision rituals. They did not name the hill *Gilgal* as the Israelites called theirs, but it is interesting to note that one of the places the Myoot occupied twice

¹ Chronology from Gardiner, 1927:1.

² Joshua 5:2-3 and *Dictionary of the Bible*, F.C. Grant & H.H. Rowley, J& J Clark, Edinburgh, 1963.

while wandering in the plains was named Gilgil. Gilgil is now a flourishing commercial centre between Lake Naivasha and Lake Elementaita.¹

The spectacular "Hill of Circumcision" that they named Tulwaap Monyiis, as we have pointed out, went popularly by the name—its main name to date—Tulwaap Sigiis. As we pointed out earlier, this may have originally been any of: Tulwa-aap-Psigiis, Tulwa-aap Kipsigiis or, as the author prefers, Tulwaap Sigiis.

When one stands at the summit of Tulwaap Sigiis, one can take in a panoramic view of virtually the entire country of the Kipsigiis, view parts of Nakuru District, Koibatek, Baringo, Nandi, Kisii Highlands, Luo country, including a beautiful sky-blue Lake Victoria. The Myoot migrants were able to see all these from the summit of this famous hill. They later possessed much of the land they could see from the top of the hill. What happened to the indigenous people—the Ogieek and the Sirikwa—is told in euphemisms, but certainly there resulted numerous fights, flights, deaths, assimilations and adoptions.

Apart from the considerable similarity in the general story line between the respective later experiences of the two peoples that had left Egypt—one going to the South and the other one going to the north—the nomenclature involved, with respect to their respective destinations, is quite telling. In summary: the river names Jordan and Kipchooryaan are derived from a cognate root, and both were used for river baptism; the respective Circumcision Hills may have different names but the geographical names Gilgal and Gilgil, were part of the experience of the respective wanderings; The Hill of Psigiis from where the wanderers of Rift Valley could see the land that they later took, resonates reasonably closely with the name of Mt. Pisgah from where Moses viewed the land that the Israelites later invaded and took from the indigenous inhabitants in a process that linguistic and historical evidence reveals to have involved appreciable degrees of assimilations, adoptions, fights, deaths and flights.

¹Further investigation may reveal that the Myoot were responsible for the name Gilgil, from a word that is lost to modern Kalenjin vocabulary. Currently, however, the name is attributed to the Maasai, meaning either a seasonal river, which oscillates between total flood and complete dryness, or *accacia pennata* bush, *ol-girigiri*. The first interpretation though is more convincing. The British who wrote down *Gilgil* first, hearing from Maasai informers, could not have confused between /r/ and /l/ as the Maasai /l/ is very prominent indeed. Furthermore there are plenty of seasonal rivers and deep gorges in the Gilgil area.

Incidentally, such a seasonal behaviour of a river could inspire the type of stories which tell of prophets performing miracles which stopped flowing waters and emptied river beds for their persecuted and pursued followers to walk over. Many ethnic communities in East Africa, the Kalenjin included, have such a tale.

Iilat, the supernatural force behind the rumbling “thunder”, that is associated with rain, as well as behind “lightning”, *ileet*, which is associated with thunderbolts, arbitration, punishment and death, according to the Kalenjiin, is also, naturally, associated with Kalenjiin *bool* or *bool-da*, “cloud”. Now, both names, *Iilat* and *Bool*, are most probably Semitic in origin. *Bool*, as already observed above, appears to be a Kalenjiinised form of *Baal*, the name of the Semitic “god” who was known as “the rider of the cloud and the storm.”

El was the supreme deity of Phoenician and Canaanite belief, the “god” of fertility, giver of rain, guarantor of rivers, and streams, and father of “gods” and men.¹ *El* was then the Semitic chief “god”, from which name modern Semitic names for God are derived. *El* was the brother (sometimes grandfather) of *Baal*, the Semitic deity most widely circulated in ancient lands. The two phenomena, associated more or less similarly by the Kalenjiin, have retained their original attributes and even names to a very high degree among the East Africans. Actually *Iilat* is *El* and *Bool* is *Baal*: To brand the double semblance a mere coincidence, is to abuse the word “coincidence” itself. The semblance in attributes, manifestations, roles and names are too many to owe it to chance.

According to Collier’s Encyclopaedia, “the goddess” in Arabic is *Al-Ilat*, and Arabic *Al-Ilah* meaning “the God” was, subsequently, owing to frequent uttering, contracted to *Allah*. The Arabs, before Prophet Mohammed came, were reportedly monotheistic in culture, although idols are said to have been common. Even before Mohammed, only Allah was recognised as the Creator and Supreme Provider. Mohammed succeeded in eliminating the idolatry aspect of religious culture—the use of physical images as prayer aids—not only at home, but also in much of the rest of the world through his most faithful followers and successors in time.

There are many derivatives of *El*. Among these is the Israeli Airlines’ *El Al*, meaning “on high”, a trade name for that state’s major airline company. Hebrew *Elyon* “the most high” or *Eloah* are derived from this *El*.

¹ Cf. *The Oxford Interactive Encyclopedia*, 1997.

Summary of Chapter 8: Asiis in Ra, in Amon-Ra and in Miot

Among other important observations made in Chapter 8, we took significant note of the parallelism between the Kalenjiin and the ancient Egyptian Min and Osirian ceremonies such as those of circumcision, in the loosening of moral discipline and temporarily turning a blind eye to otherwise illicit sexual excesses. We have also noted the parallelism in the association of the same “gods” of circumcision with the mountains, a tendency that is reduplicated in such far off places as parts of Southern Africa; notably in Xhosa and Ndebele countries.

Due note was made of the perplexing parallelism between the post-Exodus legends of the Israelites and those of the Kalenjiin after Egypt and once in what is today’s Kenya; complete with the use of similar names and landmark symbols, especially with reference to rivers, mountains, and to stories surrounding the inevitable rite of circumcision.

While we were still exploring the Semitic connection, we also mentioned the shared names for Deity such as *Iilat*, *El*, *Illah*, *Baal*, the “Lord of fertility, the Cloud, and the Storm” (rendered in Kalenjiin *bool*, *bool-da*, “cloud”). The parallelism seen in the Semitic/Kalenjiin respective experiences go to corroborate some Hebrew historical accounts as carried in the Bible as well as the Kalenjiin legends of *Misiri*. The parallelism here and in the countless other areas, further legitimise the use of the Bible as a source on which to base and from which to draw certain facts for comparative analysis throughout the project.

Chapter 9

Asiis in Isis: Was Isis Asiis?

Abstract



PICTURE 19: A bronze figurine of Isis and Child Horus—undated but this most common and popular of ancient Egyptian figurines dates back to pre-Christian times. Picture developed by The Learning Company, 1997.

Chapter 9 and Chapter 10 deal with one that is easily the most colourful of the ancient Egyptian “deities”, the one whose effective reign was curtailed by the introduction of Christianity between the first and the sixth centuries AD in Egypt. We first discuss her wide reach during her prime as Egypt’s undisputed Supreme Deity, her influence upon non-African people’s spiritual lives, especially the Semitic peoples and the other neighbouring nations of the Mediterranean surrounds.

At the beginning of the first millennium, Isis of Egypt, the celebrated Virgin Mother of God, metamorphoses into the Virgin Mary in the hands of the Gnostic Egyptian clerics who were just converting from the Isiac religion into Christianity. We see how they took Isis with them into their new religion, making it attractive and easy for the Egyptians to convert (an extension of that line of discussion is to be found under Appendix 5 and

Appendix 6).

After discussing Isis’ influence on the people outside the continent, we turn back to Africa and to the sub-Saharan Africa. Here we want to see whether and to what extent the Isiac religion permeated and affected the people’s spiritual lives. This part of Africa may be her original home, and some scholars, e.g. Budge and Frankfort, believe so. But in the absence of textual and iconographic evidence, both of which are in ample supply where ancient Egypt is concerned, we will regard Egypt to be Isis’ original home, meaning the home of her first worshippers; those who invented her in their own likeness.

We relate Isis to Asiis, investigating whether they were one and the same in terms of nomenclature and in the major attributes. Not least of these is the Nilotic preference for a female as Godhead. Any sharing in this area goes to prove further the Kalenjiin people’s oral tradition of origin. And since religion is such a highly conservative undertaking, few lines of argument could be more final.



Aset (Asiista?)

9.1 Isis' Role in World Religion

Isis is currently the most remembered of ancient Egyptian deity names all over the world. But it cannot be long since she passed into history, i.e., if she ever has. Lewis Spence reported, 1915, that there were still pockets of Isis worshippers in Paris (1915:80). And presently many revivalist organisations are sprouting all over the world. One of them, the Fellowship of Isis, with its headquarters in the Republic of Ireland, says that it is dedicated to honouring the religion of *all* the Goddesses and pantheons throughout the planet. The Gods are also venerated, they say. The Goddess, i.e. Isis, is seen as Deity, the Divine Mother of all beings. So, although they are nominally multi-denominational, the leaders refer to Isis as the Divine Mother of all beings, hence she is the Supreme Being; there is none above her. They report that thousands of members from various esoteric traditions have joined from 93 countries throughout the world and that there are hundreds of Iseums (centres of Isis worship) all over the world. The Fellowship was founded in 1976 by Lawrence, Pamela, and Olivia Durdin-Robertson. The College of Isis has been revived, they say, after its suppression of 1,500 years.¹ The Isis movement, therefore, is one on the ascendancy although it may never be the same as the ancient one.

We are, as it may appear, going to discuss Isis as an ancient bygone phenomenon at a time when it is clear that, although the beginnings are still humble, she is on the rise, nay, she never had really set, but had only waned and maintained a suppressed continuity in pockets far away from her native land of Egypt.

Egyptologists give Ra, and even Amon, more space in their books than they ever accord Isis, but the little they write about her is so inspiring. She is so charming and loveable in her good deeds and even in her occasional cruelty and, no wonder, she remains in people's memories longer than the others. She was the great and beneficent "mother-goddess" and represented the maternal spirit in its most intimate and affectionate guise (Cf. Spence, 1915:80). If Ptah represented the primordality as well as the creativity of the Godhead, then Isis represented the

¹ The Fellowship of Isis, under the apparent leadership of one of its founders, Lady Olivia Robertson, maintains a Website from which the information has been obtained: <http://www.fellowshipofisis.com>.

excellent motherly instinct of the all-encompassing Godhead. Isis was that aspect of the One that represented ideal motherhood.

That excellence in motherhood needed to be complemented by the most beautiful physical looks that could be conceived by the Egyptian mind. Isis was, therefore, also reputedly extremely pretty as the narrator in Wallace Lew's *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ* (1880, Ch. IV), is made to say:

“You must know, in the first place, that Isis was—and, for that matter, she may yet be—the most beautiful of deities; and, Osiris, her husband, though wise and powerful, was sometimes stung with jealousy of her, for only in their loves are the gods like mortals.”

According to our hypothesis, Isis—spelt and pronounced A-s-i-i-s here—is the sole Deity, and the only one from the ancient Egyptian “pantheon” that the Kalenjiin remember as Deity. As to how such a for-the-time-being presumptuous-sounding inference is arrived at, namely that Isis of ancient Egypt is what survives as Asiis in present-day Kalenjiinland, it is the central objective of this work, in its entirety, to attempt to bring out by use of direct as well as the circumstantial evidence.

Many of the other members of the “pantheon”, as we see in respect of the “gods” and “goddesses” so far discussed, have petered out in present Kalenjiinland into mere words of vocabulary. However, all of such words are invariably relevant in meaning and essence to the chief characteristic of the ancient Egyptian “god” or “goddess” in question.

Let us first get a feel of Isis, the ancient divine personality we are going to discuss in detail, from the reports that have been written by experts over the last two or three centuries. These reports make it clear that Isis was not a minor divine personage. It has been recorded, for example, that

“there were many temples of Isis in southern Italy... In the first century BC Isis was one of the most popular goddesses in the city of Rome. (That) Her temples were filled with altars, statues... obelisks &c. brought from Egypt, and orders of priestesses were endowed in order to perform the mysteries of Isis... From Rome the cult of Isis spread to Spain and Portugal, to Germany, to Gaul and Switzerland, and by way of Marseilles to North (-west) Africa. As Isis was identified with many other Egyptian and Nubian goddesses in Egypt so in foreign lands she was given attributes of Selene, Demeter or Ceres, Aphrodite, Juno, Nemesis, Fortuna, Panthea &c... In the Golden Ass of Apuleius of Madaura Isis says to Lucius: ‘The whole earth worships my godhead, one and individual, under many a changing shape, with varied rites, and by many diverse names. There the Phrygians, first born of men, call me ‘mother of the gods’ that dwell in

¹ Hornung emphasises that as “Mother of the Gods” Isis was mother of all “gods”, not just Horus: “The example of Isis also shows how this role of mother may be extended, for she is already called ‘mother of all gods’ in the New Kingdom
Footnote continued at bottom of next page

Pessinus'; there the Athenians, sprung from the soil they till, know me as Cecropian Minerva; there the wave-beaten Cyprians style me Venus of Paphos; the archer Cretans, Diana of the hunter's net; the Sicilians, with their threefold speech Stygian Prosepine; the Eleusians, the ancient goddess Ceres. Others call me Juno, others Bellona, others Hecate, others the Rhamnusia, but those on whom shine the first rays of the Sun-god as each day he springs to new birth, the Arian and the Ethiopians and the Egyptians mighty in ancient lore, honour me with my peculiar rites, and call me by my true name of 'Isis the Queen' (Budge, 1934:203).

Professor Armour (1986:48) says that outside Egypt,

"Isis is probably the most famous of the Egyptian gods. Her powers were well known in Greece and Rome, thanks especially to Plutarch, who featured her in one of his books and who saw similarities with the Greek Artemis and Roman Diana. Palestine and other countries of the Middle East were hospitable to her, and her fame has lasted into modern times."

Sigfried Morenz (1973:263) summarises the Egyptian Isis as follows,

"Goddess in human form, of unknown origin, possibly a personification of the throne; regarded as the daughter of Geb; consort and sister of Osiris, and mother of Horus. During the late period she becomes a universal goddess ... most important place of worship was at Philae (her most important temple, Temple of Philae, on an island on the lake between the two dams at Aswan). Equated with Demeter by the Greeks: during the Hellenistic and Roman imperial periods, worshipped to the limits of the Roman Empire."

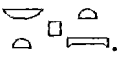


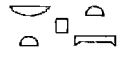
The export of the Isis movement to the mentioned Greek lands came a lot earlier than Herodotus' time, the 5th century BC. We know this because Herodotus acknowledged that Demeter, the said Greek adaptation of Isis, like many other "gods" that the Greeks adopted from Egypt, was already established among the Greeks by his time. Mention has been made of Amon, an Egyptian "deity" that was already known in Greece by the 13th century BC, and there was nowhere Amon would have gone without Isis for the one was only a manifestation of the other as we will continue to appreciate.

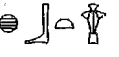

Turcan's view that the installation of Isis in Greece (in Piraeus) dated back to only "as early as 333 BC" is, therefore, an understatement of the antiquity of such African export. In fact, already by 400 BC, as Turcan mentions, there was an Athenian with the theophoric name *Isigenes*, "born of Isis" in the Greek language. Apart from the much more ancient imperial campaigns and socio-cultural and political dominance of Egypt in the Asian neighbourhood to the Northeast and in the entire Mediterranean neighbourhood to the North and beyond, economic interaction was rampant between all the peoples of these regions and beyond. Some of the wares

(1550-1050 BC). In this case the 'gods' are not just the heavenly bodies, as Nut is mother of the stars, but literally all deities" (1971:147).

that traders bought from Egypt were cultural and religious figurines that “spread the imagery of the Nilotic gods through Sicily, Sardinia and as far as Spain” (Cf. Turcan, 1996:75, 76).

The Israelites too, while in Egypt, before the Exodus; later on in the cities of Judea; in the streets of Jerusalem and back again in Egypt—after Nebuchadnezzar’s destruction of their country—are known to have regularly worshipped and made sacrifices to the “Queen of Heaven” (Jer. 7:18 and 44:1-25). “Queen of Heaven” was one of Isis’ plethora of titles under whatever localised name for her such as Asherah, Ishtar, Ashtoreth, Aphrodite etc. (Cf. Brandon 1970:107, 362).

“Queen of Heaven” was expressed in the hieroglyphs thus: . The character  often transcribed by Egyptologists *nb* means “owner of...” or “Lord/Lady”, and its Kalenjiin cognates *nebo*, “owner of” and *nebou* “lord/lady of (i.e. ruler of)”, should give a hint as to how the word was pronounced by the ancient Egyptians themselves. The symbol  signifies the sky, or the heavens, hence the interpretation of “the Queen of Heaven”. The correct transcription of Isis’ title of  as may be learnt from the Kalenjiin language, should be *Tie nebo Peet* “Girl/Lady of the Day” or “Lady of Midday sky”. This name is often contracted to Chepeet or Chebeet, through *Tie aap (nebo) Peet*. Chepeet, or Chebeet, is one of Asiis’ names. It is the most commonly used name for Asiis among the Marakwet. It is also a popular name given to girls, throughout Kalenjiinland, who are born at about midday, when the sun, *asiista*, the chief symbol of Asiis, is strongest.

Chebeet is also most likely the correct transcription of  or  which is transcribed by Budge (1904, II, 208, 213) *khebt* or *khebet*, where he refers to Isis as “Lady of Khebet”, Khebet being a mythical island that floated on the Nile according to Herodotus. It was near the city of Buto, which city was later to be popularised by the Greeks as Χεμμίς, *Chemmis* or *Khemmis* (Cf. Budge, 1904 II, 208). For some reason Isis was associated with ISLANDS—what with her role as the “goddess of sailing!”¹ We shall see later that Kalenjiin mythology also associates Asiis, at the mythical level, with an island.

Now, when, and this was not seldom, the Israelites for some reason lost faith in Yahweh, they were almost certain to fall back on the laps of Isis, this “Queen of Heaven”. The Queen of Heaven assured them plenty of food, prosperity and freedom from war and starvation. This the Israelites told Jeremiah, their own prophet (Jer. 44:16-18):

¹ Etymologists may want to investigate the word further: is the word “island” originally from “*isisland*”?

“We will not listen to the message you have spoken to us in the name of the Lord! We will certainly do everything we said we would: We will burn incense to the Queen of Heaven and will pour out drink to her just as we and our fathers, our kings and our officials did in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. At that time we had plenty of food and were well off and suffered no harm. But ever since we stopped burning incense to the Queen of Heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, we have had nothing and have been perishing by sword and famine.”¹

We have seen that Isis says that her true name is “Isis the Queen”. A Greek inscription, in duplicate, of which one was found on the Island of Ios, and the other one found on the Island of Andros, gives us Isis’ own description of her own attributes and powers. The Greek text declares that it was copied from the stela in Memphis that stood before the temple of Hephæstus (Ptah). The translation of the inscription, from Budge, goes as follows:

I am Isis, the mistress of every land.
 I was taught by Hermes (The Egyptian Thoth, Tout)
 and by his aid I found out demotic letters, so that
 all things should not be written with the same letters.
 I laid down laws for mankind, and I ordained things
 which no one hath the power to change (Egyptian goddess
 Sheseta).
 I am the eldest daughter of Kronos (Egyptian Geb).
 I am the wife and sister of Osiris the King
 I am she who governeth the star of Kuon (the Dog star)
 I am she who is called divine among women.
 For me was built the City of Bubastis.
 I divided the earth from the sky (she is Tefnut).
 I marked out clearly the paths of the stars.
 I prescribed the cause of the sun and moon (Maat).
 I found out the labours of the sea (Maat, who piloted
 the boats of the sun)

¹ It is interesting to note that the Israelites were attributing the cause of their problems to their having abandoned the Queen of Heaven (Isis) in favour of Yahweh. But it is often preached that their problems arose from their neglect of Yahweh in favour of idols, Isis and the symbols of her worship presumably being the ones so referred to. It is also implied here that the Israelites, although we may not know exactly what proportion of them left Egypt while still loyal to the Egyptian religion, and what proportion had already subscribed to the Yahweh movement, the former seem to have made up the unmentioned majority, the *silenced* majority. The quotation is from *The Holy Bible, New International Edition*, International Bible Society, East Brunswick, New Jersey, USA.

I made justice mighty
I brought together woman and man (as Hathor?).
I made women carry their babes into the tenth month.
I ordained that parents should be beloved by their
children.
I punish those who feel no love for their parents.
I, by the aid of my brother Osiris, put an end to
anthropophagy (cannibalism).
I revealed initiations to mankind.
I taught men to honour the statues of the gods.
I founded sanctuaries of the gods.
I overthrew the sovereignties of tyrants.
I compelled women to accept the love of men.
I made justice more mighty than gold and silver.
I ordained that truth should be accounted beautiful.
I founded marriage contracts for women.
I appointed separate languages for Greeks and
foreigners (the reader is reminded that this is a
Greek inscription by a Greek person.)
I made virtue and vice to be distinguishable
by instinct.
I imposed the obligation of an oath on those (who would
swear) unjustly (Budge, 1934:204).

It should not surprise us that Isis, according to the foregoing, assumes the attributes of many "gods" for we shall see later on that Isis was called by the Romans Myrionymus (of many names). So the Latin-speaking Apuleius, the author of *Metamorphosis*, or *Golden Ass* (of the end of the second century AD), worshipped Isis, "Mother of nature, mistress of all the elements, initial offspring of ages, chief of divinities, queen of the dead, first of the heavenly ones, in ONE FORM EXPRESSING ALL GODS AND GODDESSES" (Apuleius', *Metamorphosis*, XI, 5). She, therefore, "identified all the Divinities with herself and was approached through the most imposing sacraments. She was the power underlying all nature, but there was a spiritual side to her worship" (Glover, 1909:23).

The name, or nickname, of Isis, Myrionymus, is handy here because, considering all the foregoing evidence, together with the following, to the effect that the character of Mary took after

that of Isis, we should no longer wonder at the closeness of the names “Myrionimus” and “Mary”, “Miriam” or, as the Copts and the Ethiopians still call her, “Mariam”. And especially if we should consider the following statement by the famed British Egyptologist, Budge (1934:205): “The cult of Isis was succeeded in Egypt and neighbouring countries by that of the Virgin Mary and the Child Jesus and pictures and figures of both are said to have been made in Egypt in the fifth century of our era.”

Harris (1971:154) concurs with this theory for he emphatically states as follows:

“It can hardly be doubted that the innumerable figures of the enthroned Isis nursing her son Horus prepared the way for the Byzantine (the era of the Eastern Roman Empire) and later images of the Virgin Mary—just as occasionally we find on early Christian monuments Horus, the young sun-god and conqueror of evil, identified with Christ.”

This role of Isis in the moulding of Christianity is also expressly mentioned by Takács in his attempt to differentiate between the spontaneous higher form of spirituality, which he seems to associate with what he calls paganism, and the consciously developed, calculated spirituality that is supposedly propounded by Christianity. This is an awkward philosophical argument that both the sympathisers of Isis and those of Christianity might each find contentious. The sympathisers of Isis would contend that Isis religion too had a consciously developed philosophy and an orderly system of expressing spirituality even if it allowed some room for spontaneity, which, however, sometimes led to ululating by the womenfolk.

On their part, some Christians may not take the argument well that their religion is so arithmetically ordered that it is completely devoid of spontaneity or spiritualism. Spirituality in Christianity, it might be argued, is most clearly demonstrated by some believers’ reported capacity to host spirits who then speak through the host in a spontaneous involuntary process called “speaking in tongues”.

The practice of exorcising evil spirits from Christian believers, who are thought to be infested thereby, is also associated with high levels of spiritualism. However, we note Takács’ (1994:17) view here by way of recording his acknowledgement of the role of the Isisian (or Isiac as some Egyptologists call it) religion in the inception of Christianity:

“The idea of spirituality is bound to the idea of evolutionary grades in religions, i.e. the more encompassing one god, the higher the religious spirituality. Consequently, a god that is omnipotent and omnipresent extracts the highest degree of spirituality from his believers for he is the sum, the abstraction and source, of all. The conclusion that pagans were in search of higher spirituality is based on this notion. The cult of Isis, for example, becomes then the link between the utterly pagan world and the Christian world whose own spirituality, its philosophical superstructure, had to be consciously developed.”

From that sophisticated enunciation, we come to a more direct, call-a-spade-a-spade declaration of the truth of Egypt's place in man's spiritual history—especially as it concerns the Christian heritage. It is by (presumably) another western source, Arthur Versluis (1988:3, 31):

There can be little doubt that whatever traditional symbology and metaphysics remain in the West today can be traced back to ancient Egypt, that land whose people, said Herodotus, were 'scrupulous beyond all measure in matters of religion'. Indeed, though the ancient Mysteries have, it seems, long since waned—or perhaps better, been eclipsed—their influence is still felt even today, whether we know it or not... Perhaps no God or Goddess has ever enjoyed the worship and celebration of so many throughout the ancient world, from the earliest times up to and through the time of Christianity, as did Isis. Indeed even after Isis herself had 'vanished' under that name, 'She of the Many Names' continued under the guise of the Virgin Mary, who in turn assumed many of the functions that Isis had served in earlier epochs. Both, like Kanzeon Bosdhisattva in Mahayana Buddhism, 'hear cries of the world'—both are 'compassionate deliverers of the world's suffering'. But who is Isis, the *regina coeli*, whose sign in Egyptian was



Some western writers, as represented by Takács, do not find much favour with the historical fact that some—if not most—of their own civilising ancestors had once embraced this African “goddess” and regard that period when the African religion held sway in Europe and elsewhere in the Roman empire as an age of “decline in the brilliance of the Hellenic (Greek) mind”. Among the Romans, Takács (1995:1-2) writes,

“The *masses*, naturally uneducated, uncultivated, and emotionally weak, were not, in contrast to the upper class, able to master the onslaught of any oriental salvation religion and simply succumbed to these (Egyptian) gods... One could also take the period of the waning Roman Republic into consideration when the lower classes, more and more marginalised by the elite, are said to have embraced Isis... Much of what one reads refers to the lower stratum of the *populus Romanus* and the *demi-monde* that found the Egyptian goddess attractive, for they, so it seems, certainly did not have the ‘finesse’ and erudition to recognise Isis for what she was, namely, an utterly un-Roman goddess.”

This claim by Takács, partly citing and supporting W. Burkert (1987:2-3), would suggest that the people of Greece and Rome, when it came to matters of faith, followed separate religions in line with their dissimilar social status. The poorer and the more ignorant opting for the foreign religion more as a reaction to their condition than as a reflection of the convincing quality of the incoming faith. The rich and the informed, we are to infer, although Takács lets off the fact that he does not have much evidence to support it—as he says that, “much of what one reads refers to the lower stratum”—followed the traditional Greek and Roman religions. And not only was this reflected in the stratification of society but that as those European civilisations declined, so too did their faith in their indigenous religions; the Egyptian faith gaining converts in the process.

This view of the western writers, Takács and Burkert, may reflect a sense of indignation, embarrassment and frustration on the part of the modern western people that such a period existed as saw their ancestors look to Africa for spiritual direction. A difficult situation to be in, Africa now being, as it is, associated with social, cultural and economic darkness! That modern European manifestation of a sense of nationalism aside, one would find a mitigating recent example with respect to East Africa that would more or less vindicate those westerners' contention that the poor and the otherwise disaffected sections of the population were indeed the likeliest to succumb to the onslaught of a foreign faith. When European and American missionaries brought Christianity to East Africa, during the last decades of the 19th century and in the early years of the 20th century, the first to embrace the new faith at the expense of their own traditional religion were, indeed, almost invariably the poor and the otherwise socially ostracised African people. The convincing quality of the foreign faith aside, all this may owe it to the fact that a section of the population that has not prospered under the existing conditions, may, almost with an element of justification, try another alternative if such were offered. As to this natural human tendency Takács (1994:4) admits: "Any religion with elaborate rituals and mysteries promising salvation and an afterlife would naturally help the politically and socially underprivileged escape the miseries of daily life."¹

That said, it would be unfair to let go the argument without correcting the wrong impression upon which Takács view was based. Namely that the European cults of Demeter, Aphrodite, Diana, Artemis, Athene, etc., were indeed indigenous European religious innovations. The quotations, further above, from other respected western sources: Herodotus, Morenz, Armour and Budge, indicate otherwise; that these European deity names were but their own names for the ancient Egyptian Isis (also see Turcan, 1996:78-79).

So it follows that at the height of Greek and Roman civilisations, those people's supporting faith was basically Egyptian. As a matter of fact, the final decline of Rome took place when the Romans had already adopted Christianity.

¹ However, Takács cites evidence of other researchers that contradict his own contention that it was the poor and downtrodden that were desperate enough to accept Isis: "Employing epigraphical material and archaeological documents, Malaise conjectured that the Egyptian gods had found worshippers among the Italians and that their recruits were not exclusively foreigners. Most adherents were of medium means. Leaders of municipalities, as documentation from Pompeii shows, seem to have embraced these gods as well (and the acceptance of the Egyptian faith at the highest echelons of government and the monarchy, is made obvious by the fact that symbols of Isis made their way into Graeco-Roman coins" [Takács 1994:5-6, 30]). Takács yet again refers to the "widespread" notion that foreigners, the ignorant and the poor in the European Roman dominions, were the sole adherents of the Isis faith, as false (1994:36)—in the process engaging in self-contradiction. The fact is obvious, therefore, that the religion of Isis, going by all its various names, had permeated the entire social spectrum of the population and not just among the disadvantaged. The then prevailing circumstances, of social and economic depravity, therefore, do not seem to have been the sole catalyst and precondition to its gaining European converts.

Equally misplaced, therefore, is the linkage between the acceptance of the African faith by those modern westerners with their (westerners') ancestors' periods of ignorance, poverty and decline in civilisation. This is clear from the recorded developments of the first century BC, a time when the Roman rulers were particularly anti-Egyptian deities and decrees were proclaimed by the senate for the destruction of the temples of Isis and Serapis.

"Dio's account of the portents for 48 BCE make a clear case that, just as in 53/52 BCE, the proposed actions against Isis and Sarapis came about in times of extreme senatorial weakness, i.e. during periods in which the Roman constitution had been rendered ineffective. The senators of 53 BCE and the soothsayers of 48 BCE might not have seen it in these terms but their proposals and actions against the cult of Isis and Sarapis were nothing more than reactionary attempts at putting their world back in order through religious purification. But for Dio, these actions were dreadful portents; in his world Isis and Sarapis had not only a place in the Roman pantheon but were closely linked to the imperial couple" (Takács 1994:67).

Tiberius, the Roman ruler, also conjoined the Jews in the Egyptians' discomfiture. He persecuted their faith too, in an attempt to restore pure Roman faith in the land,

"... Measures against the Jews and the Egyptian cults (amount to one idea namely) that the cause of social disorder and political weakness as well as the remedy had to be sought in the religious and moral sphere. This falling back on religion and morality in critical times should not be surprising since in the Roman understanding of the world, politics were embedded in those two spheres" (Takács 1994:86).

Isis was hailed as the great healer, herbalist and miracle performer. She healed her son, Horus, with her herbs when he was bitten by Set's scorpions. She also used her knowledge of herbs and venom management to torture the "sun-god" Ra, in reaction to which pain the ageing "sun-god" revealed his hidden true name to Isis. She performed miracles on the body of her dead husband, Osiris, who had been slain by his own brother Set, in order to bring him back to life albeit briefly. The resurrected "god", Osiris, was then able to impregnate her, resulting in the conception of Horus. Set, who was her brother as well as her brother in law and enemy of both her and her son Horus, believed, of course, that Horus was illegitimate and not conceived by means of a divine miracle.

After the quest for Osiris, Isis went off to conquer men and souls.

"It is true that, by resuscitating her husband, she offered her worshippers, who were uneasy about their fate in this world and the next, the pledge of a victorious omnipotence over evil and death... Numerous minor and major gods who were cherished in popular piety gravitated around her, such as Horus, Anubis, Bes, Ptah and the crocodile Sebek." (Turcan, 1996:80).

Here we see that Isis was portrayed as the raiser of the dead and the giver of hope of life after death because she was able to raise Osiris and, later, her son Horus from the dead. Such miracle performance, coupled with the soteriological attributes, coming amid the universal human apprehension about the unknown hereafter, as well as the occasional social desperation, can appeal to human sense of hope and passion for eternal life in bliss. This attribute and capacity was later to be conferred on Jesus by the Christian movement, with Jesus playing the central role, complete with the raising of one Lazarus from the dead and curing many others for good measure. However, the analogy is very complicated considering that Jesus plays the role of the healer and raiser of the dead, which is Isis' role, yet, at the same time, He plays the role of Osiris in His rising from the dead. So does He in His promise of resurrection of all the dead and, yet again, He plays the role of Horus, the son of Isis who is hunted by Set (the equivalent of Herod in the Egyptian parallel).

From Plato's *Law*, written around 360 BC,¹ we learn that Isis was the reputed inventor of music and chanting. That she composed the Egyptian temple melodies. And because those melodies were ascribed to Isis, Plato makes the character of the Athenian narrator to say that no one was authorised to change the tune, omit, add or substitute new words. The Athenian narrator goes on to say that the Isiac melodies had therefore remained as they were, even ten thousand years before (i.e. before his time of speaking). This should tell us, although we know from Herodotus (Book II), that Isis' time on earth was long before 10,000 BC. We can work out from the information given by Herodotus (Book II) that it may have been 20,000 years ago.

Apart from being a miracle worker and healer, composer of music etc., Isis was also an inventor of technology. She was credited with the invention of the sail and so she was the patron of sailing. The 5th of March was marked into Roman times as *Navigium Isis*. The day was considered as marking the beginning of the sailing season (Cf. Pennick, 1992:48). Isis, the reputed inventor of the sail, was also the Goddess of the Lighthouse of Alexandria (Turcan, 1996:80). From this we ought to obtain the incidental but important piece of information to the effect that the sail was invented by the ancient Egyptians.

¹ Book II, Translation by Benjamin Jowett, Copyright, 1991, World Library Inc.

9.2 Isis South of the Sahara

Isis appears in several drawings and statues in human form. She is portrayed variously wearing the horns of Hathor (cow), with a solar disk between them, and sometimes wearing the throne. She is sometimes featured wearing a vulture headdress, the vulture being associated with motherhood, and so Isis also bore the title "Great Mother" (Armour, 1986:48).

The combination of the title "Great Mother" and the wearing of the vulture headdress, remind one of the attributes of Miot the "goddess" of ancient Egypt that the ancestors of the Kalenjiin seem to have so identified with that they even called themselves the people "of Myoot". But, of course, the fact that Miot was a "goddess" rather, or other than being the Great Mother of the nation of Myoot, had been lost to the Kalenjiin in the East African context. But the above symbolic merging of the Great Mother and Isis, in the ancient Egyptian context, points to a possibility that the Kalenjiin also saw the sole Creator, according to them, Asiis, as being one and the same with Miot.

Armour, the writer quoted above, and most other scholars, are not aware, of course, of the existence of Isis south of the Sahara thanks to their key sources and mentors, the early Egyptologists, who steadfastly shut their eyes each time they looked south—if indeed they ever looked that direction! Certain other westerners, however, knew of the presence of Isis south of the Sahara, which name, as said before, was pronounced and spelt A-s-i-i-s. They wrote about Her, but somehow they did not get round to marrying the Asiis story with the well-beaten Egyptian version of Isis.

Those writing about ancient Egypt and Isis did not mention the presence of Asiis to the south, and those writing about Asiis of the south did not link this deity name with the Isis of the ancient north, even though they must have been aware of the stark similarities between the two. If this oversight was not due to utter intellectual negligence, then it could only have owed it to an intellectual conspiracy of silence, which, if that is what it was, then it was so complete.

A British writer, a one-time administrator of Nandi District, G.S. Snell, wrote thus in the early 1950's:

"... Asis Cheptilil (? the white one). The derivation of the latter name is ambiguous. One account attributes it to the whiteness of the sun at midday; another has it that it is the name of a deified legendary Nandi girl of noble character who was carried off into the heavens. It is the name of God used by the Roman Catholic Mission in Nandi" (Snell, 1954:2).



The Kalenjiin spelling of Isis, A-s-i-i-s, was most probably the correct spelling and pronunciation even during the Egyptian days. The Greek traveller and writer Herodotus, who

came to Egypt in the 5th century BC, wrote a lot about the wise King *Amasis*, who was the second last indigenous Egyptian King. Students of Egyptian history know that his namesake, King Amasis I, was the Pharaoh who founded the 18th Dynasty and reigned between 1574 and 1550 BC. These two kings' common name should give us an idea as to how the Egyptians pronounced and "wrote" Isis at that time.¹


Herodotus may himself, among other Greeks of his time, be to blame for the continued misspelling of the name. Herodotus spelled Asiis/Isis, in Greek, Ἰσιος (*Isios*). Other sources have it that Amasis was actually *Ah mose*, "born of the moon-god", but that is probably purely as suggested by the hieroglyphic symbols used in writing the name. The literal meaning of *amasis* in both Kalenjiin and ancient Egyptian would tend to imply "eater of Asiis", "the one satiated by Asiis", or the one "eaten by Asiis". The cryptic meaning may have been closer to: "the one blessed by Asiis".

The pronunciation suggested by this royal name, Amasis, is the same one still applied by the Kalenjiin today in reference to the Deity and those Englishmen and Americans who seem to pronounce Isis, "eye-sees" are indeed closer to the correct way of pronouncing the name, Asiis.

¹Herodotus, Book III, translated by A.D. Godley, Heineman, 1946. The interval between the first Amasis and the last one was about 1000 years.

Isis hieroglyphic symbols  or  are transcribed AS-T (B.Dict 9) by Egyptologists, and although it would contradict standard Kalenjiin tradition, which maintains that Asiis is Godhead and *asiista* is the sun, the ancient Egyptians used either to represent the deity, and that transcription is useful in any argument as regards the ancient Egyptians' correct way of pronouncing the name, especially the first syllable. Support for this line of argument comes from the south; from the Kalenjiin-speaking Barabaig (Barabaeek) of Tanzania, who call Asiis *Aset*. "Aset sits on a big fig tree at the eastern horizon", they say (Klima, 1970:14, 50).¹

The use of one name between the sun and Deity among the Kalenjiin, is either a parallel of or a carryover from ancient Egyptian tradition where Ra stood for both the sun and Deity. Isis of ancient Egypt, like the Kalenjiin Asiis, also stood for both the sun and Deity. The ancients could see the creative and sustaining work of Deity through the irreplaceable role that the sun played in nature. The sun was the single most important creation of Deity, the only one of the Deity's creations that was able to create further life and sustain all. So Huntingford (1953b:131) aptly remarks as follows with respect to the Kalenjiin: "Asis, the sun, is the personification of the powers of nature and the universe." And Versluis (1988:32) remarks as follows with respect to the Egyptian parallel: "Isis, in sum, not fundamentally different from the Sun, is rather a manifestation of the Divine Compassion accessible to man in an age of waning faith and wisdom."

Now the Kalenjiin say that their ancestors came from a place in *Misiri* called *Do* or *Tto*.² It is our educated guess that this happens to be  *Ddw*³ of the ancient Egyptians. Our guess is emboldened by the fact that it also happens to have been the centre, or thereabouts, of the "cult of Isis". The Classical Greeks referred to that specific area as Busiris and its modern name is Abusir (Cf. Watterson, 1984:12). The great Egyptologist, Budge (1934:199), confirms the same as follows:

¹This fig tree, *simotweet* in Kalenjiin, was deeply venerated far and wide. The edicts of King Asoka of India direct the veneration to the Holy Fig-tree most emphatically (Cf. Garnier, 1904:113). King Asoka of 3rd century BC, is the Buddhist equivalent of the Christian Emperor Constantine. Had neither of these monarchs taken it upon himself to respectively recognise and sponsor the spread of his own faith, those faiths would still be very small indeed if they would have survived at all. Asoka spread Buddhism all over his expansive Mauryan Empire while Constantine, coming about 600 years later, sponsored and decreed Christianity all over his vast Roman Empire—Cf. *The Perennial Dictionary of World Religions*, 1989.

²Hollis was informed that the beginner of Circumcision in Nandi was one Kipkenyo who had come from a country called Do (1908 p. 99). Peristiany duly noted the claimed country of origin, spelling it, Tto (1939, p. 1). Both westerners must have ignored the *Misiri*(an) location of *Do* or *Tto* although Hollis was emphatic about the northern origin of these people: "The ancestors of the main body of what constitutes the so-called Nandi-Lumbwa group came, beyond doubt, from the north" (p. 2).

³Gardiner's transcription, *ibid.* p. 604.

“Isis... was either the female counterpart of the bisexual god Osiris, or a fetish goddess who was worshipped in some town near Busiris, the seat of the cult of Osiris... The first great temples dedicated to Isis were built under the XXXth. dynasty (just after 400 BC) and in the Ptolemaic period... It was a large and magnificent temple, granite, both red and grey, being used freely in its construction. Here the triad Osiris-Isis-Horus was worshipped until the sixth century of our era.”

9.2.1 *Cheptaleel*

The second explanation given to G.S. Snell, above, as to how Asiis came to be saluted, *Asiis-Cheptaleel* (the white girl), namely that this was a reference to a Nandi girl carried off to heaven is only a mythical aspect of the phenomenon of Asiis. Asiis, otherwise, to the Kalenjiin is the One Creator without beginning and end. In some versions of the myth of ascendance to the present heavenly abode, Cheptaleel is referred to as Cheemarus. We shall deal with the myth of Cheemarus later.

The ancients invented myths and fairy tales as vehicles with which to impart lessons of virtue to the youth. Just as they assigned imaginary human voice, brains and dexterity to the hare, hyena and so forth, they played the divine in human form, with some of the attendant mortals' weaknesses intact. Human beings are only human and can invent, tell and understand stories within their own and the listeners' limitation of experience. These Kalenjiin myths, like the classical myths of Greece, are but moral allegories (Cf. Tylor, 1871:277).

Were the mythical divinities not to be assigned human characteristics, strengths and weaknesses included, the messages buried in such tales would never be understood and appreciated. They had to appeal to experience, likes and dislikes, love and hate, hope and fears, or mixtures of these, but which remained within the province of human experience. It also helps to remember that many of the divinities so immortalised and assigned larger-than-life superhuman forms and attributes were initially real human beings since deified. The partly defective humanlike character that they portrayed in the later heroic tales, therefore, owed it to their historical roles as humans.

Irrespective of their obviously fabulous nature, there is never a shortage of believers in those recorded or remembered miraculous episodes. The believers must, however, explain away the glaring inconsistency, especially as to how come the divine beings and activities similar to those of mythology are no longer active on earth. They declare, for example, that the world has since decayed morally and is no longer hospitable enough for the divine to tread upon. This changed-

world hypothesis somehow helps fill the gap of credibility on the part of the gullible. As Tylor puts it, untrue impossibilities are transformed into untrue possibilities (Cf. Tylor, 1871:276).

In similar vein, Plutarch has shown how the grossest features of the ancient Egyptian Isis legend have subtle and spiritual meanings that were never meant to be taken literally; pointing out that the myths are in fact *logoi*. Philo vindicates the Old Testament in the same way (Cf. Glover, 1909:184).

As the mythical Isis took a feminine form in ancient Egypt, so did she continue in the same form in the myths of East Africa, under a plethora of names, all feminine. The myths repeated here give us an idea as to the nature of the religion that the ancients practised and which they tried to hand down to us, as they had received themselves from their own ancestors. In appreciating these tales, needless to say, it is important to keep in mind the distinction between myth and actual religion. The former only explains the latter, sometimes confuses it, but it should not supplant it.

Dr Toweett recorded the following myth which stars a Kalenjiin virgin girl, Cheptaleel, and a Maasai *moran* (soldier-grade man). This is a myth told by the Kipsigiis but versions of it are common all over Kalenjiinland.

The people were living in a country that was prone to long spells of drought. There once came an unusually severe and long spell of drought. Everywhere was dry. Everything was dry. There was no grass. Cattle and people were dying of starvation.

People took counsel together. They said that the "god" of rain was not happy because of one thing or other and that he wanted some propitiation before he could open the gates of rain.

It was decided to fetch a girl who had to be an only child of the family. She was to be sacrificed to the "god" of rain. Word was sent round and one was found who had neither a sister nor a brother.

The girl was then decorated in pure white. The people assembled and performed a ritual ceremony, and the girl was taken and placed on an island where she was expected to be taken away by the "god" of rain.

The girl's sweetheart, the *moran*, heard of what had been planned for his sweetheart. He went (sailed or swam?) to the island, determined to rescue his sweetheart. He took with him a sword, a spear and a *panga*—all were as sharp as the edge of a razor blade. When he arrived at the island, he found the girl singing: "*Tule we Kimase, kagigonin chepto chemami karne ne matinye* (You Kimase thunder violently, you have been given a girl which there is no ornament she does not have [another way of saying she was a virgin, all intact and decorated to the limit to which only virgins are])."

Showers fell and the “god” of rain arrived. He circled the island and finally made for the intended sacrificial victim. But before he could lay his claws on the girl the *morán* speared him and cut him up into two. He thus rescued his sweetheart, and he was allowed to marry her thereafter.

“The story ends there but a good deal of information is attached to it. Some people say that this girl who was decorated in pure white and who was called Cheptaleel (*Cheptane-leel* = white girl) belonged to the Kibaek family line. Others have confused the name of the Kipsigis god with Cheptaleel. Cheptaleel today means God and not the traditional sacrificed girl... The Kipsigis still believe that if a man of the Kibaek great family line is taken to the river and splashed with water all over then it would rain... The important point in connection with this story is that the Kipsigis must have lived in some very dry areas and these dry areas must have been somewhere near a lake or a sea, a place with an island. Where could it be? Some tales are told about Egyptian sacrifices. Could there be any relationship between the Kipsigis story of Cheptaleel and some Egyptian sacrifices?... The Kipsigis know their god by many names... the commonest of these names is Asis. The Egyptians, I understand, called their goddess Isis... It would be interesting from the linguistic aspect of things to try and find out whether the Egyptian Isis is the Kipsigis Asis. This may be a clue to the theory that the Kipsigis and all the other Nilo-Hamites came from the northern parts of Africa” (Toweett, 1979:4-5).¹


Yet another “clue to the theory”: for some reason, the most important shrine of Isis—the centre near Busiris to the north notwithstanding—was far to the south, just before Aswan High Dam as one came southwards, right on the *Island* of Philae. Even as late as the Roman times, pilgrims from Greece, Jordan, Alexandria, Italy and other parts of the Mediterranean surrounds, would visit Philae, carrying prayers of their family members and relatives to “The Lady Isis”. At this time they certainly considered Isis the universal Goddess. “Their journeys were the physical expression of a faith greater than prevailed generally...” and they would report back thus:

“When we arrived at the island of Isis, splendid and holy, at Egypt’s edge, before Ethiopia, we saw in the River Nile swift boats that bore noteworthy shrines (miniatures as offerings) from Ethiopia to our land rich in crops and worth the beholding, which all mortal men on earth venerate” (MacMullen, 1981:29).

If the Kalenjiin associated the ascension to heaven of Asiis Cheptaleel with an island, as we read from Toweett above, and on the Island of Philae the ancient Egyptians built the most impressive of Isis shrines according to the evidence just quoted; then it follows that the most likely origin of the worship of Isis/Asiis was on the island of Philae. Because of the importance of this hint, we re-quote Morenz here, “During the late period she becomes a universal goddess... most important place of worship was at Philae.”

A notable historian, Isaac Asimov (1967:220-221), notes the following with regard to the temple of Isis at Philae:

“Far to the south, near the First Cataract, on the island of Philae, a temple to Isis had been built by Nectanebo II, the last native king of Egypt, seven centuries before (before Coptic Pope Cyril’s reported order for the destruction of major Isis relics and the murder of the leading Isiacs of around 415 AD). It had been rebuilt by Ptolemy II Philadelphus and again repaired in the time of Cleopatra. There, while the world turned Christian, the fading smile of the Queen of Heaven could still be seen, and the age-old rites were still performed in secret far from the centre of Christian power.”

The Kalenjiin “God” of Rain (Thunder) mentioned in the above myth, is properly called *ililat* (or *ileet* in the definite noun form). Some find it difficult or disrespectful to utter the real name, so they prefer to say *Peek aap Parak*, “the water of the heavens”. Both names seem to have existed in ancient Egypt, and not only that; they were associated with Philae. Philae in Coptic is ΠΙΛΑΔΑΚ (*Pilak*) and may relate to Kalenjiin *Pa-illat* “of the Thunder “God””. Another form of the same name in hieroglyphics is  *P-aa rek* (B.Dict. 984), which resonates with Kalenjiin (*Peek aap*) *Parak*.²

During the rule of the Romans, and while the Isis movement was at its height throughout the Roman Empire, Philae appears to have become the Holy Land to the Romans. Visiting Roman women would carry sacred water back to Rome from the sanctuary of Isis at Philae (Cf. Breasted, 1912:286).

It is important to note that the very last of the vestiges of the Isis faith within Egypt were to the southernmost part of modern Egypt. And although the most likely original home of the proto-Kalenjiin may lie much further north, in today’s Abusir area—the old *Tto*/Busiris—whether their migration south along the Nile was gradual or rapid; they must have passed through, or lived in areas that were still ruled by the Isis faith, including its capital of Philae. If Christianity caught up with them at any stage along their migratory path, then they resisted it as they seem to have kept intact their high form of monotheism which, considering the near-total absence of idolatry; was on a higher plane in the scale of monotheism and abstract thought than even the Isis faith, its own prototype.

Were the Nandi, who spoke to Snell and the Kipsigiis who spoke to Toweett, respectively, aware of other possibilities as to the etymology of the title or name, *Cheptaleel* other than the

¹ This version is very close to the one Chesaina (1991:46-47) collected from Nandi. Both are akin to the Arabian pre-Islamic tales of a fresh new “god” slaying the old when the latter has brought the desired rain and is about to scoop his prize of a sacrificed virgin girl.

² This *Parak*, pronounced *barak* remains the Hebrew word for “lightning”.

more tantalising “white girl”, or “white-clad girl” respectively? A trip to the Hamitic lands of eastern Africa might provide a possible alternative origin of Asiis’ name, *Cheptaleel*.

We first go all the way, about 2000 Km. north of the present Kalenjiin heartland (in Kenya), to Central East Sudan, and areas around Sudan/Ethiopia border, not far South of Khartoum, where the Blue Nile turns to flow north-westward to meet the White Nile. We may find hints as to the source of other Kalenjiin deity names, apart from *Cheptaleel*, here as well. Here live a people, among others, who speak a distant Kalenjiin dialect. They were probably peoples of earlier times who mixed with the Myoot on the move or were themselves part of an Egyptian party left behind in old settlements during the waves of immigration southwards, or alternatively, they emigrated from Egypt on their own at a different time.

According to C.G. Seligman, these people, whom he acknowledged were skilled horsemen as well as good farmers, considered themselves indigenous to Sudan, created by God on the spot where they live today. They are the people referred to by the Arabs as Ingassana (1934:429).

The Deity according to the Ingassana, like the Deity according to the Kalenjiin, is also symbolised by the sun. The Deity is called *Tel*. They also refer to the sun as *tel* (not unlike the Kalenjiin who refer to the Deity as *Asiis* and to the sun as *asiista*). The Ingassana maintained a shrine of *Tel* within their compounds, in the form of a hut which they referred to as “the house of *Tel*”, *we i Tel*. From this *Tel*, it is not difficult to work backwards to a possible previous version of the Kalenjiin *Cheptaleel*, as *Chee-po-Tel* or *Tie-po-Tel*, “she, the girl of *Tel*”, or even *Tiepo-El*, “the girl of El”, the old Semitic deity etc. all ruling out “white girl”.

Seligman says that *Till* or *Tel* is also found among several west African languages, notably the Mandingo group of languages. It is also found in the ancient Christian texts of Nubia wherein it meant “Lord” or “Master” (1934:16).

Other “sun god” names around the above described area of south-eastern Sudan and western Ethiopia, may help to further establish the legitimacy of this northern region as another etymological ground with respect to the titles and names for Asiis. Another community from this northern area who are related to the mainstream Kalenjiin of Kenya linguistically and racially (within the African context), the Lang’o, refer to the sun as *nikolonga* while a people of similar stock nearby, on the West Bank of the Nile, the Bari, call the Creator *Ngun lo ki*, “*Ngun* in the above”.¹

¹Seligman, *ibid.*, p. 315. The Lang’o mentioned here, are not the Nilotic Lang’o of Uganda who are the more famous Lang’o further south in East Africa. The Lang’o referred to here, are Hamitic-speaking cousins of Maasai, Turkana and Kalenjiin just as are the Bari, the Lotuko, the Toposa, the Ingassana and other minor ones on both sides of Sudan/Ethiopia border, although they are 2000 or more kilometers removed from their southern cousins. It is these northern Lang’o who probably came into contact with the Luo during the latter’s reported march northwards and then southeastward, to their
Footnote continued at bottom of next page

The Lang'o word *Ni-kolong-a*, and Bari deity name *Ngun lo ki*, can explain the source of another Kalenjiin name for Asiis, *Asiis Cheepo-Ngolo*, "Asiis the daughter of *Ngolo*".

Closer home, the Maasai call the sun *E-ngolo-ng'*, from which they probably derive their name for the Deity, *Enkai* (or vice versa) although *Enkai* refers to the sky in general and only to the supernatural in particular.

It can be deduced with little need for further examination, therefore, that the Kalenjiin *Ngolo*, is derived or borrowed from any one of the above and, that proven, we are then left to speculate that those words, in turn, are derived from a deity name which has yet to be discovered in ancient Egyptian sources. Very few Kalenjiin nouns begin with the /ng/ sound as in the English word "singular" (not to confuse with the words which begin with the ng sound as in "sing". These latter are plenty). The deity name *Ngolo* is most likely, therefore, not an authentic Kalenjiin name, but is one borrowed from any of the Hamitic-speaking communities mentioned above.¹

In order to prove Ingassana authenticity and relevance as well, in our quest to decipher Asiis' titles and names, we note here that these people still remember that the first man on earth was Gebir, and that the first woman was Otianer. These are, of course, Geb, the earth "god" and Nut, the sky "goddess", members of the Egyptian (Heliopolitan) Ennead, and the first children of "god" Ra. The latter are, in other words, a deified version of the relatively more recent Adam and Eve, who are associated with the northern parts of the Middle East.

In keeping with their habit of applying solar deity names of ancient times to the phenomena of time and periods, the Kalenjiin word for "now" is *nguuni*. This is probably related to the Bari solar deity name, *Ngun* or *Ngun lo ki*. This possibility is reinforced further when we consider the Kalenjiin word for the phrase "at this time", *ko-ria*, where the Egyptian sun ("god") name *Ri* is used. *Nguni* and *koria* roughly mean the same thing, and therefore *Ngun* and *Ri* may have referred to one and the same deity in some remote place and time.

Ngolo is most evident in Maa(sai) *engolong'* "the sun". The Maasai derive their word for "day" from the word for the sun. So "one day" in Maa(sai) is *engolong' nabo*, literally, "she-sun


present home around Lake Victoria. Since then and up to now the Luo refer to all the Kalenjiin people as *Jo-Lang'o*, "of *Lang'o*". The Lang'o being associated with the Kalenjiin here are a people over 2000 kilometers north of the modern Kenyan Luo country. Good memory relative to time and space!



¹The *Ngolo* title is not of Gusii origin as H.A. Mwanzi concluded. The Kintu-speaking Gusii have their *Engoro* which Mwanzi translates to "life giving force situated somewhere in the heart." (H.A. Mwanzi (1977:117-118 and his various workshop papers)

The Kalenjiin have borrowed words and even much blood from the Gusii, but *Ngolo* is not one of them. Most of the loan words from Ekegusii have something to do with agriculture and specifically vegetables. In any case the Kalenjiin do not have a problem pronouncing the letter /r/ as in *engoro* thus finding the need to change it to the letter /l/ in order to arrive at *Ngolo*. The converse is true, however, as the Gusii cannot pronounce /l/ and their *engoro* may have come from *ngolo* just as the Gikuyu *Ngai* (God) ultimately comes from the Maasai *Enkai*, the Deity.

she-one”, i.e. “one sun”. This Hamitic-speakers’ habit of consigning the sun to the feminine gender was also found among ancient Northern Europeans. There “the sun is seen as feminine, personified as the goddess known as Phoebe in East Anglia and Saule in Eastern Europe” (Pennick, 1992:8).

Kalenjiin for the phrase “a single day”, *petuun-ok*, can also ultimately be traced back to “one sun”.¹

Kalenjiin *peet*, “day (time)” is recognisable in Coptic ⲡⲉ (*pe*) and in ancient Egyptian  *pe-t*, “the sky” or “the heavens” (B.Dict. 229a). As we have mentioned, the Kalenjiin, especially the Marakwet, refer to Asiis as *Chebeet*, “Girl/Lady of the Day”. *Chebeet* or *Cheepeet*—a contraction of *tie-aap-peet*, *tie-po-peet* or *tie (nebo) peet*—is a popular name usually given to Kalenjiin baby girls who are born around mid-day. *Tie aap*, when pronounced often and quickly, becomes *che-p* or *ta-p* and therefore *che-* and *ta-* are used as female and feminine class object names’ prefixes.

Cheepeet, one of the Kalenjiin names for Asiis that we are now familiar with, can also be linked to a name for Isis in ancient Egypt. If we can verify that this obtains, namely that Asiis and Isis shared at least one other name, then it should logically follow that Isis and Asiis were one and the same reference to Deity at the beginning. The hieroglyphic inscription of *Cheepeet*, which is still seen on tomb walls and in ancient papyri documents, is  (Versluis 1988:31). As we have argued, this should, strictly speaking, be read *Tie nebo peet* “Girl/Lady of the Day”, or “Girl/Lady of the Sky” in both Kalenjiin and ancient Egyptian. However, western Egyptologists, deprived of the benefit of the East African language, would typically transcribe this to *Nebw-t Pe-t*. But Coptic and Kalenjiin teach us that the first /t/ character here should be read first even though in the hieroglyphic arrangement it comes under the  *nebw* character.

All the above “solar deity” related words, coming from ancient Egyptian “gods”, have been retained, and where they no longer refer to the “sun god”, e.g. Ra or Ri, as a “god”, they do, nevertheless, invariably relate to time and the sun—which regulates time.

¹The *-ok*, indicating “single”, here is from *tok* a most probable word for “one” in old Kalenjiin. *Tok* is still in use among many Hamitic speakers in Southeastern Sudan. It is most likely from ancient Egyptian. The Coptic first month is ⲧⲠⲠⲧⲧ (*Tout*) and ⲧⲁⲁⲧ (*taht*) means “the beginning”. In modern Kalenjiin *tou* means “begin”, *tou-neet* is “the beginning” and *twat* means to “give birth for the first time”.

9.2.2 Cheemarus

The centenarian lady sage of Matobo, Kericho, Cheboleet Cheepo Terik¹, has the following version of Asiis', or Cheptaleel's ascension to heaven.

A virgin who was an outstandingly well-mannered, beautiful girl, who was named Cheemarus, was betrothed to a soldier. Her name, Cheemarus, is a contraction of *Tie-ma-aruus*, which means "Girl, or Lady, not quite blue". She was nicknamed so because her body complexion was jet black—a limit in black pigmentation that almost suggests blue to the Kalenjiin eye.

It so happened that before the virgin could get married to her fiancé, a long spell of drought caused a famine that ravaged the country, and the people became desperate. They prayed for rain so incessantly, but all was in vain. This went on for a painfully long time. *Toiyoi* or *Iilat* (Thunder) who was in charge of rain had forsaken the people.

At last one day, so many more painful months later, Thunder sent his messenger who was Cloud, *Bool-deet*. Cloud hovered close to the earth as he announced from village to village, for all to hear. He wanted all the people to gather at the big shrine, *kaapkoros*, after seven days, and he would come back then.

From previous practice the people knew that Thunder would, on this appointed day, expect, in the appropriate place; his favourite gift. Such gift was in the form of a black heifer. The people were always assured that the rains would follow as soon as Thunder had soared to heaven with the heifer. So a heifer answering to the requirements of the sacrifice to *Toiyoi* was sought and kept ready for the visit of Thunder.

Six days passed by since Cloud's announcement of the prayer meeting, and at dawn of the seventh day, the people streamed into and gathered in the *Kaapkoros* enclosure, for in those days they used to fence around the *kaapkoros*. This was necessary because the people used to drive their animals to the *kaapkoros* processions so that they were also blessed.

As was the practice in ancient Egyptian temples, Kalenjiin prayers began at sunrise upon which praises, such as *Kicham Cheepkochor ainoon kagochorcheech*, "we love the rising Lady, Who shines upon us, Now She has shone upon us", were sang to the rising sun as if it was Deity. At this time Deity was addressed as *Cheepkochor*, "the Girl/Lady who rises" and clearly identified with the rising sun. This may be compared to ancient Egyptian sunrise hymn, which

¹The lady's first nickname means the "quarrelsome one", "the outspoken one" or "the noisy one", cf. Coptic ⲟⲩ ⲉⲗⲟⲁ *oash ebol*, "shout loudly": the corresponding Kalenjiin words to the above two Coptic words are *waach* and *bol* respectively. Both *waach* and *bol* mean more or less the same thing in modern Kalenjiin.

was also sung by the procession, at the temple: "Rise, great god, in peace! Rise, you are in peace". All critical ritual actions and recitations at the temple were repeated and uttered four times (Cf. Te Velde, 1995:1741) as was and is still Asiisian custom (Cf. Peristiany, 1939:10).

At the time of participating in a procession around the *kaapkorosit* altar, the Kalenjiin faithful were stripped bare of all metal armaments. They carried only sticks, shields and unstrung bows. They drove their animals before them, circling the altar of Asiis four times. The virgins, who were dressed in their best, and the priests who were clad in huge ceremonial fur-clothes that were made of hyrax skins, called *sambuut*, hence the priest's other name *Poy-oop sambu*, "the father/elder of the fur-cloth"¹ sprinkled the holy solution made of honey wine, salt lick water, milk and cow dung, over the people as they filed past them and through the arch which they entered at the point of facing the rising sun. We continue now with Cheboleet's narrative.

After the procession around the altar was complete, the animals were driven off to the perimeter of the enclosure. Only the black sacrificial heifer was left behind, tethered near the altar where it stood, now looking composed after a bit of a futile struggle as its colleagues were being driven off. It now seemed to enjoy the aroma of the burning incense.

Except for the cacophony of noises that came from the mixed hordes of excited livestock—bulls bellowing, sheep and goats bleating, donkeys braying etc., all was tranquil. The people sat a few meters to the west of the altar of Asiis such that the long shadow of the huge stack of sacred trees, other plants and vines that made the altar, bathed some of them. They waited with baited breath. They loved Benevolent Thunder—the bringer of rain—but there always was a possibility of something excessive being demanded of the people if the less pleasant side of Thunder overcame his benevolent nature.

The women and children sat in a crowd to the left, Cheemarus, the righteous virgin, among them. Cheemarus' smooth black forehead reflected the golden rays of the early morning sun. The old men, the middle-aged men, and the young boys, sat in a crowd to the right. In front of the old men and young boys knelt the soldiers. Each soldier knelt down with the left knee, the right knee being lifted to the fore as the right foot was allowed to step down flat on its sole. The soldiers, all in that posture, were arranged in neat rows. The shields, which were held by the left hand and rested on the ground, were elaborately decorated with symmetrical drawings that were brightly coloured. All the soldiers were clad in brownish-red leathern clothing and the exposed parts of

¹ His ancient Egyptian counterpart, such as the priest of Ptah, would wear a long linen robe, a panther's skin on his back, which was looped around the neck, and the wig of Ptah on his head (Cf. Thompson, 1990:97). The priest of Asiis wore a fur cap instead of the wig, and probably the panther's skin called in Kalenjiin *siir* (def. pl. *siir-ek*) because *siir* was part of the attire of an accomplished man.

their otherwise black bodies, were coloured with brownish-red ochre. Their similarly ochre-coloured hair, which was braided into thin long strands and secured with pigtails, rested on their partly bare oily brownish-red backs.

The hairstyle described above was captured for us by Orchardson (1961:35) early in the 20th century and he describes it the way anyone would the ancient Egyptian men of the same age in his book which was published posthumously, *The Kipsigis*. "The hair was dressed into a picturesque pigtail, which was untied at dances so that the hair flopped in time to the rhythm."

Cheemarus could see that all the young men had now gone back to their arms and the freshly sharpened blades of their spears stabbed the air like blades of long grass in the plains. From their belts, against the right side of their hips, dangled the red sword sheaths.

Cheemarus' fiancé was among the soldiers, and Cheemarus could see that his freshly sharpened spear, like those of his colleagues, gleamed as it bathed in the golden rays of the early morning sun too. His bare upper arm of the left bore a special decoration in white and red paint. This indicated that he was a war hero. One or two others bore the same type of decoration on their left upper arms which Cheemarus and the others seated to the left could see. The sight of the composed, fully armed certified-brave-man, gave Cheemarus reassurance as she held her breath like the others, for Thunder would descend any time now. Her fiancé, like the other men, was obviously looking forward, as she was, to the young people's *kambageet* dance, which followed such prayer processions.

Although the people sat facing east, their eyes often looked heavenward. For the hour had come for Thunder to descend and scoop his gift.

Thunder finally descended, in the form of a huge hovering black cloud, *chep-tabis-yeet* (this is also the word for "tornado" as well as for "comet"), whose immense shadow darkened the whole *Kaapkoros*. Thunder then flashed bright lightning streaks, making the people turn their faces down in a hurry. Then a steady beam of Thunder's search light swung round and then stilled and focused, not upon the black heifer, as was expected, but upon the virgin, poor Cheemarus. Then Thunder announced in a loud deep rumble that he had chosen Cheemarus to be his wife, and that he would take her with him to heaven instead of the heifer.

The soldier-fiancé of Cheemarus would not hear of this. He was stunned like everyone else at first. Then, enraged to blindness, he reached for his sword. He dashed forward and to the further shock of the lay people, and to the utter dismay and disbelief of the priests, he menacingly threatened Thunder. He announced that he would slash him into pieces even if Cheemarus should be accidentally hurt in the process, if he so much as dared lift her up from the crowd of women,

other girls and children. Thunder rumbled back a reply to the effect that he would still lift Cheemarus to heaven, even if she were cut in two.

True to his threat Thunder, now in the shape of a huge cock, disengaged himself from the black cloud and descended. Thunder swept Cheemarus off her feet, but he was not fast enough on takeoff. The enraged soldier managed, in a fit of madness, to slash and sever Thunder's lower half with his great sword, avoiding hurting his sweet heart, *murer-eet*, Cheemarus who had, by this time, been held tightly to the bosom by Thunder. The upper half of Thunder nevertheless still carried Cheemarus and soared with her to heaven.

The lower half of Thunder violently wriggled its way into a cave or cavern, *keben-eet*, where it lives to this day. The other abode of this earth-bound thunder is in the *nyaanja*, "lake" or "sea".

This lower half of Thunder is the "evil Thunder", or "evil Lightning", *Ileet ne ya*. It has since that day remained earth-bound, where it is the cause of all evil and destruction. He leads people to commit sin. He is to blame for all the evil on earth and is the one who kills and maims people and livestock, attacking either in form of diseases or lightning strikes.

The upper half of Thunder, which is in heaven, is the benevolent *Ileet*, *Ileet ne mie*, who does only good things, one of which is to defend mortals against the mischievous designs of the evil earth and sea-bound *Ileet*. This upper half of Thunder married Cheemarus in heaven, where they have lived ever since.

One of the positive actions of Thunder's half in heaven, is the causing of rain. But he goes about it rather negatively: when he beats up his wife, Cheemarus, she cries and her tears drop down to us as rain. And when he strikes her too hard, she cries with greater urgency, and her tears arrive on earth still in solid form—hail stones!

What is clearly a version of this legend exists in Zulu mythology. A captive Zulu princess lives lamenting in the country of her captors who are Half-Men. In her song she beseeches Sky—for as we saw in the previous subsection, the Zulu, like the Maasai and others, call Deity "Sky" or "Heaven"—to intervene and slay the Half-Men:-

'Listen you heaven. Attend; *mayoya*, listen.

Listen, heaven. It does not thunder with loud thunder.

It thunders in an undertone. What is it doing?

It thunders to produce rain and change of season.'

“Thereupon the clouds gather tumultuously; the princess sings again and it thunders terribly, and the Heaven kills the Half-Men round about her, but she is left unharmed.”¹

The two versions, Kalenjiin and Zulu, address the same theme; the origin, or source of rain. The two traditions make a distinction between the loud-cracking thunder and the distant-rumbling rain-bearing thunder both of which are equally spoken of as if human. The use of half-bodied character(s) is common to both versions even if they are not identical in all other respects. The Kalenjiin version has one half-being abducting and living with Cheemarus. This is the portion of Thunder who, as the myth goes, was cut in two, the one half remaining on earth and continuing to operate as the source of all evil (but also as an agent of deserved punishment). The Zulu version has several of such half-beings or half-men. The discomfiture of the captive princess under the mercy of half-men abductors and the discomfort of Cheemarus, whose captor half-bodied husband batters her, are shared elements that, considered with the rest, should lead us to a justified speculation of an ancient singular source. The similarities with respect to the symbols used, of the characters, and in the theme addressed, being so many, we may indeed be certain that either one version developed further from the other one or, as we have said, that they both derive from a single source. We will soon see how both versions are analogous to a similar source-of-rain tale from ancient Egyptian mythology and how analogous to an Arabian version these Eastern and Southern Africa versions are.

Aspects of folklore can be adapted to suit the local culture and values. The Zulu’s choice of a princess to stand for virtue and the Kalenjiin’s choice of a virgin to represent the same in this source-of-rain myth only highlights the slight differential in the stress of cultural values. Royalty was not such a factor in Kalenjiinland whereas the same was, and is still, an indispensable aspect of Zulu tradition. However, both cases are reminders of possible incidences of human sacrifice for rain in greater antiquity. But they also remind us quite forcefully of the lore’s singular origin. The similarities are too deep to owe it to polygenesis.

The theory of polygenesis of folklore, as we saw in Chapter 1, is based on the assumption that folkloristic materials are in general the common property of the whole human race, so that every genre could arise among every people and any form of a genre among any particular group. One may agree with Krohn (1971:136) that this assumption does not correspond with the facts. If human spontaneity and ingenuity created the versions of this myth independently, why were the man, men or “gods” mutilated in all of them? What is so basic, or even utilitarian, about half-men or mutilated men who keep captive a weeping virgin, or princess, to inspire several like

¹ Tylor, 1871:256 quoting Callaway, ‘Zulu Tales,’ vol. i. P. 203.

polygenetic plots? This story could only have one source. If that is so, then we have confirmed the existence of human traffic in antiquity from Cairo to Cape and vice versa. The importance of this conclusion is that the Kalenjiin claim is thus pushed beyond any point of doubt.

We may remember (the author of *Emperor and the Abbot*) Walter Anderson's statement to the effect that the diffusion routes correspond to the paths of culture in general in the majority of cases. That the community almost owns the particular item of lore, or oral tradition, in the same way as it owns its language and culture; its essential identity (Cf. Krohn, 1971:145). This myth of Cheemarus then will be seen to be owned together with the religious culture and language by the Kalenjiin, each of them suggesting the northern origin and together confirming it. Yoder (1980:84) puts it in a more succinct manner: "Features shared by distinct later languages or myths must have been present in their common antecedent stage."

The narrator, Cheboleet, was asked why Thunder should punish an innocent, righteous wife as Cheemarus. It turned out alas that the "undefiled virgin", *peergeiyaat*, or "unblemished", *likwoop*, Cheemarus, has an Achilles heel: She is the demiurge equivalent of the Gnostic allegory!¹ Cheboleet says that she had created, once she was settled in heaven, the morally weak mortals, the human race, who have since turned sinners—what with the continuing presence on earth of the evil half of Thunder! So when these mortal creatures of hers commit sin, her husband, benevolent half of Thunder, punishes her by beating her up. Thus Cheemarus continues to bear and suffer for our sins although her tears reach us as the welcome rain.

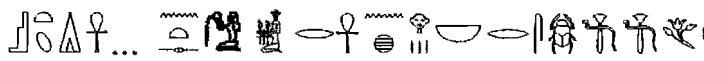
Ancient Egyptian mythology treated Isis in heaven similarly and the theme and essence is basically analogous to those from the Zulu and Kalenjiin mythologies. Isis had managed to put together the parts of her husband's (Osiris) body after that symbol of evil, Set, had ordered it to be cut up into pieces. But maybe she had managed to put together only enough parts to enable his manhood to function, and did not reassemble all the parts of his body. Myth indeed has it that the parts of Osiris' body were buried in fourteen different locations along the Egyptian Nile Valley (Cf. Green, 1967:31).

¹ That the name Cheemarus may relate to the demiurge, the Egyptian Gnostics' and the Greek Platonic philosophers' creator "god"—responsible for all creation, including of demons—who is subordinate, if in rebellion, to the conceptual and purely holy Supreme, the true God (Cf. Walker, 1983:41 ff.) is not as far-fetched as it may sound. The name Cheemarus, as we saw above, is actually a contraction of *Tie-ma-aruus*, "Girl/Lady not quite blue", meaning she had a very dark complexion. It was not impossible for the Gnostic Egyptians and their Greek followers to take this name, *Tiemaarus*, and misspell it as *Demiourgos* (said to be related to Greek "creator"), which has come down to us in the Anglicised form Demiurge. See etymology of "demiurge" in *The Oxford Dictionary*. But to be fair and balanced, it is not beyond probability either that the name and part of the myth of Cheemarus are ultimately from *Demiourgos*. There is also, of course, the possibility that there is no connection between the two myths. But here is a lead that future researchers may want to pursue.

The three African versions, i.e., ancient Egyptian, Kalenjiin, and Zulu, incorporate severed bodies in this source-of-rain theme, as we can see. The Greeks, who also enriched their mythology from ancient Egyptian myths, had Dionysos (their Osiris equivalent) being mutilated by the Titans (Cf. Turcan, 1996:78, 79).

The Egyptians considered Osiris the “god” of the Nile, the river that made the land of Egypt fertile. But at an early stage Isis was assimilated with the idol Sothis, i.e., Sirius, whose heliacal rising coincided with, or seemed to herald, the day when the river flooded. Isis in this way, therefore, “made the Nile flow in its time”. She was, therefore, “mistress of the stars” and the heavens at the same time as of the earth and the waters (Cf. Turcan, 1996:79-80).

To tie up more tightly the Kalenjiin and Zulu association of rain with the suffering of the virgin/princess, with the analogous ancient Egyptian myth which explains more or less the same vis-a-vis Isis—who is also associated with virginity—we have the following two lines of a hymn to Isis from the walls of Room X, north wall, Temple of Isis at Philae, Upper Egypt:

 “Isis, giver of life... She is the

one who pours out Inundation that makes all people live and green plants grow” (Zabkar, 1988:51). We know that inundation is caused by rain and Isis’ action of “pouring out inundation” can only be in reference to rain. We can confirm the same with Maspero (1897:21) and Cheikh Anta Diop (1978:30):

“The mythical cause of inundation (flooding of the Nile) was the goddess Isis, weeping copious tears into the Nile in commemoration of her dear, dead husband, Osiris; and every year the Egyptians celebrated the event at the great festival that marked the beginning of the inundation. The festival is called the Night of Clouds (*Gerekh en Haty*)... Modern Egyptians observe the same as the ‘Night of Tear Drop (*Leilet el Nuktah*)’ June 18th.”

In the Kalenjiin version, starring Cheemarus, it is Cheemarus in heaven, who is Cheptaleel, and who is probably Asiis, the sole deity according to the Kalenjiin. As is common with all myths, there are too many contradictions and flaws in this myth. But these should be expected considering that the myth, like any other, has relied solely on the word of mouth for its passage down from generation to generation, over several millennia. Below are some of what seem to be contradictions and superficialities in respect of the Cheemarus version, just for an example.

The blackness of Cheemarus and, or Isis, was such a prominent attribute of hers and, in spite of having lived with other black “gods”, or black people, in her time on earth, it was the one attribute that Pharaonic mythology took particular care to emphasise. The myths imply, in the same breath, that the population of the time contained many “gods”, or human beings, of mixed

pigmentation and that some were lighter in colour (in the black African context) than Cheemarus, or Isis—either version of whom was reputedly jet black. But why does tradition emphasise the blackness of one individual when we are dealing with a black African environment? That is a question that must go begging as far as Africa is concerned. We shall see, further on, that the practice of portraying Deity in black was fairly universal, a practice that points to Africa as the original home of many of the religions that maintain, or originally maintained, such tendency.

Perhaps we may be aided a bit by Ian Orchardson's (1961:34) remarks regarding the skin colour preferences among the Kipsigiis with whom he lived—and virtually became one of—early in the 20th century. He observes, "The most usual skin colour is chocolate, or milk chocolate, though jet black and yellow brown occur. Their own colour preference varies between chocolate and black, yellow brown being disliked by almost all." The colour that they all aspired to, therefore, was dark to black and it was only natural to project this quality, which was ideal in their own eyes, to the divine realm.¹

Perhaps we may, at this point, only confirm the original home of Osiris from one western scholar, Lewis Spence, 1915. We shall fetch more authorities in due course in order to, hopefully, together with the efforts of other contemporary and future researchers, help settle once and for all the issue of African origin of the major religions of the world, which is not really contested by reputable scholars from this discipline, such as Frankfort, 1948, Budge, 1920 and various, but is often conveniently and knowingly ignored by them. Spence (1915:64) categorically states as follows: "In any case, we may take it that Osiris was genuinely African in origin, and that he was indigenous to the soil of the Dark Continent."

We continue discussing the contradictions and flaws in the myth of Cheemarus. The presence of the other assistants of Asiis, in the form of the Benevolent and the Malevolent, or Evil *Iilat* (or *Ileet*) is well established in Asiisian cosmogony, and Hollis recorded this as a religious fact early in the 20th century (1909:41). But the two sides of *Iilat*, or both *Iilat*, for that matter, are supposed to be junior to Asiis in a divine trinity that She heads. So how is Asiis, as Cheemarus, to be disciplined by battering by one of those junior divinities that are answerable to Her?

¹ The definite preference for dark to black skin colour may have been as recorded by Orchardson after his arrival here in 1910. But as the colonial exploitation and subjugation took hold and the colour white appeared to be linked with material success, the shades that even remotely approached the white of those prosperous powerful whites, of brown yellow and lighter, became more fashionable than black. The colour preference "pecking order" was certainly reversed in the aftermath of great shock and social upheaval associated with loss of freedom and dignity, and it might take generations before the notion of ideal reverts to the original. However, owing to the legendary descriptive name of Cheemarus, Asiis can still be conceived in the colour attribute that was admired of old, thus fossilising that ancient taste for posterity.

And why should the mortal “sinful” creatures of Cheemarus receive rain only at the expense of Cheemarus’ heavenly peace? That whenever her sinning creatures pray for rain, they are actually and implicitly asking *Iilat* to beat her up so she may cry some more and produce tears of rain?

This may, to an extent, be understood if viewed against the background of Kalenjiin marriages here on earth with which the elderly informant, Cheboleet, came to be familiar if not actually experienced herself. Not many decades ago, it is said that a good and successful marriage had to include the occasional beating of the wife. This was reportedly viewed as an expression of love and a demonstration of strictness, an establishment of authority and proof of manliness at the same time on the part of the man. Some wives who were so perfect in their social interactions and in their manner of performing their daily chores, and therefore occasioned no cause for a beating, were allegedly known to urge their husbands once in a while, all the same, to even slap them a bit. Some say that to a Kalenjiin wife, of those days, that made the difference between being a girlfriend and being a wife; the beating, therefore, being an act of conjugal recognition. On his part, the man obliged in order not to appear to the public as one who had been taken over and “ruled” by the wife, so it is said.

Considering the implied esteem and sanctity of woman in a society that went as far as mandating the perception of “the Single Deity”, the Creator, in the feminine form, the foregoing should strike us as a grim study in contradiction. And indeed many have asserted that the reported cruelty and other forms of abuse of wives by some Kalenjiin husbands, came with men who had adopted a half-baked form of Christianity, dumping their own heritage in the process before they had matured enough to learn, understand and appreciate it or otherwise disapprove of it from a position of knowledge. They had rapidly imbibed Christianity’s teachings that seemed to imply and prescribe husband-wife roles and relationships without clearly understanding the apparent mere symbolism in the allegorical stories that otherwise highlighted and seemed to them to idealise the subjugation and marginalisation of women.

Examples litter the Bible from Genesis to Revelations. The man is created in Genesis 2:7 as the *first* living creation of God. Then, after him, all the other living things, including plants and animals, are created. The woman, as a physical derivative of the man by surgical means, according to Genesis 2:21, comes in as the very *last* item to be created, of both the living and the non-living things. She is created out of and expressly for the benefit of the man as his helper and companion. And this only after the Creator realised that the man was lonely, and after the attempt to find him a companion among the animals had failed (Gen. 2:18-23).

The imagery in Revelations 18 and 19 where Babylon is likened to a prostitute (a woman) who deserved to be tortured and then destroyed forms the dessert on the table of the neophyte's biblical "study".¹

An unsophisticated reading of these verses will lead one to miss the message intended here: that of indispensability, compatibility, and of the complemental essence to one another. By the time such an unsophisticated convert will have skimmed through his Bible, he will have come by enough examples of the subjugation and the abuse of girls and women to justify—nay sanctify—the perpetration of similar actions on his part.

Worst of all in the abuse of women, were the men who abandoned the semblance of Christianity that they had at first embraced and either reverted to but a dim understanding of Asiisianism, or merely left a spiritual void that heavy drinking and other forms of immoral indulgences often rushed in to fill up. These were the worst culprits of wife abuse, often doing it citing tradition—of which they had feign understanding in the first place—and the half-understood, all too literally-interpreted, verses of the Bible.

This scenario of a destabilised Kalenjiin familial tranquillity is quite analogous to the experience remembered among the Hindus from the respective eras of Muslim and British (Christian) rule. It has been noted that the esteem with which the women of the Hindu culture and religion are presently accustomed to, had "temporarily disappeared during the Muslim and British rule" (Pancholi, 1982:19) of India.

Now that this issue has been brought up to the extent discussed, it is necessary to add a corollary and qualification to the effect that beating a wife unnecessarily and too often, or even at all was, however, instinctively frowned upon in the truly traditional Kalenjiin setting. It was among several other forms of injustice of the unethical, as well as of the illegal, kind suffered by women under men, which were liable to a perfectly sanctioned form of mob justice that was executed by a women's court, *njogeeet aap Cheepyosook*, against the male offender.

The women's court, after passing a sentence of guilty, went ahead to execute the sentence themselves. They selected the best ox from the defendant's herd, usually a black one, and set upon it with sticks, venting their anger on the beast, and by so doing, demonstrating what they would do with the offender if they were allowed by custom to lay a hand on him.

"From the time that preparation (for the *njogeeet aap Cheepyosook*) began until it was complete no man was permitted to speak to the women taking part on pain of having some of his cattle seized. The offender, and no one else, was required to be in

¹ Although the heaven-like New Jerusalem of the next earth coming down out of the new heaven is likened to a bride (woman), she all the same comes "prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband."—Rev. 21:1-2.

attendance, and the sense of shame thus inflicted upon him was extreme... (They killed the ox [only in theory as in fact some men came to their help after a few symbolic blows had landed on the beast, brought it down and suffocated it to death]. The quoted writer, G.S. Snell, 1954, may have overlooked the fact that it was the men who did the actual killing of the beast)... The meat was eventually divided up and it was forbidden for any man to eat any part of it. The women then encircled the offender, raising him up and down several times as an act of reconciliation. It was believed that unless they showed their forgiveness in this manner the ostracism and sense of guilt would bear so heavily upon him that he would die. They then proceeded to a nearby stream to wash" (Snell, 1954:32-33).¹

To continue analysing Cheemarus' story of ascension to heaven as narrated by Cheeboleet: Asiis created all the animals and human beings among all other things after she went to heaven. So who had created her and her soldier-fiancé, and all the people who had suffered famine, prayed so hard Thunder had to intervene in the first place?

The whole story starts from prayers for rains that had failed. So whose teardrops used to come down as rain before Cheemarus went to heaven? It is clear from the story that rains had failed, meaning that there were rains before. So someone else up there used to cry tears of rain before Cheemarus' turn came. Who was, or who is it?

The ancient Egyptian version suffers from this contradiction too. Isis of heaven whose tear drops are the very cause of the Nile and its floods, used to be earthbound too, and she sailed on the same Nile—at a time of inundation—looking for and gathering parts of her husband's body which had been cut up into fourteen pieces. Those pieces had been thrown into the Nile by the murderer Set. So before she went to heaven, who used to cry copious tears causing the inundation of the Nile which, while on earth, she also sailed up and down when the banks were full?²

¹Snell's example is in respect of *njogeeet* punishment for rape and incest. But the same applied for any repeated acts of injustice perpetrated upon a female such as wife beating, marital rape, forced sex, especially when a wife was pregnant, sick or otherwise unclean. George Klima appears to have witnessed a similar proceeding among the Barabacek Kalenjiin-speaking community of Tanzania, where a women's council, *girwaged gademg*, proceeded to extract the women's fine, *ghordyod gademg*, and he lists some of the injustices that can lead to the Barabacek version of *njogeeet* (George J. Klima, *ibid.*, p. 89-94).

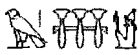
The author had the "honour" on one or two occasions in his youth, to witness an angry crowd of women, wielding sticks, proceeding to punish some convict. They came back with bundles of meat. His own mother proudly took part in those proceedings.


²R.L. Green, *ibid.*, p. 31: "... It was the time of inundation and the swift waters hurried it (the body of the freshly slain Osiris) out through the Delta and into the sea near the city of Tanis..."

9.3 Semitic Resonance

It seems to be a Semitic rather than the ancient Egyptian version, or a corruption of both, which seems to be told in the Cheemarus myth. At least as to the cast of characters, if not the substance. An almost identical cast of characters appears in a somewhat similar, though by no means identical, myth of the Semites—and the Kalenjiin myth is, in fact, alas parallel to the Semitic one, suggesting that they are of parallel origin. The Egyptians (upper parts at least) relied on the annual inundation of the Nile for their agriculture. They did not as helplessly rely on the rains so directly as the Canaanites to the north did.¹

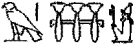
The following is an introduction of the Semitic cast of characters whose names appear in the Cheemarus myth as narrated above. Kalenjiin *iila* or *iila-t*, “thunder” or “lightning” “god” is, as we said in relation with the Sumerian “god” *Enlil*, apparently of Semitic origin.

However, if the ancient Egyptians called “lightning” *Iila*, but which is probably incorrectly, transcribed by Budge *Heru-*, from the hieroglyphic form  *Heru-thehen*, Horus the “Lightning”(?) or Horus “the Sparkler” (B.Dict. 506a), then *iila*, *iilat* or *ileet* of the Kalenjiin, may have come from an ancient Egyptian version which should be transcribed correctly as *iila*.

The Kalenjiin *Iilat* would then come from  *Iilat*, but which is wrongly transcribed and equally wrongly translated by Budge as follows: “*Herit*, the female counterpart of Horus” (B.Dict. 500a). It should be remembered that the ancient Egyptians seem to have often interchanged the letters /t/ and /l/. According to this argument then, the famous Horus or Horr, would, with the help of the Kalenjiin language and folklore, in truth, be *Iila*.²

The ancient Greek historian, Herodotus, mentioned a goddess of the pre-Islamic Arabs, *Al-Ilat* (simply meaning “the goddess”) 2500 years ago. She was the “Great Goddess”, “Mother of Heaven and Earth”. The Assyrians called her *Mylitta* while the Phoenicians called her *Astarte*. The Greeks called her the Heavenly *Aphrodite*. Wrote Herodotus: “They (the Arabs) deem none other to be gods save *Dionysus* and the heavenly *Aphrodite*... they call *Dionysus Orotalt* and *Aphrodite, Alilat*.” (Herodotus’ *Histories* Book I).³

¹ Furthermore, it is known that the Egyptians adopted some Semitic deities around 1600 BC during which era the Semitic lands, including some European Islands around the Mediterranean Sea were Egyptian domains. Such “gods” of the Semites as Bar and, or, Baal, the war deity, are thought to have been incorporated into Egyptian mythology and beliefs at this time. The Egyptians identified Baal with their older Set (Cf. Budge, *ibid.*, p. 250).

² Is  *Heru-thehen*, Horus the “Lightning”(?) or Horus “the Sparkler”, Kalenjiin *Iila leetyen*, or just *leetyen* “sparkle” or “flash”?

³ The ancient Arabian *Al-Ilat* seems to have had a male companion who was called *Al-Ila*, “the god”. *Al-Ila* was later, but long before Islam, probably out of very frequent use, contracted to Allah, according to Colliers Encyclopedia.

Prince *Baal* the chief “god” of the Phoenicians and the Canaanites was the “Rider of Clouds; the Lord of Heavens; the Lord of the Storm. His voice was thunder. He was the god who controlled the rain.”¹ This is the *Bool*, “cloud” of the Kalenjiin (the definite form of the noun is *bool-deet*), the messenger in Cheboleet’s myth.

In one Semitic myth that is reminiscent of the Cheptaleel and Cheemarus myth, *Baal* destroyed Prince *Yam*, the sea god by smiting him so viciously with two clubs provided by *Kother* and *Hasis*. Thereafter *Baal* reigned as king.²

Baal was the son, or grandson, of the sky god *El*, the Canaanite’s (Semitic) chief “god”. So here we have: *El* or *Ila*, which is the Kalenjiin *Ila*, or *Ila-t*; *Baal* which is the Kalenjiin *Bool*, and *Hasis* which happens at least to phonetically rhyme with the Kalenjiin *Asiis*, even if not in the role. That these names should be shared between two peoples that seem to be historically, socially and culturally unrelated, as the Arabs—or the Semites in general—and the Kalenjiin, may look farfetched, but only before the following material is considered.

Werner Daum collected many legends from modern Arabia that were inherited from pre-Islamic times and at least one of them seems almost certain to be another version of the Cheemarus/Cheptaleel narratives. One legend, which receives the best definition principally in South Arabia, but which, perhaps, is even pan-Arabian, that Daum collected in 1986, comes closer to the Kalenjiin’s Cheemarus story in a number of key respects. Daum published it as “A Pre-Islamic rite in South Arabia” in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1987, pp 5-14.

In the South Arabian legend, an Ethiopian hero called al-Shamsi, meaning “the sunny one” in Arabic, came to save the virgins who were annually sacrificed to a black water-demon that was worshipped by the Arabs. The demon lived in the mountains that overlooked the sea, but he apparently lived in water also. He would appear on the day that was appointed for the sacrifice of the virgin in the form of a black cloud and would take the virgin bride at nightfall. He demanded one virgin bride a year in an exchange for rain that would bring life back to the wadi by filling it with flowing water. The African hero, who had only one eye, situated in the middle of his forehead, al-Shamsi, came along on a day scheduled for a virgin’s sacrifice. And at the opportune moment, with his sword, he beheaded the demon. After accomplishing that feat he settled in the Hamlet nearby which is still visited annually by Pilgrims. When al-Shamsi died, the grateful Arabs built a great rectangular-based tomb for the internment of his remains on the spot where he slew the water-demon, and here they still call him “a friend of God”. Since that time the pilgrims

¹ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, McGrawhill Book Co. 1967.

² *Mythologies of the Ancient World*, edited by Samwel Noah Kramer, Anchor Books, New York, 1961, p. 193-196.

fulfil a ritual here which involves solemnly circling al-Shamsi's tomb in a counter-clockwise direction, as they do the more famous Ka'ba (Cf. Baldick, 1997:42-43). This manner of circling a hallowed shrine, we may note here, is rather like the Asiisian one for they also circle the altar of Asiis, *mabwaaita* or *kaapkorosit*, in an anticlockwise direction. Now, since that time of the Ethiopian hero's intervention, informants in South Arabia report, no sacrifice of virgins took place there. They have since instead sacrificed bulls, goats and sheep (ibid. 43).

Not unduly, the Koran (81:8-9) was to in effect condemn the practice, in the process confirming its historicity. That historicity was further confirmed when in 1978 "an inscription of the second century was found in Yemen, containing a ban on the killing of daughters—a practice which, in order to be prohibited, must evidently have been current" (Baldick, 1997:21).

At the philosophical macro level, the Arabian narrative is probably addressing a historical scenario whereby the Africans, for Africans South of Egypt in general were known as Ethiopians then, exported their own religion to Arabia. In the process they overthrew a then existing Arabian religion that either supported human sacrifice or received the epithet subsequently as smear campaign and propaganda generated by the African spiritual victors and their Arabian converts. Those who are familiar with the propaganda that was churned out by the missionaries, together with their African converts early in the 20th century, will find themselves in familiar ground in appreciating the gist of the foregoing argument.

The missionaries and their converts claimed that the traditional Asiisians, for example, were originally worshipping the sun and the spirits of the dead ancestors. Such spirits they (the missionaries) then called "devils" or "demons" by so retranslating *oiik*, the Kalenjiin name for them. This made anyone who as much as commemorated the departure of an ancestor in the traditional way look like a devil worshipper and to be dreaded as such. The missionaries then claimed that they had replaced the presumed "Sun-God" with "the High God" of Christians and replaced the "devils" with Christian saints who were, in other words, their own hallowed set of ancestors. These ancestors had certain appointed days in the year for their commemorations styled "the feast-days of the saints" and these were to replace the Africans' own commemoration of their ancestors by similar, though family-based, feasts.

Any in-coming conqueror, who believes that he has saved a people, will almost naturally justify the action by painting a grim picture of things as they allegedly were prior to the intervention.

Al-Shamsi was not the only African that went to help install an African religion in Arabia, if indeed that is what al-Shamsi's legend is about; more black people travelled to, or lived in Arabia. Archaeological work in Arabia has uncovered prehistoric skeletal remains that "suggest at

least three racial stocks: Negroid, Armenoid and Mediterranean” where the presence of the Negroid stock predates the age of enslavement of black people, thus dismissing the stock claim that any Negroid presence in Arabia owes it to enslavement of black Africans. Besides the indigenoussness of the black race to Arabia that has been asserted by archaeology, it is also known that the then black Egypt’s interest in the Arabian Peninsula may be traced back to 3,000 BC, when a small contingent of Egyptians set up mining operations for copper and turquoise at Yathrib, Medina (Cf. Landau, 1958:15-16, Thomas, 1937:357-359).

On the other side of the coin, the physical make-up of the Somali, Ethiopian, Eritrean, Djiboutian etc. peoples, suggest a very ancient intermixture with Semitic peoples. That intermixture seems so ancient that the Somali, the Djiboutians, and the Oromo, in particular, have evolved into a race of their own with all the appearance of a primal stock rather than a hybrid. Somatic as well as linguistic appearances seem to suggest that the Semites did indeed migrate in influential numbers to the Horn of Africa long before Islam.

When the Arab waves swept across North and North-eastern Africa as Muslim conquerors after Mohammed, they were, one might put it, in a way, repaying the African descendants of al-Shamsi with their own coin. The Persians, the Greeks and the Romans, had done it before them. That was what Africa earned for waking up before everybody else. She had to go back to sleep ahead of everyone else too. The present African Renaissance quest can probably now only hope to prove right the words of the nursery rhyme: “Early to bed, early to rise, makes one healthy and wealthy and wise”.

We now need to come a little lower and to the philosophical micro level of the narratives and here we may compare and contrast the respective legends. For our purpose, we will consider Toweett’s version with that of Cheboleet as one rich Kalenjiin narrative.

To begin with, both the respective Kalenjiin and Arabian versions address the same theme; prayers for rain that involve human sacrifice. From that pedestal the symbols utilised by the respective myths may be compared: (1) the “god” being propitiated goes by the same name in both languages, *Iila* or *Iilat* (2) both myths make use of virgin girls who are sacrificed (3) both employ a man from *outside* the community who, being an outsider, excusably performs the unthinkable according to the locals, slays the Thunder-God and saves the virgin of the moment and subsequent ones (4) the water-demon of both versions partly lives in water but is associated with the black cloud (5) thereafter both the communities adopt sacrifice of animals for rain instead of virgin girls.

The climate and fertility of a region, we learn, influenced the population’s idea of the Holy, as we introduced in Chapter 2, especially in the balancing of esteem, say between such heavenly

forces as *Iilat* and *Asiis* or, at the simplistic level, between thunder and the sun. The nature of the economy adopted was in form of an appropriate response that defined communities along agricultural and pastoral lines, or a mixture of both. The drier the environment the closer the people came to *Iilat*. This may explain why in some parts of arid Pokoot, northern Kalenjiin, people know only *Iilat* as the Supreme Being while in wet Kipsigiisland, south Kalenjiin, *Asiis* is better known as the Supreme Being and *Iilat* is correspondingly much less known. Had they been given more time to develop separately, living in widely differing climatic environments, the difference in religious attitude and in religious actions, all in response to the Holy, between some Pokoot sections and the Kipsigiis, would have widened and created separate religions and altogether separate communities.

At the wider level, if *Iilat* is the same as *Al Illah* of pre-Islamic Arabia, a desert that we have seen, experienced long harsh droughts, then one may say that it was the desert environment that elevated, through the people's collective response to it, to the exclusion of all others, *Al Illah*, the black storm "god". We saw from the above narrative from South Arabia that *Al Illah* would fill the dry river beds with water following the sacrifice of a virgin girl (Cf. Baldick, 1997:30, 31).

9.4 The Tricky Question of Gender of Deity

The Coptic name for God, $\Phi\pi\omicron\tau\tau$ or $\Pi\pi\omicron\tau\tau$ (*Fnuute/Pnuute*), seems to have been derived from the ancient Egyptian name for the “goddess” of the sky, Nut. In keeping with Christian practice, the name was turned into a masculine form because in the Jewish faith, of which Christianity is an offshoot, God, Yahweh, or Jehovah, is to be perceived in the masculine form.

However, there is on exhibit in the Coptic Museum, Cairo, a 3rd century AD tombstone that bears in prominent inscription above the images of the ancient *ankh*/cross and serpent, the word **TABNUTE**. The large inscription is positioned in the location of the sky, where those who had buried the deceased seem to have thought the Creator ought to be. *Tabnute*, because of the feminine prefix *tab-*, is a name in feminine form whether in Coptic or in Kalenjiin grammatical practice. *Pnute* is a would-be masculine form of it in both languages. It would appear that the Copts, after adopting Christianity, took some time, centuries, in fact, before they got accustomed to the Judeo-Christian culture of perceiving the Godhead in the masculine form. At least up to the 3rd century AD, as this monument bears testimony, the god-idea, among the Copts, was still one of the female personality.

Nut, who is also the sky (remember the Maasai worship *Enkai* as the sky and conceive of her in the feminine form?) represents not only creative power, but abstract intelligence, wisdom or light. Her name is thought to signify “I came from myself”. It has been noted that the temple of Nut at Sais was the largest in Egypt. It was open at the top because of Nut’s connection with the sky. The temple bore the following inscription: “I am all that was and is to be; no mortal has lifted up my veil, and the fruit which I brought forth was the sun” (Cf. Gamble, 1927:174). As these were also the attributes of Isis, Nut, after all, we may safely conclude, was another of the myriad aspects of Isis.

It has been proposed by scholars that the segregation and downgrading of women’s roles that seems to border on misogyny in Hebrew literature, probably reflects a historic revolt against a prehistoric female-centred cosmology (Cf. Fox-Genovese, GME 1993). That there was indeed such a revolt was mentioned by Celsus in his 2nd century AD attack on the then nascent movement of Christianity, as we shall see later. According to Celsus, there were two such revolts: the first Hebrew revolt was against the Egyptian religion, probably the Isis movement; the second was the revolt by a section of the Hebrews, later to be designated “Christians”, against the Jewish religion which itself had been born of revolt as stated.

We have in East Africa a legendary parallel of revolt against women-power. Gikuyu folk tradition has it that their nation was ruled by women since creation of the first man and wife,

Gikuyu and Mumbi. Indeed so overbearing and all encompassing was such dominance that, up until now, all the nine principal Gikuyu clans bear the names of female eponymous founders. It is said that the men revolted later during the reign of Wangu wa Makeri, the famed last-woman-ruler of the Gikuyu people who is remembered for her tyranny as much as for her scandal. The women, for as long as they ruled, maintained a system of polyandry wherein women kept as many men as they wished as husbands. Besides the many husbands, they developed a taste for younger men whom they took at will for companionship and despised the older men. Wangu, the legendary last-woman-ruler, was tricked by men into disgracing herself by appearing nude in the public, ostensibly to show off what they flattered her into believing was her immensely beautiful body, thus losing her throne. The men took over, banished polyandry and in its place installed the polygynous system that is only now in the process of being replaced completely by monogamy (Cf. Kenyatta, 1966:8).¹

It has been proposed that universally, throughout the earlier ages of human existence, at a time when mankind lived nearer to nature and before individual wealth and the stimulation of evil passions had engendered superstition, selfishness and distrust, the maternal element was pre-eminent. It constituted not only the binding and preserving principle in human society, but, together with the power to bring forth, constituted also the god-idea, which idea, with the arrival of art, was portrayed by a female figure with a child in her arms. The best known of this portrayal in the ancient times was Isis of Egypt. However other mother-and-child concepts existed in the religions of societies as far removed as the Chinese with their Queen of Heaven and child, Tienhow (Cf. Gamble, 1927:150, 162).

The centring of the god-idea in the woman may owe origin to greater antiquity when the institution of marriage had not been conceived and the human beings mated freely and without attachment, more or less like most animals. Under such circumstances, a mother who gave birth was left on her own with the newly born and her other young ones. All these offspring of hers, had no concept of a father, let alone the idea of attempting to trace him. The mother appeared to be the sole creator of the family. And probably at that time women were also giving birth openly so that everyone saw just exactly who was generating new forms of life and who was not! The men must have appeared to the young like a type of mothers that never gave birth and who solely preoccupied themselves with this game of poking their dangling sticks into the lower parts of real mothers who knew how to create life.

¹ Kenyatta does not mention Wangu wa Makeri in name here but her story is an established Gikuyu folk tradition and a favourite theme of Gikuyu theatre.

In parts of Europe, a sort of polyandry similar to the described scenario was witnessed as recently as during and perhaps after the time of Roman campaigns to subjugate Europe, which was during the dying years of the BC era. Julius Caesar witnessed the practice in Brittany, north-west of France, “where a group of men indistinctly made up of brothers, sons and fathers were married to only one woman” (Diop, 1996:131).

After many generations, however, the male became territorial, like the gorillas and many other species of animals, and the strongest one was surrounded by all the womenfolk of the “troupe” who gave birth to babies all around him. The children, as they grew up, though still attached to their mothers, saw this mighty fellow who alone dominated a whole harem and, taking into consideration the larger world, this may have stimulated the idea of one ultimate male, who was greater than all the local dominant ones, an all-powerful Deity. For it is natural for the human mind to try to conjure up and project an image of the largest of anything they see.

The crystallisation of God in this all-powerful masculine form did not come to the collective psyche of all the respective communities of the world, however. In the majority of communities, the female element continued to dominate the collective imagination. And when they got to the stage of searching for and imagining something greater that could explain the cause and effect of all the things that puzzled them, i.e. some force more powerful and more ultimate than their mothers, it was an even greater and more prolific woman creator, the Mother Goddess.

As for the early Hebrews, the masculine element came in and dominated perhaps owing to the increasing militaristic ventures during which the male’s capacity and reputation as the capable brute in offensive warfare, defence of the family and state, and in the expansion of both, counted and shone a great deal more. By historic times, Jewish monotheism was clearly founded upon the worship of a male creator and lawgiver (Cf. Fox-Genovese, GME 1993).

However, this is only witnessed clearly in the historic era. Although “God” in Hebrew is *Elohim* and “god/divinity” is *Eloah*,¹ the Hebrew word for “Godhead”, “godliness” and “divinity”, *אלוהות* *Elohut*, is in the feminine form—going by Semitic grammatical rules—confirming the theory of a pre-Mosaic, or pre-historic female-centred cosmology for the Hebrews as well. That is where the Queen of Heaven that had Jeremiah worried comes in.

Eliza Gamble, while discussing the topic “Sex, Foundation of God Idea” in Lee Stone’s book, *The Story of Phallicism*, wonders loudly as to what person God of the opening chapter of Genesis was addressing when He said, “Let us make man in our own image, in our own likeness”. After this

apparent dialogue, males and females were produced. By insisting that God be conceived of as being composed only of the masculine attributes and that He be perceived in the singular—i.e. not more than one—we are given to understand that God really was speaking to Himself. That the use of the plural pronoun “us” and the plural possessive pronoun “our” in the statement of intention to create man, was either uttered out of modesty and politeness (to whom?), or that God was here adopting the regal habit of pluralising first person pronouns. Either way God “did not say exactly what he meant, or at least did not mean precisely what he said” (Cf. Gamble, 1927:180).

According to this line of argument, therefore, God of Genesis was summoning someone else who could co-operate with Him in making man. According to Gamble’s philosophy then, this other person could only have been a feminine consort of God because, following the statement of intention to make man in their likeness, they proceeded to make male and female species of man, completing their collective “likeness”. If the Godhead was totally masculine, and that He was merely addressing Himself, then He would have proceeded to make only the likeness of Himself, human male species alone. This scenario may also serve as a logical answer to those Christians who say that this other person, the companion of God whom the latter was addressing, was His Son, Jesus. But, again, to pursue this logic, the two would have been expected to proceed to make human species of the male kind only, because they were both males and their *likeness* was masculine.

If the Deity of the first chapter of Genesis must be One, therefore, then we must be talking of an androgynous being. A being that encompasses, or transcends the gender concept, although here logic would still compel us to expect that Deity to have made either androgynous or asexual species of human beings only, in the *likeness* of self!

Through this question of plural conversation, reference to “our likeness” and insistence on the concept of an all-male Godhead, the authors of Genesis put their followers into such a difficult situation, what vulgar parlance calls catch-22 or, better still, a straight jacket. The practice since has been to enforce this aspect of scripture and to conceal all historical evidence of earlier contrary belief. This is the view of the brave Eliza Gamble (1927:180), who writes:

“Under Protestant Christianity no pains have been spared to eliminate the female element from the god-idea; hence the ignorance which prevails at the present time in relation to the fact that the Creator once comprehended the forces of Nature, which by an older race were worshipped as female.”

¹ A Lebanese Catholic priest told the author, in Johannesburg, South Africa, that *Ilah* was the Phoenician word for God and that the Semites borrowed this word from them. The people of modern Lebanon generally consider themselves remnants of the historical Phoenicians.

Eilberg-Schwartz, in his *God's Phallus and Other Problems for Men and Monotheism*, proposes the restoration of the balance of sexuality in Deity with respect to Judaism—whose idea of God is that of a king and warrior—maintaining that

“The lack of this balance required the suppression of the body and the free expression of sexuality (this led to the banning of iconographic representation of Deity). The restoration of this balance will permit us to establish a freely intimate relationship with an embodied God. A feminised God may validate the much needed loving and nurturing father whose absence wounded so many men” (Fuchs review, 1997:201).

The recommendation here is to allow into Judaism the feminine touch which has been lost since Yahweh “divorced” his Canaanite female consort, Asherah, in the quest for perfect monotheism, largely a development of the post-exilic era of Judaism (Cf. Gnuse, 1999:315-336). We will see further below that it is this aspect of kindness and tenderness that the Kalenjiin sought in their Asiiis by portraying Her in the feminine form, although this is perceived strictly in total abstraction.

As regards the 3rd century Coptic tombstone that we have mentioned, there is a possibility, of course, that the TABNUTE inscription on the tombstone actually referred to another female “goddess”, Tefnut, the “goddess of mist”, who was a member of the ennead. But even then the Copts who buried that individual would still not be extricated from the ancient African (among many other races’) tradition of perceiving the Godhead in the female form.

Eliza Gamble (1927:144) proposes that whenever in history a given community perceived Deity in the feminine form, that community was dominated by female power at that juncture in its history and vice versa:

“So long as female power and influence were in ascendancy, the creative force was regarded as embodying the principles of the female nature; later, however, when woman’s power waned, and the supremacy of man was gained, the god-idea began gradually to assume the male characters and attributes.”

The Celtic people of Europe during pre-Christian times also believed in an ultimate Mother Goddess. The Irish branch of Celts called their hierarchy of feminine deities *Tuatha De Danann*, “people of the Goddess Danu” while the Welsh called that divine collective *Don*.¹ The Celtic hierarchical arrangement of deities with a female at the head was, according to some scholars—such as Gamble, above, and Brandon, below—only a reflection of the collective social attitude and the resultant stratification of society itself with the female taking the upper hand. “Women held high status in Celtic society; that the chief of all the gods should be the Mother, the female, is in keeping with their social attitudes” (Cf. Brandon, 1970:183).

However, the experience with the Kalenjin and the Maasai cultures—to mention but only two African examples—flies directly in the face of both Gamble’s and Brandon’s arguments here however well reasoned and reasonable they may be. The emphatically male-dominated ethnic communities of Kalenjin and Maasai respectively, as we have seen, refer to Deity with feminine names, nicknames and adjectives. The Maasai even go to the extent of referring to Deity’s actions with feminine-article-prefixed verbs, all these going to confirm the fact that the Creative Principle was traditionally perceived in the feminine form within the collective psyche of these two communities respectively. Yet male dominance permeates most aspects of their respective cultures.

The well-known psychoanalytic fact, that men on the average adore their mothers more than they do their fathers, may contain an explanation for this. An explanation along Freudian Oedipus complex lines but which is more refined than that. A hypothesis which recognises that where men are in total control, the sum total of their adoration for their mothers may add up and lead to a collective formalised projection of that condition to the “more ideal world beyond” where it coalesces into the image of one Great Mother.

Polygynous societies in which children tended to side with their mothers more naturally than with their fathers, who were necessarily “scarcer” and less personal to the individual child, would probably breed more mother-worshippers than monogamous societies in which child-parent relationships were not so one-sided would be expected to do.

The Kalenjin and the Maasai maybe male-centred societies of the polygynous persuasion but we should not expect an explanation along these lines to come from their elders. The Kalenjin elders have other more beautiful theories for their unexpected choice of a female-centred Godhead, which we shall shortly turn to.

¹ It is not clear whether this was the same as Teutates, the Celtic deity linked by Julius Cæsar to the ancient German Teut who is in turn thought to have originated from Egypt, as Tout or Thoth, called by the Greeks Hermes (Cf. Garnier, 1904:136).

Or are we otherwise to be convinced here that the male primacy that characterises the social fabric of these communities is of such a recent development in their respective histories that the continuing feminine view of the creative force is yet to but will soon be realigned with the reality on the ground? It is presently being realigned, yes, but it is not due to internal cultural dynamics and shift of power. Rather it is happening in response to an external stimulus, this being in the form of Christianity, which wields its Judaeo-Christian male Deity and His Son.

As it is now happening to the Kalenjiin, under the onslaught of the concentrated efforts of the missionaries and their converts, the Celts also lost their female Godhead beliefs eventually to the male-God centred Christianity that was brought to them by the ruling Romans. The Romans probably initially installed their Isis-centred beliefs of the time because their persecution and abolition of Celtic religion came long before their empire had adopted Christianity but instead during the heyday of their worship of Egyptian Isis. But since the Celts' religion was already Isiac in essence, the Romans did not have much to do in getting them to realign with Rome's own version. The Romans, led by Suetonius Paulinus, about 61 AD, abolished the Celts' idiosyncratic religious practices on the pretext that these included human sacrifice. The truth, however, was that the Romans needed to establish themselves as the absolute political masters and not be inconvenienced by the theocratic power of the Druidic priests (some think these Druids originated from Africa)¹ who were the chief custodians of the Celtic religion and guarantors of the political structures.

Rome was later, after Emperor Constantine's conversion in 313 AD, to impose Christianity on all its subjects, the Celts included (Cf. Brandon, 1970:181).² However, the Romans kept and, in fact, internationalised the Druidic prayer for bounty harvest on every May the 1st. The prayers reportedly included the dreaded human sacrifices. This day is still an international holiday going variously by the names "May Day", "Labour Day" or even *Beltane* as of old (Cf. Garnier, 1904:137).

¹ Their religion, including the names of their "gods", e.g. Teutates or Tait, who is thought to be Thoth of ancient Egypt, and the orientation of prayer to the East, as evidenced by the design of the Stonehenge monuments, can only lead to such a conclusion. The chief Deity of the western European Celts, as for most of Asia was, may be thanks to the Druidic influence, Bud or Buddha, "i.e. Mercury, or Thoth, the human original of whom was Cush" (Cf. Garnier, 1904:136). However, the *Oxford Interactive Encyclopedia*, 1997, doubts the linkage of the Stonehenge monuments to the Druids although it acknowledges that the modern Druidical order seeks to make use of the site to conduct its annual solstice ceremonies.

² Also OIE, 1997, "Druids".

Of all the very elderly Kalenjiin informants that the author and his field assistants interviewed, it is only Cheboleet and one William Kipruuto (who is not so old but is very knowledgeable and speaks with authority) of Marakwet, who believed that according to the Kalenjiin, Deity was a He and not a She. Cheboleet said that the Creator was male. But when asked to give the name of the actual He, Cheboleet still gave the other obviously feminine names for Asiis, *Cheepo Amoni/Namoni*, "the Daughter of Amoni"; *Cheepo Ngolo*, "the Daughter of Ngolo" and the above Cheptaleel.

William Kipruuto gave the name of the Creator as *Asiis Chebeetip Chemataw*, translating this into Kiswahili, *Kijana mkubwa wa Mataw*, "the eldest son of Mataw". But this contradicts Dr Kipkorir's own translation of the same, styled "*Chebet Chebo Chemataw*", as "Daughter of the Day". Kipkorir (1973:14), who is also from Marakwet, however, translates another of Asiis' localised names, *Chibo Him*, as "man of the sky" although it is in the neuter gender and really means "Person of the Sky". However he makes the observation, which is important to us here, that Chebeet is the most common name for Asiis in Marakwet country.

All the other informants, and most were men, were emphatic that their creator and sole deity, was perceived in the feminine form because a man, some added, being a soldier who often had blood-stained hands, could not play such a (conceptual) role of creator. Creation was too noble a function to be entrusted to a red-handed, bloodthirsty deity, so to speak.

Daniel Kimutaa araap Roonoh, of *Mesyewea Maiina* age-set (around a hundred now), supported by Ex-chief Joseph araap Koskee of *Saawe* age-set, Londiani, Kericho, and Matayo araap Cheruiyoot, a popular sage of *Chuumo* age-set (in his late seventies), said that the hands of a man were hard and rough, while a woman's hands were *tangus*, "soft, tender", "effeminate". One did not entrust the act of creation upon hard and rough hands. This philosophy agrees in a way with Gamble's argument that during the times when and in places where Deity was worshipped in the feminine form, she was ascribed the attributes of wisdom, light and fertility and "She was a beneficent and all-wise God, a tender and loving parent—a mother, who demanded no bleeding sacrifice to reconcile her to her children" (Gamble, 1927:146).

In those places where and times when Deity was perceived in the masculine form, he was associated with power and might (Cf. Gamble, 1927:145). And where Yahweh is concerned, one may add the attributes of jealousy and vengefulness.

To confirm that Deity was a She, in the old Kalenjiin psyche, what turns out to be the Kalenjiin equivalent of the English expression "leave it to God"; which is usually uttered after failure to reach a resolution in desperate circumstances, is very instructive, as the elders

themselves advised. The equivalent Kalenjiin phrase, according to the elders, is *ngoekta kyeet (kubeeetaap) koorgo*, “may morning find the world in the lap (lit. “thigh”) of woman”.

Kimaiyo araap Turgoot of Chuumo age-set (in his late seventies) from Keiyo, when he was asked whether Asiis Cheptaleel was male or female, put it quite bluntly. He is one of those elders who referred to Asiis in the definite form, *Asiista*. In this definite form it is, however, as we sought to clarify, usually understood to refer to “the sun” as a physical object. And Cheptaleel in Keiyo is pronounced Cheptoileel, which tends to give the meaning ‘Girl of Good Omen’, during a homeward journey, *taileel*, more clearly than Cheptaleel of most other Kalenjiin dialects.

Araap Turgoot replied thus, “*Asiista ngumo ileen kagile muren-i? ... chepyooso!* (Now you think *Asiista* is perceived to be male? She is woman!)” And he continued, “*Asiista* spreads light and warmth throughout the world. She is the fountain of all life. She is the fountain of all sweetness, fertility and prosperity, *tinye anyiinyo*. Maybe that is how come the ancestors elected to comprehend *Asiista* in the female form.”

The Paramount Chief of Nandi District, Kiboor araap Kirwa’s statement, was the most illustrative of all and it is reproduced verbatim below. Araap Kirwa is an age-mate of araap Turgoot’s and both men fought on the British side in the Second “World” War, which both elders refer to as *Pooryeet aap Talianeek*, “the War of the Italians”.

Question: Elder, do you know why when the Kalenjiin talk of Cheptaleel they speak as if of a lady? You yourself gave the names: *Cheptaleel, Chepkeelyen Sogool, Cheepo Namuni*. You see, is Cheptaleel man or woman? **Paramount Chief Kirwa:** 1. *Kiigimwa kele kiirwogiin age tugul ko koorgo met. Kiirwogiindet nengen komwa ko tala met* (It has been said that any chief’s [or judge’s] head is feminine. Any chief who rules well his head is feminine). 2. *Kiigimwa kele ngoeekta emeet chepyoso ko mwaita emeet. Ngoeekta muren ko koolgol emeet—kibare kee* (It has been said that when sunrise finds the country in the hands of woman, it is peace and prosperity, but when sunrise finds the country in the hands of man, that country is in cruel hands, and there will be war). 3. *Kiigimwa kele tala met (Cheptaleel). Eng’ metinyii ak naenyiin kotala ak kotinye riirge: Konyo kainanaa, Cheptaleel. Maagimwae kele muren ne kolgol. Kiigimache talasyeet. Konooto negiimoche boiisyekchook asigomwae. Ama chepyoso ne kigiingen kele cheepo kaap anum* (It has been said that Her [Cheptaleel’s] head is gentle. In Her mental outlook, She is gentle and merciful: hence the females’ name Cheptaleel. Not to be associated with masculine man who is cruel. It was peace and tranquillity that was the people’s paramount desire.

That is what inspired our ancestors to say so. But it is not to say that [Cheptaleel] was a particular woman from such and such a home [this means that Cheptaleel is conceptual].¹

It is important to note here that both the informants who are quoted verbatim above, araap Turgot and araap Kirwa, made it clear that both the anthropomorphous and feminine conception of Deity were for convenience of speech and to aid thought. Otherwise, as they respectively point out, Asiis has no recognisable form and is therefore indescribable in human language. What they spoke about finally was the *conceptualisation* of Deity for convenience of speech and thought given that the Kalenjin language is basically a sex-discriminating language, especially as to names of objects and beings. The name of Deity had to fall in one or other of the gender categories.

The associating of Asiis, the Deity, by name with the sun, including by giving both female names such as Chebeet, “the Lady of the Sky” etc., is a habit associated with the Africans, particularly those originating from the Nile Valley. This was reportedly exported by the descendants of Cush, i.e., the Africans, to the far flung areas of the world. Garnier (1904:135), was thus able to say:

“We are told by Cæsar that the (pre-Christian) Germans only worshipped the Sun, the Moon and Fire, and that they knew of no other deities, and with them, as with other nations who worshipped the god whose original was Cush, the Moon was the male deity and the Sun female.”

The Hindus are another people who perceive Deity chiefly as female although they philosophise that she may be female as well as male but transcends both. The Hindu Mother Goddess may go by many names and assume any form. She is more popularly called Durga, “the unfathomable one” and the worship of her is called *Durga-Puja*. She has ten hands—there is a male deity who has only four—and if by the raising of hands the divinities were to vote as to who was the ultimate, Durga would most likely emerge as the ultimate. This might well be Hinduism’s subtle signification by giving her ten hands! Durga is also called: Shakti, Devi, Kali, Ambika, Lakshmi, Sarasvati, Bhadrakali, Bhuvaneshwari etc.²

Pancholi (1982:27), in appreciating this pointedly un-western-like manner of perceiving Deity, says, “It is interesting to note that God is worshipped as Mother in Hindu religion. This concept of God as Mother is alien to westerners who use male terms such as Father to describe God.”

¹Araap Turgot and Paramount Chief araap Kirwa were respectively interviewed and taped for the author by Mwalimu David Kiprop, Headmaster, Kaptildil Secondary School, Nandi.

² Cf. *Oxford Interactive Encyclopedia*, 1997.

The ancient Greek philosophers also subscribed to the fact that Deity was indescribable in human language, indefinable and un-confined, although for reasons of allegory, they depicted several “gods” in form of beasts and humans that were easily recognisable and comprehensible to the ordinary man. In his 2nd century attack on Christianity, Celsus gives us an idea of the image of Deity in the eyes of Greek philosophers:

“He has neither voice nor mouth, nor has He anything of those things which we know. Nor did He make man in His image, for God is not such as man, nor is He like any other form, for He has no part in outward shape, or colour, or movement, or substance. Of Him are all things: He cannot be expressed by word. He has suffered nothing that can be apprehended by name, and is outside of all suffering” (Patrick, 1892:64).

The last line was Celsus’ indirect answer to the Christian belief to the effect that Jesus was God who suffered on the cross for the sin of man. The Christians were driven to a tight corner here: to say that Jesus was God would contradict the doctrine of inviolability of God because Jesus was subjected to the vilest of violent human action. And to say that He was crucified but did not really feel pain, because God did not feel pain, would contradict the important principle of sacrifice on the cross. Faced with both, they maintained both philosophically problematic positions (problematic when so combined). They seemed to Celsus to have had their philosophical cake and eaten it, and then demanded unquestioning belief and no rationalisation from their converts. According to Celsus, the Christians, therefore, only approached the least philosophically minded cadres, children (without the permission of their parents), women, the poor and the slaves whom they told “Believe if you wish to be saved, or go away” (Patrick, 1892:57). Or, put differently,

“Scoundrels frequently take advantage of the lack of education of gullible people and lead them wherever they wish... this happens among the Christians. Some do not even want to give or to receive a reason for what they believe, and use such expressions as ‘Do not ask questions; just believe and Thy faith will save thee... (And saying) The wisdom in the world is an evil, and foolishness a good thing’ (*Contra Celsum* I:9, Chadwick, 1953:12).

Origen’s answer to this was that they demanded belief from their converts up-front yes, but the converts could later seek philosophical answers to Christian doctrines undeterred if they so wished. However he seems to have postulated that if by mere lending of unquestioning faith the moral character of the believers was improved and that they were thereby hauled out of the floods of sin, was the means not justified by this end? And then he made a major concession to the charge that Christianity really thrived on the unsophisticated nature of its followers:

“Partly owing to necessities of life and partly owing to human weakness, very few people are enthusiastic about rational thought, what better way of helping the multitude could be found other than that given to the nations by Jesus?” (Cf. *Contra Celsum* I:9, Chadwick 1953:12).

9.5 The Meaning of Some of Asiis’ Titles and Names

The Kalenjiin’s Asiis has more titles and names than those that we have already mentioned and many of them are known within certain localities only. The following are some of the more common titles throughout the Kipsigiis sub-nation as listed by Toweett (1979:34): “The Kipsigiis knew their Asis by many names. Some of these names are: *Ngolo*, *Cheptalel*, *Chepaomoni* or *Chepanamoni*, *Chepkelyensagal* (nine-legged), *Chepamirchio* (god of wars), *Chepakoiyo*.”

In at least one paper and one book, Professor Mwanzi attempts to explain the meanings of three of the above titles of Asiis. It was demonstrated under *Cheptaleel*, further above, that *Ngolo* could not have been of Gusii origin as Mwanzi thought. As for *Cheptaleel*, Mwanzi (1977:118) writes “... *Cheptalel* which literally means a white girl... And since whiteness among the Kipsigiis denotes holiness as well, *Cheptalel* may also mean a holy girl. Thus the Godhead among the Kipsigiis came to be perceived in human female form.”

In his narration of the legend of the sacrificed holy girl, Mwanzi says that the face of the girl was painted white prior to the event. This is to say that the “white” in *Cheptaleel* refers to the facial decoration. The clan from which *Cheptaleel* hailed, is not given but as Mwanzi’s bulk of research was done among and with the assistance of Kipsigiis people of Gusii ancestry, an ex-Gusii sub-clan, the *Basweteek* of South Kipsigiis, naturally, plays the major role in the sacrifice of the virgin *Cheptaleel*. And the event took place around “the middle of the last century” in present day South Kipsigiis country. There existed no art of rainmaking before the ex-Gusii sub-clan introduced it, says Mwanzi (1977:118). The information in the author’s possession is inconsistent with this.

Throughout Kalenjiinland, Kipsigiisland included, there is a clan, *Toiyoi* or *Toiyoon*, whose totems are *Ileet* (thunder or lightning), *Pireechik* (soldier ants), and *Roopta* (rain). The clan’s gift and calling is in the making of rain. It is a very old clan and therefore the art of rainmaking must be equally old, and definitely antecedent to the coming of the particular ex-Gusii sub-clan.

The name *Cheptaleel* is also very old. Toweett’s version, as we can see, links it with an island, suggesting a geographical setting much different from Kipsigiisland of today—or even of mid-last-century. Moreover *Cheptaleel* is a manifestly old name as it is common all over Kalenjiinland, as well as in those lands occupied by related peoples in Sudan and parts of West

Africa. Its origin cannot therefore be attributed to such a recent an event as took place mid-last-century in South Kipsigiis.

One important Kalenjiin word for a “sign of omen”, *taileel*, which is considered a good sign to someone who is *returning* from an errand but which is considered inauspicious as an omen to someone who is *setting out* on an errand (Cf. Orchardson, 1961:31), may suggest to us another possible root of Cheptaleel. The form of Cheptaleel suggested by this etymological scenario would, therefore, be *Cheptaileel*, “The Lady of Fortune”, thus approximating the attributes of the Greek “goddess” of fortune and chance, Tyche, who was the counterpart of the Roman Fortuna (Cf. Brandon, 1970:625, GME 1993). We may also find tantalising the close association of Fortuna with the horn of fortune, cornucopia, considering that Isis was often depicted as wearing a pair of cow horns on her head. We find an interesting coincidence, worth only just a passing note here, in the name of the Roman king Servius Tullius, who rose from slave to king. Some legends regard him the son of Fortuna.¹

The Kalenjiin words *tiliil*, “clean”, “holy” could easily be confused with *leel* which means, “white”, “new”, “young”, “immature”, “empty”. From the last two, we can see that “whiteness” per se does not denote holiness to the Kipsigiis as Mwanzi claims (1977:118). Another story repeated by Mwanzi can help illustrate this. He narrates, in the same book, the story of Kipsorooi, the man said to have managed to split the river in order to flee his enemies in a similar manner as the biblical Moses is said to have done with the help of Yahweh. Kipsorooi offered the river a black bead and a white bead for allowing him to cross it, and for drowning his pursuers when he prayed that the waters close up (1977:118).

The black bead and the white bead, as used here, demonstrate well the Kalenjiin symbolic view of the colours of black and white. One bead had to be completely black and the other one had to be completely white, not even a zebra-coloured one, i.e. mixed black and white, could substitute. A black object offered for sacrifice had to be black without blemish. Black was particularly associated with prayers and sacrifices for rain. The same practice obtains in Ethiopia and especially—but by no means exclusively—among the Oromo of whom Baldick says are preoccupied with water as the single most important resource to be prayed for. For that most important resource they sacrifice the most beautiful in their scheme of colours, black, just as they could only conceive Deity in that same colour, calling Him or Her *Waqā guracca*, “the black God”. Besides, they claim descent (in actual fact for all humanity) from a black serpent who married the daughter of Heaven and Earth (Cf. 1997:114, 117, 118, 145).

¹ Cf. *New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology*, 1968.

The Omotic neighbours of the Ethiopian Oromo, who also sacrifice a black animal for rain, and perhaps the Oromo as well, sacrifice a white animal when they wish to stop the rains—a subtle dualistic view of nature this has to be. It is an extension of their view of almost everything, including the division of the family house into the Eastern and Western sections and viewing them in terms of male and female opposites. The Southern Oromo section called Arussi, are even more unambiguous in the way they go about their dualistic view of things because, like the Maasai, they “have one good and one bad god (and as the Kalenjiin believe about the Beneficent and Malevolent natures of Thunder, *Iilat*) the former (“god”) thunders and gives rain, while the latter tries to stop this happening” (Cf. Baldick, 1997:114, 117, 145).

According to Evans-Pritchard, the Nuer of Sudan who, like the Kalenjiin, are Nilotic-speaking, used to dedicate black cows to “the spirit of the Nile”. Evans-pritchard was told that in the greater past the Nuer used to sacrifice a maiden to “this spirit” and that the maiden and the black cow had since been replaced by a goat that at the time of his inquiry was thrown into the Nile every year (Cf. Evans-Pritchard, 1956 various).

It is of no coincidence that as one comes down South gradually within the Ethiopian and Sudanese territory and into Kenyan territory, the cultures increasingly begin to resemble those that are associated with the Kalenjiin and the Maasai of East Africa, complete with the view of the sun as a feminine object. Maasai name for “the sun”, *en-kolong*, is prefixed with the feminine particle *en-* while “the sun” in Kalenjiin takes the feminine-prefixed (*che-*) names for Asiis and thus Asiis’ femininity along with them: *Chepkeelyen sogool*, *Cheepkochor*, *Cheptaleel* etc. Like the Maasai who refer to the moon with the masculine prefix *ol-*, *ol-apa*, the Oromo consider the moon masculine. Kalenjiin culture and language are generally silent on this one but we can safely assume that they too went along with the rest.¹

The South-western Ethiopian lands referred to here comprise territories that were originally held by the two Kenyan peoples, and the South-western Oromo branches appear to have inherited their multiple cultures and, no doubt, blood as well. Julian Baldick, for a prominent example, is sure, for instance, that the elaborate Oromo age-set system was originally East African and not what he calls “Afroasiatic”, the baseless designation that he lists the Oromo under. He opines that the Oromo only developed it further to cater for their system of opposing generation classes, namely that father’s generation set must necessarily be in conflict with his son’s generation set (Cf. Baldick, 1997:132). This rivalry does not exist in Kalenjiin age-set reckoning system because

¹ Mervyn Beech did collect (1911:19) at least one Pokoot tradition that held the moon to be masculine, being the first-born *son* of Tororrot, the Deity. However, the same group held the sun to be the younger *brother* of Tororrot, and from this we gather that the sun too was viewed as being of the masculine gender here!

the father ought to be at least one generation removed from that of his son and the son can only be considered the rival of the generation immediately senior to him for it is from that set that he takes over power.

It was the custom of these cultures that sacrificed a black animal—or a jet-black maiden before that—for rain, to sacrifice a light-coloured or white object if the ritual was intended for other propitiatory purposes. The light-coloured or white animal chosen had equally to be of the intended colour without a blemish by way of spots of different-coloured hair. White bulls were sacrificed during the Kalenjiin's triple-sided passing outs and retirements ceremony, *sageet aap eito*.

The Lotuko and the Bari communities of Sudan also sacrifice a black goat for rain. The fat, the stomach contents, and blood from the sacrificed goat are smeared on the black rain stones (the pebbles obtained from the bottom of the river). The rainmaker, *nobu*, if female, and *kobu* if male, who is the virtual ruler, later washes the same stones clean and puts them in pots for use in further ceremonial activity (Cf. Seligman, 1932:285, 330).

During their prayers for rain, the Marakwet may sacrifice a spotless black sheep at the top of a hill. The meat is roasted on a fire fuelled by wood from the sacred plants such as *taraakwa*, *eemdit* and *sinendeet*. Or, like the Nandi and others would do, a similar sheep, i.e., black without blemish, is immersed in a river but is not killed. The Marakwet may also sacrifice such a spotlessly black sheep and lower the roasted meat down into a cave thought to be the house of Thunder. This is accompanied by a man whose totem is water, or lightning, *toiyo*, who, alone, on behalf of all the people, will go down and intercede with Thunder, *ilat* (Cf. Kipkorir, 1973:33).

The colour scheme and taste associated with the divine may most likely have been inspired by Africa, but it was by no means confined to it. In Virgil's (19 BC Book III) *Aeneid*, we come across the practice of sacrificing a "milk-white ewe, the western winds to please, and one coal-black to calm the stormy seas." So even in the ancient Rome of Emperor Augustus and his celebrated independent-minded court poet Virgil, the colour black was associated with the storm, in other words, water and thunder. And, as it was with the Africans, a black animal was considered the appropriate colour of the animal to sacrifice to its supreme controlling agent.

Plutarch, narrating the story of *Aristides*, 530–468 BC (?), tells us that after the Athenian General, Aristides, won the war against Persia, which victory came after great loss of life, decreed that an annual sacrifice to "Jupiter and Mercury of the Earth" be performed on the spot of victory at Platea. The sacrificial animal was to be a black bull. The slain Greeks (meaning their spirits) were to be invited to partake of the banquet and libations of blood (Plutarch, 75 AD).

The Kalenjiin were after maximum purity with regard to the colour of a sacrificial animal and it did not matter to them which colour it was that was customary for a certain type of sacrifice—so long as there was no blemish by way of another colour blending with the intended one. The greatest annual processions utilised white goats that were decorated with the sacred vines, beads and cowry shells. These were symbolically sacrificed during the annual *kaapkoros* prayers as they were no longer slaughtered (Cf. Toweett, 1979) and indeed this was a sign of a tremendous move away from literalism to symbolism and abstract thought.¹

The sacrificial practice of the Venda, whose territory transcends the boundary of South Africa and Zimbabwe, has a lot in common with the Kalenjiin practice and—by extension and indeed—ancient Egyptian. Here, the colour black predominates. The Deity to the Venda goes by the name *Luvhimba* and, like in the ancient Egyptians' myth, the *Luvhimba* is also *Ra*—thought to be connected with the idea of “Father”—so the Deity's respectful name is *Ra-luvhimba*. Like the Gikuyu's *Ngai* who occasionally resides on Mt. Kenya, or *Yahweh* of the Hebrew in association with Mt. Sinai, *Raluvhimba*, as *Mwari* (or *Nwali*) has an earthly abode too by way of Matopo Hills of Southern Zimbabwe. “Every year the Venda used to send a special messenger (whose office was hereditary) with a black ox and a piece of black cloth as an offering to *Mwari*. The black ox was set free in a forest to join the god's large herd which had accumulated there” (Smith, 1950:124-126).²


As for Asiis' title *Chepaomoni* or *Chepanamoni*, Mwanzi was informed that the sacrificed girl was the daughter of one Mr Namoni (1977:119). However, one is yet to meet a Kipsigiis whose name is Namoni, Omoni or Amoni. Could this therefore be a reference to the ancient Egyptian ram-headed “god” Amon? Amon was the chief “god” of Egypt, equated with or even surpassing Ra when Thebes, Amon's locality, was serving as the national capital of Egypt, or of at least its immediate Nome, Waset (Cf. Watterson, 1984:138-145). It is in such a context that Asiis of the Myoot's immediate interest may have been considered a daughter of Amon. The converse might equally have obtained, namely that *Chepaamoni* could also be interpreted as meaning “Asiis of Amon” in the same way as some would say, “God of Abraham”. This would mean that Amon looked to Asiis as his Deity too.

The above is not farfetched, as one may consider also that the other Asiis title *Chepkelyensagal* (more correctly: *cheep-keelyen-sogool*), “the Lady of Nine Legs”, maybe

¹A white patch on the crown of a sacrificial otherwise all-black bullock did not disqualify a sacrificial animal. Probably this comes from the ancient Egyptian's love for *Hapi*'s (Nile) bull who was all-black but for a white square patch on its crown, as described by Herodotus (Book III).

² Cited by Mircea Eliade (1967:10-11).

referring to the Heliopolitan, Memphite, or any other Egyptian locality *Ennead* which listed Isis among nine “gods” born by Atum, or Ra, upon the instructions of Ptah, or of any other principal deity of a different local arrangement.


In a particular locality where Ra was supreme, he had to be the ultimate giver of birth, and he gave birth to nine “gods”. In a locality where Atum was held supreme, he was the ultimate giver of birth to the “gods” etc. But certainly in the later Kalenjiin context, where Asiis was supreme, She had to be the ultimate bearer, and She too stood on nine legs, or gave birth to nine unknown beings. The Egyptians referred to the group of nine “gods”, known to us by the Greek term *Ennead*, as  *pesdjjet* (Cf. Watterson, 1984:41, B.Dict. 250b).¹ The female-figure determinant here could be replaced by a male figure—or even by the figure of an eagle. The female figure interests us more because we might be seeing Isis here with a hint as to the nine mysterious legs that are associated with Asiis by the Kalenjiin.

We see, above, that the Kalenjiin woman was expected to bear a maximum of nine children (some of them however exceeded this seemingly symbolic limit). We have seen that all Kipsigiis military expeditions were preceded by a marching troop of nine non-fighting scouts, *sogoldaiik*. This routine of symbolic essence, it seems, was meant to indicate that the trailing army on the march represented the entire nation.

During peace negotiations as well, the Kalenjiin used to send an advance team of *nine* “feelers”, who pretended to be real peace negotiators to the adversaries but who had to withdraw and go back for further consultations when it was time to make decisions. A group of four, who could make limited decisions, then replaced them. If things were too serious for their mandate, the last team of at least two elders came to the round table.

The titles *Cheepamirchio*, “She of wars” and *Cheepapkoioyo*, meaning more or less the same, emphasise Asiis’ role as the “Goddess of war”. In this role Asiis assumes the functions of the Semitic war “god” *Bar*, who was adopted by the Egyptians around 1600 BC. This “god” had his headquarters in Tanis, Egypt (Cf. Budge, 1934:250).


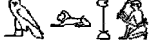

The Myoot brought the military word *bar* with them south but not its “god”. But that it is actually a Semitic loanword, it should not be in doubt. Its behaviour is absolutely Semitic, as can be demonstrated by the following largely internal inflexion system: *par* “kill”, *pir* “beat up”; *poor*

¹ Budge accompanies this with a warning that the correct transcription might be closer to *pauti* than to *peschet* or *pesdjjet* as is commonly thought. This warning is supported by the variant spelling  *pauti*, which refers to “the first and greatest nine gods” (B.Dict. 250a,b). We know that *pauti* is really the *potaa* of Kalenjiin and ancient Egyptian. It means “of the beginning”, “foremost”, or “of the front”, usually with reference to Ptah who embodies the primordially attribute of Deity.



“prosper (from loot?)”; *pooryo* “battle” and *por-yeet* “a military regiment” etc. The Semitic behaviour displayed by this word is discernible in the sense that there appears to be a two-consonant radical, -p-r-, around and within which vowels shift and change in order to generate different meanings but which remain within the range, or semantic field, of “war”, “struggle” or “violence”. That is a typical Semitic behaviour.

Cheepa-mirchio probably means 1) literally “the girl of halo” in reference to the halo that occasionally forms around the sun. The Kalenjiin refer to the halo as *oor-mariich-et*, “the archway”. The halo normally leaves an opening on one side, and depending on whether the opening faced home or away, the Kalenjiin made a decision whether or not to go on a raiding mission. An opening of the halo which was towards home was propitious, while an opening facing away, was bad omen and that, if it occurred as men were making ready to set on their march to war, would cause the abandonment of the plan (Cf. Orchardson, 1961:21).

The halo was, therefore, an omen, *tarteet*, which was supposed to be read together, if it occurred simultaneously with other *tarteet* indicators such as animal entrails, singing of the *kiptilyeet* “woodpecker”, the perching position of the white eagle, *chepkogoyoot*, etc. Other omens were unknown to the commoners, these being revealed only to the king, *Oorgoiyoot* who, unlike his commoner subjects, had direct communication with Asiis and the departed ancestors (mainly through dreams). Those ancestors, subsequent to their departure, had become all-knowing¹ and for the reason that the king had this privileged access to the counsel of Deity as well as to that of his departed ancestors, he held the last word as to whether or not to go to war.

2) The *Mirchio*, portion of *Cheepa-mirchio*, seems to belong with the words *che-marg-eet* or *ki-marg-atit*, “riots”, “fighting”, “tumult” etc. where the stem seems to be *-marg-*. The Hebrew word for this is *mered* and it seems not unrelated. The Kalenjiin and Hebrew versions are almost certainly related to the ancient Egyptian  *merkha* “war, strife, fight”. The verb form is styled  *merkh* (B.Dict. 315b). The verbal form of the Kalenjiin version is discernible in the infinitive *Kii-marg-eteet* which means “to give a person or an animal chase in such a manner that he or it and the pursuers have to run in a disorganised manner.” It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the military clans of the north that were collectively called Calasiries (among whom were the Sebbenies) were also called *Mersheri*  (B.Dict. 315b).

¹ So much so that Ian Orchardson was to remark about this as follows: “So strongly is the belief in the human spirit that to the Kipsigis it is the same as knowledge” (1961:22).

The ancient Egyptian “god” called  *Meres* (B.Dict. 315b), may also relate to the Asiis name, *Chepa-Mirchio*, although the better-known (to Egyptologists) “goddess of war and the chase” had a name closer to Asiis or *Asiista*  *Asit* (B.Dict. 112b).

All the foregoing may lead us to a suspicion to the effect that the “god of war” according to the Romans, *Mars* (*Mavors*) may, after all owe its origin to the more ancient civilisation—Egypt. The same word in the form of the name of the month of March, which is dedicated to the “god of war” in the Roman context, shows unmistakable visual semblance to the above African versions. And the fact that the woodpecker was especially observed during a march to war by the Kalenjiin armies, makes very revealing reading indeed considered alongside the Roman tradition which held the woodpecker to be one of two sacred objects to Mars, the other one being the wolf (Cf. Pennick, 1992:46).

The halo around the sun was also referred to as *kooiyen* whence we get the Asiis salutation *Cheepo-pkooiyo*. *Kooiyo* also meant cattle, or the pen where freshly looted cattle were divided. So Asiis *Cheepopkooiyo* also signified “Asiis the provider of cattle”. The cattle pen resembles the halo around the sun. Thus the Kalenjiin had fully employed Asiis to serve them in their military adventures, which centred, for the most part, on the acquisition of stock forcibly from their neighbours. And when they had a cattle raid in mind, Asiis’ salutations relevant to the occasion, *Cheepomirchio* and *Cheepopkooiyo* were sweet and present in the lips as well as in the hearts of all concerned.

The Kalenjiin people’s salutation to Asiis as the “Lady of Halo” implies that these East Africans associated the halo with the divine before they knew anything about Christianity. We know that any drawing of Christian saints, today, including Mary and Jesus, carries the mandatory halo around the head of each one of them. The inclusion of the halo, or aureole, in the portrayal of Deity in art was common in those religions whose deity had the sun as his or her chief symbol. The halo was placed round the heads of the images of the “gods” and heroes in Rome and Greece, and also round the heads of the Roman Emperors, to whom divine honours were paid after death. “The halo was regarded as the token of divinity of the person represented, that is to say, of his being a son (or daughter) of the Sun god, as implied by the lines:

‘Twelve golden beams around his temples play,

To mark his lineage from the god of day (Garnier, 1904:111).’¹

¹ For this and the preceding, Garnier cites: Dryden, *Virgil*, book xii. Pp. 245, 246 Vol. iii p. 775; Hislop, p. 237.

The author of *Pompeii*, on noticing the halo in a painting of Circe and Ulysses, remarked that it was defined by Servius as “the luminous fluid which encircles the heads of the gods” (Garnier, 1904:111).

Buddha also had the sun as his special totem. So he is called

“‘The Sublime Sun Buddha whose widespread rays brighten and illuminate all things.’ He is reported to have said that bowing to the East (the usual act of adoration to the Sun god) was ‘the *paramita* of charity,’ i.e. the perfection of righteousness, it is very evident that the ancient Buddhism, like other pagan systems, was founded on Sun worship, and that the original mythological Buddha, whose attributes were given to Sakya Muni, was, like the other pagan gods, a Sun God” (Garnier, 1904:111-112).¹

We may note here that the Asiisian faith of the Kalenjiin, as did the Isiac faith of the ancient Egyptians (the orientation of the Sphinx bears permanent evidence to this), shared at least two chief aspects of symbolism with the original form of Buddhism. All three had the sun as the chief symbol of Deity; and (therefore) the respective believers faced east in prayer. About the Kalenjiin, Orchardson (1961:25) says: “There is, in fact, scarcely any ceremony or rite, however minor, in which the east or the (altar) *mabwaiita* (and generally both) does not play a significant part.”

It has been noted that the picture of Mother-and-Child, in relation to Mary and Jesus, was a direct carry-over from Isis-and-Horus’ mother-and-child popular posture; dating back several millennia before Christ. This ancient Egyptian legacy as it survives in Christianity, includes the depiction of a solar halo around the head of Mary, Jesus and all the saints’ portraits. The difference is that during the great Egyptian times the solar disk rested on the deity’s or the saint’s head. And, in the case of Isis; between her symbolic cow horns. This solar disk was apparently to be simplified later by the Copts into the halo of the saints, and how the disk evolved into such a halo, is not hard to imagine.

The author asked Dr Zaki Shenouda, the President of the Institute of Coptic Studies, during an interview in his office within the papal precincts, Abbasia, Cairo, whether he agreed with his (the author’s) contention, that the symbol of the sun’s disk of ancient Egypt, was replaced by the

¹ Here Garnier infers the Buddhist belief that there were at least six Buddhas before Gautama, the last Buddha whose real names were Sakya Muni, being the seventh named “Buddha” (The Hindus believe that Gautama was the 9th appearance of the reincarnating second person of their divine triad, Vishnu). Some Buddhists say that there have been up to one thousand Buddhas so far, each being ushered in to bring the *dharma* from one age to another (Crim, 1989: Buddha). Garnier holds strongly the view that Buddha was really Cush, whom he identifies as Thoth, the ancient Egyptian inventor and maker of laws whom the Greeks popularised elsewhere as Hermes (1904:148). The black features of Buddha support this contention. Things have been made easier towards this end in that the name of one of the incarnations of Buddha, Krishna—the one immediately before Gautama, according to Hindu reckoning—actually means “Black”.

symbol of the sun's halo in early Christian times. His reply (lesson?) was non-committal, but his digression which followed, was rather interesting:

Every human being has a halo around his or her head. These halos range, in a continuum, from the colour green to golden. The saintly individuals have a golden halo around their heads, while the devilish types have a green halo around theirs. Those are the two extremes. Otherwise most people's halos would be of a shade somewhere between the two, depending on the individual's relative holiness. From Dr Shenouda's explanation, the author got the answer, without asking, as to why on all Coptic icons that include the treacherous Judas; Judas is always depicted dressed in green! It was important, he said, to indicate the golden halo for all the saintly people, including Jesus and His mother Mary, in any iconographic depiction of them. This halo, Dr Shenouda said, could be seen around the heads of living people through some special cameras.

If the tradition articulated by Dr Shenouda indeed dates back to Pharaonic days, then we may safely say that by the name *Cheepapkooiyo*, "the Lady of Halo" (*kooiyen* = halo), the Kalenjiin were verbally portraying Asiis in that customary saintly image.

The association of Deity with the solar disc was not an attribute that was exclusive to the three ancient religions that we have mentioned in that light: Asiisianism, Isiacism and Buddhism. Scholars have argued, with etymological proof vis-a-vis the names for Deity, that under whatever name and attributes, all "Gods" that man has created in his curious and imaginative mind, end up crystallising as the sun (Cf. Gamble, 1927:156). And once faith is symbolically centred on the sun, the east becomes the most important of the cardinal points. Gamble (1927:155) is therefore able to say:

"In later ages, the fact is being proved that this God, into whom all the deities worshipped at a certain period in human history resolve themselves, is the sun, or if not the actual corporeal sun, then the supreme agency within it which was acknowledged as the great creative force..."

We ought not take it for granted that any community's veneration of the sun as the chief symbol of Deity necessarily resulted in their congregations facing east at the time of prayer. The Borana, a Cushitic-speaking Southern Ethiopian people who are part of the larger Oromo ethnic group, according to Legesse, actually faced west in prayer although, according to Van de Loo, they buried their dead head to the east in an east-west axis format, which is as the Kalenjiin do (Cf. Legesse, 1973:94, Van de Loo, 1991:102). Just the choice of the direction "west" for the purpose of orienting prayers is enough to suggest the solar nature of their religion. Whereas the direction "east" would normally be the natural choice of such religions, as we have said, sometimes the country, place of origin, or the position of a major natural phenomenon such as a

mountain or a national monument, may override the tradition. Thus we see the Gikuyu people of central Kenya facing Mt. Kenya when praying because they believe that Deity rests atop that mountain, while the Muslims face the direction of the most important monument to them, the Kaaba. The Borana's choice of the west to orient prayers towards, perhaps points more to their tradition of origin from the west, i.e. farther to the west of Southern Ethiopia and into Sudan.¹

Summary of Chapter 9: Asiis in Isis, Was Isis Asiis

The influence of Egyptian religion in Semitic lands was evidently far-reaching. We also mentioned Egypt's foray into the entire neighbourhood of the Mediterranean Sea, including areas adjacent to its Adriatic and Aegean arms, where Isis registered her presence from perhaps the 13th century BC, but probably even long before that in her other aspect known as Amon, who is the Zeus of the Greeks (Calculations based on the information from Herodotus place the time of Isis to about 20,000 years ago). The events that led to the universal acceptance of Isis as the international patron of sailing—based on the fact that she was reputed to have invented the sail—ought to be ancient indeed and necessarily push the influence of Isis-worshipping Egyptians on Europe and Asia to much more remote periods than is often acknowledged.

To the Semites of Palestine, Isis was the Queen of Heaven to whom they made sacrifices against the wishes of their political leaders and the prophets. The sacrificial practices of the Semites much resemble those of the Kalenjiin under Asiis for the reason of the ancient spread to the Semitic lands of the Isis movement as well as due to contemporaneous and later East African economic and cultural forays into Arabia.

We saw that in later years, according to the scholars, Isis *Myrionymus*, "of many names"; metamorphosed into the Virgin Mary, who, quite instructively, is also known as Miriam or Mariam. Simultaneously, say the scholars, a composite of Osiris and Horus correspondingly vouchsafed itself in Jesus. The hand of the Gnostic Egyptians, as well as that of the Queen-of-Heaven-obsessed Semites, is clearly apparent in this metamorphosing development (many more facts regarding the pivotal influence of the Gnostic Christian founding Fathers on their theological baby, the Christian movement, are cited in Appendix 5).

¹ That is according to Legesse, 1973, Baldick, 1997. However according to the general knowledge from East African sources (also see Huntingford, 1953a), the Oromo and other Cushitic speakers, such as the Somali, who occupy sections of north-western Kenya and south-western Ethiopia, entered their present land from the east and not from the west. The orientation of prayers to the west, on the part of the Borana segment of the Oromo, may either be suggesting that their religion came to them from the west, i.e. from the deeper interior of the continent, or that their most influential ancestors actually came from such a western direction even though the major section of the population is made up of those who appeared from the east.

We noted the fact that one set of western scholars, the Egyptologists, knew and wrote much about Isis of Egypt, while another set of western scholars, the more knowledgeable of the colonial administrators and missionaries, knew and wrote about Asiis of Kalenjiinland, but no investigation was undertaken to either link or dismiss any possible linkage between the two names for Deity. The author ascribed this to either an intellectual conspiracy of silence or to utter intellectual negligence.

Significant note was made regarding the widespread preference for black pigment, either in art or in the abstract thought, for portrayal of Deity, or of the principal divinities. Osiris, Isis, Asiis (as the mythical Cheemarus), Krishna, Buddha, the "Storm god" of pre-Islamic Arab religion, *Waq Guracca* of the Oromo, *Enkai Narok* of the Maasai, etc., were portrayed in this manner. We ascribed this widespread tendency to the antiquity and spread of African influence. The fact that the human race most likely originated from Africa, as claimed by palaeontologists, may also count as a factor. But this certainly formed one common meeting point for many religions, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Native Australian religions, some Native European, and several Native American religions.

We have noted the Egypto-Kalenjiin common trait in the notion of god-idea as female. We also noted that it was originally a widespread tendency that was only modified later among some communities, notably the Hebrew, by way of revolt. A combination of Hebrew and Roman misogyny, we noted, led to the current masculinised god-idea of the Judaeo-Christian world. We noted that, owing to the power associated with giving birth, the female had advantage over the male in the conjuration, on the part of the delicate mind of the offspring, of the image of a creator, an imagination that easily extended to the formation of the god-idea. Strong beliefs of a greater creator of similar attribute were formed and this still remains in the psyche of the majority of human societies, the Chinese, the Indians, the still-Asiisian Kalenjiin, the traditional Maasai etc., as well as the ancient Egyptian society up until its final destruction. To them, the god-idea exists, or existed, in the form of a female Godhead. We noted that, contrary to common logic, a male-dominated society actually harbours a greater propensity to sponsor a female Godhead, this owing more to the men's aggregate love for their mothers and the corresponding indifference to their fathers. Wives, sisters and girlfriends do not necessarily lead to the fostering of such image in the collective psyche of the domineering male. It is the mother who possesses such power of attracting masculine admiration, a position that easily culminates in the Godhead.

That said, however, we saw that the Kalenjiin elders explain their case away by hypothesising that the ancients preferred to view the Creator in the form of woman because she had tender hands that were not adulterated by blood, as well as a tender merciful heart. We

observed though, that when all was said and done, the Kalenjiin, for one example, viewed and discussed Deity in that feminine form for convenience of language and to aid thought, otherwise Deity was held to have no form that could be comprehended by the human mind.

Chapter 10

Worldwide Influence of Isis and the Associated “Gods”: Osiris, Horus and Set



Abstract

Chapter 10 ends our Section C. It discusses the nature of, effect upon and the extent to which the ancient African religious thought, transmitted mainly through Egypt, inspired much of the rest of humanity in their own theological innovations. The discussion hopes in part to further solidify the justification for including those foreign religions in a comparative work such as this one. Our main area of concentration is, of course, comparative work between the Kalenjiin religion and its ancient Egyptian counterpart, or archetype, the intention being to prove the tradition of Pharaonic origin by this means. However if some religion outside the two was decidedly influenced by one of them, then there is justification to include it in the discussion, not least because it certainly will shed more light on the important line of discussion.

We discuss Isis in relation to Osiris, Horus and Set; how they comprised a trinity of one sort or the other and how such triadic arrangement was adopted and adapted by outsiders.

The discussion on the influence of African myth and religion on outsiders is extended in Appendix 6 where we also discuss the boomerang effect of such African export on the Africans.

10.1 The Holy Family of Isis

Isis was a member of the group of Nine “Gods” (the Great Ennead) of Heliopolis, who were descendants of Ra. As mentioned earlier on in this section, her father was Geb and her mother was Nut. Geb was the “god” of the earth and Nut was “goddess” of the sky. As we suggested, these parents of Isis were probably the *Gebir* and *Otianer* of the cosmogony of the Sudanese Ingassana, who remember the two as the first parents on earth.

The Egyptian Isis had one sister, Nephthys, and two brothers, Osiris and Set. Osiris married Isis. He was “god” of corn, and Isis became “goddess” of corn. They were king and queen of Egypt but their brother, Set, who married their sister Nephthys, was jealous of this ruling pair. Set plotted against them and had Osiris assassinated. He usurped the throne after pushing Isis, the widowed queen, aside.

Set was the “god” who finally became the incarnation of the spirit of evil, existing in eternal opposition to the spirit of good. He was rough and wild, beginning from the day he was born when he tore himself violently from his mother’s womb. According to *New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology*, 1968, “Set’s skin was white and his hair was red—an abomination to the Egyptians, who compared it to the pelt (undressed skin) of an ass.”

The Greeks, as Herodotus tells us (Book II), adopted many of the Egyptian “gods”. Set was one of them and they renamed him Typhon.

“Typhon, like Set, was thus a god of violence and turmoil. The colour red became associated with them both: with Typhon because he became a volcano and with Set because of his links with the desert. Hence red-haired animals, and even red-haired men, were held in abhorrence by Greeks and Egyptians” (Watterson, 1984:117).

The murder of Osiris by his brother, Set, has a lot in parallel with the murder of Abel by his brother, Cain (Genesis 4:8). Osiris, the victim, tilled the soil, and Set, the murderer, was a pastoralist. The Bible has the roles in reverse therefore: Cain the murderer being the tiller of the soil while Abel the victim was a pastoralist. Perhaps this reversal of occupations in the biblical account, which is the later of the two versions, owed it to the pastoral inclination of the Hebrews whose history, customs, culture and tradition, the Bible records.¹

As we have already said, Osiris had been murdered before he had sired an heir to the Egyptian throne with his wife Isis. However Isis had performed magic on the body of the slain Osiris, and he was then able to resurrect and impregnate her before going to the underworld (heaven) where he sits in judgement of the dead with Isis and Nephthys at his side. Isis gave birth to Horus who later avenged his father’s death and reclaimed the throne from Set (Cf. Armour, 1986:46-48).

If the biblical account of Genesis hints at ancient Egyptian influence—for the Egyptian record predates the writing of the Bible—then the Dogon account suggests its pan African character. The Dogon are a Malian people. Dogon religion has one God, according to the famous studies of Marcel Griaule and his followers from which sources Genevieve Calame-Griaule, draws the following summary: God began creation with two male twins. One of the twins, Yurugu, rebelled and was turned into a pale fox, the enemy of light (for it is a nocturnal animal), water and fertility. Yurugu thus naturally compares conceptually with the Egyptian “god of darkness”, Set, who is also a rebel and who, rather like the allegorical pale fox of the Dogon, is

¹The Hebrews who wrote the Old Testament—Moses being the principal one among them—after their 400 or so years of living in Egypt—were probably influenced by the ancient Egyptian mythology. However, Seth of the Genesis was a younger
Footnote continued at bottom of next page

also depicted as a strange dog-like animal of the canid family of which foxes and dogs are members. The other twin, Nommo, was sacrificed and resuscitated by God in order to mitigate the disorder caused by the fox. That one answers to the character of Osiris who was slain but was later resurrected by Isis. Thus Yurugu and Nommo represent opposite principles: order and disorder, life and death, wetness and dryness. Yurugu, the fox, has had his tongue cut off, but can foretell the future with his paws, and is respected for this (compare with the Kalenjiin characterisation of Evil Thunder, *Ileet ne ya*, who, though inherently evil, is capable of restoring and dispensing justice).

“We must observe that Yurugu also resembles Seth closely in other ways: he is born prematurely bursting out of his mother, disturbing an orderly sequence of births of twins, and he is characterised by irregular sexuality—coupling incestuously with his mother” (Cf. Baldick, 1997:158).¹

Horus, the said son of Osiris, whom he sired posthumously—to Set’s eternal doubt—was presented by artists as a man with a falcon’s head. He was the “god” of the sky and the Greeks were later to adopt him under the name Apollo, their well-known celestial “deity”. Horus was the heir to the throne of Osiris and all later Pharaohs were, in turn, heirs to Horus’ throne because they were thought to be the incarnations of Horus. He was the symbol of divine kingship so that the word for “divine king”, or even the concept of Deity, was often followed by the determinant of a falcon on its perch.

The choice of a falcon to represent Horus, just as a jackal, or dog, represented Set, may owe origin to ancient Egyptian totemism. The struggle between Set and Horus may, therefore, just have represented the struggle for the throne between two men from the Jackal clan and the Falcon clan respectively. This would, of course, present a difficulty considering that Set was supposed to be the paternal uncle of Horus, in which case Kalenjiin experience tells us that they would necessarily both have belonged to one clan, represented by one totem. But the established contention of Egyptologists that Set was the brother of Osiris, which would bring about the said relationship of uncle and nephew between Set and Horus, is not entirely unchallengeable either. There is also a chance that due to the acrimonious parting of ways between the Osiris and the Set families, one of the parties was required to adopt a new totem animal in order to sever the relationship more firmly. This sort of scenario is not new to the Kalenjiin. It is what gives rise to the situation where one clan has two or three totems, known to be historically related but now

son of Adam and he was not the murderer like his namesake in the Egyptian Heliopolitan version, Set. Nevertheless the Hebrew Seth and the Egyptian Set were sons of the first pair of parents respectively.

¹ Citing: Genevieve Calame-Griaule’s article: “Dogon Religion”, in Eliade (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion*.



separate enough to allow intermarriage between their members (see the discussion on *maat* in marriage in Chapter 11).

If the indigenous Egyptian kings considered themselves successors to the throne of Horus by virtue of their being his incarnations, the 17th century BC foreign (Asiatic) usurpers of that throne, who are called Hyksos, identified themselves with the very antithesis of Horus; Set himself. However, considering the practical level of things, where African matters must boil down to the common denominator of clan, this means that the invading Hyksos clan adopted the Set symbol, the jackal, or the dog, as their totem animal. But where the typical Egyptologist is concerned, this totemic self-identification on the part of the Hyksos meant that these Hyksos adopted Set as their “god”.¹ We know, or should know, better than this but must note, however, that subsequent to the defeat and banishment of the Hyksos clan, after 120 years of their rule (Cf. O’Connor [b], GME 1993), Set became more and more detested by the Egyptians, because it happened to be the totem animal of the hated Hyksos. Certainly by the Ptolemaic times Set had been removed from his implicit position in the triad of Isis where he had, even during the pre-Hyksos times, represented the forces of evil. But it needs to be emphasised that Set, when he was still accepted as an inevitable malevolent attribute of Deity, represented just the necessary amount of evil to balance out good and maintain tranquil order in the universe.

The Hyksos, as we have pointed out, apparently only identified themselves with the Set animal as a totem. They still worshipped the ancient Egyptian divinities such as Ra and even Horus, the nemesis of Set. Their kings transformed themselves into Pharaohs, then assumed typical Pharaonic titles such as “Son of Ra”, or even went as far as styling themselves the reincarnations of Horus. Names of some kings who reigned during the Hyksos era resemble those of indigenous Pharaohs, e.g. the first Hyksos king, Salitis is probably the one whose name was styled

, which is transcribed by Budge (1920) as *User-ka-Ra Khentcher*

but which must sound to the Kalenjiin ear as *Oserke araap Kantorr*. Or the 3rd Hyksos king whose name is transcribed by WinGlyph as Jaqobher but whose name in full must sound to us like *Murer-Set Ra Yiepkob-Horr* or *Murer Seet araap Yiepkoboorr*:

, otherwise styled .¹ What

we are supposed to take note of, from the rendering of the names of the Hyksos kings, is the use of “Ra”, “Horus” and “Set” symbols. The use of the first two indicates to us that they indeed submitted themselves to the Egyptian religion as denoted by the “gods” Ra and Horus. The use of

¹ E.g. *the New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology, 1968.*

the Set symbol may strengthen our conviction that the Set animal was indeed the totem of the Hyksos clan.

The adopting of the religion of the subjugated Egyptians necessarily meant that the Hyksos had conquered a people from a greater culture than their own and, for this reason, and in most respects; we may say that they became culturally Egyptianised themselves. It must come to us as no surprise, therefore, that some writers have noted that “the excavation of tombs of the Hyksos period has revealed no significant changes in burial customs and no cultural break with the past” (Steindorff & Seele, 1956:25).

The era of Jesus came when Set was no longer considered a member of the Isis, Osiris, and Horus family. The prominence of Horus had been established and Mother and Child philosophy was the accepted theological ideal. In infancy, Jesus was more like Horus than like Osiris in that (1) He too had a Great Mother who had also been impregnated in a divine manner, and who was thereafter referred to as “divine among women”, as well as “Virgin Mother”. (2) Although in Osiris we can recognise Jesus in His greater spiritual essence, for as long as Jesus was a vulnerable infant, whom the Roman king, Herod, wanted killed; His hide-and-seek escapades in the arms of Mary, resemble those of the infant Horus in the arms of Isis whom the usurper of the throne of Egypt, Set, wanted to kill because he (Horus) was destined to be the lawful king of Egypt. According to the followers of Jesus, He too was originally destined to be the king of the Jews, the Messiah, the deliverer of His people from foreign tyranny and all earthly suffering. But all this would be at the expense of Herod. Of course the secular, or political aspirations for Him did not come about and He only ended up being the spiritual king of a splinter section of the Jews and, later, the eternal spiritual king to millions of those that are still called Gentiles—in contrast to the Jews—all over the world.

According to Charles Finch, not only is Jesus like both Osiris and Horus but Horus and Osiris were also one. So Jesus Christ is to be compared with the composite of Osiris and Horus.

“By delineating the mythological and symbolical aspects of the principal actors in the Osirian drama, certain parallels to the Christian drama commend themselves to our attention. Osiris and Horus are in a sense one, that is, aspects of each other. This ‘composite’ entity Osiris-Horus is the archetype of the Gospel Jesus” (Finch, 1990:36).

This argument is helped by the fact that the Greeks, when they adopted Osiris as one of their “gods”, renamed him Dionysus, literally “Son of God”, in their language. This was the title that

¹ Glyph for Windows, CCER, 1993, Utrecht University, Netherlands.

was later to be assumed by Jesus. But before Jesus, Alexander “the Great” had assumed it, thanks to the oracles and priests of Amon at Siwa, Egypt, who cried out when the triumphant Alexander approached the Temple of Zeus-Amon: “Dionysos!”, “Dionysos!”, i.e. “Son of God!”, “Son of God!”. This of course got into the head of Alexander and he was thereafter to regard himself Son of God by divine means through his earthly mother Olympias. By this step of self-deification he had banished his father, King Philip, from his biological descent in the same manner that similar honour had been bestowed upon the early Great Physician of Egypt, Imhotep (see Appendix 6) and all Pharaohs of Egypt. The French historian, Paul Faure, in his biography of Alexander,

“demonstrated how Alexander, or rather the myth of Alexander, had paved the way and set the scene some three centuries later for a new ‘Son of God’, a ‘Filius Dei’, one whose modest Nazarene mother, somewhat like Olympias (mother of Alexander) before her, also claimed to have become pregnant through divine intervention” (Bauval, 1999:103).¹

About this claim of divine conception by Olympias, Plutarch, writing in 75 AD, reports that the night before the consummation of the marriage of Philip and Olympias, she dreamed that a thunderbolt fell upon her body, which kindled a great fire, whose divided flames dispersed themselves all about, and then were extinguished. It helped that Philip also later dreamt that he had sealed up his wife’s body with a seal, whose impression was the figure of a lion. Some of the diviners interpreted this as a warning to Philip to look out for the unfaithfulness of his wife; but one Aristander, of Telmessus, considering how unusual it was to seal up anything that was empty, assured him the meaning of his dream was that the queen was with child of a boy, who would one day prove as stout and courageous as a lion. The birth of Alexander was thus clouded, some thinking that at best he was conceived out of wedlock and at worst a bastard, others accepting him as being of divine conception. So when Philip later married another woman some hoped loudly that by his second wife he would beget a lawful heir. On hearing this talk of “lawful” heir, Alexander threw a cup at the speaker, Attalus, and enquired of him whether he himself (Alexander) was a bastard. However soon his father was assassinated and at the time of his death, the nearest definition of an heir was still Alexander and he ascended to the throne. His mother later told Alexander of his divine conception, which meant that he would be invincible in battle, and the rest is history (Cf. Plutarch, *Alexander*, 75 AD).

The out-of-wedlock conception, the tradition of divine involvement, the bride’s dream and the husband’s complimenting dream, are indeed analogous in key respects to the story of Mary, Joseph and Jesus.

However, Mary, as we shall see further on, attracted early Egyptian Christian converts because of her likeness to their older Isis, vis-a-vis the two Great Mothers' similar love for and devotion to a persecuted son who later became great. Like Mary in relation to infant Jesus, very frequently Isis was depicted in carvings nursing her son, Horus. Other gods, like Tout, are sometimes shown presenting gifts to Isis in this her mother-and-child posture.²

The process of arriving at the popular image of mother-and-child, on the part of the ancient Egyptian artists, may not have demanded incredible feats of philosophy and wit—not that they lacked these, on the contrary, they were most handsomely endowed. But Mother being perceived as creator, it was natural to depict her in her ideal posture, holding one creature, her son who exemplified and represented all her power of creation (Cf. Gamble, 1927:147).

We should not lose sight, however, of the fact that, going by the ancient Egyptian calendar (as narrated by Herodotus Book II), Isis, Osiris, Horus and the jealous Set, “lived” on earth about 18,000 years before their later look-alike sets of cast of characters e.g. of: Olympias, Alexander and Philip; Mary, Jesus, Joseph, and the jealous Herod, came on the scene. We need to remember that Alexander was inspired by the Egyptian religion in line with his mother's teaching and advice and that it was to Amon and to the Egyptian priests that he turned to for the sealing of his deification as the Son of Amon, i.e., *Dionysos*, the “Son of God” (Cf. Bauval, 1999:102-103). We should equally not lose sight of the fact that early Christianity was controlled from Egypt by Egyptian Gnostic priests who were converting from the Isis faith and who would not part with Isis and her Holy Family completely (Cf. Bauval, 1999:97-100).

The most important thing to remember about the Gnostic preachers at this stage, is the fact that they found it easy and appropriate to allegorise, i.e. to invent, adopt, adapt, and then tell tales that suited a given moral at a given time considering the level of philosophical sophistication on the part of the audience. To those theologians, the historicity of the event did not matter; the exegetic value of the narrative outweighed all other considerations. The extent of the influence of those priests and their scribes upon the writing of the New Testament can therefore be gauged by studying closely the purely allegorical attributes, as opined in the quotation below, of the older Holy Family of Isis, Horus and Osiris.

“Osiris, Isis and Horus, comprise the divine trinity of father mother and son. Their story is purely allegorical and symbolic. What is known of them historically amounts to very little. Osiris was the greatest god of Egypt, son of Saturn, celestial fire, re-incarnation, etc. Isis is the Virgin Mother, and personified nature. She is described as the woman clothed with the Sun of the land of Khemi (Egypt). Together Isis and Horus form the

¹ Citing Paul Faure, *Alexander*, p. 391.

² Tout is her reputed teacher in medical matters (Armour, 1986:48).

first and original Black Madonna. Horus was the next to last in the line of divine sovereigns of Egypt. He is called the 'loved of heaven' and 'beloved of the Sun'. He is the subjugator of the world, being born from the womb of the world. Horus is also the substance of his father, that is, being related to death and time—the material manifestations. By him the world is judged by that which it contains... Isis was especially popular in her aspect as mother with child, the infant Horus, and both she and Horus were pictured with black colouring and Ethiopic features. Roman frescoes almost always show her priests to be Ethiopians and Roman legions carried her image and worship to the farthest reaches of savage Europe. When Christianity finally penetrated these regions, wherever the image of Isis holding the infant Horus was found she was turned into the Black Madonna with child. For more than a millennium and a half, these Black Madonnas have been the holiest shrines of Catholic Europe and even today, millions of Europeans bow down to worship an African goddess and her child" (Van Sertima, 1989:131, 141).



The above-quoted statement may evidently carry a tinge of African, or Black Nationalism—the editor of the journal being a black man. But if it is to be treated suspiciously on that account, the following several corroborating examples from white sources should help validate it if only for the reason that white authors under normal circumstances would deny black people their genuine stake in greater history, political or religious. Any concession by them, therefore, ought to be taken seriously because they would only concede when the evidence was too overwhelming to either gloss over or

PICTURE 20: A typical colossal Olmec stone head (some weigh 20 tons) with Negroid features, now in Jalapa Museum, Mexico. The helmet is similar to those that were used by ancient Egyptian soldiers. The Olmec must have constituted a minority whose African features were later bred out of recognisable existence. By some coincidence (?) the Olmec facial features strikingly resemble those of some Luo men, who are Nilotes. The Maasai call them *Olmeek* (sing.) or *Ilmeek* (pl.) and the Kipsigiis call them *Lemeek* (picture from Jairazbhoy, 1974).

ignore altogether. T.R. Glover is a prominent one among them. In his book *The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire* (1909:23), he says: "There is evidence to show that the

Madonna in Southern Italy is really Isis re-named. Isis, like the Madonna, was painted and sculptured with a child in her arms.”

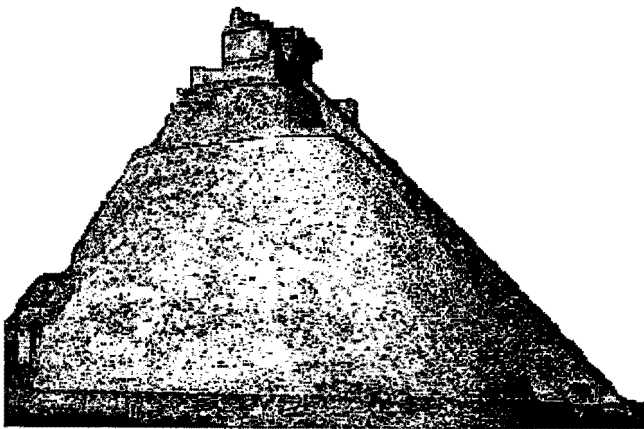
This Mother-and-child representation in art was more or less a universal favourite and its being associated with Egypt as the land of the original inspiration should owe it a great deal to the fact that the earliest and amplest evidence of it is found here. But the tendency to depict these divine characters as black people in the most part may, after all, actually confirm such an African origin. Indeed the above-cited Glover (1909:23) concedes that “Egyptian religion spread all over the world” and not just all over Europe. As reported by William Prescott, 1843, in his *Conquest of Mexico*, Book III, and cited by Garnier, the ancient Mexicans were also reached by African religious influence and “the features of the image of the god to whom they sacrificed were black, indicating its Cushite origin” (Garnier, 1904:140).

It is, therefore, of no great coincidence that it was from Mexico that the Filipinos obtained their famed figure of the “Black Nazarene” in the 17th century AD. The Black Nazarene is a life-size image of Jesus, portrayed as a black man—indeed African in all respects—carrying the cross on his shoulder. During the Feast of the Black Nazarene, every 9th of January, male devotees in their hundred thousands carry the life-size Black Nazarene in a procession around the Quiapo area after a mass. During the procession, the believers strive to touch the Nazarene, for it is believed that a simple touch from the statue will cause miraculous effects such as cure of disease from self or from a relative. But the crowd is always too large and crashes that actually lead to some deaths during this procession are not uncommon. However the belief that one can obtain equal blessing by touching the long rope that is tied to the Black Nazarene and pulled behind it, enables thousands more to attain their desire at diminished risk to life. Only the strongest can reach the actual figure, but still at a great risk to life (Cf. Manila Bulletin, January 9th 1997, CNN, January 10th 2000).

This annual procession, of course, is only reminiscent, if it is not an unwitting re-enactment of the great annual processions of Isis and Serapis. Serapis, as we have pointed out, was a fusion of Osiris and Hapi, the latter being the “god” of the Nile to the Egyptians. We saw earlier in this section that after his death, Osiris incarnated in the sacred bull Hapi. The Serapis processions took place in Egypt and later in Rome and throughout the latter’s entire Empire that covered Europe—in fact including Britain where the Isis movement reached as far north as York—and in its possessions in western Asia where Isis had converts (Cf. Spence, 1915:287). During this event, the image, or a representative object, of the “Black Goddess”, was carried shoulder high by the

priests. A vivid description of the huge processions of the ancient worshippers of Isis was left behind by Apuleius of the 2nd century AD in his *Metamorphoses* (XI.11).

The Black Nazarene of the Philippines and the beliefs and events surrounding it, therefore, act as a reminder to us of what scholars believe was the metamorphosing of Osiris into Jesus, if not of a fusing between the two by the influential Egyptian Gnostic priests as, probably, no other modern event does. A number of eminent scholars, e.g. Budge, Garnier, Gamble and Bauval, who are extensively quoted in this subsection, hold fast this opinion that Osiris was the prototype of Jesus while Isis was the prototype of His mother Mary. Both prototypes were reportedly noted for



PICTURE 21: The Pyramid of the Magician, in the ruined Mayan city of Uxmal, Mexico, has an elliptical shape rather like the Deng Kur Pyramid of Southern Sudan, Picture 11. Viewed together with the colossal Olmec stone head, Picture 20, this monument supports the argument that the ancient Egyptians introduced their civilisation to Central America as postulated notably by Jairazbhoy (1974, 1981)—*picture adapted from OIE, 1997.*

their darkness of skin pigmentation, i.e., like Cheemarus, who is the Kalenjiin's Asiis at the mythical level, they were emphatically darker than the general standard of the African populations that they sprang from.

It is important too, for the ongoing argument, to note that neither the Mexicans, who wrought the Black Nazarene, nor the Filipinos, who obtained it from them, are black people. We touch on the question of human tendency to make God in own image at the end of this chapter, where, among others, we make

note of the view held notably by the world-famous palaeontologist, Dr Richard Leakey (1983:37,38), that the Homo Sapiens habitually invents God in his own image. Going by this view, the image of the Black Nazarene ought to lead us back to a black population as the providers of the original artistic impetus. The "God-in-own-image theory" definitely excludes the indigenous Mexicans as the original inventors of the divine figure of which the Black Nazarene only ought to be a latter-day inspiration.

It is clearly evident, however, that the Black Nazarene, which, as we have said, was carved in Mexico, was the work of newly converted Mexican Christians. Although the immediate stimulus may have been the moving story of the suffering of and the soteriological essence of

Jesus, their pre-Christian conception of Deity in the form of a black anthropomorphic being, as reported by Prescott one and a half centuries ago (Cf. Garnier, 1904:140), appears to have nevertheless suggested to them what they understood to be the appropriate colour for their Nazarene.

That the ancient Egyptians were able to reach Mexico with their idea of Deity, which they then passed on to the ancient indigenous Mexicans, may be confirmed by a corroborating account from the neighbouring continent of South America. The Mexicans' relatives, 3000 or so Kilometres to the South, across the Pacific Ocean, the Inca of Peru, like the ancient Egyptians in relation to their Pharaohs, regarded their rulers as the



PICTURE 22: Egyptian bass-relief heads from Tanis thought to date to the time of Rameses Pharaohs, i.e. from the same period as the Olmec heads of Mexico, with which it may be compared—especially as to the leather helmets. The huge slab of stone into which these heads are carved is placed next to the entrance into the Cairo Museum, Egypt (Picture by author, Cf. Jairazbhoy, 1974:18-19).

children of the Sun. According to the American historian, William Prescott (1796 – 1859 AD), their kings were also embalmed and their bodies placed in the great temple of Cuzco. “A yet more striking evidence of their connection with Egypt was their name for the Sun, namely, “*Ra*,” while they called the great festival of the Sun *Rami*” (Garnier, 1904:143).

The more recent works of Jairazbhoy are emphatic of the fact that the Aztec, who dominated Mexico until the conquest by Cortes in 1519 AD, and the Maya of Yucatan and Central America, whose civilisation flourished 4th to 8th centuries AD; are both descended from the Olmec. In fact many later Mesoamerican civilizations trace their ultimate ancestry to the Olmec. The Olmec are in turn thought to be the descendants of ancient Egyptians who burst in on the Mexican Gulf about 1200 BC (Cf. Jairazbhoy, 1974:7). In his series on this topic, Jairazbhoy provides ample photographic evidence and arguments to support his stand to the effect that what we see as colossal relics of ancient indigenous American civilisation were improvements by them on ancient Egyptian people's imports into America. The arrival of the Egyptians here is dated to the time of Rameses III, around 1200 BC, although others, e.g. Professor Michael Coe, believe the arrival of the Egyptians to have been earlier, in about mid 15th century BC, which era belonged to the 18th Dynasty Pharaohs of the likes of Tuthmosis, Akhenaton, Hatshepsut and Tutankhamun

(Cf. Jairazbhoy, 1974:16).¹ However, the Olmec culture is thought to have flourished 12th to 2nd centuries BC (Cf. Stierlin, 1984:6) and Jairazbhoy's estimated date of arrival to the time of Rameses III may yet be closer to the mark.

The celebrated Negroid portraits of the Olmec people which are carved in stone, and which are described by Stierlin (1984:6) as follows: "The pug nose, thick lips, slit eyes and puffy face, are characteristic of all Olmec sculptures", go to confirm the African origin of the Olmec and from that fact we gain support for our argument regarding the Mexicans' original inspiration that led to their production of the Black Nazarene.

Examples of other Madonnas with child follow and soon we will provide authorities that connect them all to an African origin and to the story of Jesus through the said proselytised Egyptian priests of the 1st century AD. The feminine counterpart of Buddha, Kwanyin, was also represented with a child in her arms. And in China, *Shing Mao*, the "Holy Mother", who is probably a form of Kwanyin, is represented in the same way, and Garnier (1904:112) is therefore able to remark as follows:

"Now this peculiar mode of representing the goddess and her son was common throughout paganism. In Egypt, she was represented as Isis with the child Osiris or Horus in her arms. In India, as Isa and Iswara. In Asia, as Cybele and Deoios. In Rome, as Fortuna and the boy Jupiter. In Greece as Ceres with a babe at her breast, or as Irene with the boy Plutus."

Garnier further contends that Isis of Egypt appears in India as the Hindu *Isi* and that her husband according to the Egyptian legends, Osiris, resurfaces there as Iswara. Indeed the names sound close and, what more, they maintain the same relationship of wife and husband. However, *Isi* and *Iswara* sometimes play mother and son roles when *Iswara* plays his role that corresponds to the reincarnation of Osiris as Horus. In India, therefore, Horus and Osiris appear as one, just as many scholars think they appear in Jesus of Palestine. In *Iswara*, as in Jesus, therefore, we see the continuation of the characters of both Osiris and Horus in one individual (Cf. Garnier, 1904:90).

It so happens that, except for the relatively more recent portrayal of Jesus, all these divine figures are portrayed as black people. The universality of the black pigmentation with respect to the divine personages of the ancient world is not lost to Eliza Gamble, 1927, who has a nose for the unpublicised third angle of things. She has, for instance, taken note of the significance of the original scene of "temptation" in the cave temple of India where the woman is depicted not as the tempter but as the Saviour Goddess. She is trampling on the serpent and the tempter here is the

¹ Professor Michael Coe gave his opinion directly to Jairazbhoy in a personal communication.

man and not the woman of biblical Genesis infamy. Gamble notes that the woman Goddess being so depicted is black but in the same breath observes that

“This image, although black, or dark-skinned, had long hair, and hence was not a Negress.¹ The most ancient statue of Ceres was black, and Pausanias says that at a place called Melangea in Arcadia there was a black Venus. In the Netherlands only a few years ago, was a church dedicated to a black goddess” (Gamble, 1927:169).

As we have pointed out, the most ancient evidence of such representation of Deity belongs to the Africans. It received its best and still-evident expression in ancient Egypt, and the fact that it was so widespread, is testimony to the influence of that Egypt, the extent of its political power as well as of its antiquity. This fact even the western writers, who almost invariably develop cold feet when tracks of credit threaten to lead back to black Africa, admit, beginning from the above-mentioned Pausanias, i.e. if we ignore the powerful evidence of Herodotus, 6-700 years his senior. Pausanias, the Greek travel writer, also mentioned in his book, *Description of Greece*, 2nd century AD, the statue of Isis in Greece, describing it as the “Black Demeter (Greek Isis) at Phigalea—a curious enough image she had been, though (by then) destroyed.”²

One of the non-black sources, Gamble, who is now familiar, goes farther than most to admit this truth, citing general agreement as to this fact with many of her colleagues. Beside this, she traces the genesis of it all to Africa South of Egypt.

“It is thought by various writers that the worship of the black virgin and child found its way to Italy from Egypt... but that this idea... the worship of the black virgin and child... constituted the conception of Deity among the Ethiopian or early Cushite race, the people who doubtless carried civilisation to Egypt, India and Chaldea, is quite probable” (Gamble, 1927:174, 176).

About the ancient Egyptian prototype of the black Goddess, Abbe Emile Amelineau (1850-1916), a thorough French student of ancient Egypt, says:

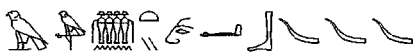
“From various Egyptian legends, I have been able to conclude that the populations settled in the Nile Valley were Negroes, since the goddess Isis was said to have been a reddish-black woman. In other words, as I have explained, her complexion is *cafe au lait* (coffee with milk), the same as that of certain other blacks whose skin seems to cast metallic reflections of copper” (Diop, 1955:76).

¹ Gamble here forgets that the ancients used wigs, besides, even now, black women of the type called Negro by western anthropologists, can tend their hair, with oils, soils and herbs, to waist-length. They can also achieve the same result by interweaving their hair with long thin fibres using a technique that was abandoned earlier in the 20th century by Kalenjin men but which was kept alive by the Maasai men up to our own time. African women have since reclaimed the technique and popularised it worldwide.

² Pausanias VIII, 42, 11; Cf. Glover, 1909:223. Also see e.g. Gamble, 1927:169, 174 and van Sertima, 1989:131, 411.

The metamorphosing by Isis into Mary, or her being fused with Mary, could be explained by the very name itself “Mary”. We have seen that Isis was called


“Myrionymus, or goddess with 10,000 names. She is the Persian Mythras, who is the same as Buddha, Minerva, Venus and all the rest... (In Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*, Isis is made to acknowledge her true name and, by deduction, her original home as follows) The Egyptians worship me with proper ceremonies and call me by my true name, Queen Isis” (Apuleius’ *Metamorphosis* XI, 5, Cf. Gamble, 1927:171).

Horus, the son of Isis, was the “god” of the sky. His Egyptian name was *Horr*, although, as we have pointed out, another ancient Egyptian pronunciation of this name may have been *Iila* (also possibly *Hila*). The Greeks rendered whatever form was in place as Horos and the Romans popularised it as Horus. The Kalenjiin do not remember *Horr* the sky “god” of Egypt, if that indeed was the true rendering of this name. But the Kalenjiin name for the rainbow, *chepkuinaaporr* (*chep-kuino-ap-orr*), literally, “it of the horns of (*H*)orr”, ties up neatly with one attribute of Horus for, indeed, we see Horus being referred to as  “the Prominent one of Horns” (Gardiner, 1931:16) in the papyrus records that preserve for us the old narrative of the duel for the Egyptian throne between Horus and Set.

However, on this issue of horns, J.M. Robertson links Osiris (as “Dionysos”) with Moses of the Bible rather than with Horus although, in the final analysis, Horus was held to be an incarnation of Osiris. Understandably, making strict distinction between Osiris and Horus is sometimes arduous. According to Robertson, therefore, “in the etymological explanation of the horns of Moses (e.g. in Exodus 27, 29, 30, 37, and 38) lies a possible clue to the Horns of Dionysos... as Moses’ horns are certainly solar” (1910:99). However, in the narrative of the infant Moses, who was hidden in the marshes of the Nile and set afloat in the basket of bulrushes, Moses duplicates Horus rather than Osiris as Robertson (Cf. 1910:99) implies. In this Moses’ duplication of Horus, therefore, we see the continuation of Horus who is otherwise “the prominent one of Horns.”

The conceptual sacredness of horns that was characteristic of the ancient Egyptian religion continued into Judaism by way of the altar that was surmounted by four horns that Moses redesigned certainly from ancient Egyptian prototypes with which he was familiar. Horns thereafter play a sacred role in 1 Kings 22:11; 2 Chronicles 18-10; in several instances in Psalms; in Jeremiah; in Ezekiel 43:15; in Zechariah 1:19, 1:21; in Leviticus 4:34 and, in Habakkuk 3:4, we hear of the two horns that come out of God’s hand.

To pursue further what remained of Horus in the Kalenjiin language, we note that the colour of the sky in Kalenjiin is *oruus*, which is closer to the Roman version of *Horr*, Horus. It may also be of interest to note that ash, which is grey in colour, is called *orr-EEK*. May be the Myoot noticed that the East African sky was grey as often as it was blue—hence the narrow distinction allowed between the colour “grey” and the colour “sky blue/grey blue”, *orr* and *oruus* or *aruus*.



As for Set, the diabolical brother of Isis, the absolutely monotheistic Kalenjiin do not, of course, remember him as a deity. But he remains in Kalenjiin vocabulary more or less within context. *Seseet* is the Kalenjiin word for “the dog” and “the wild dog”, or “the wolf”, is called *suiyoot*. The ancient Egyptians depicted Set as a sort of hunting dog. The hieroglyphic representation  which appears to read *STSH* or *SSHT* is closer to the Kalenjiin *seseet* than it is to the well-known Egyptologists’ transcription, *Set*.

Hennings, the colonial district officer who served among the Tugen, Keiyo and the Marakwet, between the two “world” wars, picked Set as an example of the Kalenjiin people’s legacy *shared* with ancient Egypt. Hennings seems to have been a keen fun of Huntingford who, rather than accept the Kalenjiin people’s own version that they came from *Misiri*, went around it by opining that the Kalenjiin and the ancient Egyptians merely shared parents!¹

Hennings wrote as follows about the Kalenjiin ancestry:

“Far back in time, the experts say, their ancestors on the Hamitic side may have come from the same origin as the ancient Egyptians, for their language stems from a similar root; for instance, some have seen in their word for ‘dog’, ‘*seseet*’, the name of Set, the dog-headed God of Darkness of the Pharaohs” (Hennings, 1951:11).

Set, as we see above, was an evil “god” in Egypt. The more common Kipsigiis word for “dog”, *ng’ook-to*, either yields, or is itself from *ng’oog-is*, “sin”, and “evil”. All the same, one of the four Egyptian military regiments was named *Set*, and, therefore, Set was not all negative. Although none of the four established regiments of the Kipsigiis, or those of any other Kalenjiin sub-nation, was named *Set*, “to march to war” against foreigners in the Kalenjiin language, nevertheless, was to *seet*. The most revealing connection between this notion and the ancient Egyptian Set is in the fact that this “god” was regarded by the Egyptians as the “god” of the frontiers, a gracious and kind “god” who although evil and treacherous at times, “assists in the conquest of foreign lands...

¹Gardiner *ibid.*, p. 460. The symbols  which are also traditionally transcribed “set” may actually have read *seseet* as the vegetation symbol  may have referred to *suswoot*, “grass” or *sooswoot*, a type of palm assigned the botanical names *Phoenix reclinata* and *Hyphaene thebaica* by Hollis (*ibid.*, p. 316). These Kalenjiin names correspond to the names for more or less the same plants in ancient Egyptian.

However, when the foreigners conquer Egypt the cult of Seth declines: identified with alien despots, he is turned into a demon" (Velde, 1967:1-26—Baldick, 1997:48).

That contradictory view of Set is extended to his symbol, the dog, in Kalenjinland where the dog, *seseet*, is good for hunting, *ke-seet logeet*, but outside hunting it is considered the anchor of sin, hence its other name *ng'ookto*. It is notably the Kipsigiis who directly associated the dog with evil, sin and selfishness by referring to it as *ng'ookto*, a word whose root, *ng'ook-*, meant all those. Although this may have been the case, the dog to the Kipsigiis still played a certain mystic role apart from the normal dog's roles of companionship, hunting, herding and guarding. So much so that Orchardson is able to note and remark as follows: "A one-day *kireet* (a compulsory abstention from work) is observed for the death of a dog, a remarkable custom in view of the Kipsigiis dislike of this animal." Orchardson adds that the birth of a stillborn child, or the strangling of the baby of a pre-initiation mother, in contrast, was marked with a two-day *kireet* while the death of other humans were marked with a *kireet* on the first two days and on the fourth, work being permissible on the third. The implication of this is that dogs were considered members of the families to which they belonged and, by extension, members of the community at large" (Cf. 1961:27, 104).

And as far as the Pokoot were concerned, according to M.W. Beech (1911:26), the colonial officer who was the first to publish a book on the Pokoot,

"... If a man beats a dog he will become poor and his stock will die. For the old men say 'in the sight of God the dog has no sins; all he does is to walk about from house to house and pick up bones and other refuse'... a dog if beaten is supposed in his yelping to give utterance to the following: *Se-par-ana'kuli k-a-m-ne nyengmwurye? Ato-ka-par kuli ko-ros Asis*, "why beat me for nothing—have I eaten anything of yours? If I am beaten for nothing Asis look to it".

The offending Pokoot man, upon hearing this complaint, from the dog that he has just assaulted, will immediately slaughter a bullock, and then invite all the dogs in the neighbourhood to eat it all up. That way he avoids disaster (Cf. Beech, 1911:26).

If the dog to the Egyptians represented Set, the first murderer, also famous for other evil acts, then the Pokoot's strong prohibition against beating, let alone killing *seseet*, "a dog", can be understood with the following Hebrew parallel in mind. That according to the Bible, God ruled that anyone who killed Cain, the first biblical murderer, would suffer vengeance seven times over, Gen. 4:15. And by some irony the Latin name for "dog" is *caninus* from where comes the English word canine. How so close to Cain!

¹See Chapter 4.

Isis, before her ascension to heaven, played the ultimate role model as wife and mother *par excellence*. As mother, she took care of her son Horus without a father to support her. As we see, above, Horus' father, Osiris, had been slain by Set, who then took the throne of Egypt by force. Horus was, however, well looked after by Isis and he grew into a strong man, later defeating Set in very eventful direct as well as proxy wars.

While Osiris, as king, taught the people agriculture, introducing agricultural engineering, the ox-plough included, and all other means to sound survival and prosperity, Isis, as wife, was such a great complement to him. She played the good assistant, teaching the people how to grind the corn, cook and make all sorts of products out of the corn, how to spin flax and weave cloth. She also taught men the art of curing disease and, by instituting marriage, accustomed them to domestic life.¹ The population of Egypt grew in leaps and bounds as a direct result of the improved diet, quantities of foodstuff, and orderly family life. We gather this fact of population increase from reading Tacitus P. Cornelius' attempt at explaining one theory—which he discredits—regarding the origin of the Jews of Palestine. He wrote as follows in his *Histories*, around 70 AD: "Others assert that in the reign of Isis the overflowing population of Egypt, led by Hierosolymus and Judas, discharged itself into the neighbouring countries" (Tacitus, 70 AD, Book V).²

Osiris left the country to travel through the world with a triumphant but peaceful army, to teach the gently subdued overseas subjects viticulture and agriculture in general. He thus heralded the universal aspect of Deity as benefactor of the human race, as educator and inventor of the amenities of life and source of survival. In his absence Isis was left the effective deputy at home (Cf. Turcan, 1986:81).

Osir, who is more famous as Osiris—the latter being the Greek rendering—was known as the "god" of resurrection and of the dead. Egyptian iconography portrayed him in pitch black as is well-known and this fact the *New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology* (1968:16) acknowledges as follows: "Osiris was handsome of countenance, dark-skinned and taller than all men."

The account of Plutarch, who describes Osiris' birth in terms akin to those that biblical writers applied to the circumstances of Jesus' birth (see further below), enhances and completes for us the above picture of Osiris. He says that Osiris, on his missionary journeys all over the

¹ Cf. *New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology*, 1968:18.

² Cornelius here was trying to explain a theory, which he dismisses anyway, linking the name Jew or Judea to the man, Judas that he mentions. The other leader of the Jews, who left Egypt, according to this theory, Hierosolymus, is reputed to be the eponymous founder of the Solymi nation of Hierosolyma, a distinguished people who appear in Homer's poems (Cf. Cornelius, 70 AD, Book V).

world, where he taught agriculture as well as religion, found converts and followers without as much as a fight. "So gentle and good was he (Osiris), and so pleasant were his methods of instilling knowledge into the minds of the barbarians (non-Egyptians), that they worshipped the very ground whereon he trod" (Spence, 1915:66).

Reading what the ancient Egyptians wrote about Osiris many thousand years before Jesus was born, reminds one of certain chapters of the New Testament. Scholars have, for instance, acknowledged the phenomenological parallelism between the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the antecedent event of the resurrection of Osiris. It is to be borne in mind that during the time Jesus was born, the people of the Roman Empire, of which Palestine was part, were celebrating and marvelling at the miraculous bodily resurrection of Osiris. The phenomenological parallelism between the resurrection of Jesus and that of Osiris, does not end at the point of physical reappearance but extends to the immediate disappearance thereafter, as noted by Brandon (1971:537), "Christ, like Osiris, did not resume his earthly life; he ascended to heaven."

The idea of resurrection is such a patently indigenous African concept that it is to be found in various localities all the way across the continent down to the southern tip of Africa where the Khoisan people recognise the resurrecting mythical hero Heitsi Eibib

"believed to have lived on earth and to have died and risen again many times, and tales of his wonderful deeds were widely narrated. All the actions ascribed to him were those of a man, but one endowed with supernatural power. His 'graves', large mounds of stone, are found all over the country, and no Hottentot will pass one without adding to it a stone or a branch, sometimes also muttering a prayer for good luck in hunting" (Seligman, 1966:25).

On their part, the Yoruba of West Africa honour annually Engungun, who is believed to have arisen from the dead. Every June he is celebrated in an "All Souls" festival that lasts seven days (Canney, 1911:140).


The strictly monotheistic Kalenjiin—of the East African context—do not remember a deity called Osiris, or *Osir*, as the ancient Egyptians called that "god". A saint, or a resurrecting deity, does not find a place in Kalenjiin mythology. But there is one very common Kalenjiin word which, depending on the inflexion added to it, can mean all the following and more: "to die", "going yonder", "overcoming", "passing", "jumping over (to the other side)", "awake from sleep", etc. That word in its root form is *siir*. Adding the said inflexions to this basic form we get: *siir-ten*, imp. "die", "pass" etc.; *o-siir-ten*, imp. "you (pl.) pass, cross over" etc.; *ke-siir-to* infin. "to die", "to pass", "to go yonder", also *ka-go-siir-to*, "it/he/she has died", or "it/she/he has passed by", or "crossed over"; *siir-un*, "awake from sleep". The last meaning may relate to Osiris' resurrection although it may all be within the collective subconscious. This becomes

obvious when we consider that *ng'eet-un*, "arise and come forth" from circumcision initiation, which is likened to temporary death (see Chapter 13) in an Osirian manner, and *siir-un*, have the same meaning at the root level in one important context: *siir* and *ng'eet*, "awake", "get up".

Indeed the similarity in fate as it relates to the two great religious personages, Osiris and Jesus, may seem to end with the physical resurrection and subsequent ascension, but it does not begin from there. It was replicated in the events of the moments of their respective births as we alluded to before. Plutarch preserved for us the account of Osiris' birth:

"When Osiris was born there were many signs and wonders. A great voice from heaven was heard crying, 'The Lord of All comes forth into the light!' A woman drawing water at the well was suddenly seized with the spirit of prophecy and cried aloud, 'Osiris the King is born.' And in Thebes a certain man called Pamytes heard a voice coming from the temple of Ra which bade him proclaim the birth of Egypt's greatest king: Osiris the saviour of mankind."¹

Osiris in death bears even greater semblance to Jesus, for when he descended to Hades upon his death, "There he became the King of the Dead, welcoming all those whom the Judges of the Dead found worthy to enter his kingdom, and adding them to his army of the blessed with whom he would return to reign on earth after the last great battle with Set" (Green, 1967:36).

Osiris, who, as we have seen, is called "the saviour of mankind", had thus found a soteriological place in the life and the hopes of the common people akin to no other "god's", perhaps up until the successful globalisation of Jesus' ministry. Osiris was the original "Saviour God",  *Suter*,¹ or, in Greek, Σωτηρ (*sotir*), "saviour", from which word we get the theologians' technical term "soteriology", meaning "salvation". Osiris gave his devotees the hope of an eternally happy life in another world ruled over by a just and good king. Besides "The royal destiny of Osiris and his triumph over death" (Breasted, 1912:290), had rapidly disseminated among the people the belief that their destiny was similar before Osiris as that of the king. The king, in the ages when Ra reigned unaided by Osiris, had monopolised entry to celestial heaven whereupon his body was conjoined with that of his father, Ra, to become one and to the exclusion of the masses. This theology of exclusion had kept out the common folk who were not from the line of descent from Ra and, for this reason; they were forever materially and spiritually suppliant to the Pharaoh who, to them, was but Ra in a transitory human form while on earth. The human character, suffering and death of Osiris changed all that. It brought a sense of identification and

¹ Plutarch through S. Squire's *Plutarch's Treatise of Isis and Osiris*, Cambridge 1744:15, cited by Budge 1904:186. Also Cf. Roger Lancelyn Green (1967:25).

belonging closer to the masses. The Osirian movement was, therefore, as much a social revolution as it was spiritual where the masses brushed shoulders in the Judgement Hall of Osiris with their king as equal penitents.

While the Osirian destiny was open to all individuals, through confession and through trial in the Hall of Judgement, they still had to prove themselves morally acceptable to him (Cf. Breasted, 1912:290, 307). Equality for all before the Maker was central to the success of the Osirian movement and is still a central pillar of and gem of attraction to its successor, Christianity.

Further resemblance between Osiris, Horus and Jesus can be demonstrated graphically by use of the calendar. The ancient Egyptians counted 360 days for the year and the additional ("superadded") five days that followed, were extra days that represented birthdays of some Egyptian "gods" (Budge, 1904:186). The additional five days effectively brought up the year to 365 days "although there was clearly a tendency to regard the year as of only 360 days" (Gardiner, 1927:203). The first of the "gods" to be born during the "superadded" or epagomenal period of 5 days was Osiris. The second was Horus, third was Set, fourth was Isis and fifth came Nephthys (Budge 1904:186). The new Egyptian year would then begin the day after Nephthys's birthday.

The Egyptians celebrated four of the five additional days. The third day, which coincided with December 28th, this being the day Set, the "god" of evil, was born; was "regarded by the king as inauspicious, and consequently they neither transacted any business in it, or even suffered themselves to take any refreshment until evening" (Budge, 1904:187).

This day which coincides with December the 28th and which the ancient Egyptians set aside to loathe because it was considered the evil deity, Set's birthday; went to Europe intact along with the dying-and-resurrecting saviour concept as we shall see. And when Christianity arrived and Jesus had fully assumed the attributes of both Osiris and Horus, it became natural for the character of Set to be assumed by King Herod, the king of the Jews. Set, when he was king of Egypt, had hunted and wanted to kill the infant Horus after killing Osiris, Horus' father. In assuming these temperamental properties of murderous jealousy, King Herod, of the Christian allegory, seeks to kill Jesus by ordering the killing of all the infant boys. Therefore, Herod and the murdering of the infants are associated with December the 28th, the day called "Holy Innocents' Day" or "Bairns' Day". It "commemorates Herod's slaughter of infant boys under the age of two.

¹ B.Dict. 653 b. The Kalenjiin *sor*, "save" or *sor-uniindet* "the saviour" and the Coptic *Gop* (*sor*), "save" show unmistakable affinity to the ancient Egyptian word.

(Since pre-Christian times European folk) tradition considers Bairn's Day by far the unluckiest day of the year, when no work should be started" (Pennick, 1992:142).

The fact that Herod plays the part of Set here and that Jesus plays that of Osiris and Horus, including as to their birthdays and even to the loathing of and the assigning of the reported evil work of Herod to a day that coincides with the birthday of Set, confirms the extent of the influence of the older religion of Egypt on Christianity at the latter's inception. This illustrates most forcefully the allegorical essence of these stories to say nothing of the fact that one is thus partly proven to be the very foundation of the other.

Another fact of important note here is that the Christian Christmas day, 25th of December, during a Gregorian (western) calendar leap year falls exactly on the last day of the ancient Egyptian year (see the hypothetical 10-day week calendar below).¹

This also is the approximate day of the winter solstice, which was equally recognised as sacred in “pagan” Europe. It is the approximate day on which, viewing from the Northern Hemisphere, the sun has reached its lowest ebb and is above the southern horizon for the shortest period in the year, resulting in the shortest day that is preceded and followed by the two longest nights. At this time, viewing from the northern hemisphere, the sun rises and sets at its most southerly points, and it is at its lowest elevation at midday compared to its elevation at midday on other days. To the northerners then, this day of the winter solstice thus has the least sunlight. But it at the same time marks the welcome end of the descent of the sun and the beginning of its ascendance, heading to the most desirable season when it hits the summer solstice six months later.

It was, therefore, the day of the “rebirth” of the sun’s power. The Anglo-Saxons, Germans included, as the Roman conqueror, Julius Cæsar, reported during the 1st century BC, celebrated the day, which they called Yule Day, “Child’s Day” (Cf. Garnier, 1904:135). The Romans were later to mark the day, 25th December, as ordered by the Roman Emperor Aurelian in 274 AD, with the festival of *Sol Invictus*, the “Undefeated Sun” or *Natalis invicti Solis* “the birthday of the unconquered sun”. It is important to note that this was long before the Roman Empire had become Christian, so this choice was not at all influenced by Christianity (Cf. Fuller, GME 1993, Pennick, 1992:19).²

The European Yule (Yuletide) and *Sol Invictus* days, ought to have fallen on the natural winter solstice day of 20/21 December. However, to the simple human eye, uninfluenced by complicated astrological calculations, the sun’s determination to return became clear on the day of 25th December, which was by this reason honoured with a celebration. As we have seen, the later Romans assigned this day to mark the onset of celebrations of *Saturnalia*, a time of intense merrymaking.

¹ The ancient Egyptian calendar here which was ushered in by the “birth” of the new sun and the “gods”, is different from the Graeco-Egyptian calendar of Alexandria whose New Year’s Day, i.e. 1st of Thoth, coincided with August 30th (Cf. Pennick, 1992:102).

² Although to Aurelian the immediate *Sol Invictus* impetus may have been a Syrian “god” of the same description (Fuller, 1993), it ought to be borne in mind that Syria itself had been a dominion of Egypt for long periods centuries before. During that time, Syrians may have adopted elements of Egyptian religion and its calendar of festivities. This assumption is based on that ancient colonial fact as well as antecedence of record, i.e. who was, evidently, and on the basis of extant record; the first to write about such religious observances with regard to their own community?

The fixing of *Sol Invictus* day and, subsequently, Christmas day at 25th December, clearly owed much to Egyptian influence because the first birthday of the “gods” of Egypt—the most important—fell on this day. Since the record of Egyptian observance is manifestly much older, little doubt is left as to which one was the antecedent and, therefore, the prototype.

The ancient Egyptian Horus/Osiris birthday of 25th of December was recognised by Rome for the feast of Jesus’ nativity (Christmas) around 336 AD (Cf. Talley, 1989:154, 237). This only meant the renaming and rededication of the day of *Sol Invictus*, which, as we have seen, was decreed by Emperor Aurelian in 274 AD. Within this context, Pennick (1992:20, 133) lists the following as examples of “sun-sons” whose birthdays were marked around the winter solstice day, calling the day

“the birth(day) of many solar saviours and dying gods... All these deities were given similar titles: the Light of the World, Sun of Righteousness, and Saviour: Horus, Helios, Dionysus, Adonis, Balder, Frey, Attis, Syrian Baal, Mithras, and Jesus... The festival of Christmas is a wonderful amalgam of many religious traditions, ancient and modern, Pagan, Zoroastrian, Jewish, Mithraic, and Christian.”

Here Pennick has left out Sakya Muni who is worshipped in much of Asia as Buddha. According to Colonel Garnier (1904:107), “All the pagan gods were identified with the Sun, which was regarded as the Great Father, the generator of all life, while the goddess, was the earth, or matter, the passive source of generation.” Hence, he says, it was fabled of Sakya Muni, after he had been worshipped as Buddha, that the sun in the form of a white elephant (the particular symbol of the sun) entered into Sakya Muni’s mother’s side, and the result was the birth of Sakya Muni. “Hence also his birthday was said to be on December 25th, the time of the winter solstice, when the sun first begins to regain its power” (Garnier, 1904:108).¹

The Anglo-Saxon Yuletide festivities that we have referred to began on 25th December and ran for 12 days from that date. The 12th day coincided with January 6th, which was the old Christmas day (festival of nativity) of Jerusalem Christians, but which was celebrated in early Christian Egypt as the day of Christ’s baptism. Now it is celebrated by all Christians as the Day of Epiphany, marking the baptism of Jesus in the Eastern Church but commemorating the visit of the magi in the Western Church. It curiously coincides with the day of clearing up after the festive season among the Anglo-Saxons of “pagan” times (Cf. Fuller, GME 1993, Pennick, 1992:30).

¹ However, in the ancient Egyptians’ Isis and Nut, and in the Kalenjiin’s Asiis, the sun, as Deity or symbol of Deity, was assigned the female gender. Generally the Egyptians regarded the sky, Nut, to be female while the earth, Geb, was male.

10.1.1 *The Respective Trinities and implied Dualities of Isis and Asiiis*

Every major ancient Egyptian deity headed a trinity, as we have seen under the stories of the major deities that have already been discussed, Ptah and Amon-Ra. Isis too had her divine trinity which comprised of herself, Osiris and Horus (the author's view is at variance with this traditional Egyptologists' arrangement—see below).

Some historians and other thinkers now believe that the Holy Trinity of the New Testament, as implied in Matthew 28:19, "Having gone, then, disciple all the nations, (baptising them to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit)", and later formally incorporated through a synodal decree, represents a carryover of the Trinitarian aspect of ancient Egyptian theology. It is notable that the Old Testament does not feature a divine trinity of any sort. This should not come as a surprise considering that the Christian movement, just like many other disciplines in the fields of culture and knowledge, was moulded in and controlled during its formative stage from Egypt (see Fr Malaty, 1987:28). It so happened that its nursery was an Egypt that was in the process of shifting gradually from Hellenistic to Roman socio-cultural and political subjugation. However, such subjugation did not make much difference culturally-speaking because, and this is significant, most of the subjects in all Roman dominions had adopted the Egyptian religion of Isis and, at least to that extent, were culturally Egyptianised. The first Christian clerics anywhere in the Roman Empire, therefore, were mostly men who were converting from the religion of Isis. These early Christianised and Christianising former theologians of Isis, most of whom were indigenous, mixed-race Egyptians and Egyptianised Greeks, continued exerting influence on the nascent Christian movement even up to the first three or four centuries after Jesus.

We have detailed accounts of the said influence written by scholars of all shades of opinion as well as from all shades, literally speaking. One of them, Beatrice Lumpkin (1989:416), writes:

"In science, too, there were many Egyptian 'firsts' including the first calendar, sun dial, water clock and steam engine, a 365-day year and 24-hour day, and the beginning of medicine as a science. The Egyptians were the teachers of the ancient Greeks. Little wonder, then, that the greatest centre of 'Hellenistic' science was in Egypt, at Alexandria, at a time when the population was native Egyptian and a few Greeks had immigrated to that great city...¹ Western literature, architecture, religion and ethics were also greatly influenced by those of Egypt. In religion, the story of Moses as a baby in the bulrushes is a close analogue of the earlier Egyptian Horus story (Isis hid Horus in a basket among the reeds of the Nile). The Christian trinity was a later import from Egypt and is not found in the Old Testament."

¹quoting George Sarton's *A History of Science*, Cambridge: Harvard, 1959, p. ix.

One of the early Christian fathers that have been credited with adapting the African concept of trinity, as a Christian doctrine, was Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullian (c. AD 160-240). He was a citizen of Carthage, North Africa, and is reputed to be the first Latin-speaking Christian writer who had a considerable influence on the development of Christian doctrine. He was a pendulum of an extremist who severely “attacked Gnosticism, (also attacked Judaism, Catholic Christianity before converting, and those he called pagans after he had converted). He contributed to the formulation of a doctrine of the Trinity, urged a rigorous asceticism, and believed that only martyrs were assured of salvation” (OIE 1997/4).

It is, therefore, clear that some people took the Holy Trinity concept north from Egypt. Any trace of the concept of divine trinity southward of Egypt? May be there are a few, even several, but the Kalenjiin context is the one we are concerned with here and, therefore, it is Asiis’ trinity that we are going to discuss. We quote Hollis who wrote on the Nandi in 1909:

“Besides Asista (read Asiis), there are two other superhuman beings, the kindly and malevolent thunder-gods called respectively *Ilet ne-mie* and *Ilet ne-ya*. The tradition regarding these two gods and their battles is very similar to the Maasai tradition of the Black and Red gods. The thunder-gods are not worshipped, nor are offerings made to them... The crashing of thunder near at hand is said to be the bad *Ilet* trying to come to earth to kill people, whilst the distant rumbling is the good *Ilet*, who is protecting them and driving away his namesake. Forked and sheet lightning are said to be the swords of the bad and good *Ilet* respectively. Whenever forked lightning is seen, all Nandi women look on the ground, as it is considered wrong that they should witness the work of devastation which the sun or God (Asista) is allowing to take place. During a thunderstorm it is usual to throw some tobacco on the fire, and the youngest child of a family has to put a *sosiot*, or stick used for cleaning gourds, in the ashes of the fire, and then throw it outside the hut. The members of the Toiyoi clan (whose totem is the very *Ileet*) throw out of doors an axe which has been rubbed in the ashes, and exclaim at the same time: *Toiyoi, sis kain-nyo* (*Toiyoi*, or thunder, be silent in our kraal)...” (Hollis, 1909:41, 99).¹

It should be clear, up to that point, that Asiis’ trinity was actually as follows: ILEET NE

MIEE-ASIIS-ILEET NE YA, i.e., BENEVOLENT IILAT-ASIIS-MALEVOLENT IILAT.

We may need to clarify that *Ileet* at the superhuman being level should, strictly speaking, be called *Iilat* (or *Iila* according to Mt. Elgon Kalenjiin) which is the indefinite form of *Ileet*. *Ileet*, in that definite form refers to thunder or lightning, which are audible and/or visible. But since the *Iilat* forces are considered to be two, it is no big grammatical crime to refer to either of the agents as *Ileet*. The same may not be said of Asiis, however, as there is only one Asiis. The definite form, as

¹The Bongo-Mittu Ethnic groups of Bahr el Ghazal, Sudan, also associate thunder with the axe, calling axe-heads “the teeth of thunder”—Seligman, 1932:476.

we have shown before, *asiista*, refers only to the sun and it is grammatically and semantically wrong to refer to Deity as *Asiista*.

In like manner, as we have seen, *asiista*, the definite form of *Asiis*, refers to the visible object, the sun, and not the divine power behind it, whose name remains in the indefinite form, *Asiis* (Cf. Huntingford, 1953b: 134). Even the “divine” power behind *koriisto*, “the wind”, which is not counted in the trinity, but is spoken of in tones almost similar to those in which only the feared mysterious powers are pronounced, is called *Kooriis*. This is the indefinite form of *koriisto*.

Thus a Kalenjiin elder can pronounce in jest, or even curse aloud *asiista*, *ileet* and *koriisto*, but will almost whisper in great awe the same names if he were to pronounce them in the indefinite forms, for then the words would be referring to the super human being level of things: *Asiis*, *Iilat* and *Kooriis*.

In Pokoot country, where *Asiis* is more often referred to as *Torrorrot* than as *Asiis*, the two *Iilat* are also recognised.¹ In the trinity of *Torrorrot*, benevolent *Iilat* works with *Torrorrot* while the evil *Iilat* is a loose cannon doing harm, and occasionally, some good—such as punishing the evil and the unjust in society, and indicating true boundaries where such is the dispute. It destroys ill-gotten property etc., either on his own prompting, or in answer to the people’s, or to a lone victim’s invocation.

Mervyn Beech (1911:20), who complains about the “vagueness” of Pokoot belief and its purported lack of uniformity from one area to another, nevertheless manages to give a summary of it and from it we can discern the concept of dualism within a triad:

“And so it appears that the general consensus of opinion inclines to the belief in the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient being or entity to whom it is advisable to make frequent prayers, and who is responsible, not only for the creation of the world, but for all the good and evil occurrences that have happened within it ever since.”

This practical, dualistic view of Deity permeates most aspects of worship and other cultural matters in Pokoot country and in most other Kalenjiin countries if not in all. Here the concept of the devil has not been clearly divorced, embodied in an imaginary supernatural being and set aside as the chief rival of Deity as well as the cause and scapegoat of all evil, a feat that the Christians seem to have managed to accomplish as they seek to ascribe only benevolence to Deity. But even the Hebrews, whose religion went to form the visible base of Christianity, recognised the dualistic

¹ But some sections of the Pokoot, surprisingly, seem to recognise the absolute Deity in the name *Iilat*. This is an idiosyncrasy within the larger Kalenjiin context. This should point to either a Semitic influence or to a suggestion as to how the Semites drifted away and ended up calling Deity by the same name. It is this same name, *Iila(i)*, that in the Middle Eastern context, replaced the hallowed name, Isis. The Semites in the past called Isis Al Ilat, “the Goddess”. She was
Footnote continued at bottom of next page

nature of Yahweh and we may repeat Isaiah 45:7 by way of demonstration: "I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the Lord, do all these things."

The universe must be balanced and, therefore, there is a good and an evil side to almost everything. The struggle between Malevolent *Iilat* and Benevolent *Iilat* is evident in everything. So even during prayers, good and evil are recognised. The Pokoot prayers are, for this reason, led by two elders whose vocational endowments are virtually diametrically opposed. One certainly has to come from the clan which is gifted with the powers of cursing, the Frog clan, *Myakaw*. The other elder may come from the other clans, but notably the Jackal clan that may not produce vocational "cursers" but only priests of the positive disposition.¹

Among the Kipsigiis, similar respective roles were originally played by the *Kipsamaeek* clan whose spiritual gift was in the art of cursing and the priestly clan of *Kipasiiseek* whose spiritual gift and calling it was to bless. Both roles were considered honourable. Currently, the situation is such that several other clans have been co-opted on either side, although it will be quite a while before a person from the *Kipsamaeek* clan can be ordained as a priest of Asiis.

The dualistic principle in Asiisianism also showed itself during beer-drinking parties. Before guests could begin drinking beer at any Kalenjiin beer party of old, symbolic amounts of the liquid would first be ceremonially sprinkled over the ground by the host. This propitiatory action was called *kitaata*. First the host would perform his *kitaata* outside the drinking room and that piece of sacrifice would be meant for all the ill-meaning departed spirits of his ancestors. He would then come back into the house and perform another *kitaata* round on the floor of an inside room: this was meant for the departed well-disposed spirits of his ancestors. The latter lot of spirits would be the spirits of those up the host's lineage who had died righteous, were well taken care of by the successors prior to death and, therefore, would be having no cause to complain and to harm their survivors. Prayers that were directed to Asiis—with a line or two of reference to the departed good and bad spirits—would then be said and, things having been thus balanced, guests could proceed to drink blessed beer!²

equated with Demeter and Aphrodite by the Greek (See footnote on the equation of Al Ilat with Aphrodite as inferred from Herodotus' account by A.D. Godley, in his translation of *Herodotus' Histories*, Book II).

¹ Oral Interview with Isaac wero Siree, West Pokot District (conducted for the author by Mr Kolil), 1992.

² Huntingford, 1953b:132-133, says that outside each principal house of the South-western Nandi family, was constructed a little hut meant for the ill-meaning departed spirits of the individual family. This little hut was aptly called *koot aap musambwaanik*, "the hut of the (ill-meaning) spirits." Family members would deposit inside these tiny structures symbolic quantities of food and drink meant for the consumption of the ill-meaning spirits who would partake of it there "instead of going into the real hut and thus bringing sickness to the occupants." This tiny hut for the evil-minded spirits was a philosophical opposite of the miniature *kaapkorosit*, or *mabwaaita*, the altar of Asiis, that was erected closer to the entrance of the main house. Huntingford mistakenly thinks that the tiny hut displaced the altar of Asiis in this side of Nandi. The keeping of the two structures in fact portrayed the dualism of the Asiisian religion more


Footnote continued at bottom of next page

This simple religious act performed before the commencing of drinking, can explain the basic philosophical structure of Kalenjiin belief: a triad or trinity that features the Deity, Asiis, with the two opposing positive and negative forces on either side of Her. What we have here is a typical Nile Valley case of dualism within a trinity that is comparable to Hinduism's respective negative and positive forces of Shiva, the destroyer, and Vishnu, the preserver, both of whom exist within the trinity of Brahma. Thus Hinduism, like its daughter religion, Buddhism, bears marks of ancient African influence, if not of actual origin, the latter of which scenario Garnier, among other western scholars, such as Gamble (1927), believes is the case (Cf. Garnier, 1904:136).

The tradition among western Egyptologists that the triad of Isis, or Osiris, was OSIRIS-ISIS-HORUS is so strong that it might take much convincing for it to be accepted that the triad may actually have been HORUS-ISIS-SET. This latter arrangement would represent a typical balance of the forces of the universe that all Hamitic-speaking people sought for, or in their trinities. For all these superhuman beings were conceptual and each performed a different divine role—but all of which, together, made a whole—and no arrangement that excluded one of them, could be considered whole and balanced.

The Museum of Egypt features an exhibit whose import, in support of the above argument, was not lost to the author. The life-size stone carving depicts the crowning of King Rameses III, around 1190 BC, by the “gods” Horus and Set. Horus stands on the right hand side of Rameses, while the “god of darkness and evil”, Set, stands to his left. Those positions are significant. As they make to set the crown on the royal head of Rameses, both “gods” are exactly equal in height, except for Set's erect ears which rise higher than his arch-foe's head.

The crowning scene speaks volumes for the inclusion of Set in the trinity of Isis, at least up until and including the dynasty of the Rameses kings. The fact helps that Set was also considered in Egypt the “god of thunder” (Morenz, 1960:238). And since he was evil, he was “god” of “Evil Thunder”, the equivalent of the third member of the Asiis triad, *Ileet ne ya*, “Malevolent *Iilat*” or “Evil *Iilat*” who is best characterised by his chief outward manifestation as destructive lightning.

Now what about Isis, the supposed head of the divine triad, with reference to this scene of coronation ceremony of Rameses III, for she seems to be absent from the scene? It so happens that behind the new king, is the royal throne—the throne of Isis—which has the peculiar shape . Isis

than most other symbols. Huntingford, however, thinks that the tiny hut meant for the evil spirits represented a cultural influence from the neighbouring Kintu-speaking people of Kakamega who also maintained similar structures. But the action of performing the *kitaata* act outside and inside of the main house in all other Kalenjiin homes implied that even where the physical structures were not constructed for the evil-minded spirits, an imaginary spot in the clearing outside the home was still set aside for them. So whether the structure existed or not, its philosophy was in place.

symbolises and is in turn represented by the throne, the holy seat of the Pharaoh who must claim to be her son since he is held to be an incarnation of Horus, Isis' own son. He sits on this throne the way Horus sat on the laps of Isis even as she sat on the throne (Cf. Bleeker, 1983:32). At the level of a hieroglyphic symbol, the throne represents the sound I-s-i-s or A-s-e-t, and probably A-s-i-i-s, or *a-s-i-i-s-t-a*. The trinity is, therefore, complete in this marvellous piece of art: Horus-Isis-Set. Or was it Horr-Asiis-Seseet, or Iila-Asiis-Seseet?¹

The symbolic crowning of the king by both positive and negative forces of nature, as represented by Horus and Set respectively, metaphorically spoke of the conferment to the king of the powers to reward for good deeds as well as to punish for bad ones during his reign. Even the ideal king, Osiris, was always depicted holding the whip and the sceptre in the form of a crook. These symbols correspond to the "carrot and stick" of the English language. A king was only complete if he was in a position to punish as well as to reward; to encourage as well as to discourage—Isis willing.

¹ A Kipsigiis speaker would interchange *Seseet* with *Ng'ookto*—which latter word is related to *ng'ook*, "sin", "evil", "selfishness" etc. That inter-changeability between *ng'ookto* and *seseet*, tells you that the Kalenjiin, in the east African setting, have not, at least at the subconscious level, quite forgotten the philosophical Set or Seseet of ancient Egypt.



PICTURE 23: The crowning of Rameses III, 1190 BC, Egyptian Museum, Cairo by Horus and Set. The ancients were displaying a practicality in getting the king to be crowned symbolically by the opposing forces of good and evil. Besides, this demonstrated their belief in a complete trinity that comprised of good but also recognised the inevitability of the presence of evil. The divinity on the king's right is Horus who represents the positive forces while the divinity on the king's left is Set, the ultimate representation of evil and the negative forces. Significantly, though, Set is also depicted, at par with Horus, clutching at the *ankh*, the sacred symbol of life—the prototype of the Christian cross (see Appendix 5). Set here is probably conferring on the king the power to carry out any unpleasant duties that may inevitably come his way, the very essence and counterpart of *seetan(ik)* seal of approval for economic and punitive raids that was customarily given to the soldiers by the Kalenjiin *Oorgoiyoot*. In the trinity depicted here, the king appears to represent Isis although her presence is really acknowledged by the throne on which the crowned king will soon sit and reign from. Besides, the priest of Isis is the principal operator here, having led the future king through town, holding the tethers of the sacred bull Hapi all he way and into the temple (Cf. Thompson, 1990:106)—Picture by author.

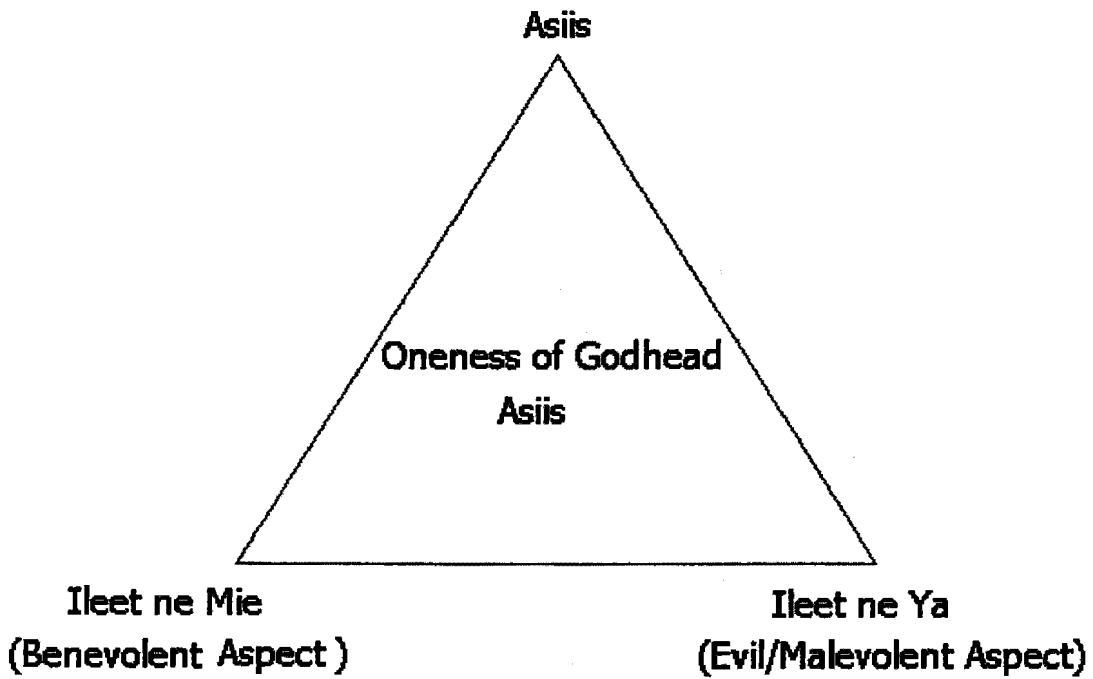


Figure 5: A diagrammatic depiction of the trinity of Asis suggested by the description by Hollis, 1909.

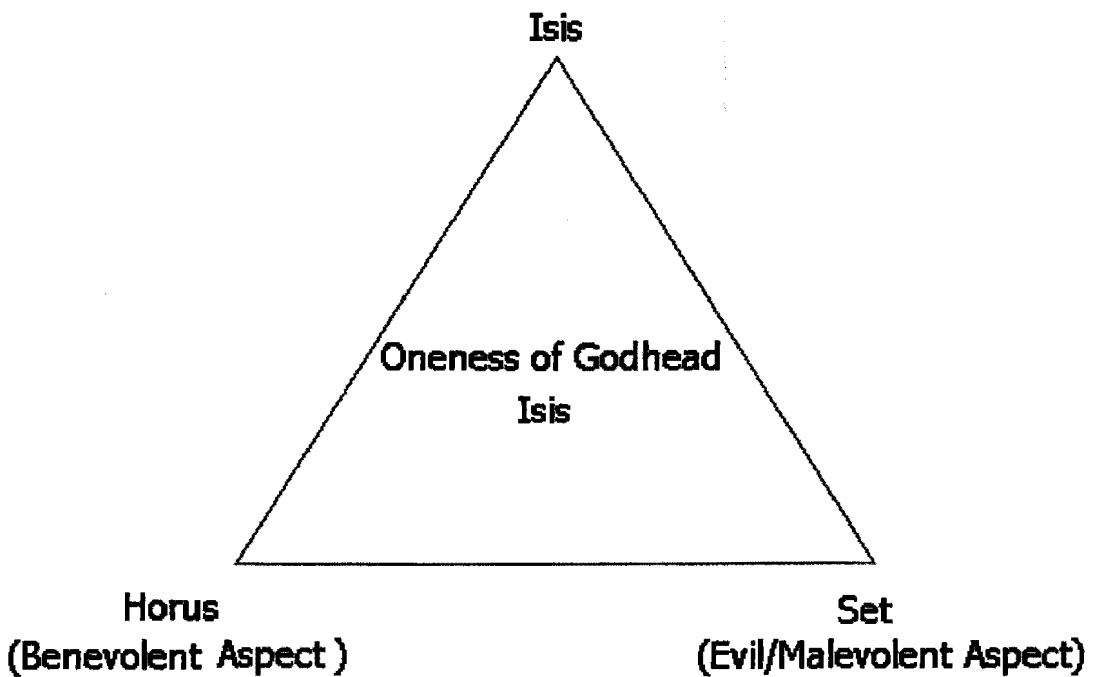



Figure 6: The trinity of Isis that is suggested by the above scene of the crowning of Rameses III.

The balance, or desire for balance, was symbolically recognised in some Kalenjiin people's meetings, or prayer sessions, by the inclusion of the two sticks, *nogirweet* for blessing, and *kaapseroiyoot* ("of serpent"?) for cursing, as was mentioned in Chapter 2. The latter's presence in a prayer procession did not imply that it was to be used on that occasion. It was just there as a reminder, or as a sign of acknowledgement of reality, the truth. Curses, when necessary were uttered in the afternoon while the major prayers were said at sunrise. So, theoretically, the two sticks could never be used simultaneously.

The essence of the twin presence of the sticks in prayer occasions, or in meetings, seems to have been symbolic of this fact: that as long as there were prayers, there was evil, and as long as there was evil, there were prayers. For without the constant fear of, and the actual ravages of the forces of evil, people would not pray. Good exists to be prayed for, but evil also exists to be prayed away. These are two inseparable truths that would typify dualism had it not been for the fact that, at the ultimate level of things, above the two, was Asiis, making it a triad.

In later years, back in Egypt, we see a trinity comprising of Isis, Horus and Osiris, Set excluded. This was the concept of the Holy and the response structure that Christianity found in place at its inception, a one-sided trinity that counted 3 positive divinities. It was not out of the blue, therefore that the trinity that Christianity formed for itself was also composed of three positive divinities: God the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ) and the Holy Ghost—to make it three. The Christians recognised Set outside this trinity in his ancient Egyptian name,  *sesh-ta* (B.Dict. 621a) which was probably pronounced, even in ancient Egyptian times, as *shetaan*, *satan*, *setaan* or *setaan-yaat* as pronounced presently by the Kalenjiin. The word "Satan" may not be of Semitic origin, therefore, as often thought. The river in Nandi called Ain aap Seetan, which name was translated by Huntingford as "River of Witchcraft"(1953b: 15), bears eternal physical testimony to a Nilotic rather than Semitic origin of the word Satan. As a matter of fact, the concoction that the Kalenjiin *Oorgoiyoot*, "king", gave to his soldiers for use as protection as well as for bewitching or blinding and bamboozling the enemy into inoperative fools during an attack, was also called *seetan*, plural, *seetanik* (see Chapter 15).¹

Satan has since served as the Christians' eternal scapegoat. He is called "the tempter", "the slanderer", "the enemy", "the liar", and "the angel of the bottomless pit". Collectively, these titles present Satan as the one who has the power of death, rules with lies and deception, accuses

¹ We do not, however, rule out the highly unlikely scenario that the word *Satan* could also be a Semitic borrowing in Hamitic tongue.

humankind before God, and opposes the purpose of God in the world while remaining obedient to God (Cf. Ezell, GME 1993).

Although Judaeo-Christianity and its offshoots would deny it, clearly Satan is close to the centre of their scheme of things, mentioned during prayers, service or mass in churches as often, even if only by way of scapegoating human shortcomings, as the Son element is, if not more often. Churches and other great structures have been built to keep Satan in check. The situation is such that if Satan were to cease being part of the equation, probably there would be no further need to build these structures. Therefore, by his pervasive presence, as manifested in the inevitable presence of evil all around, he spurs these structural developments, sees to their maintenance and keeps them in use.

Judaeo-Christianity is, as are its offshoots, therefore, as basically dualistic as any of its older and contemporary counterparts, such as Asiianism and its Evil Iilat vs. Beneficent Iilat; ancient Egypt's Isis religion in its Osiris/Horus vs. Set stage; the Babylonian and Chaldean faiths and their dualistic adversarial forces of light and darkness; and Zoroastrianism with its personification of the devil and all evil in Ahriman, who acts in opposition to Ahura Mazda, the Deity (Cf. Ezell, GME 1993).

It is no coincidence that the concept of Satan of the Bible crystallises in the dialogues of the tribulations of Job who is from Uz where dualism was the accepted theological norm. In Job 1 and 2, God is convinced, pursuant to a dialogue with Satan, the "Adversary", to punish Job severely, through Satan, although He (God) was not convinced that Job deserved such a visitation (Job 2:3). The book of Job portrays Satan as a frequent visitor to God for counselling although he does so with the singular view of causing suffering. Satan is also portrayed as God's instrument of punishment in the Book of Job although he often operates unfettered by God Who is made to appear helpless about it and even going as far as complaining, subsequent to the act, of having been misled as in Job 2:3.

We have seen that the Kalenjiin's Evil Iilat, though patently malevolent, can also be used to punish wicked human beings and show the just boundaries during land disputes. Such are typical roles of the evil one in dualistic religions. But that the wife of Job, being a woman, is made to be the first tempter who asks Job to part with integrity as well as with his up-to-then futile trust in God, is reminiscent of the proceedings at the biblical Garden of Aden and is typical of Semitic literature.

Although Christians readily confess belief in the trinity of Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, the sheer amount of attention paid to and the frequency of mention of Satan, seems to suggest a strong but unofficial acknowledgement of the presence of Satan in the equation. But one does not get to know at the expense of which member of the canonical trinity Satan is indirectly recognised. However, it is important to note that the doctrine that encompasses the third member, the Holy

Spirit, or Holy Ghost, was only formulated in 381 AD at the Council of Constantinople after a debate (Cf. Gilkey, GME 1993). It is still the least mentioned of the three—its purpose therein difficult to fathom but is worth an investigator's while as is the purpose of the entire doctrine of Holy Trinity (Cf. Morenz, 1960:255).

Why the Holy Spirit, or Holy Ghost, was inserted in the first place several centuries after the movement had taken root partly had something to do with an anomaly that increasingly haunted the Fathers. According to the theological wisdom of the time, the then unincorporated angels, preceded the Son, Jesus. They had been the first divine emanations from the pre-existent Divine Substance. Furthermore, Paul himself had declared in Hebrews 2:7-9 that God made Jesus a little lower than the angels but still higher than Moses (Hebrews 3:3).¹ The angels were the agents of God from the beginning, representing His creative wisdom and thus had to be incorporated in a full trinity co-equal with the Son and the Father.

Another possible reason was that one or two of the major ancient religions, the Egyptian one especially, perceived of the Creator in a trinity. Blavatsky (Cf. 1976, II, 36), the theosophist, is thus able to say, "The early Fathers of the church had not much to exert their imagination; they found a ready-made doctrine that had existed in every theogony for thousands of years before the Christian era."

The most important of such theogonies, as far as influencing Christianity, with regard to the late inclusion of the Holy Ghost in order to complete a trinity, in the view of some influential scholars (further on), was the Gnostic movement. According to the Gnostic movement, the Son of God was the Logos, i.e. the "Word" and He shared in the qualities of both Father and Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, or Holy Ghost, was conceived by the Gnostics in the female form and was therefore the "Mother" of whom Jesus was speaking when, according to the apocryphal (i.e. so far unrecognised by the Christian movement) *Gospel of the Hebrews*, He said, "My Mother, the Holy Spirit". In Gnostic thought, therefore, with the Father Who proceeded from the Godhead and Who was thus pre-existent and self-begotten, was the Word that later incarnated in Jesus, and the often unspoken of Mother, the "Holy Spirit". These made up an Isis type of trinity even before Christian leadership had been taken over from the Egyptian Gnostic fathers. In the Gnostic philosophy, God was in threefold after calling forth "himself from himself": *Nous*, "mind", *Ennoia* "thought" or

¹ However, in Hebrews 1:4-6, the Son is placed above the Messengers, i.e., the angels, contradicting in a way Hebrews 2:9. May be it is for such reasons that Blavatsky (1976:37) calls Paul "honest-minded", "sincere Paul" into whose head "these metaphysical subtleties never entered" and who, in the final analysis, "never considered Christ more than a man full of the spirit of God".

“idea” and *Logos*, “word” or “reason”. The Christian movement later equated *Nous* with “God the Father”, *Ennoia* with “God the Holy Spirit” and *Logos* with “God the Son” (Cf. Walker, 1983:31).¹

Sigfried Morenz (1960:256-257), who considers a theoretical search for the original home of the concept of trinity all over Asia and Mediterranean Europe, could only find a singular track that led him back to Egypt. He therefore says:

“If such a search is undertaken, it will yield a negative result for all territories except Egypt... The trinity was a major preoccupation of Egyptian theologians... thus three gods are combined and treated as a single being, addressed in the singular. In this way the spiritual force of Egyptian religion shows a direct link with Christian theology... (We may) consider Alexandrian theology as the intermediary between the Egyptian religious heritage and Christianity.”²

Morenz (1960:256) credits the “succession of great Christian thinkers—and their Gnostic forerunners—who originated from Egypt, or lived there, starting with Valentine and Basilides (c. AD 135), followed by Clement and Origen, and leading to Alexander, Athanasius and the presbyter Arius”.

The Trinitarian tradition had to be kept by the fathers of the then new movement (Christianity) probably for maximum credibility as postulated by a Manichean, Fauste, of the 3rd century. He said:

“The Evangeliums were written neither by Jesus Christ, nor his apostles, but long after their time by some unknown persons, who, judging well that they would hardly be believed when telling of things they had not seen themselves, headed their narratives with the names of the apostles or of disciples contemporaneous with the latter” (Blavatsky, 1976, II, 38).

However, all said, a formal recognition of Satan as a hated member of a Christian trinity in the mould of ancient Egyptian, Babylonian, Indian, Kalenjiin, etc. philosophy, would, of course,

¹ The reader will see that the Greek words *Nous*, *Ennoia* and *Logos*, belong to the group of words that are common to both Kalenjiin and Greek (Kalenjiin: *nai*, “know”; *nayo*, “knowledge”; *logooi*, “information”, “news”, “words”) as listed in Chapter 4. These words may originally be of ancient Hamitic extraction, although the possibility that they may be Greek loan words in Hamitic speech cannot be ruled out. Either way they stand as part evidence of the veracity of the Kalenjiin tradition of Pharaonic descent.

² We must add that Sigfried Morenz, after saying so much, would appear to have had to quickly remember where his personal spiritual loyalty ought to lie. Probably seeing a possible charge of blasphemy coming his way, he makes a statement which, when considered with the views expressed before it, is really empty. He says, “In order to avoid any gross misunderstanding, we must at once emphasise that the substance of the Christian Trinity is of course Biblical: Father, Son and Holy Ghost” (1960:255). Yet he himself ascribes the philosophical foundation of such Bible (NT) to the Egyptians who a while before proselytising were loyal to the ancient religions of Egypt that were collectively characterised by the inevitable trinities. We will see one or two more Christian writers ahead who similarly abandon reason after making thoroughly grounded statements of high intellectual value by immediately adding such manifestly hollow disclaimers as Morenz’s. The outcome seems predictable among these Christian writers that, after providing inevitable, founded and unassailable truths that amount to questioning Christian novelty here and there, they sense that they have betrayed their own religion and feel duty bound to make a sort of retraction. This invariably turns out to be hollow and very unworthy of their otherwise proven scholarly class.

invalidate the name "Holy Trinity", which is held so dearly. It would, in effect, render Christianity a dualistic movement. So dreaded is such a scenario that, in the past, preachers were stoned for publicly articulating such belief. The Paulicians found themselves on the receiving end of such intolerance. The Paulicians, a dualistic Christian sect, which was regarded as heretical by the powerful larger Christian establishment of the time, derived their name from Saint Paul. In interpreting Paul, they either followed Marcion or a Manichean preacher called Paul who is sometimes confused with Paul of Samosata. The Paulicians believed in two "gods", one good and one evil, and taught that all matter was evil. They denied the humanity of Jesus, for then He would be matter and thus necessarily evil. They rejected the Old Testament, Catholic hierarchical order, and the notion of tradition. The Paulicians claimed that faith in Jesus Christ, whom they believed to have been an angel and therefore incapable of crucifixion, saved people from judgement. In other words, why maintain the threat and prospect of judgement in the scriptures as well as the station of Jesus as a saviour who by saving had precluded the need for such judgement? (Cf. Cunningham, GME 1993)

Having said that the ancient Egyptian trinity, during the last days of indigenous religion, i.e., at the time Christianity took over, was made up of Isis, Osiris, and Horus, it is important to establish which of the three was the highest placed, i.e. the would-be effective supreme deity. Most people, who have grown up in the environment of Judaeo-Christian male-centred cosmological disposition, would tend to readily assume that Osiris was the chief and Isis was his subservient wife. But Egyptian women, even in the mortal society, were not necessarily mere appendages to their husbands. They were the equals of their husbands with full rights to inheritance of their fathers' property etc. (Cf. Bleeker, 1983:29).

This may be compared to things as they stood in traditional Kalenjiin times as respects the treatment of genders when it came to family property. The facts are preserved in the works of, among others, Orchardson who lived among the Kipsigiis from 1910, only five or so years after complete conquest and colonisation by the British. The socio-cultural and economic terrain that he came upon, therefore, was, for all practical purposes, pristine. His book was published years after his death, so the date of publication is a bit misleading. His bit of information in respect of gender relations and property rights is as important here for its comparative value with the ancient Egyptian parallel and for contrast purposes with Hebrew literature's attitude to the sexes as for rebuking a creeping attitude in Kalenjiinland where men, believing that their wives have no right to the family assets, dispose of them as they wish, often with little consultation or even courtesy. Included in such property is sometimes money which both parties have earned through joint work such as: in tending tea gardens and plucking tea leaves for sale; sale of milk, often milked by the wife alone; sale of

grain produced by joint labour etc. The habit is patently un-Kalenjiin and is often perpetrated by culturally de-based men who are neither Christian nor Asiisian in faith but misquote either of the faiths in support of their dishonest and uncivil behaviour. The true traditional Kalenjiin position in respect of family property ownership is preserved for eternity in Orchardson's (1961:111) written words as follows:

“Although a woman is not said to inherit property, since all inheritance must be in the male line so that ownership is retained in the family, yet she may not only own special property of her own but also, for all practical purposes, she is regarded as joint owner with her husband of all the family property. Unless they had quarrelled or were estranged, no man would sell or dispose of stock without consulting his wife... Similarly no woman would dispose of her own property without discussion with her husband, her husband's brother or his son. Although a field is usually spoken of as being the property of the man and the grain the property of the woman, in practice both are really jointly owned.”

The implied respect and esteem was conferred on African women in general by the matriarchal lineage systems that were in place prior to structural social and economic changes that ushered in male dominance later. In fact up until now, in a number of the surviving kingdoms of Africa, the Queen Mother, if she survive her king-husband, remains the effective ruler through her son-king who must rule in name only until the Queen Mother dies (e.g. the Xhosa kingdoms as narrated by Alberti, 1807, the Buganda kingdom, the Swati kingdom etc.).

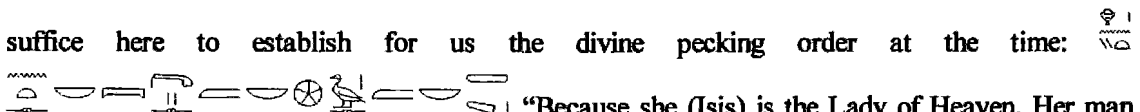
The origin of the said Christian male-centred attitude is partly traceable to Roman policy and partly traceable to the traditional Jewish attitude towards the sexes. The Roman state, with its principle of *patriapotestas*, “right of the father”, granted women even fewer rights than had the Greek states. “The Roman *patriapotestas* granted the father extensive rights, including that of life and death over his wife” (Fox-Genovese, GME 1993).

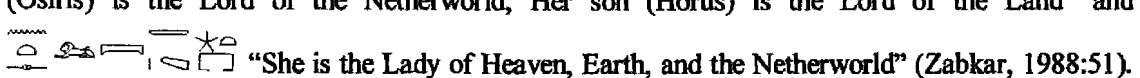
This legalised sexist attitude on the part of the ruling political power, Rome, at the inception of Christianity, when it combined with the traditional near-misogynous Judaic literature's attitude towards the sexes, left a readily recognisable imprint on the product. The new religion, being a splinter from Judaism, and formed during Roman hegemony, could only have inherited and reflected quadruple features of literary, legal, cultural and spiritual misogyny. Although different from the Roman society in its social foundations, traditional Judaic society also restricted women's social role and encouraged sexual segregation. Any contest for equality of the sexes is forever outlawed by the scriptures with their overriding proviso by way of Genesis 3:16 which quotes the authority of none other than God. The situation is such that at present “Different rules apply to women, some of them less onerous or prohibitive; for example, Orthodox women are prohibited from reading from the Torah and women rabbis are only found in the non-Orthodox branches of Judaism” (OIE 1997/5). And as we have pointed out, this may be explained by what some scholars

believe, namely that "Judaism probably also reflected a historic revolt against a prehistoric female-centred cosmology. By historic times, Jewish monotheism was clearly founded upon the worship of a male creator and lawgiver" (Cf. Fox-Genovese, GME 1993).

The ancient social structures that guaranteed equality of the sexes were still in place at the time the Africans conceived their trinity and it so happened that in Egypt, and perhaps all over North-eastern Africa, Isis, the woman, took precedence.

The walls of the Temple of Isis in Philae tell us about things spiritual as they probably were during the said Judaic rebellion, which most likely took place while the Israelites were still in Egypt. The Supreme Deity, as recognised by the Egyptians at that time, and who was perceived in the female form and called Isis, was then reigning unrivalled. The other recognised divinities were either only complimentary or were representing other manifestations of her. Two lines from the hymns sung to Isis, which can still be read on many of the walls of the Temple of Philae, may suffice here to establish for us the divine pecking order at the time:


 "Because she (Isis) is the Lady of Heaven, Her man (Osiris) is the Lord of the Netherworld, Her son (Horus) is the Lord of the Land" and


 "She is the Lady of Heaven, Earth, and the Netherworld" (Zabkar, 1988:51).

Although Isis is assigned the supremacy of the heavens, her husband the underworld (heaven of the dead), and her son, the land, in the first line here, in the second line she is declared the supreme over all those other regions. Her supremacy is, therefore, absolute and is neither relative nor confined. She is the definite head of the divine trinity.

*Section C: Comparative Analysis of the Concepts, Beliefs and Myths
regarding the Holy, the Superhuman Beings and Forces*

Table 7: A Hypothetical Ancient Egyptian 10-day Week Calendar superimposed on the Modern Calendar

	Day I	Day II	Day III	Day IV	Day V	Day VI	Day VII	Dy VIII	Day IX	Day X
Month	(1) 1	(2)2	(3)3	(4)4	(5)5	(6)6	(7)7	(8)8	(9)9	(10)10
One	(11)11	(12)12	(13)13	(14)14	(15)15	(16)16	(17)17	(18)18	(19)19	(20)20
(Jan)	(21)21	(22)22	(23)23	(24)24	(25)25	(26)26	(27)27	(28)28	(29)29	(30)30
Month	(1) 31 jan	(2)1	(3)2	(4)3	(5)4	(6)5	(7)6	(8)7	(9)8	(10)9
Two	(11)10	(12)11	(13)12	(14)13	(15)14	(16)15	(17)16	(18)17	(19)18	(20)19
(Feb)	(21)20	(22)21	(23)22	(24)23	(25)24	(26)25	(27)26	(28)27	(29)28	(30)29
Month	(1)1	(2)2	(3)3	(4)4	(5)5	(6)6	(7)7	(8)8	(9)9	(10)10
Three	(11)11	(12)12	(13)13	(14)14	(15)15	(16)16	(17)17	(18)18	(19)19	(20)20
(Mar)	(21)21	(22)22	(23)23	(24)24	(25)25	(26)26	(27)27	(28)28	(29)29	(30)30
Month	(1) 31 mr	(2)1	(3)2	(4)3	(5)4	(6)5	(7)6	(8)7	(9)8	(10)9
Four	(11)10	(12)11	(13)12	(14)13	(15)14	(16)15	(17)16	(18)17	(19)18	(20)19
(Apr)	(21)20	(22)21	(23)22	(24)23	(25)24	(26)25	(27)26	(28)27	(29)28	(30)29
Month	(1) 30 ap	(2)1	(3)2	(4)3	(5)4	(6)5	(7)6	(8)7	(9)8	(10)9
Five	(11)10	(12)11	(13)12	(14)13	(15)14	(16)15	(17)16	(18)17	(19)18	(20)19
(May)	(21)20	(22)21	(23)22	(24)23	(25)24	(26)25	(27)26	(28)27	(29)28	(30)29
Month	(1) 30 ma	(2) 31 ma	(3)1	(4)2	(5)3	(6)4	(7)5	(8)6	(9)7	(10)8
Six	(11)9	(12)10	(13)11	(14)12	(15)13	(16)14	(17)15	(18)16	(19)17	(20)18
(June)	(21)19	(22)20	(23)21	(24)22	(25)23	(26)24	(27)25	(28)26	(29)27	(30)28
Month	(1) 29 jn	(2) 30 jn	(3)1	(4)2	(5)3	(6)4	(7)5	(8)6	(9)7	(10)8
Seven	(11)9	(12)10	(13)11	(14)12	(15)13	(16)14	(17)15	(18)16	(19)17	(20)18
(July)	(21)19	(22)20	(23)21	(24)22	(25)23	(26)24	(27)25	(28)26	(29)27	(30)28
Month	(1) 29 jul	(2) 30 ju	(3) 31 jul	(4)1	(5)2	(6)3	(7)4	(8)5	(9)6	(10)7
Eight	(11)8	(12)9	(13)10	(14)11	(15)12	(16)13	(17)14	(18)15	(19)16	(20)17
(Aug)	(21)18	(22)19	(23)20	(24)21	(25)22	(26)23	(27)24	(28)25	(29)26	(30)27
Month	(1) 28 ag	(2) 29 ag	(3) 30 ag	(4) 31 ag	(5)1	(6)2	(7)3	(8)4	(9)5	(10)6
Nine	(11)7	(12)8	(13)9	(14)10	(15)11	(16)12	(17)13	(18)14	(19)15	(20)16
(Sept)	(21)17	(22)18	(23)19	(24)20	(25)21	(26)22	(27)23	(28)24	(29)25	(30)26

	Day I	Day II	Day III	Day IV	Day V	Day VI	Day VII	Dy VIII	Day IX	Day X
Month	(1)27sp	(2)28sp	(3)29sp	(4)30sp	(5)1	(6)2	(7)3	(8)4	(9)5	(10)6
Ten	(11)7	(12)8	(13)9	(14)10	(15)11	(16)12	(17)13	(18)14	(19)15	(20)16
(Oct)	(21)17	(22)18	(23)19	(24)20	(25)21	(26)22	(27)23	(28)24	(29)25	(30)26

Month	(1)27oc	(2)28oc	(3)29oc	(4)30oc	(5)31oc	(6)1	(7)2	(8)3	(9)4	(10)5
Eleven	(11)6	(12)7	(13)8	(14)9	(15)10	(16)11	(17)12	(18)13	(19)14	(20)15
(Nov)	(21)16	(22)17	(23)18	(24)19	(25)20	(26)21	(27)22	(28)23	(29)24	(30)25

Month	(1)26nv	(2)27nv	(3)28nv	(4)29nv	(5)30nv	(6)1	(7)2	(8)3	(9)4	(10)5
Twelve	(11)6	(12)7	(13)8	(14)9	(15)10	(16)11	(17)12	(18)13	(19)14	(20)15
(Dec)	(21)16	(22)17	(23)18	(24)19	(25)20	(26)21	(27)22	(28)23	(29)24	(30)25

Month 13 "Gods" birthdays	Osiris' birthday 26dec	Horus' birthday 27dec	Set's birthday 28dec	Isis' birthday 29dec	Nephthy's birthday 30dec
---------------------------------	------------------------------	-----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	--------------------------------

The above 10-day week hypothetical calendar represents a reconstruction by the author of a typical ancient Egyptian-style 10-day week, 3-week, 30-day month, 36-decan-year calendar (Cf. Gardiner, 1927:206). The author has superimposed on it the modern, or Gregorian calendar. The days of the ancient 30-day month are in brackets while the days of the modern calendar are without brackets. In a leap year, 25th December falls on the last day of the ancient Egyptian year and on normal years the Christmas day arrives the day before. Adjustments have been made to the western calendar since the days of Julius Caesar who ordered the use of 365/366-day year, but the festive season coinciding with the ancient Egyptian birthday of Osiris and Horus and later Christ, have remained more or less fixed either on the same day or on one day apart. The original of the two is certainly the Egyptian one as Herodotus wrote over 400 years before Julius Caesar's time that the Egyptians were "the first men to reckon by years and made the year to consist of twelve divisions..." (Herodotus Book II).

10.2 Creating God in Own Image

As we come to the end of the discussion on the Super Human Beings under Section C, we may need to reflect and note quite emphatically that the inevitable portrayal by Africans of their "gods" and "goddesses" as black anthropomorphic characters, whose ample evidence we have come by so far, could only answer to a pattern in human character, a proclivity. One of the world's most respected palaeontologists, Dr Richard Leakey of Kenya, who is himself a confessed atheist, says as follows about this tendency in his autobiography:

"I feel certain that religious beliefs are related to the dawning of self-awareness in primitive man. God is an inevitable creation of the human intellect where explanations are unavailable... I myself do not believe in a god who has or had a human form and to whom I owe my existence. I believe it is man who created God in his image and not the other way round...."(Leakey, 1983:37, 38).

There is definitely a universal inclination to “imagine the gods in our own image” (Funkenstein, 1994:99), and the black man has not been exempt from this inevitable human tendency to create Deity, imagine, or portray the Deity, which is the same as creating, in own image. Chukwunyere Kamalu, in his book, *Foundations of African Thought: A Worldview Grounded in the African Heritage of Religion, Philosophy, Science and Art*, citing his West African experience, gives the vital explanation to this tendency to anthropomorphism, which tallies with the ancient Gnostic view of pedagogical condescension that was championed by Origen (Patrick, 1892:135):

“The supreme being is personified as a human being and as working in ways that are human... not because Africans believe that God is a human being, but because the invisible, in order to be made visible and conceivable to the limited human imagination is clothed in the human form. It is very much a case of human beings creating God in their own image” (Kamalu, 1990:43).

The tradition of conceiving or painting in oral art and physically benevolent deities black, among black populations, such as the Maasai and the Oromo whom we have already mentioned, and several others all over the continent (Cf. Kamalu, 1990:42-43), dates back to, at the latest, the Egyptian times. As we have seen, Isis, Osiris, Ptah, and other Egyptian “gods” and “goddesses”, probably with the exception of Set, were portrayed in art as black people. Set, the red-haired “god” of ancient Egypt was, like the Maasai Red *Enkai*, essentially an evil “god”. Julian Baldick (1997:8), in his book, *Black God: The Afroasiatic Roots of the Jewish, Christian and Muslim Religions*, acknowledges this fact as follows:

“Whereas elsewhere black was the colour of the violent but necessary storm-god, and red the colour of the brave young warrior-god who killed him and made fertilising water flow, in Egypt black was usually a benign colour of fertility itself, and red was the colour of the generally useless and hated storm-god Seth.”

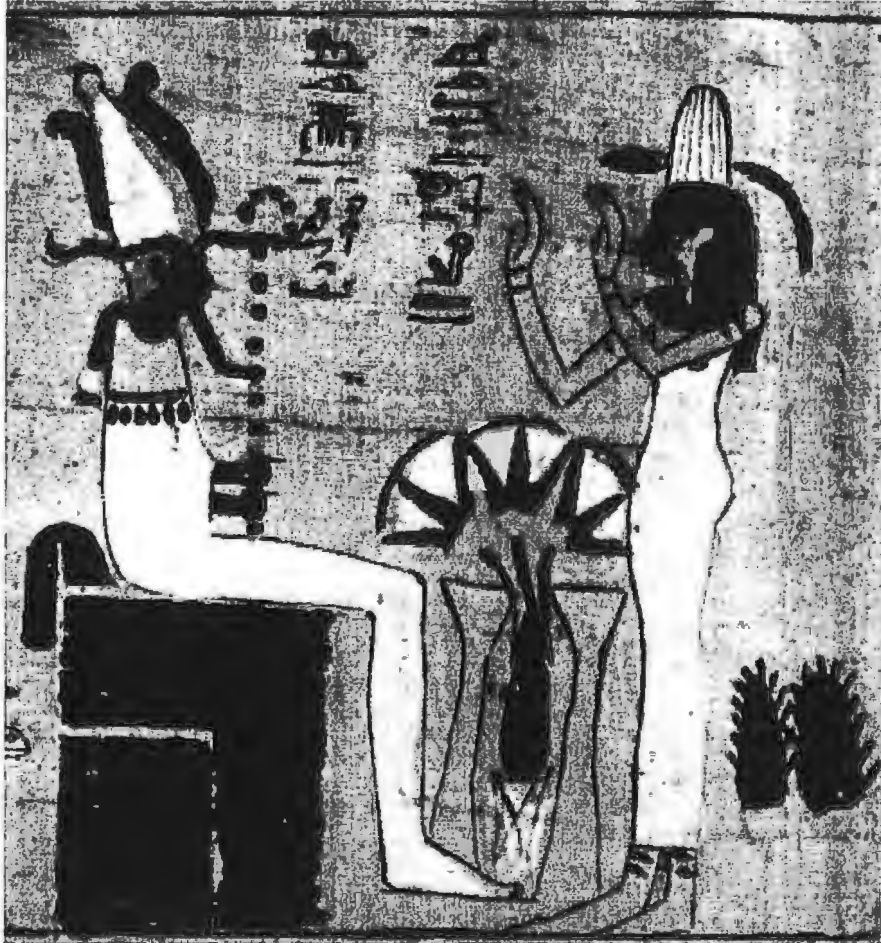
The Malevolent *Iilat* of Kalenjiin mythology is also conceived of in the form of a huge red cock—a probable negative extension of the conception of Horus as a falcon. The Benevolent *Iilat* was probably conceived of in the image of a huge black cock, because he had to be associated with his most important merchandise, the black rain clouds. However, Some of the Pokoot people, not all Pokoot, seem to have traditionally conceived of Deity, whom they called *Tororrot*, “sky”, as a cross between man and bird, a being with two opposing natures. Theirs was, therefore, a perfect dualistic conception of Deity. They told Mervyn Beech during the first decade of the 20th century:

“Torôrut is the Supreme God. He made the earth and causes the birth of mankind and animals. No man living has seen him, though old men, long since dead, have. They say he is like a man in form, but has wings—huge wings—the flash of which causes lightning, *kerial*, and the whirring thereof is the thunder, *kotil*” (Beech, 1911:19).

The dualistic nature is read into this belief system in that the flashing lightning (*kerial*, *kooliel*) aspect of Deity is associated with destruction and death, although this aspect also restores justice, while the whirring, rumbling (*kotil*, *kotul*) aspect, causes the rain that occasions growth of vegetation and the sustenance of and multiplication of all life forms. The two opposing natures, therefore, constitute the bipolar moods of Deity and there is no better way to portray a dualistic system of belief.

We have read a quotation from the man who has been dealing with the greater history of the Homo Sapiens, Leakey, who maintains that this species has an innate tendency to create “gods” and, we may add, “goddesses” in its own image. The Homo Sapiens engage in this indulgence probably owing, first of all, to their self-awareness in relation to the surroundings and other creations and the love, or appreciation, of their own image. Naturally, the person one loves most in one’s life is oneself and any protestation to the contrary is a futile exercise in hypocrisy. If one loves oneself the best, then it follows that that other person that one loves and resorts to the most,

one’s Deity, will be



PICTURE 24: A picture of the papyrus of Nesi-Khonsu, the Chantress of Amon (Cairo Museum—Rambova/Piankoff, 1955), 12th – 10th century BC. The chantress is facing the “God” of the Dead, Osiris, who is wearing the crown of Upper Egypt and, appropriately for his lady petitioner who served the Deity in the name of Amon, he wears a pair of ram’s horns—the symbols of Amon. Here she is called Osiris just like the Lord she is facing, for she is deceased. Osiris’ name is differentiated from the petitioner’s name by the qualification after his name: the “Lord of the West”. Osiris is traditionally painted pitch black while the supplicant facing him, may be painted red, yellow, dark brown or black for differentiation, but their unambiguous prognathic features, complete with a receding chin, reveal that they are also of the black African stock like their Lord. The festal cone of fat that Nesi-Khonsu is wearing is identical to the one placed on that fontanelle (*twryet*) point on the head of ritual candidates, such as *tegeriisyek*, who were being dedicated to Asiis among the Kalenjiin (see Orchardson, 1961:56).



PICTURE 25: A picture of the papyrus of Teye, 12th – 10th century BC (Metropolitan Museum, New York—Rambova/Piankoff, 1955). Teye appears white and in all white except for the wig and scarf. The lady deceased were often presented this way and it is only the typical prognathic profile and the receding rather than pugnacious chin that confirmed that they were black women. Osiris is presented in his typical poise and colour. The festal cone of butter that Teye is wearing is similar to the one placed on that fontanelle (*turyeet*) point of the head of ritual candidates, such as *tegeriisyek*, who were being dedicated to Asiis among the Kalenjiin (see Orchardson, 1961:56).

depicted in one's own image—the best according to oneself. Going by this logic, it follows that any worship of Deity in another human appearance other than one's own, is unnatural. It is fundamentally a sign of inferiority complex, or self-dislike and distrust often characteristic of a race that has been conquered, politically subjugated, racially despised—made to feel unworthy of the image of deity—and proselytised.

The white people too in their natural, free environment—i.e., excluding the early days of African hegemony, through Egypt mainly, when they felt compelled to portray the Madonna and child as a black divine pair—created the benevolent deity in their own image. The Slavonic people, for example, saw the divine in two opposing images, “White God”, Byelobog, and “Black God”, Chernobog. The White God personified positive creative forces while the Black

God personified evil destructive forces. The White God was the “god of light and day” while the Black God was “god of the shadows and the night.”¹

This human tendency to create deity in own image has all along been a well-known theological and philosophical fact and the Greek philosopher, Xenophanes, considered it a fallacy as long ago as his time of about 545 BC. He observed that if animals could draw or carve, they would represent deities after their own form (Cf. Brandon, 1970:86). Since this is not the case, and all we have is humans indulging in this habit, the practice is thus called anthropomorphism.

Anthropomorphism in religion inevitably follows from the fact that the Homo Sapiens can conceive of deity only in terms of his own mental categories. Not possessing the capacity to utilise tools, ideas and concepts outside his experience, this resort is only human. Tylor (1871: ii, 247) says, “Man so habitually ascribes to his deities human shape, human passions, human nature, that we may declare him an Anthropomorphite, an Anthropopathite, and (to complete the series) Anthropophysite.”

Thus the human propensity to anthropomorphism is established and well known as a predictable inevitability. Therefore, if all that one could find in the relics of a bygone society is paintings and carvings representing deity, one would have found, by means of such icons, the true representation of the physical features of that bygone society. The ancient Egyptians are a good example of a bygone society that did this to the limit and the present generation can only consider itself lucky that those ancients did this and thus left behind adequate evidence of their own likeness.

The succeeding generations do not have to create their own deity, their ancestors would already have done that for them in their own image and all they would have to do is inherit. The fact that Deity is perceived of as a black individual, as far as the black people are concerned, only confirms the fact that their ancestors, including those of ancient Egypt, whose skin pigmentation has been contested quite unnecessarily—and in the face of overwhelming evidence—were black.

The indigenous people of Australia, who are black, are no exception in this predictable Homo Sapiens tendency to “create” Deity in the image of self. Mircea Eliade (1967:3) collected such tradition from certain sections of them. Of the Kunil ethnic group’s belief, he writes:

“It is a striking phase in the legends about him (*Burjil* the Deity) that the human element preponderates over the animal element. In fact, I cannot see any trace of the latter in him, for he is in all cases the old black-fellow, and not the eagle-hawk, which his name denotes.”

¹ Cf. *New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology*, 1968, on “Slavonic Mythology”.

And, even for those aboriginal people who called *Bunjil Daramulun*, Mircea (1967:5) writes: "As *Daramulun*, he is said to be able to 'go anywhere and do anything.' He can be invisible; but when he makes himself visible, it is in the form of an old man of the Australian (aboriginal) race."¹

Having come thus far on this issue of portrayal of Deity among black people, the artistic portrayal of the Hindu divinities and saints such as Durga, Krishna and Buddha, must confound us. For they are often more likely than not to be portrayed with human features of the black type. Even the name "Krishna" means the "Black One" (Brandon, 1970:400) although in relatively modern Hindu art, he is painted blue. But blue was still another favourite ancient Egyptian colour for Osiris although black was the norm.

Buddha's artistic portrayal stands out as the typical image of a black man—complete with pierced and elongated earlobes that are more representative of the Kalenjiin and Maasai traditional styles. It so happens then that in his last two incarnations, as Krishna and later as Buddha, Vishnu took the form of a black man. Durga, the ten-handed Mother Goddess of Hinduism, is often depicted in the image of a black warrior woman.

What these Hindu examples tell us, is that the founders of the Hindu religion were basically black people whose descendants to the north of India have had their profile gradually altered through intermarriage with the incoming Aryan race. And as to those in the South, such as the Dravidians, they are still essentially black, more or less as they were during the cataclysmic early phases of Hinduism. The hypothesis, that *Homo Sapiens* tends to create the Deity in own image, therefore, passes even the tricky challenge posed by Hindu sacred art.

¹ Eliade adds that the other aboriginal names for the Deity: *Nurrundere*, *Nurelli*, *Mungangaua* and *Baiame* "all represent the same being under different names" (1967:5).

Summary of Chapter 10: Worldwide Influence of Isis and the Associated “Gods”: Osiris, Horus and Set

In the mythology of ancient Egypt, Osiris, the “god-king” of Egypt, who was also the “god” of corn, married Isis, his sister, who became the “goddess” of corn. It was in their agricultural patronship that they were later to revolutionise the cause of world food production. As Osiris played the spiritual and agricultural missionary in other parts of the world, he left Isis in charge in Egypt. During her reign the population of Egypt is said to have overflowed and that it discharged itself into the neighbouring countries. However, at the same time, Set, the brother of Osiris and Isis, planned to overthrow Osiris.

Osiris was later assassinated by Set, who then usurped the throne and set the stage for a later eternal struggle between Horus, the son of Isis and himself.

Horus represented good while Set became the eternal opposition to the spirit of good. He became the devil in the dualism within-a-triad set-up of Egyptian religion. His skin was white and he had red hair, which was an anathema to the ancient Egyptians. The Greeks called him Typhon and recruited him into their pantheon with his Egyptian negative attributes intact.

Like the Isiac movement of ancient Egypt, Asiianism too had its own trinity by way of the three persons: Asiis and the two Iilat agents, Benevolent Iilat and Malevolent Iilat. It was the imagined eternal struggle between the Iilat positive and negative agents that rendered Asiianism a practical duality within a trinity. Many actions, such as propitiations and prayers during meetings and during other sessions, take into account and actually act out dualism. In a world that needed to be balanced, and a world, which operated on the basis of such balance, the concept of a dual natured Deity was inevitable. Even in the ancient Hebrew literature, this ambivalence on the part of Deity is recognised and perhaps is expressed best in Isaiah 45:7. But the Paulician Christians who tried to recognise what seems to be an inevitable duality of God found themselves in trouble with the mainstream churches.

The Asiian triad resembles most the equally Egyptian-inspired Hindu triad which features the negative force of Shiva, the destroyer, and the positive presence of Vishnu, the preserver, who are both under Brahma the Supreme.¹ But still the prototype of all these, according to a scholar of note, Sigfried Morenz (1960:256-257), was the Egyptian triadic system.

The Author argues that the triad of Isis may have originally been Isis, Osiris, Set, where Osiris and Horus may change places. The reason for this proposal is that a negative member had

¹ See Garnier 1904:136 and Gamble, 1927, various, for more on the view that Hinduism owes a lot to the African religions through Egypt. Also remember the missionary work of Osiris.

to be incorporated in these triads as the Hindu and Asiisian triads show. The triad of Ptah, Sakhmet and Nefertum follows this pattern as well. The pattern seeks to account for the evil allowed by Deity in the world and the good that manages to balance it. As to whether or not Isis headed her trinity, rather than being subservient to Osiris, we resorted to textual evidence taken from the walls of her temple in Philae to confirm her primal position emphatically.

However at the inception of Christianity the triad of Egypt, which was recognised throughout the Roman Empire, was composed of the unbalanced triadic equation of Isis, Osiris and Horus. It became easy for the converting Egyptian theologians to insert in their place God the Father, Jesus Christ, the Son, and the Holy Ghost whom Jesus would refer to as "My mother, the Holy Spirit" according to apocryphal sources.

We observed that the Old Testament does not feature a divine trinity of any sort and that even the New Testament is not replete with Trinitarian examples either. Perhaps the most prominent—although indirect—mention of a trinity, if not the only one, is by way of Matthew 28:19. Otherwise the inclusion of it as Christian doctrine came by way of a synodal decree. The Egyptianisation of Christianity would have been incomplete without the adoption of the Trinitarian doctrine.

The ancient Egyptians had no difficulty with having their divine triad headed by a female Deity. In fact women in the society ranked at par with men in most situations. The Roman and Jewish attitudes to the relations between the sexes were quite different, being so decidedly sexist that we used the word "misogyny" here. The hard stance may have extended from an ancient revolt against leadership by women, or against a religion that recognised a female-headed Godhead—most probably that of Isis, the Queen of Heaven.

We also noted the close resemblance between the cosmogony of the Dogon people of Mali and the one of ancient Egypt as regards the birth and characters of Osiris and Set, on the one hand, and Nommo and Yurugu on the other. Like Set, the evil fox, Yurugu of Dogon cosmogony is also pale. The biblical account of Cain and Abel seems to run on the same theme as well although it is not quite as close to the ancient Egyptian cosmogony as the Dogon one.

We gave some attention to the educated guesswork of a British administrator of the inter-war years, Hennings, to the effect that Set of ancient Egypt was what was retained in the Kalenjiin word for "dog", *seseet*. We also demonstrated how the dog, although it is much loved and even mourned when it dies, is symbolically linked to sin, hence its other name *ng'ookto*, which shares a root with the word for "sin" and other forms of vice. This general attitude towards dogs is also common in the Middle East area.

Set is also the Egyptian “god” of the frontier who “assists in the conquest of the foreign lands”, the very essence of the Kalenjiin expression *seet lugeet*, “army marches to war”. This ambivalent attitude towards a typical negative force, namely that it occasionally dispenses justice, exists in Asiisianism because the Malevolent Iilat is often called upon to intervene through his known *modus operandi*: destruction of persons and ill-gotten property. We see God, in the biblical account of Job, using the devil as an agent of punishment too.

The Kalenjiin language may not remember Osiris in an equally precise manner as it does Set. But given that Osiris is linked with death, which is not necessarily such a tragic eventuality, the Kalenjiin phrase equivalent to “pass away”, or to “jump across” and “to awake from sleep”, instructively come from the root *siir-*. “To awake from sleep”, *siir-un*, meaning of *siir-* may, therefore, be linked to a forgotten concept of resurrection, but which is probably retained in *ng'eeet-un*, “to rise and come forth” from the condition of the death that circumcision initiation simulates.

The resurrecting nature of Osiris was passed on to Jesus, complete with the epithet of “Saviour” who promises salvation and eternal life in bliss to all who care to follow. Both Osiris and Jesus democratised heaven by bringing salvation to the rich and poor alike, the high and mighty alike with the lowest placed members of the social pyramid. And both Osiris and Jesus will respectively return “to reign on earth after the last great battle with Set (Satan)”.

Resurrection was not an alien idea to the other Africans, however, as even the Khoisan people from all the way in Southern Africa had their own dying and resurrecting “god” in Heitsi Eibib. The West African Yoruba had their own resurrected Engungun and we may yet hear of others.

In order to facilitate Horus’ right to the throne of Egypt, legend had him conveniently conceived divinely through intercourse between a resurrected Osiris and Isis. In other words Horus was conceived divinely. His father was a “god” and so was he. Thereafter all kings of Egypt claimed a divine birth as incarnations of Horus in order to justify ascendance to the throne as divine kings.

Although Set stood for evil, the Set animal would appear to have served as some clans’ totem, especially as the totem of the foreign Hyksos clan that ruled Egypt for over a century, around the 18th century BC. It was also a name given to one of the four permanent regiments of Egypt, the military organisation that we compared favourably to the hereditary military organisation of the pre-colonial Kipsigiis army.

As a wicked king, over the short stint during which he occupied the Egyptian throne, Set anticipates Herod, King of the Jews, in that he seeks to destroy the infant Horus because he was

destined to be the lawful king of Egypt, the way Herod was later to seek to kill infant Jesus of whom he was warned would be the King of the Jews. Herod was reported to have ordered the killing of children, hoping that Jesus would be included among those killed. This was the infamous infanticidal event whose commemoration falls on December 28th, in the name and style “Holy Innocents’ Day”. Part of Christendom considers this the unluckiest day of the year when no work should be started. But this was the exact day that the ancient Egyptians loathed as the birthday of Set and no work would be done on it. In an indirect way, Herod is also linked to Set here. Since the ancient Egyptian religion was many thousands years older—by a probable 18,000 years, going by an estimate worked from Herodotus’ reports—it is clear which of the two religions based its practice on the other’s. The Jesus infancy narrative rests squarely on the narrative of the ancient Egyptians. The story of Krishna (see Appendix 6) is identical to that of Egypt as well and Krishna’s murderous uncle, King Kamsa, answers to the character of Set and Herod perfectly; complete with the killing of infantile innocents for fear that a greater king might come out of them. Of course Krishna escapes, as did Christ.

The Hyksos rulers appear to have adopted the social, political, administrative, cultural and religious structures of the conquered Egyptians and made no attempt to introduce their own systems if they were at all different from those of the Egyptians. This represented one of few incidences where a conqueror still considered the vanquished to be greater than him. It testifies to the extent of Egyptian influence prior to the conquest, namely that Egypt may have colonised and influenced the Hyksos in their homeland long before they invaded Egypt.

As for Horus, he is a continuation as well as a composite of Osiris. In many ways Jesus, in the circumstances of His life and in the essence of His mission, resembles the composite of Osiris and Horus. Although Jesus did not make it to the throne, He was still hailed as the “King of the Jews” in an emulation of the respective roles of Osiris and Horus as kings of Egypt. It is also demonstrated in Appendix 6, as we have said above, that the Indians had a similar inspiration by way of Krishna in that Krishna answers so directly to the characters of Osiris, Horus, Moses and Jesus. The hand of an ancient and the later Gnostic Egyptian scribe is evident in all of these cases.

Horus, for some reason, was known as the prominent one of horns, an epithet that may be what is retained in the Kalenjiin name for the “rainbow”, *chep-kuino-ap-orr* (*chepkuinaaporr*). Moses was linked to horns too, probably arising from his use of Egyptian design in his construction of the tabernacle.

25th December, the common birthday of many saviours, e.g., Osiris, Horus, Dionysus, Syrian Baal, Mithras, Buddha, Jesus etc. can be traced back to the most ancient of them, the ancient Egyptian prototype of most of them if not all, owing mostly to its manifest antecedency and the

known fact of early Osirian missionary work. The concessions of Egyptian antecedence and archetypal position with regard to the observance of 25th of December as the birthday of the Sun, or the Son, have been made by some western scholars such as Garnier, Spence, Gamble and Brandon.

The Gnostic Egyptian fathers of Christianity, while they controlled the Christian movement at inception, had found it hard to part with the family of Isis altogether, especially with regard to its allegorical and exegetical value. The concept of Madonna and Child began with the Egyptians and their icons of Isis and her child Horus. Scholars have pointed out ample evidence of the presence of the Black Madonna and Child in many places in Europe. This was to be the inspiration of the popular Mother and Child posture of Mary and Jesus especially in the Catholic and in other orthodox churches. We find similar inspirations in China and India.

The Black Nazarene that was wrought in Mexico and exported to the Philippines, where it is, for all practical purposes, worshipped, appears to be a continuation of an ancient black inspiration—reminiscent of the processions of Isis and Serapis in Egypt and elsewhere in the Roman Empire, which were well-described by Apuleius of the 2nd century AD. Scholars such as Glover (1909) and Garnier (1904), as we saw, concur with this position of black African antecedence in matters of organised religion.

By studying the portraits, figurines and other iconographic representations of Deity, such as those of Osiris, the Black Madonna, and the Black Nazarene, one can tell the characteristics of the population that created such works for it has been argued by competent scholars that the Homo Sapiens has a natural proclivity for creating Deity in his own image.

The unambiguously Negroid colossal stone heads of Mexico which are associated with the Olmec people, as well as the works of Jairazbhoy (1974, 1981), support the assertion that black people reached Mexico and other parts of the Americas, taking with them their industrial, political, religious, social and cultural superstructures.

The Greeks were not left behind either in the admiration for the family of Isis, for their Dionysus, “Son of God”, was their own adoption of Osiris. There was also the sculptured image of the Black Demeter (Isis) at Phigalea, Western Greece, which was well described by Pausanias of the 2nd century AD. King Alexander the “Great” was to count himself equally a Son of God, complete with a reworked story of a divine conception similar to those of Osiris and Horus, to support his divinity. In assigning himself a divine conception, Alexander had shunted his father aside the way the followers of the more ancient Imhotep of Egypt had shunted aside the latter’s father in assigning Imhotep a divine birth and the epithet “The Great Physician”. The followers of

Jesus Christ later assigned this last epithet to Him as well. However, we show in Appendix 6 that Imhotep was older than Jesus by close to 3000 years.

Alexander and Jesus, of the 3rd century BC and the 1st century AD respectively, were to share even more between themselves in that their respective pre-wedlock divine conceptions were each followed by a dream that came to their foster fathers informing them to understand and cooperate in the matter of their wives' pre-wedlock conceptions for they were divine.

Isis had many names in parts of the world where she was worshipped, hence the Latin epithet *Myrionymus*, "Of many names" which probably is what we have in the name "Mary". However, this should not discount altogether the ancient Egyptian etymological possibility of *Murer*, a "lover", or "bride", which name, at least in the Kalenjiin context, extends until the "bride" gives birth the first time.

SECTION D

THE ETHICAL CODE OF MAAT

General Introduction to Section D

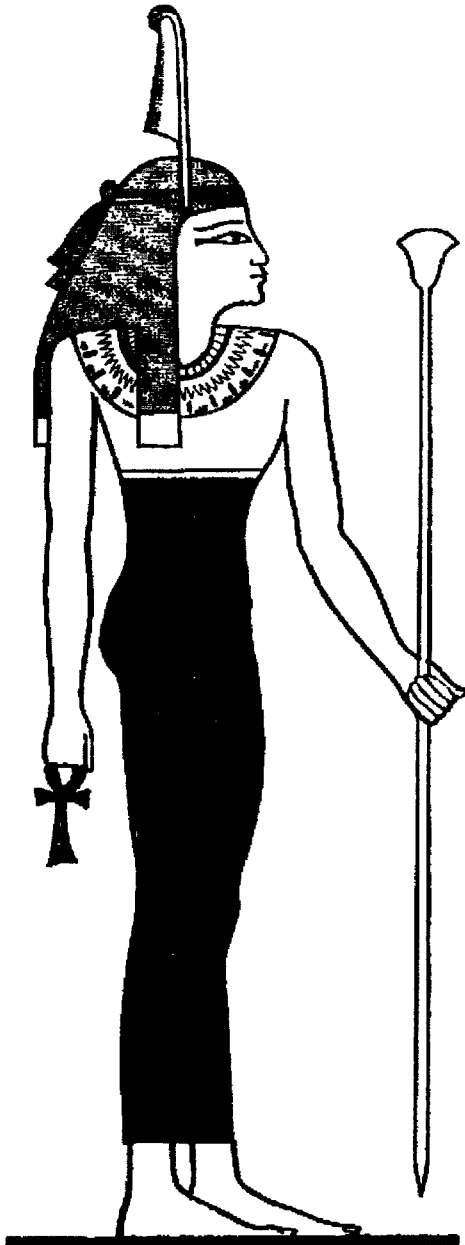


Figure 7: Maat
Adapted from Budge, 1904, I:419

“Within the world that Ra created according to his divine plan, Maat stands for social justice and religious order, the relationship between man and man, man and gods, man and the dead” (Watterson, 1984). This opening statement is meant to free us at the outset from the common lay understanding of Maat as one “goddess” among the “many” of ancient Egypt. *Maat* was first and foremost a socio-religious system, a cog in the wider wheel of belief in the One Ultimate Principle, whose ethical code of conduct helped regulate society at the practical day-to-day level. The Egyptian theologians only embodied the concept in the form of a philosophical goddess in order to facilitate easier understanding of it. It was their pedagogical habit to resort to allegorical and exegetical methods, to even condescend where they felt there was need, in order to accommodate the less philosophically sophisticated, i.e., the general masses, in their teaching of religion.

Where or when Ra was considered the Ultimate, Maat constituted that aspect of him that was sympathetic to social welfare. She was not a divine entity separate from him. Likewise, when and where Isis was considered the Ultimate, Maat embodied that aspect of her that paid sympathetic attention to social welfare. She was not a goddess separate from Isis.

The Kalenjiin’s belief was all summed up in an apex called Asiis, the logical continuation, in the south, of Isis and of all the other so-called gods and goddesses of ancient Egypt as demonstrated in Section C. Here Maat came along too, but not as a

conceptual goddess. She came only in her purely abstract role as the chief enforcer of the social and religious order as of ancient Egypt and in that same name. But because it was not the name of a goddess here, but only the logical embodiment of the ethical code and concept under the wider belief in Asiiis, we shall carry it in the lower case, *maat*.

Chapter 11

The Ethical Code of Maat of Ancient Egypt as retained in the *Maat* Social Institutions of the Asiisians

Maat

Abstract

Chapter 11 ushers in the discussion on the concept of *maat* as it governed the social institutions of the Kalenjiin. It should become clear as we go along that this indeed was a continuation of the ancient Egyptian *maat* concept minus the idea of a divinity that would stand for it. To the Kalenjiin, *maat* stood for social, economic and moral obligations between: (1) the living and the dead people who were from one agnatic genealogical lineage; (2) living people from the same agnatic genealogical lineage; (3) men serving in one military regiment (e.g. any one of the four traditional military regiments of Kipsigiisland), and (4) between men circumcised into an age grade around the same time (e.g. in the four-*maat* system of sub-generational reckoning in Nandi). All the men who shared any of or all of these social categories, addressed one another with the term *maat*, thus continually reminding themselves of the special relationship between them and the special obligations and expectations to and from one another and, jointly, to and from the wider society.

The whole nation was made up of such *maat* cell networks and that was how it was governed successfully without a police force and prisons.

We are also going to discuss in this subsection how *maat* was hinged to the totemic system in Kalenjiinland just as it was in ancient Egypt.

11.1 An Overview of *Maat*

Maat was right order in nature and society, established by the act of creation and hence meant, according to the context, what was right, what was correct, law, order, justice, and truth. This moral status quo the king and every member of society had to maintain and a just reward was promised to those who kept it faithfully. *Maat* was the heart of Egyptian ethics, the criterion by which men and women led their lives. As justice, it was the basis of the Egyptian legal system. The vizier responsible for justice was for this reason called “the priest of *maat*” and judges in later times wore an image of *Maat* on a chain about their neck. The ancient Egyptians personified this concept in the form of a completely conceptual female divinity they named *Maat*. As the personification of physical and moral law, order and truth, she was in reality a pure abstraction deified and then trusted to keep the human beings on a straight course, the word *maat* also meaning “straight” (Cf. Budge, 1904, I, 417).

Maat was never seriously considered an independent divinity outside the recognised Ultimate Principle, be it *Isis*, *Ra*, *Ptah* or *Amon*: she was always an appendage to them. This meant that *Maat* only represented that aspect of Deity that paid special attention to ethics, morality, justice and the legal system. Even *Akhenaton*, the 18th Dynasty Pharaoh who seems to have rebelled against the superficially apparent polytheistic tendencies of Egyptian religion, retained *Maat* as he tried to obliterate memory of all others except his sole Deity, *Aten* (Cf. Silverman, 1991:82).

The Egyptians found it comfortable perhaps to imagine that such delicate issues should be in the hands of such a soft, effeminate personality as the *Maat* that they created. Their theologians appear to have obliged enthusiastically and gone right ahead to create a philosophical divinity that almost assumed real life of her own. Initially she became the daughter of *Ra*, was closely associated with the administration of justice and vouchsafed a cult of her own (Cf. Morenz, 1973:116, 123, 265). *Maat* carried the *ankh* and sceptre and was most readily identified by the (ostrich) feather she wore on her head.

Armour adds that *maat* was a “guide to the correct attitude one should take to others... the key to the Egyptian view of ethical behaviour for humans while alive and of divine behaviour in judging of the souls after death” (Armour, 1986:162).

“Tradition stated that in the beginning, kingship came to earth in the person of the god-king, *Ra*, who brought his daughter, *Maat*, the embodiment of Truth and Justice, with him. Thus the beginning of the earth was simultaneous with the beginning of kingship and social order... *Maat* stood for much more than the incarnation of Truth and Justice. It stands for the divinely-appointed order of things, the equilibrium of the universe with the world, the regular movements of the stars, the sun, the moon, the seasons and the

during initiation; and within this last general concept (to a lesser extent) by being members of one *ibinda*, the age-set. The latter grouping may, ideally, cover the entire Kalenjiinland.

A Kipsigiis man, in particular, will refer to any person who happens to be related to him through any or all of the above social groupings as *maat* or *maanyuun*.² *Maat* is known as much for its warmth as for its rules, the numerous don'ts, rights and obligations. The entire population is held together by *maat* bonds of one sort or another, as we shall see below.

Because the various Kalenjiin sub nations do not necessarily apply *maat* emphasis uniformly, some favouring either this social relationship by giving it the name *maat* or the other type of social relationship by applying the term *maat* thereto; we might experience a problem trying to discuss *maat* in one general Kalenjiin context. We therefore need to declare as often as possible which of the sub nations we are discussing *maat* in respect of.

The words *oreet* and *maat* are used interchangeably in daily speech by the Kipsigiis but *maat* is closer, more emotional, and perhaps even more philosophical than *oreet*. Most other Kalenjiin sub-nations use the term *oreet*. *Maat* is rarely mentioned in this context if ever but its concept is understood and adhered to the hilt.

Two Kipsigiis men belonging to one *kootaapchii* (*Koot-aap-chii*, lit. "House of someone"), a patrilineage, but who are from different nuclear families, call one another *maat*. The two want to emphasise their relationship so much so that very often men at the *maat* level of relationship, strangely, tend to cultivate closer bonds than real brothers can manage on the average. But just as often, men refer to their brothers or even their own sons and sons of their brothers as *maat*. The word has its own spiritual magic.

The Nandi use the term *maat* principally in relation to an age grade. They use seven of the eight Kalenjiin age-sets and each age-set is sub-divided into four subsets called age grades, the *siritoik* (sing. indefinite is *sirit*) or *maat*. The senior most *sirit-yeet* (definite), the one after, the

1. Incidentally, the depth of the sky and its association with the sailing of the solar boat may remind one of the Kalenjiin reference to deep waters as *rir-eet* (the similarity to the deep waters of Ri?).

2. The Kipsigiis *maat* categories are given by Peristiany, 1939: 39-41. However, the author has not come across any number of Kipsigiis men who belonged to one *ibinda* who addressed each other, purely on the basis of *ibinda*, with the term *maat*. Not even so on the basis of the closer *paagule* level (those circumcised together in one house of rites), probably because *paagule* as a term of address is itself ever fashionable. And with the importance of the military regiments having waned considerably, no one hears of individuals who belong to the same regiment, *poryeet*, addressing one another, purely on the basis of regiment, by the term *maat*. But the word *maat* is not far from the Kipsigiis individual's lips in the presence of the members of his patrilineal grouping. As Peristiany found and recorded *maat* in the wider use early in the 20th century, and his informants were people who were born the century before that (and who were, therefore, least culturally adulterated), we have little by way of an alternative but to go by his wider version of *maat* categorisation as he found it then. *Maat* was still reigning supreme when he came to Kipsigiisland.

had formerly lived in a state of free love in a *sigroinet*, or warriors' house, in which case no notice would be taken of the offence" (1909:76).¹

¹ This practice is still current in Maasailand among the middle age and senior segments of the community as reported by Sankan (1971), and confirmed in the oral field by author. It went hand in hand with circumcision, which created the age-sets, and Kenyatta reported (and supported) it among the Gikuyu (1938), while Snell reported it among the Nandi (1954), Peristiany among the Kipsigiis (1939).

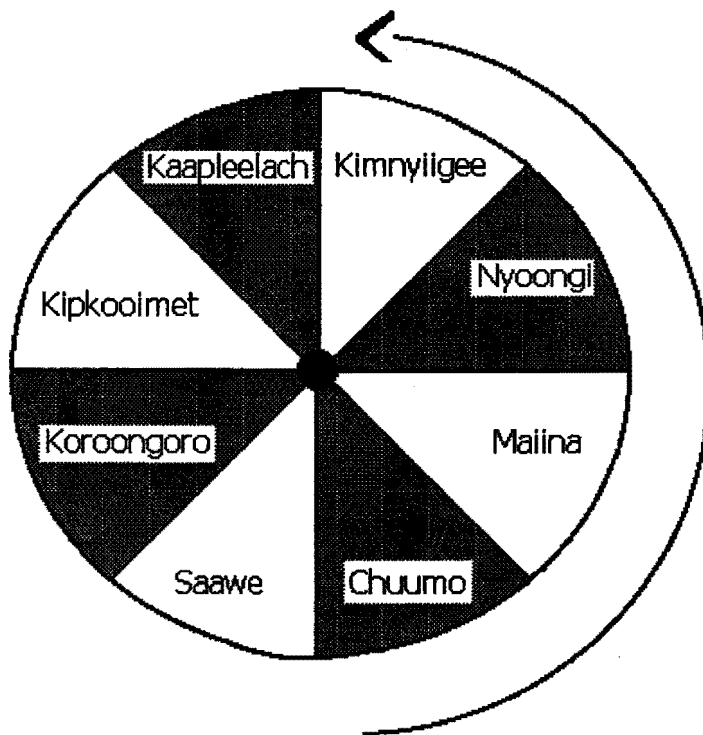


Figure 8: The ideal 8-set, 2-house Kalenjiin age-set system. The rotation is shown moving in an anticlockwise motion here only because Asiisian processions move in an anticlockwise direction around the altar. Members of the age-set that is facing "noon" here, *Kimnyiigee*, are being initiated presently, 2000 AD, in Kipsigiis, in Nandi, in Keiyoland and probably in one or two other places. But some of the other neighbouring sub-nations are no longer in tandem although they still follow the sequence all the same. Ideally the *Kimnyiigee's* initiation should go on, new members being added every year for about 15 years. Then it will be the turn for *Nyoongi*, then *Maiina* and so forth. The cycle ideally repeats itself every 120 years. So, all remaining equal, the next age-set of *Kimnyiigee*, being the great great-grandchildren of the present *Kimnyiigee*, will be initiated around 2120 AD. The entire system moves like one mass even though the sets are grouped into two "houses" of four age-sets each: the *Koroongoro* House (*Kaapkorooongoro*), which is shaded in the diagram, and the *Kipkooimet* House (*Kaapkipkooimet*) which is left plain. The two "houses" perfectly enmesh. Grandfather and grandson are directly opposite each other within the same "house". Father and son are ideally separated by one generation set in between their own but still belong to one "house". The most suitable person to reincarnate an ancestor is his or her great-grandson. In other words, ancestors ideally reincarnate as their own great great-grandchildren, i.e., they come back as the great great-grandchildren of themselves. Put in yet another way: your grandson is your grandfather in your next cycle of life on earth. You are not supposed to live so long that you are able to see your great great-grandchild because ideally, that should be yourself come back. You do not come back before dying. Therefore, if you live too long (>120 years) you will have to commit holy suicide in order to be reincarnated in proper time with your age-mates. The foregoing however, is based on the ideal situation. Some Kalenjiin sub-nations have since dropped one or other of the sets because of calamities that afflicted their members in history and the remaining seven sets are stretched out to cover for the lost set. The "houses" have consequently lost their meaning in such cases. But the original 8-age-set 2-house model still functions ideally, as described, in Keiyo and in Marakwet at least. As for the ideal of great-grandsons "siring" their great-grandfathers, this is only possible if a great-grandfather lives to a ripe old age. Premature deaths lead to their being reincarnated immediately, if deserving, by their own sons and paternal relations within the wider *kootaapchii*. Given such a scenario, the sons, grandsons and great-grandson-generation agnatic relations, are still expected to do their turn for there is no limit as to the number of reincarnations a soul can benefit from.

The cyclical Kalenjiin age-sets are shown in the accompanying diagram, in their normal sequence: *Maiina*, *Chuuma*, *Saawe*, *Koroongoro*, *Kipkooimet*, *Kaapleelach*, *Kimnyiigee* and

Nyoongi. The Kipsigiis, the Nandi and the Tugen, use only seven of these sets while most of the other sub-nations use all the eight sets. The latter have both *Koroongoro* and *Kipkooimet* as different age-sets. But the Kipsigiis have since dropped *Kipkooimet* while the Nandi similarly dropped *Koroongoro*. Reasons for dropping age-set names have always had something to do with disastrous losses in military campaigns and defence. For example, the Tugen dropped *Maiina*, without replacement, in the early 19th century, when, as the men under arms, the *Maiina* of the time, attacked the Keiyo but lost disastrously. The few who survived were promoted to *Nyoongi* and that was the end of *Maiina* in Tugenland.¹

The Marakwet and Eendo have their reason why their *Kipkooimet* was rebaptised *Kaaberur*, “the house of blessing”, namely that an epidemic of smallpox swept through their land in the 1940’s AD when they were initiating members for their House of *Kipkooimet*.

The age-sets reincarnated with the people and their associated fortunes and misfortunes, it has to be remembered, and to avoid the same disaster recurring every 120 or so years later when the same age-set would be due for circumcision, the Marakwet/Eendo name of the *Kipkooimet* set was changed to reflect hope.² Or, as in the case of the Nandi, Tugen and Kipsigiis; a set would be dropped altogether and the misfortune erased from memory.

One important reason why the affected age-sets were not repeated, is that the members, having largely been wiped out as young soldiers, had not got the opportunity to marry and beget children of their own who would carry forward their *maat* and reincarnate them together with their age-set according to the *maat* ideals. Their deaths in a totally lost battle, besides, led to moral uncleanness and they were, therefore, not a popular lot to be allowed to reincarnate.

The Nandi have successfully erased from memory the reason that led to their dropping *Koroongoro* from their age-set cycle but it is thought that they lost their *Koroongoro* men in significant numbers during a campaign against one of the following: the Luo, the Luhya or the Pokoot. The Kipsigiis, on their part, remember reluctantly that their last *Kipkooimet* men lost disastrously to their Gusii neighbours in the mid 1800’s at Ng’oino. This was a disastrous loss that they later made good, won a lot of land but later lost men again in a campaign in Moogore, right deep inside Gusii country, just before the arrival of the British and their colonisation (Cf. Lang’at, 1969:84).³

1.D.W.W. Kettel, 1975, footnotes.

2.D.W.W. Kettel, 1975, footnotes.




³ The popular explanation for this disaster is that the Kipsigiis soldiers met an allied force of Luo, Gusii and Kuria in Moogore, or Saosa, as the Gusii call it. This is an unlikely early alliance, but that is the explanation one meets with in the oral field time and again (Cf. Lang’at, 1969:86).

Maat rules within the context of the age-grade comradeship are legion, governing the individuals' behaviour towards: one another, one another's children, one another's wife, one another's parents etc. The strict moral codes that come with the word *maat* in this context virtually turn the members of an age-grade throughout the nation into brothers, or as Chesaina (1991:7) puts it:

"The age-set assumed by the initiates does not merely play a nominal role, it is a point of reference for each member's commitment to his fellow initiates and to the community at large. Each member of an age-set has to live up to the expectations the community has towards each age-set. This is because in the final analysis initiation is not social prestige but the beginning of definite social responsibilities."

The wives, children and parents of one (age-grade) Nandi *maat*, for example, treat any member of that *maat* as they would their husbands, fathers and sons respectively. Such social attitudes towards one another are reciprocal to the highest degree. Each male citizen of the nation belongs to one *maat* or another and, by the reciprocation imperative, and through the "cell" network of *maat*, the entire nation as a whole is subjected to uniform *maat* moral codes. Perfect social and religious order is thus achieved and maintained.

11.2 *Maat* in the Clan System, the Clan Totem (or Clan Emblem)

The ancient Egyptians, as the Kalenjiin still do, associated the word *maat* and its derivatives with fire, road, way or path as well as with the family and social interlinkage networks such as those outlined above. Among the Kalenjiin, fire, path and certain social bonds are named *maat*. *Oreet* is another ancient Egyptian word for, way, road, path etc. which has survived intact in the Kalenjiin language. The pertinent ancient Egyptian words as preserved in hieroglyphics are as follows:  *her-t*, “way”, “path”, “road” (B.Dict. 130), Kalenjiin *oreet*;  *m'hau-t*, is translated by Budge (B.Dict. 284a) as “family”, “kith and kin”, “tribesmen”, “generations (?)”, Kalenjiin *maat*; while he translates  *mat*, as “way, path” (276b).

Totemism is part and parcel of the *maat/oreet* system and we need to incorporate it at this stage. Since all Kalenjiin families are identified by the family name as by their totemic emblem, we may want to know whether this major defining characteristic was with the ancient Egyptians too, they being the ancient race to whom the Kalenjiin tradition traces descent.

Lewis Spencer, in his book, *The Myths of Ancient Egypt*, 1915, dares link ancient Egypt with totemism. This is a linkage whose presence in Egypt Spencer’s mentor, Wallis Budge, almost denied for fear perhaps of associating Egypt too closely with the rest of Africa as well as with the then similarly pre-literate societies elsewhere, all of which they preferred to call “savage”, “barbarian”, or “primitive”.¹ The early scholars of anthropology had so associated totemism with cultural backwardness that to link ancient Egypt with it at once sounded dissonant, irreconcilable, contradictory and out of place. But in a totemic sea that Africa and other similarly culturally oriented parts of the world were part of, Spencer poses, “Wherefore, it may be asked, was Egypt alone immune from the influence of totemism?” (1915:9). Spencer (1915:11) continues to supply irrefutable evidence supporting his stand:

“The Egyptians carried standards on which were represented their totemic animals precisely as the natives of the Upper Darling (Australia) engrave their totem on their shields... In many of the nomes of Egypt certain animals were not eaten by the inhabitants. This is a sure indication of the existence of totemism, for the presence of which in Egypt no better proof could be adduced.”

Spencer (1915:10-11) believes that it was obvious that the cat-headed Bast, who was worshipped first in the shape of a cat, was originally a cat totem and

¹ Which is ironic for Budge if we consider his unequivocal admission (see Chapter 4) that the ancient Egyptian language is basically an African language whose original home was to the east of the Great Lakes region.

“the crocodile was the incarnation of the god Sebek, and dwelt in a lake near Krokodilopolis. Ra and Horus are represented with the heads of hawks, and Thoth with the head of an ibis. Anubis has the head of a jackal. That some of these forms are totemic is not open to doubt.”


It may be regarded a certainty, therefore, that the Egyptian society was grouped into clans with totems in the form of a variety of animals and natural phenomena to identify them as is still practised by the Kalenjiin community. The system there also went by the name *maat* and was later abolished along with Maat on the mistaken account that it was zoolatric (Cf. Van Sertima, 1989:276).

Maat is manifested most tellingly in the Kalenjiin clan system. Any Kalenjiin society is divided into family lineages, what may be called “clans” for lack of a better term. Every clan traces its roots to one founder, often a male although not necessarily so. The Kalenjiin are presently patrilineal and it is the males essentially who carry the clan *maat*. Hollis counted 17 clans in 1909 among the Nandi (1909:5) and Peristiany counted about 25 animal clan totems among the Kipsigiis in the late thirties and reclassified them into 14 clans (1939:124). The Kipsigiis and the Nandi communities are largely made up of the same clans with identical totems across the border. Between the two, eliminating repetitions, about 20 clans may be counted.

The same clans and their animal emblems are repeated among the other central Kalenjiin sub-nations with the occasional addition of a totem and a peculiar clan or clan name (nickname) here and there.

Each Kalenjiin clan possesses a symbol by way of a chosen emblem they call *tyoondo* (from *tyoony*, “animal” and the article, *-to*) “a/the animal”. The emblem need not be a real animal. Some clans even recognise such *tyoondo* emblems as the sun, rain or lightning. The vast majority of the totems however are real beasts where “beast”, in this context, includes any living thing that is mobile, such as lion, elephant, safari ant, mole, cockroach, bee etc.

As is reported of some Native American and Native Australian communities, the names of the animals in their role as clan totems in Kalenjiinland, may be different from the familiar names used in the zoological, biological, entomological, celestial or astrological sense. Thus, to give the totemic names of a few of the animals that have been used as totems, we have: the elephant as a totem being called *Terik*; the lion, *Talai*, and the baboon, *Yegen* (or *Kip-yegen*). Whether this was done as a deliberate masking effort, as suggested by Lévi-Strauss with respect to the non-African totemic communities cited above, is difficult to tell. But the Kalenjiin clansmen and women are so proud of their individual clan animal emblems that they sooner than later give these animals nicknames, as one would do loved pets without the intention of masking.

Some additionally revere their totems so much that they are reluctant to refer to them by their ordinary names, as doing so would make them look ordinary when they were supposed to be special. So they apply nicknames and such practices may arguably be called masking. In certain cases the existing clan names that are ultimately derived from their totems' names, were originally the names applicable zoologically to such animals in older times and which have passed out of parlance as specific animals' names in the normal process of attrition of words. *Yegen*, the totemic word for "baboon" in Kalenjiin, for example, appears to be the ancient name for that animal because a sufficiently akin word is found in ancient Egyptian records as one word for "baboon",  *ieen* or *yeen* (Gardiner, 1927:606).¹ Moreover, it is still the usual name for "baboon" in the language of the Maasai. Another example is *meliil*, Kalenjiin for "leopard". It has disappeared from daily speech in central Kalenjiin where it has been replaced completely by *cheplaanga/cheplaangeet*. But it survives in the name of that section of Nandi called Kameliilo, "of Leopard House". *Meliil*, in other places *meril*, however, still survives in northern Kalenjiin with reference to "leopard" (Cf. Lévi-Strauss, 1962:19 for this concept).

The Kalenjiin clan emblem system dates back to ancient times. But the modern Kalenjiin believe that it was put in place primarily in order to guard against inbreeding. Inbreeding was known to lead to the birth of physical and mental weaklings if not altogether physically deformed babies. Each one of the clans was assigned an "animal" by which it would identify itself in relation to all the others and thereby observe rules of exogamy (social regulations forbidding marriage among relatives) with less difficulty and with maximum certainty. It will be seen that this motive, which is well known to the Kalenjiin, corroborates Levi-Strauss' suggestion that totemism reflects a kind of logic in which the differences between species and kinds in the natural world are used to express the categorisation of society (Cf. Clerk, GME 1993).

The oft flaunted religious motive in relation to totemic systems the world over, namely that these animals, plants and natural phenomena, were objects of worship, or that they were believed by the practising societies to be the incarnation of ancestors, did not apply to the Kalenjiin psyche and purpose in keeping this system of social regulation in place.

The Kalenjiin emblems, which are more often referred to as totems (by western as well as by African scholars) than as emblems, are, therefore, mere "flags" by which to identify and unite groups of people. This emblem concept of the Kalenjiin differs from the typical totem concept.²

¹ Transliteration is author's own, as it is not supplied by Gardiner.

² Kettel, a Canadian ethnographer who did some work in Tugenland, uses the term "emblem" instead of "totem" (B.W.W. Kettel *ibid.* 1975, various). Were it not for the need for maximum clarity, the author would have preferred the term "emblem" because of its precision in that it defines this cultural practice as a labelling system for the purpose of
Footnote continued at bottom of next page

“The totem of the clan is considered by the clansman much more as a symbol round which to rally, than as a divinity to be worshipped”, wrote Peristiany about the Kipsigiis, whom he studied in the late thirties. Although he uses the term “totem”, Peristiany was careful to distinguish the Kipsigiis (Kalenjiin) practice from that of stereotypes that reportedly virtually worshipped “totems” (1939:119).

According to Lord Avebury, such totemic systems began as family names. Thus the followers, or descendants of a man named “Lion” would, some generations down the line, consider the animal “lion” as their totem, respect the lion at first and finally worship it. He quotes examples from Samoan studies that had indicated that the sacred animals and plants there had advanced beyond the stage of totems pure and simple and to have attained the dignity of “gods”. The indication, therefore, was that in this part of Polynesia, totemism had developed into a religion (1911:91, 97).

Dr Frazer, in criticising Lord Avebury’s rather loose usage of the terms “worship” and “religion” with regard to totemic allegiance, goes ahead and defines the term “religion” as it relates to totemism and worship by way of dismissing Lord Avebury’s contention:

“If religion implies, as it seems to do, an acknowledgement on the part of the worshipper that the object of his worship is superior to himself, then pure totemism cannot properly be called a religion at all, since a man looks upon his totem as his equal and friend, not at all as his superior, still less his god.”¹

In his article “Totemism” in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Dr Frazer goes on to define totemism as both a religious and social system. It is religious in the sense that there exists mutual respect and protection between a man and his totem. In its social aspect, he says, totemism consists of the relation of the clansmen to each other and to men of other clans.

Lord Avebury is quick to notice self-contradiction on the part of Dr Frazer in his book, *Totemism and Exogamy*, as looked at side by side with his encyclopaedic contribution. In his book, Dr Frazer does not admit totemism as a religion, but in his encyclopaedic contribution, he does and thereby agrees with Lord Avebury whom he criticises in the book (Cit. Avebury, 1911:90).

The attempt to view all the world’s totemic systems in one uniform light may, in the first place, be the cause of the confusion in the definition of the word. The Ojibway section of the Algonquin Native North American ethnic group, use the word *do-daim*, “town mark” or “sign” with

identification of persons in the social place. Its freedom from religious connotation, or from belief by clan membership that they descended from it, which is too closely associated with the term “totem”, adds to its attraction. Another term which anthropologists have used and which is equally precise and devoid of religious and descent connotations, is “badge” (Cf. Avebury, 1911:100).

¹ In his *Totemism and Exogamy*—cited by Lord Avebury, 1911:89.

reference to the animal or plant, the name of which a clan bears (Cf. Tylor, 1878:284). This appeared to the Europeans of early 18th century to apply to animals or plants that these communities seemed to consider to be their ancestors and protectors, but which were definitely a rallying sign (Cf. Canney, 1970:360). However, the Algoquin's simple interpretation of their own word as "town mark" or "sign", was overlooked in the quest to find a deeper meaning that would conveniently corroborate the theory that the Algoquin's religion was "primitive" as many other religious systems of the world's non-literate societies had been labelled.

Some anthropologists, such as Frazer and Durkheim, in their search for the origins of totemism wherein they hoped to see the beginnings of religion, had advanced many theories. One of them had it that the person who owed allegiance to a certain totemic item as an ancestor, may be doing so owing to a scenario to the effect that at the moment the mother had discovered that she was pregnant, she had quickly sought the origin of her conception and traced it to either the meat of an animal that she had then just eaten or vegetables from the plant that she had eaten moments prior to perceiving the sensation of a life inside of her. She then named the individual so "conceived" after the respective animal whose meat she had consumed or the plant whose product she had just eaten. That would be that individual's personal totem. And amongst some Melanesian communities, it was enough for the woman to notice the animal or plant on her body or round about her in a peculiar manner for her to associate her pregnancy with it and hence declare it the personal totem of the child to be born (Cf. Frazer, 1910 ii:92).

Those anthropologists named the superstition, which held that women conceived through influence of animals, plants and inanimate objects, "conceptional totemism". The assumption here, on the part of some of those anthropologists, was that the people concerned were ignorant of the whole idea of biological conceptions via copulation.

Another version of "conceptional totemism", traced by Émile Durkheim to the Arunta people who are native to Central Australia, claimed that at the instant a woman discovered that there was a life inside of her, she looked around to determine at which neighbourhood she was in and what animal or plant was associated with that neighbourhood as a totem. Her baby, when it was born, would be named after the animal or plant totem so determined and it would for the rest of its life owe allegiance to that item as a personal totem. This was based on a theory of reincarnation, namely that an ancestor whose totem was associated with the geographical location at which a life supposedly entered a woman, was himself or herself that life soon to be reborn. Going by this, the totem of such an ancestor was to be the totem of the baby that he or she reincarnated in (Cf. Canney, 1970:361).

The more common (to us East Africans) type of totemism is the hereditary one, whereby upon birth, the baby assumes the totem of one of the parents as his or her own totem. The Kalenjiin follow the hereditary totemism type and merely use the name of the animal, plant or other phenomenon so designated as a hereditary clan mark. And, as we have pointed out, this is chiefly for application in social organisation, but neither for religious purposes nor as objects of worship.

This attitude to one's totem as a mere, if revered, identifying mark, is more or less a feature generally typical of black Africans, even to those from among communities that are not ethnically and culturally related to the Kalenjiin, such as the Kintu-speaking segment of Africa. It is probably due to shallow understanding of the complex African social organisation that would lead a non-African researcher to conclude as Dr Theal, a historian working among the Kintu-speaking peoples of Southern Africa, does. He says, "the reverence of the Bantus for their totemic animals rests on a belief that the souls of their dead are lodged in the creatures; in other words, totemism with them is only one form of the worship of ancestors."¹

One possible cause of this extreme reverence of totems is the African propensity to mystify things. This they do chiefly in order to instil fear of the unknown that would otherwise bear harmful consequences if disturbed, or to enforce allegiance to and conformity with a given cause or norm. Instead of preaching day in and day out, for instance, about the need to preserve certain endangered, or otherwise predisposed specie of animals, they allocate it to a section of the community as an identification totem. The individuals from such a section would have to thenceforth inextricably link the welfare and fortunes of the designated totem animal with their ancestral spirits as well as with their own fortunes. The families so associated with the respective totem animals become the legal custodians and protectors of them in such a committed manner that a casual observer would think that they were worshipping them.

The western mind can come closer to appreciating this philosophy and system of social organisation if they could only analogise it with their own horoscope system in which every individual is allocated a guardian animal according to his or her birthday. He or she links her fortunes, or even traces his or her temperaments to those that are thought to be typical of the animal so allocated, without being accused of worshipping it.

The Komatis of Madras, India, are known to follow a similar totemic system to that of the Kalenjiin where the chief purpose of it, as it is amongst the Kalenjiin, is the regulation of exogamy. Among the Komatis, as among the Kalenjiin, "no man may marry a woman of the same clan as

¹ G. M'Call Theal, *Records of South-Eastern Africa*, vol. 11, p. 404, et seq. Cited by Avebury, 1911:110.

himself, and all the members of a clan revere their totems in the usual way, making no secret of their reverence" (Avebury, 1911:110).¹

Needless to say, such "animal" clan totems of the Kalenjiin and the others of similar totemic inclination the world over, are revered as much as nations revere their flags and yet those nations are never viewed as *worshippers* of flags. In many countries, burning a piece of cloth that is painted in the national colours, and thereby answering to the name "flag", is a crime punishable by imprisonment, fine or both. The absurdity of this may register more if we considered that in such countries, if you painted a piece of cloth that was in your own possession in national colours, then took it to the streets and then burned it there, you could be jailed for the act of defacing or destroying the "flag". Yet the piece of cloth was not only your own but it was only a piece of cloth!

The Kalenjiin equally detest an emblem defiler, and how much more should they do it, with greater justification, these "animal" emblems being the creations of Deity and not the handwork of man as the flags are? And we never can know for certain now, but suppose it was, which it may well have been as hinted above, that one of the objectives of the "animal" emblem system was to preserve wildlife and the ecosystem as a whole? It would then appeal immensely to the most modern conservationist and environmentalist thought.

This conservation motive is actually maintained in the oral traditions of the Baganda of Uganda who say that their totemic system was installed by their first king, Kintu, of approximately late 14th century AD, during a time when the Baganda were sustained solely by hunting wild game. In order to conserve certain endangered species of animals, he decreed partial moratoriums on their hunting by declaring such animals to be totems of certain sections of the community which sections were thenceforth debarred from participating in the hunting of such animals. As for this piece of African ingenuity, Frazer (1910 ii:476) allows a rare concession in the following words "The theory that the totemic taboos are based on a sort of Act for the Preservation of Game can hardly be primitive."

Records have been made of some totemic social systems that required the members who identified themselves with a totem to actively promote the conservation of their totem. A chief of the Malinke Keita of the old Senegambia, West Africa, whose totem was a certain specie of the sparrow, once begged of a Frenchman to release a sparrow that he had caught. "That", he said,

¹ The term "clan" here, for the purpose of marital regulation, must relate, in the Kalenjiin case, to the agnatic exogamous units called *kootaapchii*.

“would give me great pleasure; for I am a relation of the bird... We are all forbidden to kill it, to eat its flesh, and to allow any one to hurt it in our presence” (Frazer, 1910 ii:544).¹

We have the following from Hollis (1909:6), with respect to the Nandi:

“In former times the killing of his sacred animal, or totem, by the clansman was strictly forbidden, and any breach of this law was severely dealt with, the offender being either put to death or driven out of his clan and his cattle confiscated. Nowadays (1909 AD) custom is less severe, and although it is still considered wrong to kill the sacred animal, if this is done, an apology to the animal is apparently all that is necessary.”¹

Killing totemic animals and then apologising to them seems to have been widespread in Africa and, in fact, elsewhere where social organisation was partly totemic. Solomon Reinach in his *Cults* (as quoted by Canney, 1970:361) has confirmed this to be one of the 12 traits and norms that characterise totemic societies worldwide.

A corroborating example is provided to us from the Xhosa people of the southeastern coast of South Africa. Ludwig Alberti, writing in 1807—over one hundred years before Hollis wrote the above—used almost the same words as those of Hollis (although Alberti wrote in German): “When after much effort an elephant has at length been killed one seeks simultaneously to apologise to it for having done so by pretending that the killing was merely accidental and not intentional” (Alberti, 1807:48). It is safe to generalise that the habit was widespread in Africa because the Xhosa and the Kalenjiin live thousands of kilometres apart. The same has to obtain amongst the intervening communities all the way simply because ideas do not fly of their own like birds.

It would appear that there was thought to be a living spirit that inhabited the body of the fallen animal, even as it lay dying, that these Africans were addressing when they sought to articulate their pretended apology. They may also have been apologising to Deity indirectly. But certainly the totem animal was not worshipped; even the act alone of killing the animal, albeit illegally, nay, sacrilegiously, precluded that.

The Kalenjiin know that some of their ancestors invented the highly systematised and regulated totem network but they do not mystically associate those ancestors with the individual totems as such. Neither do they, normally nor ceremonially, eat these totems which each individual refers to as “the animal of my *maat*” and which they may even affectionately address as if they were addressing another person of their *kootaapchii*, uttering “*ma-nyuun*”, “my *maat*”, i.e., “my kinsman”.

¹ Quoting Dr André Rançon, a French explorer, 1894.

As a rule, and this, incidentally, applies to many other socially regulated societies such as those of Papua New Guinea, the Baganda and the Banyankole of Uganda etc., clansmen do not eat their clan totems. This requirement has seen to it that domestic animals whose meat is eaten are generally excluded from the list of totemic animals. Exceptions that are common among the Kintu-speaking nations of Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, and probably elsewhere within the Great Lakes neighbourhood, where domestic animals feature in the list of totems, have put in place a piece of ingenuity to skirt around the difficulty and avoid starving the totem's members. Among the Banyankole, the Baganda, the Batoro and the Banyoro, for instance, certain parts of the body of a cow may be allocated to some clans as their totem, e.g. the tongue of cow, the head, or even the cattle of a certain colour. The members of such clans may not eat the part of the animal that is their totem, but they may eat other parts so they do not starve for lack of meat. Those clans whose totem is the red cow, for example, may not eat meat from a cow of that colour, and the restriction extends to the animal of this colour only, but they are free to partake of the meat from cows of different colours (Cf. Frazer, 1910 ii:28, 473-540).

Frazer, in trying to figure out the reason why a clan from this Great Lakes region of Africa should be allocated as a totem, say the tongue or entrails of an animal, speculates along the lines of conceptional totemism, which, as we have seen, was associated by Émile Durkheim with the Arunta ethnic group of Native Australia. In a conceptional totemic system a woman may determine the clan of her child by merely taking into account what she had eaten immediately prior to noticing that she was with child. The plant or animal source of such dish would become the child's totem (Cf. Frazer, 1910 ii:473-540).

The likelihood, however, as far as the Great Lakes communities were concerned, may have been different; the probable reason instead having been one designed to force generosity upon the people. If a family that was debarred from eating animal entrails on account of these constituting their appointed totem, for example, slaughtered an ox, they would be obliged to donate all the entrails to their neighbours who were not similarly debarred. This way poor neighbours who may have had no animals to slaughter, and who would otherwise have gone without such nutritional items as meat, made their day. In fact such generosity could be stretched to painful limits. The Nyankole family whose totem, for example, was a red cow, would not eat the meat from such a cow, neither would they drink its milk. They would have to donate such an animal, or all of its

1 Hollis repeats here the story of a *Kipkoitim* (elephant clan) man who so admired the huge tusks of one of his "clansmen", an elephant, that he was overcome by temptation and he did kill it. He then walked to the carcass and expressed shock: "So sorry, old fellow, I thought you were a rhino."

products, to some other family or families to whom an animal of similar description was not tabooed.

The BaNyankole, who are sometimes called Bahima, are a pastoral people *par excellence* and average families own such large herds of cattle, which are otherwise famous for their enormously long horns. But poor families are not unknown among them, hence the design probably—and the beauty—of their totemic system which is largely cattle-based. To a great extent it is characterised by the tabooing of certain body parts of domestic animals, or certain animals of a specific colour, as we have seen, by designating them totems of certain clans which are, by dint of this classificatory design, debarred from eating, or even keeping them (Cf. Frazer, 1910 ii:536).

We can imagine that under this classificatory system, should a farmer's cow produce a calf that is of a colour that is tabooed to him or her, he or she may be expected to dispose of it to a neighbour who, perchance, may be poor but is not similarly tabooed. It is clear that given a strict enforcement of this piece of socialistic ingenuity, the lucky poor may gradually climb out of their predicament by merely acting as recipients of calves whose colours are tabooed to the wealthy ones. African socialism, which is what can justifiably be called *maat*, thus relied on charity and generosity yes, but put in place mechanisms that forced ethical and moral actions upon individuals just in case they were reluctant. In the context of Kintu-speaking Africa, *maat* may be viewed as being analogous to *utu* or *ubuntu*, "humanity".¹

Some of the Kalenjiin clan totems, like many of the totems of those Eastern Africa neighbours, and those of such far-removed peoples as the Native Australians, Native Americans and certain Asian nations, are unreachable, let alone being edible. Whoever it was in antiquity that allocated totemic emblems to the Kalenjiin clans studiously avoided domestic animals, excepting the dog, which, in any case, is not edible. Some are edible, however, and are eaten by those who do not hold them to be their emblem. But things have since changed or been relaxed in Kalenjiinland and it is not inconceivable that some of the edible totem items, like *pugenereek* (white mushrooms), which are a delicacy, are eaten by everybody nowadays. Highly mobile edibles like duiker (not eaten by some), guinea fowl, *taiyweet* (partridge) etc. are hunted, killed, cooked and eaten without ceremony by those to whom it is not disallowed. Hollis (Cf. 1909:8 and various) is emphatic about the prevailing situation before the relaxation, e.g., he says, the *Kipamwi* (duiker) clan "... may not... eat the flesh of the duiker or of the rhinoceros."²

¹ Following a discussion with Prof. PS Vermaak, Pretoria, July 2000.

² There is a story, however, about one man who lived two generations or so ago. He was of the Baboon clan (*Kibyegen*) who, reportedly, carried home carcasses of baboons that had been killed in instances where they had become a menace to agriculture. He ate them. There was probably no further ceremony about the eating as he or another clansman of his would

Footnote continued at bottom of next page

The Mawatta of Papua New Guinea were known, latest a century or so ago, to bar all their people from eating their own individual totems. In addition, the wife was not allowed to eat her husband's totem and vice versa, failure to observe which embargo the offender would be ostracised as a ceremonially unclean person for a time (Cf. Frazer, 1910 ii:27). This kind of proviso aimed at the spouse, has not been recorded of the Kalenjiin but it seems natural and logical that this should be the case, especially as the cooking utensils would be shared by husband and wife, not to speak of the mutual respect for one another's family background that governed couple's lives. Besides, on getting married, the wife assumed her husband's clan, *kootaapchii* and the totem, although she did not surrender her own natal clan, *kootaapchii* and totem.

Lions, baboons and leopards feature among the social emblems. These are killed—with symbolic permission from those whose totem the particular animals are—when they become a menace. Peristiany joined a Kipsigiis leopard-hunting party in 1939 and reported (1939:172-174):

“The leopard had made a nuisance of itself by killing the goats of a *kookweet* (parish), and it was decided to kill it (As soon as the excited noisy men had formed a ring around the beast's lair, silence was ordered). Over the noisy activities now falls a deep hush, and a man of the *cheplaangeet* (leopard) clan addresses his fellow clan-member in the following terms:- *ibaraate tuguuk aap piik, neego ak tuuga ko kaachubiin ak inyee. Amun iboo oornyoon kaawirenen sagoon* (You have destroyed people's property—cows and goats—for this I hereby curse you and because you belong to my clan I throw a leaf at you'). He then throws a leaf in the direction of the leopard.”

The afflicted neighbourhood members close in first, followed by the others as the *cheplaangeet* clansman continues chanting more curses although the throwing of the leaf had marked the end of the moral requirement.¹

The Lotuko, a Hamitic-speaking people who live in Sudan, prohibit the killing of the clan totem animal and every clansman strives to preserve his animal emblem. One may kill his totem animal only as an act of self-defence. Lotuko, like many of their Hamitic-speaking neighbours believe that when a man dies he reincarnates into his totem animal (Cf. Seligman, 1934:311-312).

have given the go-ahead for the beast to be killed by cursing it out of his clan in the first place before it could be attacked (see below). As we stress elsewhere, some of these ancient rules indeed seem to have had the wildlife conservation motive, as to have to ask for permission to kill a totem animal each time necessarily reduced the killings of such wildlife.

Hollis (p. 24 *ibid.* 1908) includes baboon and rat as delicacy to the Nandi. Both are unheard of on Nandi tables these days. Certain species of moles, may be... but rats! All wildlife is protected by the government these days and the possibility of hunting them down does not arise. Government has set in to secure what centuries of *maat* ethical code of conduct had preserved.

1. The author has altered slightly Peristiany's spelling of Kalenjiin words to come closer to more correct Kalenjiin phonology. He has further rationalised Peristiany's translation of the same into English as Peristiany preferred literal word for word translation where, because of the wide difference in language structure between Kalenjiin and English, his translations are often as amusing as informative (although the message comes across all the same)!

So totem animals here are no mere flags with which to identify people, as the case is among the Kalenjiin. Here, amongst the Lotuko, they are the people's ancestors!

The great torch of the Kalenjiin clan's *maat*, embodying the virtues of the clan, burns in the girls of the clan too and, in spite of their technical inability to pass down this *maat* to their own children (see below), they are often the proudest members of their clan. Each clan's women have a song, poem or rhyme, invented probably several centuries past, in praise of their clan and its totem. The rhyme is restricted to the daughters of the clan although most men of the clan, who chant their version but only seldom, will usually know it given the frequency with which the rhyme is chanted.¹

To serve as an example of the esteem that clan totems enjoyed, the following is the opening part of the rhyme pertinent to the Kipkeles *Kootaapchii*, as chanted by its womenfolk. The clan totem animal is the lion and the royal beast's virtues are being extolled:

Hee Talaeek!

Aa cheptaap Kaamabeel amayo

Kitabeel kole kasaita

Koyo kole kamitak

kole oongiam kouchuto!

*Hee Talaeek!*¹

'am daughter of home which neither roasts nor boils

Would roast but says fat drips down

Would boil but says it gets too soft

Then says let's eat it as it is (raw)!

Kipkeles men's verse:

Kipoo Kipkeleseek

Sabuleen tegeetik

1. The men's version is rarely said as men would more often praise their military regiment rather than sing out the virtues of the clan.

Tenden kelyeek

Amasoomo chepo ruutoi

We are of Kipkeles

They of hairy chests

Of thin legs

But who will not hire any for travel

All in praise of the clan's totem, lion, who eats his meat fresh and raw. The lion who may appear to have thin legs in relation to its large hairy body but who is proud of them and will not hire any for use on long journeys.

The Kalenjiin totemic system, which was invented to guarantee *maat* throughout the land, like male circumcision, was not seriously targeted by the missionaries as they spread Christianity from the beginning of the 20th century. It survived and some of the most ardent supporters of the clan and the totemic system today are to be found among the African Christian clergy and church elders. The totem system will therefore live on.

The ancient Egyptian society, from whom it is thought that the Kalenjiin brought *maat* and its totem support system, was not as fortunate:

"Maat suffered from the fact, Karenga tells us, that its last centuries coincided with the first centuries of the Christian religion which not only supplanted it but at times systematically attacked it. It was actually outlawed by Theodosius in the fourth century (AD) and again by Justinian in the sixth. Egyptian symbolic use of animals in religious expression was not understood by European invaders and seen by them as zoolatry without any serious attempt on their part to understand the theology and ethics which embraced and explained it" (Van Sertima, 1989:276).

From the foregoing statement, we confirm that *maat* and totemism were completely interlinked even in ancient Egypt as they still are in Kalenjiinland.

Considering the foregoing discussion, can any totemically regulated social system be fairly described as follows?

"... Taboos, totemism and exogamy found in 'primitive' religion... Taboos take on religious meaning as they are associated with totemism. Each clan identifies itself with an ancestor symbolised by a totem animal or plant. Totemism usually involves the

1. "Gentle ones", meaning, "royalty", or "nobility". Most ancient ruling clans among the Hamitic-speaking peoples belonged to the lion totem. But history, at least in Kalenjiinland and some nations in Sudan such as the Bari and Lotuko, has examples of rulers whose emblems were other than lion.

ceremonial eating of the totem animal which otherwise is protected by taboos.” (Gehman, 1989:35).¹

11.3 Maat Control in Matters of Marriage

A suitor's parent is subjected to an interview when he or she goes to a prospective bride's home by the parents of the girl or their representatives—usually the latter. If the suitor's family totem and that of the prospective in-laws is one and the same, eyebrows are raised because the candidate and the girl may and usually trace their ancestry to one ancient person. Such a suitor's parent would be required to prove that although they essentially belong to one clan with the prospective bride, they do not belong to one House, *Kootaapchii*, the real exogamous grouping.

The *Kootaapchii* concept subdivides clans into branches, each of which can trace ancestry to a relatively recent individual. The individual may be dead several hundred years, but as long as there has occurred no further sub-division founder interrupting the lineage as recognised equally between the bargaining families, no marriage may take place between their offspring. Such a suitor is held to be a blood relation of the girl he is seeking to marry.²

If the suitor side can prove that they owe allegiance to a *Kootaapchii* other than that of the girl's line, even though they may belong to the same clan and owe allegiance to one and the same totem, they will have jumped the most disabling exogamy hurdle. It was harder, in fact almost impossible, in the past, to marry a pair that shared a totem as reported by Orchardson (1961:76), but other reports indicate that exceptional situations existed.

An example: The Kipois clan members of Kipsigiis, whose totem is the jackal, were subdivided, at least up to 1939 when Evans-Pritchard mentioned them, into four *Kootaapchii* branches as follows: Kaapcheromur, Kaabororeek, Kaapsegiit and Kaagiposson. Unless there is a special taboo between one of these branches and another that bars them from intermarrying, they

1. Quoting and analysing Sigmund Freud's *The Future of an Illusion*.

2. Kettel has asserted in respect of the Tugen that “*kapchi* (*kootaapchii*), however, is an elastic term because every male becomes a lineage founder eventually, provided he has offspring... From any individual if you count back three generations, you will come to a lineage founder. Every Tugen man is eventually a lineage founder to those of the first, second, and third generations below him in the agnatic line, and ceases to be for the fourth. “Up to the third generational level members of the lineage address each other by kin-terms. At the fourth generational level, they address each other just as they do unrelated persons although agnatically related” (D.W.W. Kettel, *ibid.* p. 26).

Collated evidence from the oral field, however, seems to indicate that founders of *kootaapchii* were the few great achievers, illustrious fellows who overshadowed their own *kootaapchii* founders. But as long as they lived, the founders did not know that they were founding a *kootaapchii* as their loyalty was to their older *kootaapchii*. But those who, for reasons of irreversible marital incest, real or conceptual, were forced to found their own *kootaapchii*—and transfer the incurred curse to it—of course knew that they were founding a *kootaapchii*. So did those people who emigrated far away from their original homelands. Kettel probably had the narrower *kootaapchii* to *kootaapchii* exogamic condition in mind when he wrote that every man necessarily founded a *kootaapchii*.

could intermarry. A Kaapcheromur could marry a Kaabororeek etc. even though they may both owe allegiance to the jackal as their totem and know very well that their common ancestor was one Mr Kipoiis who may have lived before or around the 15th century AD. But a Kaapcheromur man could not, under any circumstances, marry a girl from another Kaapcheromur family.¹

Apart from any known disabling taboo and serious defects in the inherited innate conduct within the suitor's family—and the Kalenjiin believe in such a thing as inherited innate conducts of families which they call *iin* or *in-deet*—a suitor may be disqualified on account of another relative's marriage contract. If his close relative married from the same *Kootaapchii* that he intends to take a bride from during the present or a recent generation, he will be disqualified. So will he be if one of his earlier wives came from that same *Kootaapchii*. So will he be if his mother, or his maternal grandmother, came from that *Kootaapchii*. These rules were more or less the same throughout Kalenjiinland. From Tugen:

“For the Tugen, kin connections and extant alliances create the primary constraints on marriage choices. An alliance is effected between two lineages (*Kootaapchii*) on the basis of one, and only one, marriage. Any marriage is conditioned by the marriages of co-generational lineage members, of parental generation lineage members, and of grandparental generation lineage members. Marriages with members of any of these generations are prohibited. Sexual relations with such people are considered incestuous and are avoided... The genealogical great-grandfather's marriage (with genealogical great-grandmother) blocks marriage with the great-grandmother's natal lineage just in case great-grandmother is still alive, a highly unlikely state of affairs. Consequently, the duration of prohibition, three generations inclusive of the founder, is the duration of Tugen alliance. There is no pressure for a marriage between members of any pair of fission lineages stemming from two allied lineages to take place, although under Tugen demographic conditions of small local populations and low density the likelihood of such marriages taking place at the generation of fission is very high... There is some expectation that such marriages will occur to judge from the ritual signalling of the end of an alliance. This is marked by the return of the belt (*momosiet*²) of a woman who was married out to another lineage. The belt will have four rows of cowry shells indicating that the deceased woman had given rise to a line now three generations long. A girl has a belt with a single line of cowries. When she has a child, a second row is added, and when a grandchild is born, a third one, and finally, with the birth of a great-grandchild, the fourth and last row completes the record keeping. The four-rowed cowry belt is returned around the neck of a nanny goat (which is a gift) by one of her male descendants of the third descending generation. Tugen say that marriages can then be contracted in that generation.

1.E.E. Evans-Pritchard, in his introduction to Peristiany's book on the Kipsigiis, *ibid.* p. xxxi-xxxii. The estimation of the time Kipoiis lived is the author's own—based on the likely time of Myoots' major dispersal events (a) because Kipoiis clan members are to be found at least in 3 sub-nations, Kipsigiis, Nandi and Koony and (b) because Kaagipooch, a key founding ancestor of the Nandi was of Kipoiis clan (see Nandi clans table prepared by Hollis, 1909).

2.*Mamoosiet* is not to be confused with *legetyeet* the women's belt whose primary use is to return the tummy to shape after birth. The connection with reproduction, hence fertility, makes *legetyeet* such an item of great symbolic essence. Women can use it to stop arguments and fights among people by merely producing it and ordering the combatants to stop. Old men use the multi-nodded *nogirweet* staff to stop petty neighbourhood or family brawls, but an ostrich feather, or the ceremonial headdress, *kutweet*, in a battle situation, if it becomes necessary; to intervene and halt bloodletting.

These belts serve as mnemonic devices helping lineages keep track of the lapsing of their various alliances" (Kettel, 1975:36-37).

Marriage choices may also be constrained by an unreconciled homicide at the larger clan level. If someone of a given clan kills, whether purposely or not, someone of another clan, these clans cease to intermarry until a purifying ritual removes the mystical curse which is called into effect by the killing (Cf. Kettel, 1975:88).

"With the inter-clan murder, reconciliation and purification were necessary, otherwise the *ng'oki* jurisdiction would begin to destroy the procreation of families of the respective clans beginning from those that are closely related at the material time, and then moving into the rest of the members of the respective clans" (Chesang, 33).

These *maat* and *ng'oki* rules in relation to marriage, are ancient ingenious innovations that sought to ensure that people avoided debilitating crimes or that they endeavoured with maximum expediency to sort out pending issues such as those of homicide as soon as the taboo was incurred. The numerous choice-restricting checks also ensured that suitors looked more around and farther afield for brides. That way the entire community's ties were enhanced because the procedure automatically generated the most extensive relations network throughout the territory of the sub-nation concerned. The rules automatically forced and maintained a total societal cohesion.

Marriage choices may also be restricted further by misfortune-associations such as what is thought to be an inherent high incidence of barrenness that characterise the females from certain families. And beyond this, the ancients had somehow established that marriage combinations between certain specific families either yielded very few births if any or led to several still births and high rates of infant mortality. Such matching is avoided and each *Kootaapchii* maintains a list, by word of mouth, from father to son, of the various *Kootaapchii* that they should avoid marrying into.

The Kalenjiin *maat* torch patrilineal relay system may be contrasted with the practice of some other socially organised and regulated nations in Eastern Africa, the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, the Native Americas, Native Australia, India, New Guinea, Polynesia, Melanesia etc.

Among the North American Natives called Iroquois, the father and child can never belong to the same clan, descent going in all cases by the female line. The rules of exogamy are similar to those of the Kalenjiin although, in their case, the *maat* of the woman, wife and mother is the controlling factor.

The Native Americans of Nootka Sound, North-West, control matters of totemic exogamy as follows: "A Whale, may not marry a Whale, nor a Frog a Frog. A child always takes the crest of the

mother, so that if the mother be a Wolf, all her children will be Wolves. As a rule, descent is traced from the mother, not from the father" (Tylor, 1878:285).¹

The Iroquois social system, as well as the one just described, is analogous to the majority of the Native Australian mother-line descent systems. The Iroquois, just as do the Native Australians, the Kalenjiin and others, also control the social system by means of clan totems in form of animals such as Wolf, Bear, Turtle, Hawk, Deer etc. Like it is among the Kalenjiin, none of the clan members may marry one from their own clan (Cf. Tylor, 1878:284) although an important difference obtains, namely that whereas the Kalenjiin are of patrilineal persuasion, the mentioned Native American and Native Australian societies are of matrilineal persuasion.

An occasional far-removed society may maintain a clan system that is perfectly analogous to the Kalenjiin one, children inheriting the descent line of their father, complete with the totem "animal", and marriage being controlled by the related totemic system. And the totems here are, again, essentially animals with the exception of an edible plant or two, just as in the analogous Kalenjiin system. One such ethnic group has been reported by the members of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition. They said that the children of the Mawatta ethnic group of Papua New Guinea "follow the totem (*ibihara*) of their father only" (Frazer, 1910 ii:28).²

The western end of the Islands of Torres Straits, which divide Australia on the north from New Guinea, provides us with another example of a patrilineally controlled system of exogamy complete with the typical complimentary component by way of totemic division and classification of the population. The Mabuiag people of this area have divided the population roughly into two, one half identifying itself with sea creatures as totems while the other half identifies itself with land animals. As it is among the Kalenjiin, women, like men, inherit the father's totem and a married woman, just as in Kalenjiinland again, keeps her inherited totem in marriage although all her children will inherit her husband's totem, clan name etc. (Cf. Frazer, 1910 ii:4).

The Melanesian, or Black Islands—named so because of the complexion of the native populations—to the north-east and south-east of New Guinea, provide us with an example of a two-class exogamous system that restricts marriage to inter-class relationships but at the same time regulates marriage further by a totemic system. Descent here is inherited along the female line and is, therefore, more analogous to the typical native Australian practice but is opposite of

¹ Quoting Mayne, Brit. Columbia, p. 257.

² Citing the *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits*, v. 187 sq.

the totemic exogamous patrilineal system that is typical of the Kalenjiin and others such as the already mentioned Mabuig of the Torres Straits etc. (Cf. Frazer, 1910 ii:86).

Among the proud Brahmins of India, it is unlawful for a Brahman to marry a wife whose clan name, *gotra*, (literally, “cow-stall”) is the same as his own and this prohibition bars marriage among relatives in the male line indefinitely. Connections on the female side may also preclude marriage for those cases that are within close limits of consanguinity (Cf. Tylor, 1878:280). This system is also quite analogous to the Kalenjiin one where *kootaapchii* is the equivalent of the Indian *gotra*. It would be of some interest also to investigate how East Africans came to refer to a clan, or larger family, as *boma*, “cattle pen” in Kiswahili, as this happens to be analogous to the metaphoric Hindu terminology.

The Zulu and the Xhosa, both of the eastern coast of South Africa, who are better known for what some western anthropologists preferred to call “ancestor worship”, are not known to be totemic in their organisation and their exogamy is managed by family name, the equivalent of the *kootaapchii* of the Kalenjiin. Like the Brahmins of India and their management of exogamy by means of the *gotra* name, the Zulu and the Xhosa maintain record by means of the large family name *isibongo*. A Zulu man here may not marry a woman who bears his *isibongo* name whether she come from within the Xhosa community or from within the Ndebele community, for all these communities are cousins and have *isibongo* names that run right across the present ethnic divide. Another great African people who are not totemic and have to manage exogamy solely by means of family name are the Maasai (Cf. Frazer, 1910 ii:382, 408).

The Kalenjiin’s double-barrelled technique of managing exogamy by means of both the wider family name, or “House”, *kootaapchii*, and the totem (to an extent) is not, as we can see, universal even in the African context. However, it is widely spread in space, as it is found in even such far off places as Native America, Native Australia, Polynesia, Melanesia, India and, most importantly, the spread in the historical context is accounted for by its reported presence in ancient Egypt. With all these facts in mind, it is quite legitimate a hypothesis to say that the Maasai, the Zulu, the Xhosa and the others in Africa that do not maintain a totemic system, have actually dispensed with it. Such a possibility can take place if a single large family migrates and founds an ethnic group on its own in their new abode. That entire ethnic group would be having one totem, the one that they came with as a family and it would soon lose relevance.

We see the said Kalenjiin’s double-barrelled style of managing exogamy being mirrored among the conservative Central Indian populations who are collectively called Dravidians and who are, on the average, as dark as Africans, apart from sharing many other physical attributes. They organise themselves along totemic and exogamous lines with descent going along the

father's line. Here too a man may not marry a woman from his father's clan and totem. Neither may he marry from his mother's family line unless, and this is identical to one Kalenjiin rule regarding consanguineous marriages, which rule we alluded to under "*Maat* in Marriage" above; the bride is more than three generations removed from the groom's mother. However, it is to be noted that some of the Dravidians, e.g. the Nattaman, Vallambans, Goundans and several other Tamil-speaking Dravidians, make it a rule to marry a first cousin (paternal aunt's or maternal uncle's child). They go outside such familial loop only if one of that degree of consanguinity were not available (Cf. Frazer, 1910 ii:221).

The Kalenjiin style of reckoning lineage and managing exogamy by means of both the *kootaapchii* name and the animal emblem, may appear to be restrictive of marriage choices in an unnecessarily severe, intrusive and debilitating manner. But that may only seem so until we hear something about the corresponding Ashanti system that is even more restrictive, intrusive and debilitating to marriage. The Ashanti of Ghana, West Africa, are both patrilineal and matrilineal at the same time in their reckoning of descent and also manage exogamy within this environment and subject it to these parameters. A man carries in him a *ntoro*, the equivalent of Kalenjiin *maat*, which he passes on to his offspring. The woman too, although the man's *ntoro* enters her at marriage—for the purpose of observing his family's taboos—retains her own "blood", which she also passes on to her offspring. To a couple's children, the mother's "blood" constitutes their clan while the father's *ntoro* constitutes their spirit. A human being is considered to be complete only if he or she has those two elements, spirit and blood. It follows that no one may marry into his or her own clan as bestowed by the mother and yet still no one may marry into his or her own *ntoro* as bestowed by the father. And since these are permanent and inherited identity tags, marriage choices become permanently preclusive irrespective of the number of transpired and living generations down the line of an individual's descent (Cf. Rattray, 1927:52).¹

Besides this, some scholars have found something to argue about the allocation of the power to pass on the spirit, such as the Ashanti's *ntoro* and the Kalenjiin's *maat*, to the man as compared to the power allocated to the woman, which is to merely pass on blood, as in the case of the Ashanti. Blood is only matter, so it is said. Since blood being only matter, is temporary, while spirit lives forever, the unevenness in psychological esteem that is respectively associated with the two elements necessarily bestows superiority to the man. It was not long after this that the

¹ The Ashanti seem to have long known what scientists discovered only late in the twentieth century; the behaviour of the mitochondrial DNA, which is inherited only via the mother and, therefore, "can reveal maternal ancestry over many generations" (Pretoria News, 14th October, 1999). That the Ashanti referred to it as "blood", and used it for tracing ancestry, which the western scientists are now beginning to do, does not throw them off the realms of true biological knowledge.

philosophical conceptualisation of the greatest of the spirits, the principle that is devoid of matter, Deity, was assigned the male gender. The man had arrogated to himself the deity-like role of passing on invisible things like the spirit and, once there, drew esteem from such imagined role and ability that was far above that of the woman who merely could pass on visible and tangible matter, blood (Cf. Gamble, 1927:149). We know from previous discussions, however, that although the Kalenjiin may have approached this view of the mother as a mere reproductive, passive receptacle, the god-idea still remained firmly with the female.

The Khasis of Assam, of the pre-partition North-eastern India, were recorded early in the 20th century as having retained a totemic clan system that is run on mother-kin lines, unlike the case is in most parts of India. As is characteristic of most mother-kin systems, a man marries and moves over to live in the wife's natal home and remains more closely attached to his sister's children than to his own. Upon death, his property is inherited by his sister's children, including the throne if he was a king. In the absence of such nephews and nieces, his own mother or sister shall inherit the property. In many of the mother-kin social management systems here, marriage proposal is expected to come from the woman and not from the man and she, by a custom that is typical of the mother-kin systems, remains the superior partner in the marriage. The mother-kin social management system, i.e. matrilineal system, is prevalent in the Assam area of India where other ethnic groups coexist side by side with the Khasis. The general physical characteristics of the populations here exhibit other affinities apart from the social arrangement; they all possess modified Mongoloid features (Cf. Frazer, 1910 ii:320).

Outside the strict rules that govern marriage under the lineage system, a Kalenjiin man may not take for wife a daughter of an age-mate of his because *maat* rules state expressly that any child belonging to a member of his age-set is of his *maat* and is therefore his own child. He may not even attempt to have sexual intercourse with such a "child" for that would amount to incest!¹

Such incest may not necessarily be confined to technicality; it may be biological as well. This possibility arose from the old practice which considered wives to be married into the age-set, especially the age-grade, of their husbands and not only to the individual men with whom they tied the legal knot. They were compelled by that system to offer maximum hospitality to men of their

1. Men who have married daughters of their age-set members have been demoted to the junior age-set after their own. Some men offer or are advised by elders to be demoted to the junior set in order to be able to take wives from among the daughters of members of their own true age-set. This occurs due to the fact that the opening grade and the closing grade within one set can in some cases be separated by fifteen years or more. The senior-most members of an age-set may be fifteen to twenty years older than the junior-most members of the same age-set, as we have said above. Some of the daughters of the senior-most age-set in an extreme situation can be as old as the junior-most male members of the same age-set. A technical incestuous situation in such cases occurs very easily, hence the conferring of the right to the elders to intervene and order demotion of the junior-most age-set members in the manner explained, in order to put things back to natural order.

husbands' age-set when they visited. A woman's husband under that system kept her only in trust on behalf of the entire *maat*, his age-grade. Children resulting from such free unions, even if they were brief, could, in theory, belong to any man of the age-grade who had visited and been offered full hospitality. There were rules that guarded against this eventuality but still they were not foolproof. Besides, which girl would accept to be the wife of a man who might have slept with her mother?

This practice of sharing wives and husbands along the age-grade lines dated back to the times of the Pharaohs and Herodotus (500 BC) described it in his *Histories*, Book II. Peristiany (1939) described it among the Kipsigiis, while Hollis and Snell (1909 and 1954 respectively) mentioned it with respect to the Nandi. Kenyatta (1938) gave a graphic detail of it as it obtained among his own people, the Gikuyu. The practice is only dying now in its last bastion, Maasailand, from where a brief, terse no-excuses description comes, thanks to ole Sankan (1971). A lot more on this is said in the author's upcoming book, which is tentatively, entitled *The Military Clan of Pharaoh*.

A man, *maat* rules say, may not take for wife any close relative of his *paagule*¹, one circumcised alongside and fed together with him in one *meenyjo* confinement. Men from one *meenyjo* become ritual brothers and begin owning their close relatives in common. Men cannot be "brothers" and in-laws at the same time. This rule also had the added effect of forcing men to go farther afield in search of prospective brides because the immediate neighbours were likely to be relatives of one sort or another. In this way the geographically widest possible relations network was achieved, sense of belonging, unity, peace and tranquillity maintained throughout the nation.

Subject to the rules of exogamy, a man may marry (or have intimate relations with) "a daughter of a man of any age-set preceding or following his own" (Peristiany, 1939:108). Thus a man may not have intercourse with a wife of any age-set senior to his own, neither may he have such relationships with a wife of any age-set junior to his own; for all such women are his potential mothers in law, either legal or technical.

¹*Paagule* or *paa-kule* is thought to be a combination of a Maa(sai) noun *kule*, "milk" and a Kalenjin possessive pronoun, *pa*, "of": "of milk", meaning one that you drank milk together with. In wealthier days inmates drank milk (or porridge) together from a long wooden trough, the way cows drink water. *Paagule*-induced marriage restriction as narrated here was adapted from D.W.W. Kettel, *ibid*, p. 16.

11.4 *Maat* in Marriage and the New Restrictive Scenarios

Information gathered from the oral field indicates that certain of the aforementioned restrictive rules have since been relaxed. Among the more Christianised sections of the Kalenjin communities, the marriage-alliance rule that banned marriage between members of one *Kootaapchii* and another purely on the basis of there having occurred a marriage alliance between another pair from the two *Kootaapchii* involved has been relaxed.

In the past new *Kootaapchii* agnate units were formed regularly by certain members who were breaking away for one reason or another from the bigger branch. This allowed intermarriage between members of the newly formed *Kootaapchii* with those belonging to their original *Kootaapchii* as well as with other breakaways from the same older group who would have similarly broken away and regrouped under a different *Kootaapchii* name. Presently few if any new *Kootaapchii* are being formed. Things being thus, restrictions of exogamy would have reached a choking level by now were it not mitigated by the fact that single marriage contracts between a pair of *Kootaapchii* do not now preclude marriage combinations between other members from the same pair of *Kootaapchii* who are not patrilineally too closely related.

Some families still avoid marrying into certain specific *Kootaapchii* in accordance with taboos unique to them as handed down from their ancestors. But most do not remember or even know that such taboos relevant to them existed. Homicide cases are dealt with by the courts and situations of unresolved conditions of homicide incidences between marriageable families, which would otherwise preclude the conclusion of new marriage contracts between them, should not arise.

The foregoing, which would seem to reduce restrictive conditions as far as matching is concerned are, however, frustrated by new conditionalities that have necessarily come with Christianity, formal education and increased emphasis on recognition of social esteem as underpinned by wealth or the relative absence of any or all of these.

Youngsters from Christian families are encouraged by their parents to seek marriage partners from other Christian families.

Possession of high level of education restricts a marriageable youngster to a narrower field consisting of those who possess similar or reasonably mitigating levels of education. Those who possess less or no formal education at all are equally restricted to partners of similar predicament.

A marriageable girl who is from a wealthy family expects to be picked by a man from a family of equal socio-economic standing or thereabouts. Young men from poor families would avoid such girls from wealthy homes unless they are men with a great deal of self-confidence and a high sense

of self-worth indeed. Such a man must thereafter work hard to level up economically with his in-laws or risk losing his wife who would be expecting nothing less than that.

Very often, depending on the individual and her family's style of upbringing, such a bride would appear to be constantly psychologically, even obdurately, aspiring to be the superior partner within the new conjugal union owing to her privileged background. The man of such a union, if he were of weak character, would soon imagine more spite than he was being shown, if indeed he was being shown such disrespect, and his reaction and effort towards the restoration of what he thought was natural order, very often led to separation.

The slowly encroaching same-to-same social class match making has led to something of a caste system of nuptial understanding although it may not as yet be approaching anywhere close to the highly structured and inflexible practice associated with the Hindu caste system. The basic motive in both systems is the same however: desired harmony in the home that welcomes a new bride (Cf. Pancholi, 1982:19).¹

Many men and women of the marriageable bracket have left their homes to seek higher education, engage in business or look for paid employment in distant places. Others accompany their parents or relatives to such far off places of employment and live with them. Distance alone in such situations becomes another restricting factor. Many an incident has occurred where in such far off place a man and a woman who were otherwise prohibited to marry by some of the obscure ancient taboos, have gone ahead in their ignorance of the existence of such taboo, to prepare a wedding and informed the parents back home, but only too late. However, the unspoken automatic curse affects only those involved in wilful infringement of the exogamic and other marriage restrictions. Such are expected to divorce immediately if they are to avoid the effects of the automatic curse. Innocent infringements, on the other hand, such as from the example given, and they are extremely rare, are not punished by the automatic curse although change of *kootaapchii* may be required of one of the parties if the relationship is embarrassingly too close. Otherwise the relationship is ignored and allowed to continue (Cf. Orchardson, 1961:77).

There now seems to exist an unwritten consensus to the effect that marriage may take place between any two individuals provided both come from different *Kootaapchii*, do not share recent blood, and no *close family* member has already consummated a marriage contract with one from the

¹ Pancholi, 1982:20, notes that even the Hindu migrants in Britain are yielding to their youth who, brought up in an all-too-pervasive democratic system, opt more often for love marriages in the place of the arranged marriages that are still far more common in India. He, however, notes that nuptial democracy is inching its way to recognition in the politically democratic and pragmatic but socially dictatorial and dogmatic India as well.

same *home*. Marriage contracts are now more of a family-to-family affair—subject to the *Kootaapchii* rule than the old *Kootaapchii* to *Kootaapchii* affair.

Of course the greatest restrictive or restriction-busting innovation, depending on how one looks at it, is the liberty since given youngsters to freely pick marriage partners of their own choice. Parents not only occasionally have to accept partners for their girls and boys who would otherwise not qualify under the old stricter rules of exogamy, but they occasionally have to helplessly watch their own “better” choices for the youth being turned down by their now socially “liberated” youngsters. The youngsters however, mercifully, still recognise the *Kootaapchii* rule and family-to-family agnatic condition. The old restrictive exogamy has itself been restricted.

This nuptial “democracy” was already with the Xhosa even two hundred years ago. Alberti reported in 1807 that a Xhosa bride had the freedom to accept or reject a suitor by personally driving away the prospective dowry cattle that he may have driven into her father’s cattle pen. The Xhosa suitors often drove such cattle into their prospective in-laws’ cattle pens instead of negotiating and agreeing on the bride price beforehand—an actions-speak-louder-than-words approach. However, the parents may have a contrary opinion and stop their daughter from driving out the suitor’s cattle. But if she was adamant, she drove them out several times even as her father—who may have been attracted more by the number and, or quality of the cattle, than moved by concern for his daughter’s apprehension—drove them back into the pen! He would go as far as beating up the girl and forcing her to accept the suitor if she persisted for too long. But often the girls had their way here.

If the cattle were accepted and a Xhosa marriage took place, the situation would still remain precarious until the newly married woman had conceived and given birth. The parents of the girl would not partake of the milk from the bride-price cattle until such a time as the marriage was sealed by the birth of a child. Thus the fulfilment of contract on the part of the bride’s family; was in the ability of their daughter to seal it by producing an offspring. She was not a complete wife until she had proved that she was capable of reproduction. Her death before that first childbirth would result in the bride wealth cattle being returned.

Another unusual—to us East Africans—Xhosa innovation reported by Alberti in 1807, had a girl taking the initiative and proposing to a man by walking up to a man’s home in a group of friends and relatives. The friends would then undress her and bare the top half of her body before the desired man’s female relations. Confirming from the reports of their judgement of her for her beauty and signs of “agricultural and housekeeping strength” or otherwise, the man would indicate his acceptance or disapproval. He may even play hard to get. On his insistence she may be left alone with him one night for personal familiarisation if he so fancied. Should this one-

night stand result in his change of mind, then the bride price negotiations would begin thereafter at the bride's home (65, 67).

However, the reports of Joan Broster (1967:68-81), who worked in Engcobo among the Qaba section of the Xhosa, 160 years after Alberti, indicate a marked drop in nuptial etiquette, in fact an almost complete loss of it within the intervening period of just over one and a half centuries. She reports that no Xhosa girl "wants" to get married. All must feign reluctance for fear of being thought to have been so desperate for marriage and, therefore, been "cheap". So negotiations take place between the parents, or guardians and parents and relatives of the bride and bridegroom—because, as it is in much of the rest of the continent, marriage is between families and not so much between individuals—and an agreement is reached. On the appointed day for collection of the bride, who is supposed to be ignorant of the goings on round about her all this time, she is tricked to leave the home on some fictitious errand. Somewhere along the way, the groom and two of his henchmen pounce on her and forcefully carry her off in a nominal, or mock abduction process called *ukuthwala*. But the girl must try to wriggle herself out of their grip while shouting and screaming for help as loudly as she can. However, people know *ukuthwala* and will not come to her aid but will, instead, take a note of how much she protests and resists marriage, the louder the screaming and the greater the resistance the worthier the bride!

The abductors begin dragging her along and she then gets to know at this juncture who of her three abductors is her future husband; it is the seemingly unconcerned third man tagging along several paces behind herself and the two husky fellows who are now busy physically dragging her away. He may be a man of any age, and she may not be his first abduction experience. In one of the cases that were personally witnessed by Broster, and the one that struck a personal emotional blow to her, the "disinterested" man tagging along behind the two abductors was a widower of about 60 years of age. The screaming bride, Broster's own employee, was about a third his age (but it fortunately turned out to be a happy partnership as Broster was to learn later).

The author has attended many varied wedding ceremonies in Kenya. Amongst the Gikuyu, Christian or non-Christian, the mock reluctance of the bride to go along (even after buying the wedding garb and dressing up for the wedding, and who may even already be pregnant) is an imperative, although no physical force is involved in moving her. Her female relatives and neighbours, who are already dressed up in their best, try to "fight" off the bridegroom's female relatives and neighbours in a move supposedly intended to sabotage the marriage. The bridegroom's "fighters", however must win and then heave a loud ululating sigh of relief as they dance in celebration of their "victory"; the bride a captive in their middle. The "defending" party must follow in mock shame, then accept "defeat" and all join in celebration.

The Kalenjin bride must play reluctant too. Any bridge or road that she crosses on her way to the groom's home could be the obstacle that would make her change her mind and turn back the way she came. A gift is promised and only then can she "reluctantly" continue the journey, keeping her "options" which she may exercise at the next crossroads or bridge. She knows that this is probably the only time in her life that she could blackmail anybody, especially her parents and the prospective in-laws, on peril of immeasurable embarrassment that she could now, and only now, inflict on them. She arm-twists her relatives, who are now her virtual hostages, at every twist and turn. Like her Gikuyu counterpart, she may already be with child, but this should not be the cause for her to betray a weakness in morals by showing signs of cheapness. In fact it is the sterling moment to redeem the shame that comes with premarital conception. Kipkorir (1973:51), writing about the Marakwet, puts this as follows:

"This is the one occasion in Marakwet custom when a woman can afford, and is allowed, to treat a man in this way. It is she who is being courted, not she who seeks a husband. Yet, if a woman—no less than a man—were to remain unmarried, it would be assumed that she was seriously deficient—mad, deaf and dumb, or impotent."

This apparent requirement, that a bride should resist marriage, seems to be a worldwide phenomenon as some examples, below, demonstrate. This perhaps excludes only those societies that are run along mother-kin lines wherein the woman, and not the man, is expected to propose and take the upper hand thereafter in pushing the process of marriage through. One supposes that in such reverse cases, the man ought to show some reluctance for fear of being thought cheap in his moral constitution as well as being desperate for marriage!

The "forceful abduction" of the bride has been recorded of the ancient Spartans—the relic of which practice remains with modern Slavonic peoples. Other places from which this hypocritical nuptial practice has been reported are, Wales, Ireland, South American Native populations, Parts of India, Australian Native populations, Fiji, ancient and modern China etc. In most of these cases, the bride "abduction" practice has somewhat been tempered "and has passed from the actual violent carrying off of the women, down to the formal pretence of abduction kept up as a marriage ceremony" (Cf. Tylor, 1878:286-287).

Summary of Chapter 11: The Ethical Code of Maat of Ancient Egypt as retained in the *Maat* Social Institutions of the Asiisians

We observed that the ancient Egyptians simplified the huge number of ethical and moral codes that humans had to contend with in their day-to-day lives by embodying them in a philosophical divinity that they called Maat. Maat, who was conceived in the feminine form, was not an independent “goddess” as such, but she represented that nature, or aspect of the One Deity, that the Egyptians believed in, that stood for social justice and religious order. She was the trait in the character of Deity that desired merciful and just relationship between human beings, between human beings and Deity, and between the living and the dead. Her male companion, Tehuti stood in a similar manner for Deity’s intelligence and wisdom, thus, in a complimentary manner, completing what the humans imagined as the absolute intelligence, wisdom, truthfulness, delicate love, mercy, justness, mindfulness and sensibilities of Deity.

We picked on Maat, concentrating on her above-listed concerns, i.e., the ideal of merciful and just relationship between human beings; between human beings and Deity, and between the living and the dead. This was the moral, socio-cultural, and economic area of interrelationships that the Kalenjiin happened to call *maat*—exactly the same word for the same function as of ancient Egypt but without the association of it with a philosophical divinity.

We mentioned, listing cognatic lexical items as examples, that the ancient Egyptians appear to have associated, as the Kalenjiin still do, the words for: “fire”, “the way”, i.e. “the path”, “age-grades” or “generations” with “kith and kin”, i.e. the wider “family”.

The Kalenjiin gave the name *maat* to the socio-cultural and economic areas and to the spiritual and human bonds as follows: (1) between ancestor and descendant who saw to and shared in one another’s welfare, fortunes and misfortunes, (2) between descendants of one male ancestor who had an obligation to that ancestor, to their other shared or related ancestors, as well as to themselves, (3) between men of the same military regiment who in critical times of battle found themselves putting their lives in the hands of one another, (4) between men who were circumcised around the same time, dying and rising together in the symbolism that circumcision represented.

People who shared any of these relationships addressed themselves with the term *maat*, which reminded them of their shared fortunes, taboos and moral obligations to one another and to others in society who regarded them in a certain manner or looked up to them for their well-being.

The most sensational type of *maat* bond was that between a male ancestor and his descendants and between those descendants. This one has survived and is alive and well in Kalenjiinland. The other *maat* bonds have largely been forgotten, remembered only by the old people and entombed in books and archival material written early in the 20th century by western anthropologists and pioneering colonial administrators who had found the entire *maat* code intact and in place.

The surviving type of *maat* bond is the one that is represented by a shared totem. Totemic *maat* was practised also, and under the same word, *maat*, as we saw, in Egypt up to the 4th century AD when the Roman Emperor, Theodosius, banned it, considering totemism a form of zoolatry, i.e., worship of animals. A later Emperor, Justinian, saw to its final demise in the 6th century AD. The Kalenjiin one survived up to the present time because the Roman rule did not extend up to the territory in which the proto-Kalenjiin lived at the time of persecution of the institutions of Isis for the benefit of the Christian movement throughout the Roman Empire.

The surviving *maat* bond covers the entire Kalenjiin territory and where its enforcement is deficient, tyrannical, oppressive, or insensitive, the sympathetic counterbalancing moral force of *kaamaama*, the maternal line, makes up for the deficit, or tempers the disputed issues, approaching the situation with the more humane maternal instincts that are naturally associated with maternal uncles.

The enforcing moral agent from the negative side is the most feared punitive and destructive force of *ng'oogis* or *ng'ooki*. So, in a nutshell, positive justice and encouragement to do and promote justice, lie in the province of and are enforced by the ethical and moral code of *maat* and supplemented by *kaamaama* ethics, while failure to do justice and negligence of duty and obligations, are punished by the negative force of *ng'oogis*, a word associated here, as well as among the major religions that shaped the Near East, with the dog, for unclear reasons.

Totemic systems were put in place as identification markers that would ensure *maat* and guard against incest and endogamous marriages, i.e., intercourse and marriages within the larger family, or what is now accepted and called by science, "inbreeding". We saw how the elaborate mnemonic system of *mamoosiet* was used to count the number of generations that had elapsed before marriage between a pair of *kootaapchii* could be resumed.

Most of the totemic markers were names of animals and it is doubtful that anyone ever worshipped those animals, certainly the Kalenjiin never did. Those that identified themselves with a totem the world over showed so much reverence for their totem and, as a rule, neither killed nor ate it, except in desperate situations. These animals were considered members of the

particular clans that they stood for as emblems. In the past, killers of clan totems were executed like other murderers of real human beings.

The killing of a totem animal required the ceremonial permission of a member of the clan concerned who then gave it away the way he would a clansman for execution. In this way, some animals were saved from extinction and we may even speculate that the totemic system was partly aimed at promoting and enforcing the ideal of wildlife preservation.

Totemism is spread over much of the world, as we saw, and some anthropologists' attempt to understand the institution as it applied to other nations other than their own, led to their reading too much into it, trying to find deeper and more subtle meanings than its inventors had intended. The outcome was the accusation of totem, or animal worship, also called zoolatry; the selfsame grave judgmental mistake made equally by Roman Emperors Theodosius and Justinian thirteen centuries earlier while they extinguished, for ever, ancient Egypt's *maat*.

Chapter 12

Ancient Egypt's Metempsychosis, or Reincarnation; a Concept continued under Asiisianism's Clan System of *Maat*

Abstract

Chapter 12 comprises further discussion on the Asiisian concept of *maat*; how the doctrine of reincarnation was embedded into it; how, as in Egypt of old, ancestor veneration was remembered and regulated under it. In these social regulatory respects we probably know more about *maat* in Kalenjiinland than what has been discovered so far with respect to ancient Egypt. Students of ancient Egypt may, therefore, discover leads here that will facilitate their more effective and more meaningful exploration of their popular "goddess" Maat.

We shall also touch on the social office of maternal uncles, *kaamaama*, because it had similar sets of rules, economic and moral obligations that were limited to the relationships between maternal uncles and their nephews, i.e., their sisters' sons. Somehow this special *kaamaama* relationship tended to supplement and complement the agnatic *maat* social sphere but, at times, to counter it—hence its relevance to our discussion.

We further enrich and supplement our knowledge of *maat* from other parts of Africa such as Western and Southern Africa. In the process we establish that Nilotic Africa was not unique in its management of socio-religious ethics through the *maat* codes. As a result we stay clear of the general path of comparative religion students, of ignoring African religions in their comparative work. They prefer to spend all their intellectual resources and energy comparing what they call "world religions" and ignoring a very rich area, in the first place a probable silent contributor in antiquity to those "world religions". We would be blundering at this point in time if we ignored pertinent, rich African examples that could best help reconstruct an ancient African thought whose details are scanty and must be sought and collected from the widest possible Diaspora. We also touch on related systems from other less developed parts of the world with a view to building as clear a picture of *maat* as possible through examining the parallel and the contrasting systems.

After demonstrating through discussion how beautiful and effective the *maat* code was, in that it provided for a complete way of life as well as acted like a complete religion, even as far as to appear to operate independently of the wider belief, we launch into a brief defence of religions, which include Asiisianism, that have been branded primitive apparently by basing judgement more on the material depravity of the adherents than on their supposed lack of philosophical sophistication in matters sacred.

The short piece on Tehuti, the conceptual male companion of Maat, is meant to complete the discussion on *maat* as well as to define *maat* further.

12.1 How and who may receive the *Maat* Torch and pass it on

Early in the 20th century Ian Orchardson noted that Kalenjiin religion was not characterised by formal public worship of Deity, but that their belief in the Supreme appeared in most of the ceremonies that took place at every stage of their lives. He more or less summarises Kalenjiin belief (which perfectly corresponds, in this respect, to ancient Egyptian belief in the continuation of the human spirit beyond death and the resultant deep ancestor veneration, as we shall see shortly) when he says in his posthumously published book:

“Most of these ceremonies are directly or indirectly connected with the belief in the reality and continuity of the human spirit, a belief which runs like a thread throughout their lives... (They) believe that every human spirit has existed from far back in the past, that it is continually reincarnated in the bodies of human descendants, and that it will continue so to be reincarnated so long as the family persists. Hence the extreme importance of marriage, of carrying on the line of descent and of all that pertains to the continuity of the family” (Orchardson, 1961:22).

But the greatest “reincarnator” of all was still the sun. The close association of Asiiis with the sun, *asiista*, by the Kalenjiin (for which reason they have been wrongly dubbed “sun-worshippers”), necessarily engendered the cyclical nature seen in nearly all of their cultural and religious affairs. The sun rises, energetically climbs into the sky, and then descends and wanes as it sets. It then renews itself and rises again the following day without fail, and so on, forever.

Just as the sun is “born” every morning, “dies” every evening and is “reborn” every morning after, human beings too are born as babies, grow up to their prime in adulthood, decline gradually as elders, die, and are subsequently born again as new babies. No one dies forever who lives a righteous life and sets a shining example to all. After every death, like the sun, he or she shall be reborn—reincarnated.

As it relates to ancient Egypt, all the major “gods”, were equally associated with the sun and its rhythm. As we saw in Chapter 7, the priests of Memphis had put the following words into the mouth of Ptah, who was the “Lord of the years, measurer of time but timeless himself”: “I am yesterday, today and tomorrow for I am born again and again. I am the Lord of Resurrection who comes forth from the dusk and whose birth is from the House of Death.”¹

1. See the story on Ptah in Chapter 7. The ancient Egyptian notion of resurrection, or more correctly, reincarnation—because it involved renewal—was abstract and philosophical. The Gnostic founding Fathers of Christianity went along this path of philosophical interpretation and allegorism until the western branch of the church began to be influential. So the relatively recent event of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which aspect, along with His virgin birth, constitute the very hinge of Christianity, were since then to be backed by and heavily rely on physical proof, precisely following the intervention of Bishop Ignatius (35-107 AD) of Antioch and Bishop Irenaeus (130-200 AD) of Lyons who introduced canonisation of scripture and decreed literalism in their interpretation (Cf. Brandon, 1970:361).

Like the Kalenjiin, therefore, the ancient Egyptians believed not only in life after death in the Netherworld, but also in the individual's resumption of life back on earth, re-entering as a *human* baby. This is called metempsychosis, Greek for "transferring of soul from one body to another". Apart from its better-known term "reincarnation", it is also called "transmigration of soul" and "rebirth". As we have said, the Kalenjiin believe in the endlessness of the cycles of spirits, entering and leaving bodies ad infinitum. The Kalenjiin take comfort in this belief, seeing the life on earth as a temporary resort before moving on—hence Orchardson's (1961:22) remark, to this effect, as follows: "In fact, the Kipsigis regard the spirit as much more important than the body, which they look upon as a temporary dwelling place of the spirit."

According to Herodotus, the Greek belief in this phenomenon of metempsychosis originated from Egypt. It was preached in both Platonism and Neoplatonism in the Greece of 6th century BC (Cf. Brandon, 1970:439).

It is thought that the development of this philosophy, of reincarnation, arose from the natural examination and deduction made by society of the phenomena of birth and death and the reproduction of family features in children. It is associated with religions that were dominated by a "Mother Goddess" such as the (Isiac or Isisian) religion of ancient Egypt; Chinese theology and philosophy—excluding Confucianism; Hinduism (Cf. Brandon, 1970:439) and, of course, Asiisianism of the Kalenjiin.

Other believers in reincarnation of this manner were members of Celtic and Teutonic religions, Gnostics and certain esoteric forms of Judaism, chief among whom, historically, were the members of the Jewish sect of Essenes Brotherhood, the sect that many scholars believe Jesus belonged to. The faiths and cultural outfits that do not believe in the cyclical view of time, such as mainstream Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism, tend to be those that do not believe in the concept of reincarnation (Cf. Brandon, 1970:439).

A man or a woman who dies will have his or her soul recalled back to life on earth through a baby being born subsequent to his or her death. Such a baby must be born to a man of the deceased person's *Kootaapchii*.¹ The child assumes the deceased person's name and sometimes even the character. This is to be expected, as the child's guardian angel, who guides it through the dos and don'ts of *maat*, is the deceased after whom it is named, or whose soul it is carrying, and the quality of the duplicate cannot be better than its original. The deceased double is continuously guiding its living duplicate. For the latter reason: criminals, other social misfits, and economic failures, when

¹ Or to a woman of that *kootaapchii* if she has been passed through the *kiitunji toloi* rite of in-house marriage—discussed further below.

they die, are customarily not recalled back to life on earth by way of reincarnation. Such departed social “misfits” are the ones who go to “hell”.

The Romans came near to this philosophy in that they believed that every man had his Genius and every woman her Juno. This was believed to be a spirit that had given them being and, like the Kalenjiin counterpart, was regarded as their protector through life. On their birthdays men made offerings to their Genius, women to their Juno (Cf. Bulfinch, 1855 Ch. 1).

Hell in the sense of *eternal* fire, or other forms of sadistic endless torture, does not exist in the Asiisian theology. According to general opinion, neither does heaven, the single home of the Creator, angels and people who had led righteous lives while on earth, exist in that description. To the Nandi who spoke to Hollis early in the century,

“The human soul is embodied in a person’s shadow, and it is firmly believed that after death the shadows of both good and bad people go underground and live there. People who have great possessions on earth are equally blessed when they die, whilst the spirits of poor people have a bad time after death as they had during life” (Hollis, 1909:41).

“*Below*” in this context is the right translation for *ng’wony* (or *turguiin*), which the writer quoted, Hollis’ informants, might have used to describe the location of the souls’ hereafter. *Ng’wony* literally means “below” as well as “ground” or “underground”. But in the spiritual context it means the opposite of the heavens, and the latter is where Asiis alone lives (probably with *Iilat*). Spirits live somewhere below planet earth, which is not the same thing as “underground”.

However one Keiyo man who died but came back to life before he was buried,

“related that he had been up above, and had seen wonderful herds of stock belonging to the sun ‘Assiss’, and lesser herds belonging to the rain god ‘Elat’. He conversed with the people he found there, and learned that he could hope to return permanently to those regions...”(Massam, 1927:195).

This story, told around 1920, shows that some may have held heaven to be located somewhere above: at the traditional abode of Asiis and *Iilat*. We may also confirm from this story, in conjunction with the quotation from Hollis, above, that wealth enjoyed in the hereafter was thought to be commensurate with one’s diligence, social esteem, as well as with one’s righteousness here on earth—for it was generally believed that diligence and righteousness led to wealth accumulation. Diligence increased the stock of the individual while his righteous living, apart from the abundance of blessings accruing from it, ensured that he did not suffer divine, civil and criminal punishments and fines that would go to reduce such stock.

Perhaps a religious doctrine that comes nearest to this is to be found in Hinduism. According to Hindu belief, the cumulative effect of an individual’s *karma*, duties performed and roles played

while on earth, propel him to the next status in a new life commensurate with the level of such diligence and righteousness, or the lack of the same during the previous life.

A Hindu seeks *moksha*, salvation, meaning the ultimate reunion with Brahman (say God), in his life. In order to attain *moksha*, he must achieve three objectives in life: (1) *Dharma*, righteous conduct, (2) *Artha*, acquisition of economic welfare, the life of earthly prosperity, and (3) *Kama*, worldly pleasures, enjoyment of good things in life (Cf. Pancholi, 1982:14, 15).

To summarise, both Asiianism and Hinduism have it that one's station in the hereafter, by any name, is created by each person for himself or herself, through his or her social, religious and economic conduct, while on earth. The foregoing quotations respectively from Hollis and Massam, convey this theological philosophy that dates back to Egyptian times. With respect to Egypt, Homung (1982:232) states as follows: "the deceased wishes to be included as the 'scribe, in the sun god's staff of officials. Here the form of kingship on earth is mirrored among the gods in the next world; the Egyptians view many features of the hereafter as continuing the state of things on earth."

The hierarchy within the divine sphere in the case of the latter Kalenjiin example is reflected in the differential wealth in cattle between Asiis and Iilat where the former is portrayed as being much more endowed than the latter. Asiis is therefore superior to Iilat in the hierarchy of divinity because She is richer in cattle—the medium of wealth known to the Kalenjiin of the time—than Iilat. Taking hint from the former quotation (from Hollis), we may assume that the human beings followed the deities in hierarchy in accordance with the size of their wealth. Each individual aspired to be closer to the divine, which closeness seems to have been measured in the relative wealth in cattle.

The analogous ancient Egyptian example (quoted from Homung) features a scribe who wishes to be rated closer to the scribes of heaven. Excellence to the individual Egyptian concerned was achieved through excelling in scribal work. In this profession, the most excellent was the "god's" scribe, Thoth—the moon "god"—who was the most desired scribal idol but who could not be surpassed as he represented excellence (Cf. Homung, 1982:232).

It so happens that the records left behind by the Egyptians represent the work of scribes and, naturally, excellence in the scribal profession is represented here as the ideal to aspire to. The cattle-owning segment of ancient Egypt, were they to leave a similar record behind, would have undoubtedly idealised cattle-owning, with the owner of the largest herd occupying the foremost spot, the unsurpassable spot preserved for the Deity. But here we have seen more evidence, by way of what Hollis and Homung wrote with respect to the Kalenjiin and to the ancient Egyptian view that the hereafter was a continuation of the now. The Kalenjiin people's claim to descent from the ancient Egyptians is helped a lot by such philosophical congruities.

The departed souls guide and protect the people who are still living. This they do along *Kootaapchii* lines. They save them from sin, but some of them, as does the evil *Iilat*, misguide the living to sin, and sometimes inflict them with diseases. Such are either wicked souls which were themselves moral and economic failures on earth prior to their departure to the underworld, or departed souls who feel they have been wronged by their survivors, either in death or prior to death. Some spirits, even good ones, desiring to be reincarnated in newborns, may bother some members of their *Kootaapchii* until such a time as they are ritually effectively persuaded not to do so and, or, are actually given a chance to reincarnate. As was the belief amongst the ancient Egyptians, here too the spirits of the departed bothered only members of their own family, *Kootaapchii*. Of the cognate Egyptian belief, Breasted (1912:51) says: "As hostile creatures infesting the cemeteries, the dead were dreaded, and protection from their malice was necessary... and in later times a man might be afflicted even in his house by a deceased member of his family wandering in from the cemetery."

Being denied such a chance to reincarnate is true and serious condemnation of the spirit concerned, and that is what might amount, on the spirit's part, to being in hell, *keelusta*,¹ "to be lost forever". Spirits that are reincarnated are fortunate and their pleasure can only be described in terms that are associated with life in heaven in the Christian sense.

In the olden days, very old Kalenjiin men, from a few communities, who considered themselves a social burden, on top of which they "unnecessarily" held up a soul which should have been recycled, used to commit "holy" or "legal" suicide in order to attain, through *kurseet*, their version of heaven. Apart from benefiting the society by so availing the soul for reincarnation in brand new babies, the grand old men and women got rid of the social burden that was their invalid selves. And apart from releasing the soul for recycling, they also released their age-set name for re-use. Who knows, the new babies bearing their own recycled souls might, by good chance, later belong to their particular age-set and thus get a chance to become a total mirror image of themselves (those retiring from earthly life). More detailed discussion on the Kalenjiin clockwork-like cyclical age-set system is to be found in the author's said upcoming book, which is, tentatively, entitled *The Military Clan of Pharaoh*.

The Tugen "invalids" who were intent on committing "holy" or "legal" suicide, *keepa siew*, got together, went off to a remote spot, and there, holding hands in a circle would dance and sing their way to the edge of a cliff, from which they would drop to their deaths (Kettel, 1975:17). This was their manly and holy way to die and release the soul for entry into the children of their line.

¹ From the verb *lus*, "be spiritually lost". This notion of hell also exists in the now-archaic word, *irong*, which probably meant "hell" (Cf. Orchardson, 1961:24). This referred to an imaginary pit apparently associated with the direction "West"; the direction called *cherongo*.

T.L. Edger, a colonial administrator in Kericho, noted more or less the same in respect of the Kipsigiis. “An old man committed suicide by consent of relatives by drowning. He went to do it himself after being anointed—alone (D.C. KER 4/1).¹ This way the Kipsigiis great-grandfather released his soul, *oii-ndet*, for reincarnation in new babies down his family line.

Very old women among the Kipsigiis would also commit “holy” suicide. It was done collectively. This was called *kesoom meet*, “appealing for death”. This would become necessary when cases of infant mortality increased, and the elderly women suspected that it was they who were responsible for the deaths because, by staying alive, they were holding up souls, *oiik*, which were needed for recycling. Very old great grandmothers from the oldest living age-set, all the surviving members of that age-set—the female members are the ones that lived longest—would march in a procession down to a waterfall, carrying eleusine flour in bowls, *kiiskiisik*. Once at the edge of the cliffs, they would turn their backs to the precipice in order to face east at this critical moment. And, reacting to a command from one of their own, they would toss themselves backwards, hurtling to death at the rocks below.²

1. A number of the Nandi informants, old *Maitna* men, were emphatic that the practice of *keepa siew*, “holy suicide”, was confined to the then poorer (northern) sections of the Kalenjin. That the Nandi did not practise it. But if this was had in common between the Tugen and Keiyo to the north on the one hand, and the southernmost Kenya Kalenjin (Kipsigiis) on the other, then it is a matter of time before the same is documented as relates to the old Nandi—who were geographically in-between. Until then, we can, for sure, say *keepa siew* was the practice among many Kalenjin communities.

2. From an interview with the author’s mother for Burnette and Gerald Fish who wanted to reconfirm something about *poore* and *kapsoguut* when they were completing their *Kalenjin Heritage*. It would appear that as they marched to the precipice, the old women walked very slowly, for the author’s mother says that that is how come that when one walks too slowly one is asked whether one thinks that one is going to *poore*. His mother also says that if you pray for death it comes—you do not have to go to the cliffs. From this it would appear that the younger people were neither told where the great grandmothers had gone nor how they had died. They were only told that they had gone to beg for death. And, naturally, that is how far the author went with his mother!

To the northern Kalenjin, *poore* has another meaning and we will touch on it later.

The *Oi-ik* (pl. of *oiindet*) were not unholy, whether they resulted from a death through holy suicide or from normal death. Huntingford (1953b:140), in his book, *The Nandi of Kenya*, records the relationship between the people and their departed spirits as follows:

“On the whole, the *oiik* are friendly to their people... essentially benevolent unless angered... and the Nandi think of them with affection. “They are our *oiik*,” they say, “and come to visit us at night to see how we are, because they love us, and we love them.”

I.Q. Orchardson, the European who lived among the Kipsigiis and learnt their customs and language early in the 20th century, on his part, witnessed the Kipsigiis attachment to departed souls:

“... most of their doings are dictated, at least to some extent, by fear of—or care for—those departed spirits or ‘*oiik*’... A custom corresponding closely to Christian Baptism combines both the Sun worship and spirit belief. Thus when a child is born, the father must call the spirits of grandparents, or if not dead, of some other suitable dear relation into the child. If this is not done the child—lacking an ‘*oiindet*’—will not thrive and will probably die” (D.C. KER 3/1, 1918).¹

The Kipsigiis did not call a spirit into the child as Orchardson puts it above. That would not have amounted to reincarnation and the Asiisians are firm reincarnationists who believe that all bodies of human beings on earth are mere duplications, repetitions and multiples of earlier lives. Merely calling a spirit into a baby would have amounted to baptism, which, for the Kalenjiin individual, awaited circumcision.²

However that was 1918 and Orchardson had spent “only” eight or nine years among the Kipsigiis. In a later publication, Orchardson (1961:45) portrayed better knowledge of the subtle technicalities involved and he was able to say, “When a child is born it is given two names, one of which refers to his or her *kurenēt*, that is the man or woman who when living embodied the spirit which enters into the new born child.” Still the entry point into a body by the spirit is not sufficiently clear here. But we know that the true entry point is at conception as implied by the early pregnancy ceremonies such as *ngoraiik aap kutuswa*, “the garments of the mouths” which the husband initiates as soon as he learns that his wife is pregnant (Cf. Orchardson, 1961:44).

Any baby born was the renewal of some departed relative. The baby was that relative, and who knew that the baby was that person better than the baby itself! So the Kalenjiin “naming” of the baby amounted to mere inquiry, from the baby, as to who it was. It was presented with several

1. By this time, Orchardson, like many other strangers of his time, had not appreciated the fact that the Kipsigiis distinguished between Asiis, the Goddess and *asiis-ta*, the sun. Orchardson apparently learnt this subsequently, and some of his later observations are quoted elsewhere. *Asiista* only symbolized Asiis who was Herself invisible.

²The name given to the reincarnating individual via *kuur-seet* is styled *kaarn-eet* or *kurenēt* (*karna* = “name”) and what a phonetic coincidence with the Latin *carminatio*, the mother of English *carminatio*, in *carminatio* and re-incarn-ation!

names from the list of the departed ancestors of its *maat*, among the Kipsigiis, four days after its birth. This was done by a group of chanting women led by the midwife, *chepyosoop sigiisyo*. The baby would accept one of the names by sneezing upon the mention of it. That would be its real name and its sneezing upon the mention of the particular name, would be a confirmation that the baby was that individual back all over again.

Upon that confirmation, *by the baby*, the women present broke into cheers, laughter and ululation, as they welcomed the departed person back to the world again. That, surely, is different from mere naming. It is even different from baptism. It is a question of finding out who the baby is from the one who had freshly re-emerged from the underworld, the baby itself!

Some babies “denied” being any of the suggested souls and “refused” to sneeze. The women would then have to induce the sneeze as they repeated the same names of departed people over and over. The name of the individual finally acknowledged by the baby, after being so induced, was duly “given” to it, but having “acknowledged” that identity only after some inducement, the baby would have to go by a nickname. That nickname would overshadow that of the particular departed relative it had accepted so reluctantly. Such a baby, if a boy, would often be nicknamed Kipkooskee, and if a girl, Cheepkooskee.¹

The Marakweet call the *kureneet* name, i.e. the name of the reincarnated kinsman or kinswoman, *kainaap kapkikut*. *Kain-aap* means “name of” and *kaap-kikut* is the official place designated for the naming of the baby, usually the house of the *tomoneet*, *tomoneet* being the general Kalenjiin technical term for a pregnant woman as well as a mother who recently gave birth. The name signifies that she is still in ritual confinement, a state often regarded to be still ritually unclean.

In the *kapkikut* a Marakwet elder balances an ovoid gourd, *repes*, which is used for drawing honey wine from a larger container, on the tip of a long iron drill bit, *kolombe* which has been plunged firmly into the floor near the *toloita*, the central pole that supports the house, which the Marakwet call *kipteleny*. While thus attempting to balance the receptacle, the elder suggests the names of the departed members, *ooi*, or *oiiin*, of the *kootaapchii* of the baby’s father, one at a time,

¹ Kipkooskee may be a contracted form of *Ki-p-ko-esyo-kee*: “he who denied his *ke*” (soul, or self). The female counterpart, Cheepkooskee may have been *Tie-po-ko-esyo-kee* or *Chepkoesyokee*. The root of these names may as well be *ooskee*, “abort self”. Orchardson gives an unlikely etymology for this fascinating name, namely that because of the reluctance to sneeze, the baby is considered to be like a post-*kooskoliny* baby, one born after 4:00 p.m. (“about 4 p.m.” is *kooskoliny*), and before dawn, who were known to be poor sneezers. Orchardson is also emphatic that there was no inducing of babies to sneeze (1961:44-46) but then this would not make possible the naming of children Chepkooskee and Kipkooskee. The midwife could also call a baby out of its mother’s womb in cases of difficult births using the names of the departed spirits of the particular *kootaapchii*. Should a baby “answer” to a name by coming out on being called, it is by this action confirmed that that baby is embodying the spirit of the individual so named. That becomes the *kureneet* name of the baby (Cf. Orchardson, 1961:46).

while attempting to balance the receptacle. The success in balancing suggests that the baby has acknowledged the kinsman or woman whose name is mentioned at that instance. So the spectators cry out *kacham!*, "it is agreed!" "And the child is given the name of this particular *oin* ("spirit")." The officiating elder then picks up the *repes*, the spectators sing and rejoice amid the blessing of the baby by means of a fine spray of honey wine from the mouth of the officiating elder. People drink and thereafter the mother is released from her confinement, meaning that the state of ritual uncleanness has thus ended (Cf. Kipkorir, 1973:55).

We can see that between the Kipsigiis and the Marakwet child-naming ceremonies, the variations only lie in the procedure but the principle, the main object, is the same, namely that an objective, nay lottery-like, attempt is made to establish the baby's identity, i.e., whose reincarnation from the family's departed agnatic ancestors it represents. Similar minor variations in the method but not in the substance apply to many other Kalenjiin rituals from one sub-nation to another.

Circumcision is perhaps the only one that has for generations been approached with such care and orthodoxical regard that variations in the method and procedure, from one sub-ethnic group to another, are minimal. The author is in a position to categorically say this after having had the opportunity to compare the various, mainly male circumcision rites, as respectively reported by several authorities. These include the uninhibitedly written document on Keiyo male circumcision by Kiprono under F.B. Wlebourm; the carefully limited one on the Marakwet initiation from Kipkorir;¹ the rather uninhibited one on Nandi male and female initiation by Langley; the Sabaoot male and female initiation in uninhibited version by the Goldshmidts. All these, compared and contrasted with one another, and with the one of the author's own immediate heritage, the Kipsigiis male initiation, which is supplemented by the older more pristine accounts of it by Orchardson and Peristiany, portray such a spirit of uniformity that the dialectal idiosyncrasies seem to have little bearing to.

Now the naming outlined above, which technically amounts to "identification" of the "visitor" from the underworld rather than naming, should not be confused with the casual naming that leads to the giving of *kaineet aap musareek*, which means, "name of (fermented) porridge". This one the Kalenjiin baby was given either immediately after birth or much later depending on the community (but certainly immediately after birth these days). This "porridge" name merely recorded the circumstances surrounding the baby's birth. For example, a baby born during famine would be

¹ The oft-heard claim that Kipkorir divulged the secrets of the circumcision rite contrary to custom is obviously misplaced if it is based on his best-known work *The Marakwet of Kenya, a Preliminary Study*, 1973. One suspects that the claim is made by people who are themselves quite ignorant of the rite and think that an outline of stages and a hurried, superficial description of the surgical procedure, constitute an imperilling disclosure.

named after that circumstance; a baby born during the wet season would be named after that season. But owing to the central role that the sun plays in Kalenjin religion, i.e., being considered the chief symbol of Asiiis, most babies are named according to the position of the sun at the time of birth.

A name equally heard commonly, is one that describes a peculiar characteristic of the person whose reincarnation the baby so named is believed to be. This kind of name, and the one recording the time or the prevailing circumstances during birth, were more frequently used than the actual one that admitted a reincarnation. But the latter was infinitely more important and its limited use was due to respect for it rather than neglect of it. This was the *true name*. The one name, the weapon, that witches could use effectively if they knew it and wanted to bewitch the baby—hence the immense secrecy with which it was guarded.

Huntingford (1953b:144) records in his book, *The Nandi of Kenya*, that a Nandi woman in conjunction with her husband could, as an alternative approach, but not the norm, determine the spirit that she would reincarnate by giving birth to. After settling on a departed individual, from a set of names of departed spirits up the lineage of the husband, the woman would pray each night before she went to sleep, inviting the chosen spirit to come to her womb. The next morning she would perform her *kitaata* ceremony by pouring small quantities of milk on the floor of her house and dedicating it to the favoured spirit. When she gave birth, her baby would be considered the reincarnation of the departed individual she so invited into her womb and given the name accordingly.

Since the spirits could reincarnate in either sex and not necessarily come back in their original sex, this approach did not present a problem as to what one would do should the baby turn out to be of a different sex from that of the spirit so invited.

Huntingford makes an important mistake where he says that a child who dies as an infant could be reincarnated. It is only men and women who have been initiated that can reincarnate in newborn babies, and initiation itself is the determining factor. Initiation is the baptism that enables a soul to live forever and that is what the capacity to reincarnate means. What a woman who lost a baby could do if she wished was to see to the reincarnation of the same adult individual that she had tried reincarnating before in a second attempt. It is the baby of the repeated attempt who goes popularly by the unisex nickname *Kiituur* (Cf. Huntingford, 1953b:143).

The souls of departed married women could be reincarnated in the families to which they were married as well as in those families into which they were born, their natal homes. The reason is that, while a woman enters a new *maat* upon marriage, that of her husband, she never relinquishes the *maat* she was born into. She takes her husband's *maat* and symbolically keeps it in her right hand while she simultaneously keeps her natal *maat* in her left hand. This is implied by the following

proviso: any ceremonial bracelet (called *tamookiet*) fashioned from the skin or hide of an animal that is sacrificed at her natal home is worn by her in the left wrist. *Tamookiet* from an animal that is sacrificed at her marital home is worn in the right wrist (Cf. Orchardson, 1961:35). Married women, therefore, belong to two *Kootaapchii* and, almost as a rule, two clans. A married woman can still be visited by the departed spirits of her natal home, i.e., those from her father's lineage, even as she suffers or benefits from the visits of the spirits of the *kootaapchii* that she has married into (Cf. Huntingford, 1953b:140).

In some cases, it should be remembered, people occasionally married within the clan but never within the *Kootaapchii*. Thus a Talai (lion in Kipsigiis and Nandi) man could, in theory, marry a Talai woman as long as they belonged to different *Kootaapchii*. They are of one *oortanyit* but not one *ooreet*. *Oortanyit* is wider than *ooreet*, encompassing the entire clan while *oreet* is usually loosely used to cover the narrower *kootaapchii* relationship.

The rule that allows a woman's soul to reincarnate either as a man or a woman in her marital home as well as in her natal home has given rise to humorous situations. An example of a possibility on the extreme: four generations down the line the descendants of woman X, now a great-great grandmother, and the descendants of her brothers, now great-great uncles, could marry once again. And because her soul is circulating, via reincarnation, in both *Kootaapchii* a situation may arise, at least in theory, where one of X's descendants carrying her soul, marries another individual who is carrying the very same soul. That is, she gets married to herself, or he gets married to himself!

A more common—if humorous—occurrence: a wife and husband in this generation become brother and sister or even brothers, or sisters, in the next generation. This happens, say, if both wife and husband die, leaving a son behind. The son will most likely reincarnate the souls of both his parents via his own children who will be born subsequent to the death of the man's parents. And reincarnating souls, in some cases, do not discriminate on the basis of sex. The better to deter men from mistreating and despising the lot of the "weaker sex", for any man could reincarnate in one of his descendant's, or his *maat* relative's home, as a woman in the following generation! Both of the author's own full brothers were women in their previous bodies. They have females' *kureneet* names.

Orchardson (1961:45) reports that among the very large elephant-totem Kabarangweek *kootaapchii*, which now, for all practical purposes, constitutes a clan, "every child of whatever sex has two spirits, one male and one female." Perhaps this Kabarangweek innovation was in

recognition as well as in explanation of the tangible fact that right in the psyche of all men, there lurks a maternal trait. We do not hear of this often, but the vice versa ought to be the case too.¹

Kalenjiin women never went to war and debate as to which military regiment, this being a *maat*, to belong to, that of her husband, or the one she was born into, never arose although her family's regiment was involved during marriage negotiations.

The father in a family that is legally constituted, i.e., marriage laws and all other *maat* ethics having been duly observed, between wife and husband, and between the pair of *Kootaapchii* involved; carries and can pass forward to his offspring, the *maat* torch. This would be the torch that he in turn had received from his father who had similarly received it from his own father. The founder of the *Kootaapchii*, or even the larger clan, is the ultimate known starter of the flame. Thus a father hands this imaginary fire down to all his legitimate sons and daughters. The sons will in turn hand the same down to their own sons and daughters. That way the *maat* relay continues *ad infinitum*.

What counts, for the purpose of legitimising, and for the subsequent rekindling of *maat* upon the birth of each child, is the legal step marked by the tying of the bracelet made of the sacred grass *seguutyet* (*vernonia sp.*)² between the man and woman being joined together. At that critical moment the man's *maat* enters and dwells in the bride, and any child by her shall belong to that *maat* that the act of marriage has so conferred on her. If, subsequent to the tying of the knot, she were to run away and cohabit with another man, any children she may get by the latter shall belong to the *maat* of the legal husband. That is, such children would belong to their mother's legal husband's larger clan, military regiment and *kootaapchii*, bear the names of the legal father's *maat* and even possess the attributes associated with it, take his own name and, eventually; shall return to him.³

Divorce is still rare although not as nearly unheard of as it was in the past. Divorce has the effect of reversing the marriage and nullifying the husband's right to his own children who thenceforth belong to the divorced wife and her natal clan. All the man is entitled to is the dowry that he, or his parents, had paid for the wife. The wife may remarry if formally divorced, assume the *maat* of the new husband and all her children from the previous marriage and any that may be born to the new union shall inherit the new man's *maat* and property. This provision betrays an ancient

¹ However, the author has not personally confirmed the existence of this innovation among the Kabarangweek and the speculation is entirely based on one of Orchardson's often-reliable reports.

² Vide Hollis' appendix 1, 1909, *ibid*.

³ Some Kipsigiis old men put it so nicely for the author. Something like: *Kipsigiis ko ma sigiisyo: seguut!* "For the Kipsigiis (the people of Birth) it is not the siring that counts: it is the wedding ring!"

matrilineal trait among the Kalenjiin because by it the divorced woman seems to carry off all the children. It implies that even in marriage, the children belong more to the woman than to the man. This would have the effect of further making divorce very unpopular and it is not any wonder, therefore, that extremely dysfunctional couples would often choose to live an estranged life and avoid formalising the separation.¹

As already mentioned, the daughters in the family also receive the *maat* torch but *maat* rules say they may not pass it down to their own biological children. The latter must receive torches from their own fathers. There are exceptions, however, and they constitute the material for our next topic of discussion.

12.2 Reincarnation under Woman-to-woman Marriage Arrangements

As we have already observed, the females also inherit their fathers' *maat* from birth, but, as we said, they cannot under normal circumstances pass that natal *maat* forward to their own children. The ancients made provisions for exceptional circumstances as follows:

1) If a wife fails to bear at least one son, but manages to get at least one daughter, that daughter, or any other of her own—but only one—may be passed through a rite that enables her to bear children for her father's *maat*. Such preclusion is called *keeraany*. The appointed daughter goes through a mock expulsion from the clan, then she is accepted back as a bride and “married” to the central pillar of her mother's house. Any children she may bring forth, will inherit not only her natal *maat*, i.e., her own father's *maat*, but will also inherit family property that will have been given to her, just as if she were a son, no less.

2) An old spinster—a relatively new species, as spinsters were almost unheard of in the past—reaches menopause before she had borne a child, especially a son, to inherit her property and carry her *maat* forward via the process of reincarnation. Such a spinster may decide to acquire a “wife” who would bear children for her. Such children would inherit the woman “father's” natal *maat* as well as her property.

¹ See Orchardson, 1961:79. However, no case involving the application of this provision is known to the author, nor to his informers and, therefore, may have been discontinued during the very early part of the 20th century. But, even then, it must have been very rare indeed. How is it possible, for instance, for the spirits of the father's *kootapchii* that have entered his children, thus enabling them to live, to come out of these children when he divorces their mother without them falling dead upon the fall of the divorce “hammer”? How can the spirits of the new husband's ancestors enter into grown up children, though they would have discarded their initial spirits upon the divorce of their mother? This whole scenario contradicts the basic doctrines of reincarnation.

3) But the following is the more common scenario: A man's wife fails to bring forth any offspring within the marriage. After she has attained menopause and all hope of her giving birth to the desired offspring are lost, she is ritually transformed into a "man" of her husband's *kootaapchii*. A woman who has been "transformed" into a "man", can "marry" another woman. This marriage is also referred to as *kiitunji toloi*, "married at (or to) the central pillar", or kingpin of the house. The children of this "marriage" automatically inherit the female "father's" *maat* and property.

But it is to be noted that the *maat* that the female "father", in example number 3 above, may pass forward to her children, is the *maat* that had passed to her during her marriage to her husband. Her husband's *maat*, that is. It is this adopted *maat* that she passes forward to future generations, thus ensuring that the *maat* of her husband does not die with him. The Nandi refer to a version of this as *kiilaal maat aap oreenwa*, "re-lighting the fire of their clan" (Snell, 1954:28).

Even to the cases of woman-to-woman marriages, all rules as appertain to the normal marriages, are followed. Such requirements, for instance, include having to ensure that no *maat* rules, such as those that guard against technical or real incest, are broken.

A man will be appointed to sire children for the young "wife" on behalf of the conjugal "senior partner" of number 2 and 3 types above. Such a man will have no fatherly rights to the children any more than an artificial insemination bull has in the thousands of calves he sires but whom he is far removed from and never sees. The children may never even get to know him.

The children of the number 2 and 3 types of woman-to-woman marriage belong to the female "husband" legally as far as fatherly rights are concerned.

By the time a number 3 type woman is certified "barren", that is, passed menopause, her husband would have married another woman who may have given birth to a son at least. It is his first son, as a rule, who will bear children with the son-less lady's "wife". The *maat* being passed forward in such a case happens to be identical to that of the young man. But just identical for the mere reason that the sire's *maat* happens to be that of his father—which is the same one that was adopted by the "barren" woman a generation before him. But it is technically the adopted *maat* of the "barren" woman that is being passed forward.

It is probable that this kind of arrangement, where a son from within the family would be used to "breed" with his "barren" step mother's "wife", was invented with a view to limiting cases where biological fathers' *maat* were different from that which their offspring took by dint of custom. However many were the cases where the "appointed" men came from outside the family.

The male children of such a woman-to-woman marriage are often baptised (as part of the rite of circumcision) *araap Koogo*, “of grandmother”, and this grandmother, of course, is the “husband” of the children’s mother. Custom leaves no room here to doubt whose *maat* is being passed down.

Before a wife “marries” another woman, she is first of all converted into a “full male” member of the husband’s *Kootaapchii* through a naturalisation rite. She then becomes the “equal” of her husband. In fact property, including land, is thereupon split between the two. From then on, the two can attend and meet in beer parties on equal terms. The woman-husband is furthermore not expected to have sexual relationships with any man, her husband included, as that would technically amount to “homosexuality”! This rule applies to number 2 type as well. Women who “marry” others of their own sex are, as a rule, very old and are presumed to have lost all sexual urge. This custom is still current.¹

As to the number 1 scenario above, where a daughter is “married” to her own home, the woman is allowed to be “seen” by a man or men of her own choice, but the children resulting from such relationships do legally belong to her and her *own kootaapchii*. The “appointed” man in this situation is no better than the one discussed above, in the scenario of woman-to-woman- marriage, as far as legal fatherly right to his own biological offspring, within this arrangement, is concerned. But he is a respected honorary member of the family (where he has been appointed to “serve”), and during parties that are hosted by that family, his word weighs a lot. Such a man will usually have his proper wife besides, but who will have to understand the arrangement without betraying any signs of jealousy.

The girl who has been “re-adopted”, or “married to the home pillar”, in the above manner, is forever incapable of getting married to a man herself. Her male children will be baptised, during the rite of circumcision: *araap Posubeen*, “of young female”.

The practice of symbolically banishing own daughters and then “marrying them to the home’s central pillar”, is no longer common but the modern socio-economic and religious conditions have led to many daughters remaining single all the same. There are now many single mothers who were neither married to outsiders nor to the home pillar—for the practice is dying. The present trend is to regard all such daughters as having been “married” into their own families, and their children are expected to inherit their maternal grandfather’s *maat*, be the reincarnations of that *kootaapchii*’s departed ones etc. Even the baptismal names given during circumcision to boys from such single parent situations, are from the maternal grandfather, and such names, with the particle *araap*

1.No evidence was availed that testified to the contrary, but it has been said that not all the Kalenjin sub-nations had these woman-to-woman marriage arrangements. There was no trace of it in Terikland, South Nandi, for instance, and the informants there said that it was not, to the best of their knowledge, part of Terik custom.

preceding them, may even be identical to those given to the grandfather's own sons. No one seems to be naming such children *araap Posubeen*, or any other equivalent, anymore.

In the case of a "pillar-marriage", should there ever be a dispute, as to fatherly rights, between biological fatherhood on the one hand and "pillar fatherhood" on the other, as to which *maat* the children shall inherit, *maat* laws say that legal fatherhood, which is the "pillar fatherhood", shall prevail. This legal provision protects the daughter who was "married to the pillar" against the possible claims of parenthood rights by any of her male friends who may have sired any—or all of her children.

The coming of Christianity to Kalenjiinland has altered things quite a bit. A man, professing Christianity, tries to persevere for so long the condition of being sonless, if his only wife has not yet born him a son. Rare is the case, however, of one such a man who accepted to go all the way, and to the grave, sonless.¹ For sooner than later such a man acquires a second wife, with the sole hope of begetting the much-desired son, the reincarnation of some dear ancestor, upon her.

For, you see, the social stigma that is attached to son-lessness, and the consequent inability to pass forward the *maat* torch, is so strong, and under its pull, the strands of Christian rules that had wrapped up the man "straight", soon break. Then all hell breaks loose, for the individual and the existing family who, up to now, have grown up listening to the ever-strong condemnation of polygamy in church.

If Christianity could accept number 1 arrangement above, the *ke-raany* method of "readopting", or "marrying to the pillar" one of the daughters in such no-son situations—for the sole purpose of propagating the father's *maat* into the future—perhaps the one sheep in the flock so "afflicted", would not leave. But the church here, by accepting such an arrangement, would be condoning sex outside of marriage on the part of the "readopted" girl, and extra-marital sex on the part of her "appointed" partner!

The other alternative, number 3 above, whereby the wife of the staunch Christian would be required to "marry" her own "wife" for the purpose of rekindling the *maat* of her husband, would be the least palatable course of action for our Christian man—for he would then lose the services of his only wife. Remember that once a woman "marries" another woman, she (the woman "husband") ceases all sexual activities. So, for the Christian man who is caught in this situation, all avenues are closed, and he has to face the condition of *lus*—the Kalenjiin notion of "hell"—in his hereafter. The stigma attached to this condition has so far been too harsh for anyone to bear. So Christianity, to the

¹ A case or two are on record where childless Christian men adopted boys and girls.

extent that it is inflexible, has invariably been compromised. What with the ready biblical example of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar!

The Bible too recognises that a man must pass on his *maat* so that he does not suffer the condition that is the equivalent of Kalenjiin *lus* or *kooninda* where the afflicted is called *cheemukta*. Deuteronomy 25:5-10 deals with this. A married man who dies sonless—the phrase used is “without *son*” and not “without *child*”—leaves the duty of raising his *maat* to his brother. The Bible specifically demands that the surviving brother fulfil this duty and that he keep the widow for wife in the name of his deceased brother, besides his own wife. Should he turn her down, the Bible requires her to accuse him before the elders. And if he defies the elders, she is required to remove one of his sandals and then spit on his face in public. From then on his family shall be known as “The Family of the Unsandalled.”

The Kalenjiin Bible uses the proper Asiisian traditional terms in this context, *maat* and *ndi*. *Ndi* means “cohabit with a brother’s widow with a view to continuing his line on his behalf”. “If the man stands before the elders and says ‘*maachame aandi*’ (“I don’t want to cohabit with widow”), the widow, *mosogeet*, shall embarrass him in the aforesaid manner and utter “*Ingeeyachi kouu noto chiito ne esioo koolaal maat aap ng’etaap kaam* (“this be done to one that has refused to kindle the *maat* of his brother”).” (Deuteronomy 25:9).

This biblical example, nay, requirement, which specifies that a man must get a son to pass forward his name, for a reason difficult to fathom, is never cited by sonless Christian men who believe that it is the Christian way not to marry another wife just for the sake of begetting a son with her. The average African Christian man, anyway, sooner than later yields to custom—albeit all in ignorance of the implied support under Deuteronomy 25:9. In fact he may believe that he is rebelling Christianity. Anyway, a new wife then arrives. Then another. Several family units headed by, and looking up to one seeming dictator of an indifferent man, soon have to coexist. Plenty of young children, sons and daughters, soon begin to enliven the homestead. Inter-house tensions, strains and hatred now begin to develop because Christianity, of the type brought here, and polygamy, have been trained to be mutually exclusive social practices. The two have, therefore, not developed the necessary psychological infrastructure to fall back on should the unexpected condition of having to coexist occur.

Where the reverse happens to be the case, i.e. where the western type of Christianity comes into a polygamous home, it invariably tears the home asunder. Many cases have been recorded of Kipsigiis men who got “saved” and consequently got rid of all of their wives except the first. And, as we have seen above, when polygamy comes into a Christian monogamous home, its Christian-ness, in its westernmost sense, departs. Either a syncretised form of Christianity, or an equally

syncretised form of Asiianism, takes its place in the home. More is said about syncretism in Appendix 6.

12.3 Ancestor Veneration, A *Maat* Preoccupation otherwise miscalled Ancestor-worship

The departed spirits, in general, watch over their *kootapchii*'s mortals and, where the latter stray from their obligations of *maat*, they inflict punishment on them by way of diseases, deaths and economic misfortunes. However the day-to-day managers of the moral code have to be near at hand, and so the elders are charged with the responsibility of *maat* guidance and the meting out of immediate punishment if, where, and when it is violated or ignored. Only what is beyond them, or outside their knowledge, may be appealed to the departed elders, *Iilat* and *Asiis* through curses and oaths. Perhaps what social crime the mortal supervisors cannot see is what falls in the province of the immortal. The spirits are superior to the elders, for after jumping yonder, *ke-siirto*, "to jump across", they landed on a state of perfect and complete knowledge. The elders on earth are next to them in knowledge and wisdom and in the hierarchy of *maat*. The awe in which the *Kalenjiin* hold their elders stems as much from the fact of their proximity to that hereafter as from deference for their advanced age and wisdom.

Kipkorir (Cf. 1973:17) has listed instances where his informants in Marakwet claimed to have been guided by the spirits of their departed relatives on what to do to heal a sick relative such as by describing the nature and method of sacrifice, colour of animal to be sacrificed etc. A spirit may also indicate—all communication is by means of dreams that come involuntarily to the survivor—where to find lost property. "What they say must be done or there may be failure of crops or stock or loss of human life." By this manner of intervention the spirits continued to look after the welfare of their survivors.

However, the missionaries were able to win extra converts by what amounted to driving a wedge between the people and the spirits of their beloved departed by, among other means, retranslating and equating the word *oiik*, "spirits", with "devils" and "demons" (Cf. Kipkorir, 1973:24 f.). They ignored the fact that the latter meanings were covered by the *Kalenjiin* term *masambwaanik*. This semantic tactic had such devastating results, in fact so much so that, presently, the reflexive understanding of the term *oiik* by the *Kalenjiin* is one of revulsion. It was a clever, if some may consider immoral, play with words, of course, on the part of the missionaries in concert with their early converts, and it won them much victory albeit owing part of it to such a method as amounted to no less than spiritual Machiavellianism.

Similar trait of ancestor veneration, along the same *maat* lines, and by the same name, has not been lost to historians in relation to ancient Egypt. It is one of those shared building blocks that go to support the *Kalenjiin* people's claim to ancient Egyptian ancestry:

“Finally, the socio-historical setting of *Maatian* (of *Maat*) ethics is marked by its strong and profound reverence for tradition and the past. This was expressed in terms of both ancestor and elder veneration and a profound respect for ancient knowledge and achievement. In *Maatian* sacred literature, there are abundant models of virtue from the past used to instruct... Gardiner (1964:56) makes the point that ‘one of the most characteristic traits of the Egyptian habit of mind is the extraordinary attachment to the traditional as opposed to the actual’. In fact, he continues, ‘no other people has shown a greater reverence for what was by them termed ‘the time of the ancestors’” (Van Sertima, 1989:367).

This ancestor veneration, called ancestor worship by some western writers (further below), extended all the way from the northern tip of Africa, spread over much of the rest of the continent and stretched with little interruption to its southern tip. What sets the Kalenjin and ancient Egyptian model apart is the incorporation of the concept of reincarnation into ancestor veneration and the view of life and death as a never-ending cyclical phenomenon. Ancestor veneration, of similar type and extent of devotion but which is largely devoid of the concepts of cyclicity of life and death as well as of reincarnation, is most pronounced in the Kintu-speaking sections of Africa. Here Deity, except reportedly amongst the Shona segment of Kintu-speakers, plays a remote, rather detached role and the departed ancestors come to the fore. In fact so prominently that Brandon’s *Dictionary of Comparative Religions* (1970:39) summarises and generalises Southern Kintu-speaking people’s belief as follows: “South Bantu religion is one of ancestor worship modified by the presence of other mystical agencies. Chief among these are witches and sorcerers. The cult of tendance on ancestors is universal among Southern Bantu.”

We shall make an attempt at exploring the philosophical basing of this culture and discover that the western view, which tolerates ancestor dedication events called “memorial services” was, after all, in its judgmental branding of African ancestor memorials as “ancestor worship”, simplistic, and that it actually succumbed to double standard judgement. Ancestor veneration of any persuasion is a natural human tendency and Christianity, as well as other religions, cannot completely—or even remotely—absolve themselves from it.

For example, since the 9th century of this era, November the 1st has been set aside to honour all Christian saints, the known and the unknown. This represents the Christianisation of Samhain of pre-Christian “pagan” Europe. It was believed that on this day, which was the natural boundary marking the onset of winter in Northern Europe,

“the veil between the living and the dead, is thin. It is the Festival of the Dead, that time of the year when we remember our ancestors and hail our descendants... Materially, the nature of the festival, as with many other celebrations, is the same in the pagan and the Christian traditions. The festival of Samhain is celebrated widely on its eve. This is the Christianised festival of All Hallows’ Eve, popularly known as Halloween, which is observed after dark on 31st October... The theme of this week is memory of the dead,

communication with the underworld, and purification for the future" (Pennick, 1992:18, 124).¹

The veneration of ancestors, which has been called "ancestor worship", especially when it applied to Africa and, occasionally, to China; it ought to be clear, was and is still actually a worldwide religious practice. The Romans set aside the dates 9th, 11th and 13th of every month of May as the days of *Lemuria*, when the departed ancestors visited their former homes. These shades, lemurs, were acknowledged and duly honoured, i.e. they were brought into communion with their living descendants, or survivors, on those specific days (Cf. Pennick, 1992:69).

Ovid (43 BC – 17 AD), the Latin poet, in his *Fasti*, described, for the eternal benefit of intellectual fairness, how the Romans propitiated the spirits of their departed ancestors, the said lemurs. This was done at night—for it was believed that the spirits prowled at night and that they could cause deaths at that time. According to Ovid's account (V), after washing hands in spring water, the head of the house, who performs the rite all alone, then takes black beans from his mouth, casts them over his shoulder, and while he does so he says: "These I offer; with these beans I redeem myself and my house". This he repeats nine times without looking behind him. The ghost is thought to pick up the beans and to follow unseen. He touches the water again and implores the ghost by repeating nine times again as follows: "Come forth, spirits of my fathers." He looks back, and accounts the rite duly performed (Cf. Granger, 1895:68).

The Greeks, as one philosophical mind declared, also venerated the spirits of their ancestors which spirits they called *daimones*—later adopted into English by Christians and derogated by them as "demons". Celsus of 2nd century AD defends the Greek veneration of the spirits of their dead apparently against Christian attacks as "demon worship" as follows:

"We ought then not to live at all, nor to have come into this world; or having come, we ought to give thanks to the demons (ancestral spirits), and offer them first-fruits and prayers that they may be friendly and beneficent. If an earthly satrap or governor, or even an official of lower position, can injure those who treat him with disrespect, shall the satraps and administrators of the air and the earth be powerless to injure when they are insulted?" (Patrick, 1892:77)

Asia is another home of ancestor veneration. It is present and well ingrained in Buddhism, Confucianism, Shintoism and Hinduism, large sections of whose membership comprise Chinese

¹ Here the writer quoted, Pennick, uses present tense in describing the old pre-Christian custom although presently the non-Christian aspects of this celebration are largely suppressed. However Halloween, the eve of the "Festival of the Dead", now Christianity's "All Saints' Day" and the following "All Souls' Day", are still marked by Westerners in a "pagan"-like manner according to Pennick. They dress as horribly as possible, this being the day that marks the onset of a "darker, more introspective time of year, when access to the otherworld is easier than usual, when witches ride abroad" (Cf. Pennick, 1992:121).

(Buddhism, Confucianism) Koreans (Buddhism, Confucianism), Indians (Buddhism, Hinduism), Japanese (Buddhism, Confucianism, Shintoism), Vietnamese (Buddhism, Confucianism) etc. The organisation of atonement, placation, propitiatory, and commemorative ceremonies along the patrilineal line here is similar to the corresponding typical African organisation (Cf. Odell and Schwartzbaum, 1989:33).

Scholars have offered various explanations and speculations as to why the survivors of a departed ancestor should be so devoted to the departed, often exceeding in effort the attention they had paid to the welfare of the departed when they were still living. The possible origins, reasons, purposes and causes have been divided by Odell and Schwartzbaum into three categories under the headings, "psychological", "economic" and "sociological". We are going to utilise their categorisation technique but enrich the arguments further with the African experience.

a) **Psychological.** Psychological theories tend to point to issues such as of emotions, namely that the survivors, finding it difficult to contemplate the permanent absence of their loved ones, often want to hang on to them somehow through the commemorative acts and continued pretences that the departed were still present to consume meals with them as before. Such survivors are unwilling to accept the inevitable, i.e., to come to terms with reality. Other suggestions have it that the living are essentially terrified by death and the dead. Therefore, the propitiatory acts that they engage in lavishly, are really geared to driving away the spirits of the departed as safely as possible or otherwise rendering them harmless by what, in their case, really amounts to offering bribes to the dead. It has also been suggested that the requirement of ancestor commemoration and veneration was partly put in place in order to address the natural contradiction between parent-child love and parent-as-source of material gain upon departure feeling. The theory goes that the inevitable commemorations counter the possible "good riddance", or "hurrah" feeling among the inheritors of the property of the dead. Commemoration, propitiation and prayers, it is proposed, bring back some filial piety and suppress the material greed or unhealthy sense of relief and enjoyment of the permanent absence of the benefactor. Another suggestion is quite applicable to the African situation, which is not to say the others are not. The author found many corroborating examples, or stories of it in the oral field of Kalenjinland: namely that the survivors often feel guilty for not having paid enough attention to the welfare of the deceased and often try to remember them rather overzealously with sacrifices by which they hope to ameliorate their sense of guilt as well as avoid the

likely punishment from the dead. Most survivors, anywhere in the world, are more often than not left with a sense of guilt, whether or not justified, of not having done enough for the deceased and the frequency of cases of such overzealous placatory and propitiatory efforts all over should probably be expected.

b) **Economic.** Economic theories suggest that ancestor veneration serves to validate the right of heirs in the family estate. The frequency of the right-to-bury tug of war cases between competing sections of a deceased's family in Kenya validates this theory most soundly. In their thinking, he who is seen to bury and thus subsequently be well placed to offer sacrifices to a deceased (euphemistically called "tending the grave") must indeed be the rightful heir. Another economic theory has it that since the property that is to be sacrificed belonged to the deceased all the same, the deceased may as well continue to enjoy his or her property with the living heirs. Failure to give the deceased his or her share in the continued enjoyment of such property would lead to misfortunes, illnesses or death to the living members of the kin group, the *kootaapchii*. Among the Chinese, it is said, the transfer of an inheritance is the only guarantee of veneration after death. In this way, the progenitor ensures the guarantee of such action himself, or herself, by such transfers of property prior to death. The successors are then bound by this "implied contract" action to observe propitiatory rites thereafter.

c) **Sociological.** The sociological theories of ancestor veneration view such customs as a means for maintaining the continuity of the social order in spite of the death of individuals. It was suggested by Tylor that veneration of the ancestors represented an extension of paternal authority beyond life. Ancestor veneration also represents an effort to maintain a sense of belonging to one kin group for as many generations as possible down the descent of an ancestor. We also ought to note down the fact that in many African examples, the belief is that the departed ancestors are mediators between the Deity and the living and their remembrance, therefore, is ultimately the remembrance of Deity. If one is unable to remember them then how is one going to be able to remember the even more removed ancestor of ancestors, the Creator? We also need to recognise the practical reality, namely that continued collective propitiation may serve to enhance the esteem and power of the leading elder of the kin group over the group and help him attain and maintain a standing, social and even political, in the wider realm of society. This may explain the beginnings of religions and their spread, namely that they were also initially tools of social and

political control at the household-level, which were exercised through ancestor veneration (Cf. Odell and Schwartzbaum, 1989:33). The early colonial officers in Kalenjiinland were to learn how the Kalenjiin, who maintained minimal government, no police force and no prisons, managed to control and maintain socio-cultural and economic cohesiveness and tranquillity within their vast territories. Political power was ultimately in the hands of frail old men; the older the more powerful they seemed to be. It was the sanction of the *oiik*, the spirits of the departed ancestors that was governing through these frail old men. The closest representatives of the ancestors' spirits on earth were the oldest members of the community who were, in any case, closer to them in descent as well as in that they were soon to meet face to face. Those old people were considered wise, wisdom coming with age, and, what more; they had lived for some time with the departed members and knew them and their tastes and dislikes at the personal level. Huntingford (1953b:156) was one of those outsiders who were fascinated by the departed ancestors' mystical method of maintaining a fast political hold on the people in total physical absentia. He writes:

“When the influence of the *oiik* is withdrawn, obedience decreases, and the authority of the old men weakens or disappears... For the principal significance of the *oiik* in the public life of the Nandi is their part in exacting obedience to the law and custom. These are founded on public opinion, and behind public opinion are the *oiik*: ‘our fathers did this, and if we also do not do it, the *oiik* will be angry...’ Whence the strength of a political system which appears superficially to be so full of weakness.”

The absence of writing in much of Africa meant that the ancestors were quickly forgotten. Dependent only on human memory, the spirits of the departed ancestors had short shelf lives and the society's heroes similarly had such high turnover, owing not to their unmemorable contributions but to the limitation of memory on the part of their descendants. Those nations that possessed writing were able to prolong the shelf life of the spirits of their pivotal ancestors and heroes, in fact for so long that it could be forgotten that these too were, after all, originally honoured as departed ancestors. With the onset of greater human mobility and better communication technology, some of these ancestors “of all time” have become international ancestors, thus camouflaging further their historically true nature as some particular clans' ancestors. In fact the word “ancestor” is never applied to them. On the contrary, the word “ancestor” is readily applied to the African situation because the African would be honouring his or her relatively recently departed progenitor as compared to especially the western people's worship of virtually deified, immortalised and internationalised ancestors of remote ages.

The immortalising of ancestors together with their achievements through voice recording, filming and writing, and the spreading wide of such material through travel and other means of communication, can often lead to the mistaken belief that such figures, as historical realities, were indeed proportionately (to the power to disseminate) physically and morally great. Indeed the more widespread the word, the larger than life and the holier was the perception people had of those immortalised characters. The society that possesses the greatest capacity to immortalise, propagate and disseminate stories and myths regarding the supposed achievements of its own heroes and ancestors, will be able to dominate spiritually and intellectually those societies that buy its story because such physical might is soon mistaken for moral might and right.

Joachim Wach (1958:60), in his posthumous publication, *The Comparative Study of Religions*, sums up all the foregoing when he says that once one has learned a religion, he may or may not develop an urge to share the message with others. But often the urge to communicate could be so compelling and one turns into a missionary and into the propagandistic gear in which

“a strong urge is felt not only to share, but to attract and invite others to see and hear as one has seen and heard. This urge has frequently been so strong that it has succeeded in swaying and overwhelming individuals and groups NOT BY FORCE OF THE MESSAGE BUT SOLELY BY THE POWER OF THE MESSENGERS.”¹

The Xhosa, who are the chief inhabitants of the Eastern Cape Province of modern South Africa, were among those that neither wrote, disseminated nor immortalised their ancestors together with their physical and moral achievements beyond a few generations. The western settlers particularly noted them, since the early colonial times of the 17th century, for their great devotion to their departed ancestors. A modern Xhosa female informant, responding to a white female researcher’s question, encapsulated the philosophy behind ancestor veneration and dedication; the essence and import of the practice in a single reply as follows:

“There is a God (*Thixo*) but I do not know him. I know my ancestral spirits, *izinyanya*. They live close to God and next to me. If I displease them they will make me sick or cause me sorrow or hardship. I do not pray to God but in my dreams my ancestral spirits appear to me, sometimes happily, as last night when in my dreams I talked face to face with my grandmother. At other times the spirits are displeased. When displeased, the spirit says he or she is hungry and wants meat and will describe the animal he wishes to be sacrificed. It is either a goat or an ox. It is never a female animal. All my family attend the sacrifice and feast on the meat. This makes the spirit (who, however feeds only on the aroma of the

¹ The use of upper case is author’s own, intended to highlight agreement with his own hypothesis.

meat) happy for he sees that we love and remember him, and so restores health and happiness to our kraal" (Broster, 1967:45).¹

From this reply we gather the following salient points regarding Xhosa religion, and from it we garner a treasure trove worth of the philosophical elucidation of the practice of ancestor veneration, an all Africa preoccupation, the Kalenjiin nation, of course, included:

- 1) There is a Creator who is referred to in the quotation as God and who goes by the name Thixo and is, therefore, One (they are monotheistic). The Xhosa people only know about Him, but do not personally know Him
- 2) However, all is not lost here because the people personally know their departed ancestors who know God personally for they have joined Him
- 3) And now reside somewhere between the living and God. They are intermediaries between man and God and are not a replacement of God in the eyes of the living
- 4) The petitioner can, therefore, logically speaking, only address his or her wishes to those that he or she knows in a language familiar to both and those prayers shall in turn be relayed to the true object of prayer, God, by those relatives who are now within His proximity and who are by such privilege, familiar to and with Him
- 5) The petitioner is weary not to displease these elevated ancestors, who are now within the presence of God, by indulging in selfishness or in other displeasing acts of sin, un-mindfulness, negligence of family and omission of duty to it
- 6) And if the petitioner ignores and goes ahead unmindfully, he or she will be punished right away here on earth by being visited with disease or otherwise treated to sorrow and loss. Punishment by the divine is, therefore, here and now

¹ The Xhosa people would chant to invite their ancestors to a sacrificial feast, the chanting being led by the leader of the patrilineal genealogical unit concerned. They had a way of finding out whether the ancestors had received the invitation to the feast. After bringing down the sacrificial animal, he-goat or ox, by means of tying the legs with thongs and pulling, they would prod the thorax until the animal bleated or bellowed respectively. This was the sound by which the ancestors confirmed that action was being taken irrevocably. By bleating or bellowing, the sacrificial animal involved had passed the message to them. Should the animal fail to bleat or bellow, the occasion would be considered inauspicious, in a manner almost analogous to the disappointment following a failed result in the Kalenjiin's reading for signs of omen from the slaughtered animal's entrails. Only that the Kalenjiin considered *Asiis* to be the communicator of such omen and not so much a response or otherwise by the ancestors (Cf. Bigalke, 1969:108, Broster, 1967:61). Of the Xhosa sacrificial act, Broster remarks, "Never before had I seen such reverence on their faces nor realised how strong was their belief in the invisible presence of the ancestral spirit. Here was a scene from the Old Testament, yet the living custom of their past."

7) The departed spirits take the initiative of communication and pass messages to the progeny through dreams in which they appear to the living and carry out conversation with them, guiding them and finally asking to be fed. Through the action of feeding the spirit of the departed, by means of animal sacrifice, the virtues of generosity and mindfulness of others, is thrust upon the mortal who must endure the bitterness of parting with one of his or her prized animals. But only by means of this sacrifice will he or she occasion a communion with the wider family and their departed spirits. The hunger of the departed spirit is not personal to it; rather it embodies the collective hunger of the members of the genealogical unit concerned. It is not physical hunger, least of all greed; but it is the hunger of communion, the wish to see the maintenance and continuity of familial love, cohesiveness and identity in the absence of the departed unifying factor, the ancestor concerned (Cf. Mbiti, 1969:26, 162-163) All the ancestor wants is evidence of the continuity of love and communion among his or her descendants, and what evidence is there that is greater than the smoke and aroma of burnt offerings—the sign of feasting together?

8) Even though the spirits may appear to be so demanding, they are considerate and will only select either an ox or a he-goat but not the female of animals; these must be left intact so that they may continue to enlarge the kraal of the family. The divine, therefore, are interested in the people's welfare and prosperity. You may remember them and the rest of the membership of the lineage but not at debilitating or crippling expense. What is demanded of you, is a portion of the profit and not a portion of the capital

9) If all this is done at the right time and in good spirit, the ancestors, who represent God, shall be happy and in due course, shall restore health, prosperity and the happiness that will result therefrom

10) If you can manage to please those around you as well as those departed ancestors with your good actions, mindfulness and generosity then, by doing that, you have managed to please the ultimate; God. If each one from each genealogical unit followed this correct path, then the entire nation, which is made up of such units, shall walk a righteous path that will lead to greater health and prosperity for all.

But the interpretation of the same message by the white female researcher quoted does not come close to the sophisticated philosophical interpretation that, in the absence of religious bigotry, we could bring out by taking another look at the African woman's statement. Like many westerners before her, being unable to penetrate deep into the underlying African philosophical thought that is symbolised by such otherwise outwardly simple physical—we may even say gory—actions like animal sacrifice; Joan Broster betrayed prejudice when she surmised as follows:

“Thus there is no inward or spiritual meaning to their religion. They do not believe that they are made by God to serve Him here and in Heaven, nor is there an ethical code of love or goodwill governing their lives. They believe they fulfil their lives and obtain happiness by serving their ancestral spirits, and that these if propitiated will sustain, strengthen and support them” (Broster, 1967:45).

With an ostensibly express intention of breaking away from such typical bigotry and haughtiness towards African religions, as is clearly discernible in Broster's statement above, the Catholic Church is soon going to find itself deep in the study of *maat*. H.H. Pope John Paul II has exhorted in no uncertain terms, his clergy and the entire infrastructure at his disposal in Africa, such as the Episcopal Conferences, Catholic Institutes and Universities, to

“set up study commissions, especially for matters concerning marriage, the veneration of ancestors, and the spirit world, in order to examine in depth all the cultural aspects of problems from the theological, sacramental and canonical points of view” (Pope John Paul II, 1995:64).

The church is going to study *maat* officially! And the clergy are ordered to respect the African religions. Says the Pope (1995:64),

“The adherents of African traditional religion should therefore be treated with great respect and esteem, and all inaccurate and disrespectful language should be avoided. For this purpose, suitable courses in African traditional religion should be given in houses of formation for priests and religious (?)”

In its new accommodative mood, the Catholic Church intends to enter into dialogue with “rival” faiths. In proposing this, the African traditional religions are treated on equal terms with the other churches as well as with the other major religious force in Africa, Islam.

This, on its own, is a revolutionary proposal:

“... For the same reason the Special assembly emphasised the importance of ecumenical dialogue with other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, and of dialogue with African traditional religion and Islam... Certainly the Church on the Continent can also play an important role in inter-religious dialogue, above all by fostering close relations with Muslims and by promoting respect for the values of African traditional religion” (Pope John Paul II, 1995: 49, 67, 137).

Ignorance is no good but it can sustain one in a faith. Many of the clergy, one is afraid to have to predict, who have been living in the bliss of ignorance, especially as far as African religion was concerned, when allowed, nay, encouraged to learn *maat* and other doctrines to an appreciable level, might desert the church, unless the church simultaneously moves in quick enough pace to Africanise itself. The clergymen who will retain total confidence in the church in spite of learning a few beautiful African truths hitherto hidden from them, and not only in order to retain their jobs; will be those that the church can count on in this part of the world for all seasons. The church probably balanced its risks and chances and then decided that it was better to end up with such few than to keep multitudes of clergymen whose faith was sustained by ignorance in an area that the church is now recognising as vital, if it is to survive and prosper in Africa.

Maat had to be learned and lived by all the people, and ignorance of it could be costly. A Barabaig (a Kalenjin-speaking community in Tanzania) example as witnessed and summarised by Klima is pertinent at this point:

“Every male child must learn the Barabaig system of genealogical reckoning as part of his education and socialisation in order to prepare him for the social, economic, and political life ahead. Mastering his personal genealogy, he will be able to orient his social behaviour in face-to-face relations with other clan and lineage members in a culturally appropriate manner on the basis of his position in the genealogical structure of the clan. If he cannot do this, he is destined to commit social errors that may result in legal action being taken against him by an irate lineage or clan member. A social error committed against a lineage or clan member may cause him to be deprived of cattle from his herd. If his cattle herd is to multiply in number, he must avoid becoming the recipient of a cattle fine imposed upon him by a fellow clansman... At present (the late 1960's), maintenance of clan integrity (such as legal enforcement of marriage rules, prohibiting marriage between fellow clansmen and clanswomen) is the concern of the senior clan members in different neighbourhoods and wards. When word reaches a senior clan member that another clansman has violated certain clan norms or standards of conduct he confers with another senior member and together they may decide to hold a clan council or moot... Clan membership entails the acknowledgements of rights and the observance of obligations toward other members of one's clan. A clansman must stand ready to assist another clansman when his aid is solicited and, in turn, he expects future assistance from clansmen as part of his moral and legal rights... (if he declines such or other morally-binding responsibility) his actions are considered breaches of clan norms and therefore punishable by moral and legal sanctions... Given the kind of ecological (semi-arid) adjustment to physical environment achieved by the Barabaig, and given the social condition of clan dispersion, the institution of a clan moot appears to be an effective form of social control, limited, however, to the regulation of behaviour between clansmen” (Klima, 1970:84-85).

The *maat* code of conduct ensured religious, social, political tranquillity, and economic prosperity both here and now for enjoyment by all. It also guaranteed the same condition for each one in the hereafter, for no one who observed the code in its entirety should suffer here or later, the condition called “hell”.

Khun-Anup, the peasant of ancient Egypt who defended himself successfully against injustices under a rich and powerful man, taught about *maat* as follows:

“*Maat* is for eternity. It goes to the grave with those who do it. When they are buried, and the earth envelopes them, their name is not erased from the face of the earth. They are remembered because of their goodness. For this is a principle established by the word of God” (Lichtheim, 1975:181).¹

By the statements “name is not erased from the face of the earth” and “they are remembered because of their goodness”, the ancient Egyptian sage was referring to the *maat* rule that declares those unworthy of being remembered, by means of reincarnation in newborn babies of their own *maat*, lost and forgotten. The prospect of being reincarnated along the lines of *maat*, and therefore being remembered and not erased from the face of the earth, was the greatest hope for an ancient Egyptian, as it still is to the Asiian Kalenjiin person. The soul that is erased from the face of the earth, the one that really goes “to hell”, in the modern Kalenjiin parlance, is the one belonging to that social misfit, *kipreprepchaat*, a good-for-nothing person, or a *kimuumaiyaan*, i.e., a self or socially accursed person, a taboo breaker, whose soul is therefore allowed to die forever. No one recalls him or her back to the earth via *kurseet*, i.e. via reincarnation. He or she remains in the state of *lus*. Everyone, except the real hopeless character, strives never to *lus-ta*, i.e., “be lost and forgotten”.

That was the greatest factor inhibiting the people from committing *maat* wrongs, sin, disregarding and breaking social taboos, or from under-performing among the erstwhile Kalenjiin. Everyone wished to be reincarnated and not to be erased from the face of the earth forever. And he or she understood the minimum of the norms of *maat* that guaranteed this, including ensuring, while still alive on earth, that they did not die son-less or poor, because leaving no issue behind was the same as dying poor and poverty was a *maat* don't, a sin!

Such poor did not fair better here on earth either, as the following example from Kipsigiisland—which was recorded by Peristiany (1939:187)—will illustrate. In a (pre-colonial) Kipsigiis public trial where all were allowed a chance to air their views, there were “definite class distinctions, as the poor man, the *kibananiat*, who has not achieved anything remarkable in any walk of life, is soon shouted down and seldom dares to stand up to speak.”

Far from upholding unfair discrimination on social and economic grounds, this custom instead saw young men working hard to avoid the stigma of poverty, and the Kipsigiis were, in fact, an absolutely wealthy lot in relation to almost any community in what is today's Kenya. Poverty, on

1. *Egypt Revisited*, Edt. Ivan Van Sertima, *ibid*. p. 375.

the part of anyone, was a symptom of *maat* observance gone wrong; so relatives saw to it that none of their own lived poor while they themselves lived a better life. They would not be observing *maat* ethics if they overlooked their own kin in that manner. But there were the “unhelpables” who squandered, in all manner of ways, the assistance from their more fortunate kin. That was not ethical either, and they deserved the life of destitute on earth and the condition of *lus* thereafter.

The stigmatisation of poverty, and the *maat* imperative that obliged the rich to help their poor kin, also saw to the realisation of relative evenness in the distribution of wealth, as well as the maintenance of a very narrow gap between the rich and the relatively poor. Religion, therefore, through the enforcing social agent of *maat*, saw to the fair distribution of economic resources within the community.

No deceased person could be reincarnated via a child belonging to a family of another clan. These souls only enter into bodies of infants of their own *Kootaapchii*. The soul of an individual is a reincarnation of the soul of a deceased ancestor up his or her patrilineal descent. A single soul of a deceased may split into uncountable souls of either sex, and reincarnate in several new babies of his or her *maat* (the *Kootaapchii*).

This aspect of *maat* philosophy partly aimed to explain the natural exponential increase in the numbers of human beings, for if reincarnation meant the mere one-for-one replacement of departed souls, there would be no population increase. In fact there would be a continuous fall in population numbers owing to the few that drop out as *maat* failures and are never reincarnated. It also aimed to establish quantitatively the quality of morality of life, i.e. at establishing a scale for measuring the righteousness of life that an individual led on earth. The most righteous living was expected to yield the soonest and the highest number of reincarnations within the *kootaapchii* after the individual died. The most delayed and the least number of reincarnations after death indicated the opposite: moral and material poverty on the part of the departed. This crystal clear standard of *maat* philosophy made the desired moral quality of life quite palpable and achievable and encouraged righteous living among the people. The deceased individual’s path to heaven was not, as upheld by the western-fronted religions, a secret between the individual and Deity; here it was known to all and sundry on earth as it could be statistically charted posthumously through counting those reincarnations.

There are always enough departed souls within the family to reincarnate. A man may beget the same departed soul many times over if he has many wives.¹ Departed persons who were high

1.A woman can give birth to a particular reincarnating soul only once, however. But she may try again if one of her children named after a certain departed person dies. One of her subsequent babies could be the reincarnation of the same (original) deceased person and it will duly be named after him or her. Such second-try children are often re-named *Kiitnur* although
Footnote continued at bottom of next page

achievers in any field, lived according to the rules of *maat*, and observed all other social ethics, are bound to be reincarnated in many homes and houses of their *Kootaapchii*. Such elevated and coveted treatment of a departed soul is the equivalent of the Christians' "going to heaven", on the part of the Kalenjiin deceased. The same has been said, above, about the ancient Egyptians by at least two writers.

Not only does the departed righteous enjoy the heavenly treatment of being reincarnated in so many homes, but he or she lives a good life in the underworld as stated above: a life that is somewhat commensurate with his or her achievements while still a mortal. He or she continues to receive good will, presents and food offerings from his or her descendants.

12.4 Moral and Ceremonial Uncleaness

The Kalenjiin word for "shadow", *taamirmiiryet*, is the same word for "soul" or "spirit". Whether the ancients actually believed that the soul was embodied in the visible shadow, as recorded by Hollis and quoted further above, is difficult to prove at this stage. It is true that people who were undergoing permanent or temporary spells of moral, clinical and ceremonial uncleaness, themselves made sure that their shadows did not fall on "innocent" people during their period of quarantine, or ostracism. But this taboo may itself have been sanctioned by the ancestors so that it acted either as deterrent against committing of sins and crimes, or against doing certain things prematurely.

Examples: a murderer of own clansman, i.e., one from his own agnatic *maat*, is morally unclean forever and his shadow may not fall on anyone. This makes anyone contemplating murder think twice before condemning himself or herself to permanent ostracism and effective quarantine by taking the life of a relative. A relative, by reason of blood relation, was often the nearest and could easily be reached and murdered during property disputes and other kinds of disagreements such as those arising from the inevitable competition for family resources and inheritance. This class of persons needed greater protection because of the existence of such fertile potential grounds for disagreement coupled with the vulnerability owing to geographical proximity. Besides, since no fine was payable in compensation for the technical reason that the murderer and the victim belonged to one "House", the loss was total.¹ On the other hand, killing a fellow Kalenjiin outside the clan

they take the name of the departed spirit whose reincarnation they represent—further explanation of the *kithur* concept ahead.

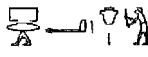
¹ Orchardson says that murdering a clansman by means of burning, as by means of an act of arson, was not punished by fine or curse perhaps, he says, because of the collective guilt on the part of the Kalenjiin arising from the accidental burning of old men, women and children when moving South from the old homeland of Tto. This migration incident he
Footnote continued at bottom of next page

could be compensated, as much as the loss of a human being could be compensated, by payment of the prescribed fine. However, although the murderer was fully cleansed, "made sweet", i.e., morally restored, *kianyiiny*, and "cleansed" or *lyopot* (in Marakwet, Kipkorir, 1973:42), the stigma remained. A deliberate homicide was difficult to cleanse, especially if the murder involved the drawing of blood, which could easily happen if the murderer used a knife, a spear or other sharp implement. To discourage people fighting with dangerous weapons during normal feuds that could lead to unintended fatalities, the law "allowed" venting through a bloodless encounter by means of a provision to the effect that a death that did not draw blood, whether intentional or accidental, could not stigmatise the killer although he was still liable to a full fine. Premeditated murder was, therefore, proved partly by the evidence of blood drawn. Forms of "dry" murder that did not draw blood, existed, such as by strangling during wrestling, or knocking an opponent down cold with a punch. Deliberate poisoning, although almost unheard of, and killing by sorcery, belonged in one category and, although no blood was drawn, the punishment was often by execution (Cf. Orchardson, 1961:113).

In the long past, a murderer was isolated and could not come into contact with even his own family members. He could be attended to during the first four most seriously unclean days after the murder only by fellow murderers who may have been cleansed themselves but were still regarded *motireenik* (ritual witnesses) of the iniquitous "brotherhood" of murderers. Still the community felt that one who had taken a life ideally should lose his own. So a murderer—especially one who had drawn blood in his homicide act—was encouraged to prove himself even more by means of a rather sarcastic mechanism which required him to kill four male enemies, i.e. non-Kalenjiin, and one woman from the enemy's camp during a bona fide military campaign. This necessarily obligated him to occupy the riskiest position either ahead of the storming brigade, or take a position within the section of the army whose operation involved risky hand-to-hand combat. This not only exposed him to the prospect of "good riddance" by the enemy but thus was created a chance for him to help further enrich his own community at the risk of losing only a convicted murderer. His personal exposure in combat may be likened to the modern use of robots to look out for and detonate or disarm booby traps. The killing of a woman, which was a "war don't" under normal combat circumstances, was allowed in this instance although it was said that a convicted murderer would

heard from his Kipsigiis informants. However murder of a non-clansman through an act of arson was still liable to a full fine but with no moral stigma attached to the act (1961:114).



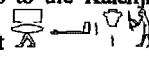
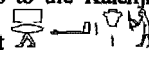
only kill a very old woman in the enemy country “for, in any case, she would not live long” (Cf. Orchardson, 1961:28-29).¹

A murderer who accomplished this errand and survived, ameliorated his condition of moral uncleanness and, in fact, joined the exclusive club of accomplished heroes whose bodies were decorated, even tattooed with the special *kole* marks. He might even have earned the coveted nickname *Changole* “of multiple decorations, (*kole*)” from which his sons would derive a most coveted surname, *araap Changole*. He gained the highly coveted reputation of a *par-iindet* “heroic killer of enemy”, which must remind us of ancient Egyptian  *per-a ha-t*, “hero, brave man” (B.Dict 241a).² The convicted murderer thus overcame the stigma of *rum-iindet* “killer of own kinsman”, which must, again, remind us of Coptic ϩⲉⲩⲉⲧⲁ ϩⲟⲩⲓ (*refhetb roomi*) “murderer” or “slayer of man”.

However, a killer of an enemy at war still avoided meeting his own people until he was ritually cleansed and purged by being made to take purgatives that would clean the inside of the body (Kalenjiin for “to diarrhoea” which the taking of *purgatives* leads to, is *purgeetan*. Is this a mere coincidence?). The exterior areas of the body were cleansed by ceremonially bathing in the river.

By such manner of temporary quarantine, the “brave” killer of an enemy had to keep his shadow to himself for ten days! Although the enemy killer was a hero, he was not *great* enough to have avoided terminating a life, for, strange as it might sound, even the lives of the enemy were valued. All soldiers—minus the convicted murderers whose mission was otherwise—should avoid killing as much as possible, the rule said, but only kill if it could not be helped. The spectre of having to keep his shadow temporarily to himself—by having to keep away from his own people after bloodying his spear—was a good deterrent in the mind of the soldier against unnecessary wanton killings during cattle raids in foreign lands.

¹ Although the rare cases of women committing murder, usually of their own husbands, were known, it would appear that similar provision was not made for their self-amelioration since they were not expected to participate in military raids. So they kept their state of moral uncleanness until they died.

² The transcription by Budge here could be corrected now that we know the corresponding Kalenjiin word *par-iindet* or *poriindet*. The symbol  for house corresponds to Kalenjiin *porjo*, the archaic word for “house” which still survives in *poryeet* or *pororyeet*, “big house” of so and so, e.g., *pororyeet aap Chepkeendi*, “the House of *Chepkeendi*” otherwise called *Kaapchepkeendi*. It could mean the clan or military regiment formerly of the house of so and so. The heart symbol  often corresponds to the Kalenjiin sound *-iindet* and in this it interchanges with the hieroglyphic symbol . We can therefore tell that  was *por-iindet* or even *por-eindet* certainly not *per a ha-t* as Budge puts it.

Battle losers, by losing, also incurred moral uncleanness, and so were treated in more or less the same manner. They had to be cleansed of their misfortune before they came into contact with the “innocent” public, for they could pollute.

The Xhosa hero who had played the critical role in bringing down a lion, i.e., having been the first to strike it, was treated in the same way as an enemy slayer among the Kalenjiin. He was considered morally impure and was kept hidden for four days in a secluded hut that was instantly built for him. There only uncircumcised boys could attend to him because, being still uncircumcised, they were as morally impure as the lion slayer was after having initiated the death of a lion. In his confinement, he smeared himself all over with white ochre—like boys who were undergoing initiation in Xhosa country as well as in both Kalenjiinland and Maasailand. This indicated that the Xhosa lion slayer was as impure as a newly-circumcised-but-not-yet-discharged boy. On the fourth day he bathed and smeared himself with red ochre as any Kalenjiin or Maasai young man would do following confinement.¹

A Kalenjiin woman who had freshly given birth was, like her Xhosa counterpart in similar condition, considered ceremonially unclean for one month. She had to keep to the house lest her “unclean” shadow, and “unclean” feet, touched the grass—and the “innocent”. This was clearly clinical wisdom on the part of the ancients, which saw to it that women who had given birth did not set about their chores before their bodies had fully healed and recovered strength for their own benefit and that of the new-borns. It also imposed an imperative on the part of the relatives and neighbours to avail their services to the mothers in their postnatal weak period. And because soon it would be the turn of the others to be similarly indisposed—either or both ritually and clinically—such services and support were rendered devoid of indignation.

The husbands of confined women in Kalenjiinland readily slaughtered animals at this time because it was believed that meat; especially soup made from it and mixed with herbs, was the best healer and fastest restorer of health. The occasional greedy husband, however, would not find maternity confinement of the wife reason enough to reduce his stock. So an ingenious ethical law was put in place to require that every time the “morally unclean” woman stepped outside and had to step on the grass—which was considered sacred—she stepped on a ground that was strewn with fresh gut contents, *eiyaat*, from a slaughtered animal, and thus simultaneously cleansed the grass that she was polluting by treading on. This way the husband was compelled to slaughter at least one

¹ The comparative notes from Xhosa come from Alberti, 1807:76-77. The dancing of the Xhosa, as described by Alberti again, is reminiscent of the two East African communities': scantiness of instruments; linking arms together; jumping; women dancing by heaving back and forwards with the upper torso only etc. (79-80).

animal for this purpose and, besides, if he failed to do it, his prized animals would die should they eat the un-cleansed grass that was polluted by a woman in confinement!

A circumcision initiate was ceremonially unclean until he or she had performed the last rite of passage. To have to keep his or her shadow to himself or herself (and mates), ensured that he or she kept the recommended distance away from members of the opposite sex until time was opportune.

All these stumbling blocks of rules also ensured that the instinctive emotion and childish excitement on the part of the individual who had achieved success on the one hand, and the acute feeling of inferiority, guilt and embarrassment on the other—as it would be in the case of a loser in battle—died in the individual who had achieved success, or failed miserably, whichever was the case, before he or she met other people. For it was imperative, for the men especially, not to publicly show excessive excitement or visibly suffer the pangs and anguish of failure in public.

The foregoing quarantine rules and procedures have many common traits with what is known of the Israelites as well as of many other African communities. Alberti (1807:52) recorded a similar code that he witnessed among the Xhosa in 1807 thus:

“As in the case of the Israelites, a belief exists among the Kaffirs¹ of moral impurity, which in certain cases debar[s] an impure person for some time from closer association and intercourse with others and requires the observance of certain directions relating thereto. In particular, persons who are afflicted with impurity may not, during that time, wash or colour themselves, drink milk or make love. As against this, the impurity is removed by washing oneself, colouring, and rinsing the mouth with water, after the expiration of the relative period.”

¹ “Kaffir” as used here, was an extremely derogatory term for black Africans originally meaning “heathen” in Arabic and therefore applicable to any “unbelievers”, including Europeans that had come under Arab rule during the height of Islamic expansion and power and before the European inquisitions of 13th to 15th Centuries AD. It was a favourite of the white people of South Africa before black rule came and restored respect and dignity for black people. The Arabs of the East African coast also used it against Africans who would not convert to any of the foreign religions and it still exists in our Kiswahili vocabulary as *kafiri*.

12.5 Other *Maat* Situations

No man, under normal circumstances, may change his clan, adopt another one, or create a new one. There are a number of exceptions, however: A convict who is due to be handed over for execution by his own *kootaapchii* and clan after an unsatisfactory trial, in the eyes of his maternal uncles, *Kaamaama*, may be claimed by such *Kaamaama*, in which case he would adopt their lineage, i.e., his own mother's natal lineage (Cf. Kipkorir, 1973:8).¹ Another exception to this rule was in the past reserved for non-Kalenjiin male captives who were brought home by soldiers. The captors individually adopted such captives into their own clans, and, sometimes, into their own *Kootaapchii*.

In at least one case, a large section of the Kintu-speaking Gusii are said to have been surrounded and given the choice to become Kipsigiis right on the land captured along with them. They converted, but being too many, probably outnumbering their captors, the mass adoption was not detailed to *Kootaapchii*. The conquered instead joined various Kipsigiis clans, but became founders of *Kootaapchii* themselves. Other Gusii men immigrated to Kipsigiis country of their own free will, and, after having been circumcised the Kipsigiis way, which rite itself constituted a complete naturalisation process, became *Kootaapchii* founders in their own right. Today there are very many *Kootaapchii*, mainly in the southern areas of Kipsigiis country (now Bureti District), and over large areas of Bomet District, bearing Kalenjiinised Gusii names. There are many homes here too that, in a similar manner, trace origin to the Maasai nation.

Men who carry the same *maat* share their problems. Heavy court fines, wedding expenses, funeral expenses, or children's initiation fees, and heavy education expenses; may be split among the nearest (geographically) members of the clan—especially the *Kootaapchii*—even if they were related via an ancestor who died several hundred years before.

In the past, an aggrieved clan whose member had been murdered, had a right to seize the cattle from any herd provided it belonged to a member of the clan of the murderer. To facilitate the smooth invocation of liens of this nature, each clan had to adopt unique tattoo patterns, which consisted of cutting certain unique and readily recognisable marks on their animals' ears.

Special *maat* rules govern areas such as land ownership, especially in Keiyo and Tugen. In these areas people live more or less in clan territories. The purchasing of land in such territories by an "outsider" is very difficult, therefore. The land here is protected by *maat* for the benefit of its own posterity.



¹ More details further ahead. Example is still limited to Marakwet report from Kipkorir, 1973.

People were generally free to marry into any clan except their own. But for reasons lost in antiquity, certain clans were not allowed to marry into certain others. Hollis recorded the following restrictions placed on the path of a Nandi Talai man: He cannot marry into Kipoiis, Tungo or Sogomo clans. Not only that, he may not marry a woman who has previously conceived. The privileged royal that he was—in that he could point an index finger at any woman, usually a beautiful one, and that became his wife—he was, to that extent, limited as to his choices.

His other limitations were that he could not wear a lion-skin head dress, eat the meat of an animal killed by a lion; he may not settle among the Terik or the Tugen (although some of them in fact originated from Tugen); may only fight on the right flank in a battle; may only bleed oxen in the morning. The Talai were not to perform the *rikseet* ceremony after circumcision and neither were they allowed to view the bullroarer. Other clans too had selected privileges and restrictions (Cf. Hollis, 1909:9).

At the broader level, the Kalenjiin were in the past prohibited and allowed to intermarry as follows: “not intermarry with Wanderobbo (Ogieek) or Kavirondo people (Luhya/Luo), but intermarry with Masai (as well as amongst their own branches)” (Hobley, 1902:40).¹

The Kalenjiin “clan” is not really clan in the conventional sense. It is in fact lineage. All clans mix and live together, perhaps with the exception of the Keiyo and, to a lesser extent, the Tugen, who maintain separate clan territories as mentioned above. Although geographically mixed, people carry *maat* which are unique to each clan, and every clan has its idiosyncrasies which, theoretically, should enable one to tell one’s clansman from an outsider without having to be told. Certain fine details of behaviour and attitude are expected from particular clans and the individual member is helpless as to whether or not to adopt such characteristics. He and those peculiar characteristics are borne afloat by the river of fire, along the course of *maat* and *ooreet*.

Oor or *oor-eet* as we pointed out before, is certainly related to ancient Egyptian  *her-t* (Gardiner  *errwt*), “way, path” (B.Dict. 499). It is also preserved in Coptic $\rho\omicron\rho\epsilon\iota\alpha$ (*p-oreia*), “path” (Crum). Another possibility is $\Theta\text{I}\text{O}\text{O}\rho$ (*eiyoor*), “river”. The people followed the course of River Nile as they emigrated southwards from Egypt. That was their route. Although all Kalenjiin people’s principal ancestors followed that route, they did so at different times and more splits were occasioned each time a group, or family, left to look for greener pastures (literally

¹ These restrictions have since been relaxed. But even during the time they were in full force, the women who were captured during raids were either married by the soldiers who captured them, or they were married off by their captors to other Kalenjiin men. Male war captives were adopted by their captors into their respective clans and they could thereafter marry Kalenjiin women subject to the ancient inter-clan restrictions.

speaking) elsewhere. It is most probable that they kept moving along different river banks or they followed the same river banks at different times.

The most serious (but also the most misused) curse that one can swear at a Kalenjiin man, is *mechiin maat*, “may your *maat* torch die on you”. This is simply to say, in other words, “may your family die out,” or “may your seed die,” or “may your spirit cease to return to the living,” i.e., “may you die without an offspring who could transmit forward your *maat* torch”, i.e., “may you suffer the condition of *lus*.” A man who does not beget a son becomes the last in his own lineage branch. He cannot therefore pass the best in him, as contained in his *maat*, down to the next generation. He is called *cheemukta* and his death is called *me kooninda*, “die for eternity” as there will be no son to see to the reincarnation of his spirit (Cf. Orchardson, 1961:78, 118).

It is not all in vain though as, assuming he is an upright and successful man, upon his death, any male relative of his *maat* can reincarnate his soul through the medium of a newly born baby of either sex. But all strive to get a son within the family, by all means, who will more directly pass down their *maat* and lineage, hence the custom of resorting to the very strange-sounding (to the uninitiated) remedies narrated above.

Huntingford (1953b:38) came close to defining the ancient Egyptian *maat* in the process of attempting to define the Kalenjiin *maat* phenomenon:

“Between Asiis and the living stand the spirits of the dead, *oiik*, still members of the tribe, who mediate between man and God, and punish the living in order to prevent them from upsetting the ‘balance of nature’ by their crimes. These spirits are in the main friendly to the living and visit them in the form of snakes (rats, moles) at night (and these, therefore) may not be killed at night.”

The philosophical positioning of the spirits of the dead between the living and Deity, which is described by Huntingford here, was characteristic of many societies over much of Africa, such as the Xhosa of South Africa whose similar philosophy we have discussed. The subtle differences and refinements rested on whether a society directed its prayers to the Deity or addressed them to the ancestors for onward transmission to Deity. The Xhosa and many other Kintu-speaking peoples generally followed the proxy method. The Kalenjiin, on their part, addressed prayers directly to Deity but often admonished the ancestral spirits, within the same prayer, to leave the living alone in peace.

The presence of the belief that the spirits of the dead entered snakes, rats and moles at night for the purpose of transportation to the homes of their descendants and survivors, does not imply that the Kalenjiin believed in the transmigration of the soul into these beasts. These crawling animals were just a convenient means of transportation back to the home, and only for use as such at night for, it would appear, judging from this concept, that spirits were believed to travel only at night.

There is no evidence either, such as is reported with respect to North American native populations (Avebury, 1911:111), that the Kalenjiin believed that the souls of the dead transmigrated into their totem symbols. These symbols are not revered by the Kalenjiin because they contain such spirits, but just as identification symbols that the revered ancestors decreed for every clan. The most vile and most detested of animals, the butt of the dirtiest jokes, the symbol of greed, rashness, foolishness and failure, hyena, happens also to be looked at with great awe. But this only owes it to the fact that it is the undertakers' animal in whose stomach many a revered ancestor's body is entombed. Yet still the hyena has never been looked upon as the reincarnation of any of those ancestors that hyena's own ancestors had consumed. Besides, as *Tungo*, hyena is a hallowed totem of a clan that is proud to go by that name.

The ethical code of *maat* can never be exhausted and one only supposes that the above narration is enough for the purpose of arriving at a conclusion as to whether the Kalenjiin concept and practice of *maat*, is close enough to the ancient Egyptian concept, as we have seen summarised by Barbara Watterson thus: "Within the world which Ra created according to his divine plan, *maat* stands for social justice and religious order, the relationship between man and man, man and gods, man and the dead."

12.6 Maternal Uncle, the Powerful Moral Force outside the Formal *Maat*

All Kalenjiin communities observe similar *maat* moral codes in similar fashion although some may use different words for *maat*. Others lay greater *maat* bond emphasis on one aspect of social relationship or another other than the readily visible Nandi-type preoccupation with the circumcision *maat* comradeship, or the Kipsigiis patrilineage oriented type of *maat* emphasis.

For an example, the most powerful enforcer of the moral code in Keiyoland is the *Ng'oki* concept. It is *maat* looked at from the negative "don't" angle:

"The concept of *ng'oki* guarantees the smooth relationship of the age-sets, particularly the members of the same age-set. One is not permitted to insult, humiliate or degrade a member of his age-set or that senior to his age-set. At the same time the wives of the same age-set are expected to treat the members of the age-set of her husband with the respect that is due to her husband: that is not to insult, humiliate or degrade... The relationship between the members of an age-set is extended to the relationship of the inter-clan relationship. The maternal uncles, because of the inter-clan marriages become the social point(?). It is held that (you) should respect (your) maternal uncles, making sure that you do not do anything wrong against them, because if they happen to curse, the curse will have the effect of awakening *ng'oki* into action, against you." (Chesang, 1974?:28).

The Keiyo regulation of the moral code that is heavily hinged on the social office of the maternal uncle, and guaranteed by the ever present fear of *ng'ooki*, automatically ensures that the entire Keiyo community is subjected to it for the simple reason that almost everyone has a maternal uncle or a number of them. Conversely, almost every man is a maternal uncle to other people. And not only must you always hold your maternal uncle in such awe but the same respect must be extended by your own offspring to his offspring and the same relationship must be observed by the generations after them for as long as it will be remembered who gave a bride to whom—usually going back four or so generations.

The maternal uncle rule was observed throughout Kalenjiinland. The Keiyo only laid more emphasis upon it. So much so that this is probably why the Nandi refer to any Keiyo man—occasionally reciprocated—as *wer-po-tie*, “son of daughter”. The nickname is both testimony to a previous existence of a period of rampant intermarriage between those two sub-nations of Kalenjiin as well as to the fact that the Keiyo probably displayed such extreme humility and loyalty to their Nandi maternal uncles, especially when they made the long trip back to Nandiland to seek ceremonial permission from the maternal uncles to go through this or that rite, that the Nandi attention was especially drawn.¹

Among the Northern neighbours of the Keiyo, the Marakwet, the most serious court cases that were tried at the highest level of *asiswo*, i.e. the equivalent of *pororyeet* council in Nandi, Tugen etc. and of the *emeet* council in Kipsigiisland; would require the presence of the maternal uncles of the accused. These alone held the final say in matters of life and death for their accused nephew. If they accepted the court verdict and sentence, they led in executing it. But as we said, further above, if they were at variance with either the verdict or the sentence, they would be compelled by the *asiswo* council to accept the convict back into their own houses (Cf. Kipkorir 1973:8).

As we said, such action would have such effect as the convict ceased to be a member of his father's clan thenceforth and he was adopted into his maternal clan. He was allowed to live but he was stripped of his paternal *maat* rights, obligations and protection. This would still be a harsh sentence in that it implied that the accused had been declared an outcast. In Kipsigiisland only social outcasts were required to renounce lineage and, even then, all the outcast needed do was

¹ Two informants, araap Turgot in Keiyo and Paramount Chief araap Kirwa of Nandi, respectively spoke of a certain emotional, almost ritual, reciprocal relationship between the Nandi and the Keiyo that is underlined by the mutual nickname, *werpotie*. The two communities also habitually exchanged, quietly, babies of the uninitiated teenage girls that should have been strangled at birth on account of illegitimacy and on account of being “children of children”. The temptation to trace the mutual nickname *werpotie* to this practice is great.

migrate to a far off place, change his *kootaapchii* but still remain in the same wider clan of his father.

Perhaps this Marakwet innovation, assuming that the Southern Kalenjiin versions were the original—the opposite could as well have been the case—inevitably came with the nature of the demographics of the parishes and counties that was initially typical of the Northern Kalenjiin sections. The Northern Kalenjiin sub-nations generally lived, in the not too remote past, in almost exclusive clan territories so that the *asiswo* council of Marakwet was composed of elders a majority of them coming from a single clan. This being so, an accused appearing before them was really facing a bench that was composed largely of male patrilineal relatives of his own father. By dint of clan exogamy there was, almost by definition, no representative from his mother's side and neither was the mother a sitting member of the council. Yet, needless to say, serious cases required the oft more humane viewpoint of someone possessed of maternal instincts vis-a-vis the particular accused. These feelings, in the forced absence of female relatives, the maternal uncles, the *kamaama*, were best placed to inject into the council proceedings.

The maternal uncle, therefore, supplied the moral counterbalance against the pervasive, patrilineally-defined and dominated *kootaapchii*-centred *maat* system of Kalenjiinland. So vital were maternal uncles. An example of the vital role of a maternal uncle all over Kalenjiinland: the final authority that allowed a boy to be circumcised—and this was the most important rite in the entire life of a man—was not his father, as an outsider would have expected, but his maternal uncle.¹

Wrote Peristiany about the Kipsigiis maternal uncle:

“The maternal family is of secondary importance in the life of a Kipsigis, as its members belong to a different clan. The only person of outstanding importance is the mother's brother by the same mother, i.e. the ‘true’ *mama*... A young man stands in great fear of his maternal uncle and tries not to anger him, as his spell is said to be very

1. “Paternal uncles” do not exist in Kalenjiin and, in fact, in most other languages of black societies, including the Dravidian languages of Southern India (Cf. Frazer, 1910:ii, 227). Any of one's father's brothers is either the “big father”, the “middle father”, or the “small father”, depending on his position in order of birth in their family. All are addressed “Father”. The maternal uncle, the real “uncle”, is addressed as *maama*, “mother” (?). By the same argument, paternal *first* cousins do not exist; they are either brothers or sisters. More remote relations on the paternal side are just *maat* who may still be described as *kitaupche*, “we are brothers”, or “we are brother and sister”, “sister and brother”, or “we are sisters”, whichever combination is applicable to the speaker and the persons being spoken about. This scenario characterises extended family set-ups, and members of the other famous “extended family” religious group, the Hindu, also follow this pattern in defining familial bonds (Cf. Pancholi, 1982:17). The possibility that this might point to the existence of polyandry within these societies in ancient times, by which custom a woman could marry many men, often a whole set of brother-husbands, cannot be ruled out. With the husbands of their mother, if they were all brothers, rotating around their mother like clockwork, the children had no way of knowing which of the men was their father. However, in certain polyandrical cultures that allowed brothers to marry one wife, such as that of the Ba-Nyanakole of Uganda, the eldest of the brother-husbands was designated “official” father of all of the common wife's children. This was only meant to facilitate easy identification in the social place (see Frazer, 1910:ii, 538).

potent, and the mere mention of it has a sobering influence on him. If he shows disrespect towards his mother or to his *mama*, the latter will threaten him with the spell, which is only cast after extreme provocation... The *mama's* importance is said to be due to the fact that 'he was in the same womb as the mother' and this not only gives him special powers but also makes him be under special obligations to the boy—obligations greater than those of his paternal uncles... " e.g. when the boy's ears are being pierced, the *mama* anoints him with butter and presents him with one goat; before circumcision of the boy his *mama* anoints him with butter and, when he comes out, presents him either with a goat or a heifer; he may also assist with the boy's dowry when he marries by way of a heifer.¹ The most terrible thing that can happen to a Nandi is to displease his maternal uncle... It is always usual for warriors to give their maternal uncles a cow after a raid in return for the kindness shown them as children" (Hollis, 1909:94).

And from Tugen,

"An alliance between two lineages gives rise to asymmetrical status relations. Members of the giver lineage are considered to be status superiors. This is symbolised in behavioural expectations, attributions, and kin terminology. One Tugen said about his mother's people that 'they are above us... they are bigger than we are.' ... Males of the giver lineage, excluding those above the generation of the linking woman, are attributed the power to curse to death members of the line descending from their lineage woman. This is particularly so in the case of the woman's genealogical brother... This attributed power is balanced by an attributed mystical ability on the part of the woman to destroy her brother's line. She can do this in the event that her brother abuses her, particularly if he insults her sexually, or in the event that her brother consistently refuses to aid her children" (Kettell, 1975:39-40).

1. As he would be coming from another clan, a *mama's* gift towards dowry was unacceptable as being in relation to dowry and he had to emphasize in a beer party to his neighbours and his own clansmen that it was a mere gift from *mama* to nephew (Quoting and adapting from J.G. Peristiany, *ibid.* p. 100&104). By clan here Peristiany must have been having in mind the *Kootaapchii* level. The word "clan" in this book and as far as Peristiany was concerned in other parts of his book is otherwise restricted to the larger grouping referred to as *oortanyit* in Kalenjin and represented by an "animal" emblem. Several *kootaapchii* make up an *oortanyit*, "clan". Strictly speaking, if rare, marriage is possible between two from one clan as long as the *kootaapchii* are different. And in such a case a *mama's* heifer gift would bear similar earmarks as those of the family of his nephew as not to arouse attention when accompanying other cattle of dowry driven to the nephew's in-laws.

Anyway, these days the *kootaapchii* have become so large and when carrying out a conversation in the English language, the members refer to their *kootaapchii* as "clan".

12.7 Quality of Religion: The Preoccupation with Heaven, the Morbid Fear of Hell, and the Notion of “Primitive” Religion

The adjective, “primitive”, when it is used to qualify religion, as in one of Sigmund Freud’s statements quoted earlier on in this discussion, can only amount to a highly contentious proposal. All religions aim, as a primary objective, to ensure the well being of the individual’s soul after death. And as a by-product of this heavenward preoccupation, the individual, with the carrot of heaven (as well as the stick of hell) so dangled before him or her, strives to attain righteous living on earth. The success or failure of this by-product effort can be measured by observing the general behaviour and adherence to the key moral codes within a given society that subscribes to one type of religion or another. A wider societal failure is signified by general moral decadence, social, economic and, consequently, political turmoil. The relative or absolute absence of all of these can only signify a corresponding (promotional or preventive) success on the part of the moral code promoter or enforcer, in other words, the religion in force.

But as to the prime objective of propelling souls to heaven, no one has evidence of any sort, qualitative and/or quantitative, as to how each of the world’s religions has fared so far in the attainment of that primary goal. In the absence of such feedback, the use of terms like “primitive” or “advanced” to describe any of the religions of the world makes these adjectives sound hollow indeed.

Robert Lowie’s argument vis-a-vis the merits and demerits of the notion of hierarchical quality of religions, and his view to the effect that such judgmental predisposition was futile, may be harnessed to serve our argument here, which seeks to dismiss altogether the concept of “primitive religion”. Some writers, such as Lowie, have found it so convenient to so designate the religions of the technologically less advanced nations of the world, such as those of indigenous Africa, indigenous Australia and indigenous Americas. But it should be remembered that Lowie, who argues so rationally in the following quotation, does so as long as the religions of the technologically more advanced people, such as the Buddhist Asians, and western Christians, are being compared. He contradicts himself when he goes back to the main subjects of his book; the technologically backward peoples whom he calls primitive.

To his mind, technological simplicity and illiteracy—meaning the lack of western type of education—renders the subjects primitive, together with any religion they may have invented. Like many others, he has been obscured by a screen of prejudice and cannot see the sophistication in the religious philosophy and theology of the technologically less-advanced peoples no matter how long

he took to study them. Instead of examining their religions in their own light, he examines them in the light of the technological and economic backwardness of the believers.

Lowie's (1948:xii) more enlightened argument goes as follows:

"If (for example) Buddhism satisfies that part of the Buddhist's nature which corresponds to the devout Christian's longing for acceptance by the deity, then it is a veritable religion, just as polygyny is anthropologically no less a form of marriage than monogamy, and an oral tradition must be reckoned, despite etymology, a specimen of literature."

Going by this argument, the religions of the technologically and economically less-advanced peoples should similarly be considered fit and proper faiths if they equally serve to satisfy their adherents. Any other manner of viewing this would be engaging in intellectual double standards.

Having pointed out all the foregoing, it is important to draw the distinction as to the manner in which the Asiisians ensured that the citizens adhered to the moral code as compared to the corresponding philosophy and methods of the adherents of the westernised religions.

The westernised faithful is forever gazing in the sky at the two objects that are dangled before him or her: the carrot to the right hand side and the stick to the left-hand side. One is called heaven and the other, hell. If he or she observes consistently the don'ts of this earth and continues to repent, pray, thank and praise the Creator, then the carrot is his or hers for the taking. But if he or she ignores some of the don'ts, relapses in prayers, does not repent, praise and thank the Creator; then the stick of hell is there, waiting. He or she therefore has to praise the Creator so incessantly. For the assumption here is that the latter loves incessant praises.

An exceedingly devout westernised faithful is forever walking a spiritual tightrope and in personal conditions that would appear to an uninitiated outsider to be akin to paranoia. He or she is obsessed with personal post mortem welfare and sees religion as both insurance against unfavourable post mortem conditions and assurance of ideal post mortem existence. Yes, all religions are concerned about post mortem existence, this being an important basis of the concept of religion in the first place (Cf. Brandon, 1970.536). It is the extent of preoccupation with it under seeming or imagined threat wherein lies the difference.

The most spiritually paranoid of the western-type believers, who, therefore, would give off the impression of being the most pious, is called "a God-fearing person". Even the obsessive and morbid fear of the devil as if he lurked at every corner and alley, is symptomatic of spiritual paranoia. But it was the condition of constant "fear" of God, because the early Fathers said that He wielded the stick of hell, which appeared to outside observers to border on paranoia that concerned the Greek philosophers who had bothered to learn something of Christian doctrines. They saw in this impiety and outright blasphemy of the Creator to whom they themselves could

not ascribe human weaknesses of hate, anger, envy and vengeance. One of the Greek philosophers, Celsus, in attacking nascent Christianity of the 2nd century, alluded to the Christian idea of the stick of hell as follows: “By lies about the punishment of sinners they wish to strike terror into the ignorant” (Cf. Patrick, 1892:42).

To this accusation Origen replied that some people could not escape from the flood of wickedness unless a forceful way was found to pass the message where scripture was too steeped in wise obscurity for them to understand: “for some cannot be converted except through fear and a representation of punishments” (Patrick, 1892:136).


The objective here was to “save” souls and the end justified the means. This represented a major concession from one of the founding Fathers of the Christian movement, Origen.

Some of the early missionaries to Africa in general used this threat of hell quite liberally to win and keep converts. The human being is aware of his human mortality and the insecurity and apprehension with which this species lives as a result of this certain knowledge of mortality and uncertain knowledge of what follows, necessarily makes it liable to embrace any doctrine that offers guarantee of post mortem security. A brand of philosophy that can best involve itself in the two-pronged approach of post mortem fear mongering—as admitted by Origen—and salesmanship of post mortem hope, can expect a hearing from those who are deeply concerned with their own post mortem welfare.

The Asiisians, in their traditional setting, spent less time thinking about and working for their post-mortem welfare. Instead, they sought to uplift their moral, physical and social welfare in the manner of “here and now”, as they believed that this would ultimately automatically translate into post-mortem spiritual welfare (Cf. Hollis 1909:41).

While still children and too young to understand philosophical lessons in morals, the Kalenjiin are taught morals through the medium of bedtime stories. The concept of the deceptive devil that appeals to human gullibility, shortcomings of greed and the ever-present need for acceptance and love, is imparted to them through the use of the versatile character of the ogre, *Chemoosiit*. *Chemoosiit* variously appears to the victim as the richest, most loving, most considerate, most handsome man, or the most beautiful woman, with the most persuasive tongue. He only appears in his true ugly countenance: with a third eye either on the forehead or on the back of the head; with a red mouth full of large carnivorous teeth and with composite features that combine all the ugly animals that the story teller can imagine, at the hour of reckoning; which is when he is preparing to cook and eat up the victim that he has deceived into entering his trap. This is how Chesaina (1991:11) summarises this ogre concept of *Chemoosiit*. He

“was a symbol of deception, destruction and the power of evil... his cannibalistic behaviour signifies his lack of decency and humanity... the ogre is used as a rod for punishing characters representing social deviants and the foolish in order to teach them to be aware of deception and power of evil in society.”

The ancient Egyptian equivalent of *Chemoosiit* was  *Am-Mit*, (*am-yit*?) “A monster, part crocodile, part lion, and part hippopotamus, which devoured the dead” (B.Dict. 121a). The proper transcription should probably be something like *Am-myat* “eater of death (the dead)” in Kalenjiin, or *am-jit*, “eater of person(s)”. It is akin to the *am-jit* in *kaap-ko-am-jit* “of man eaters”, pronounced, *kapkwomjit* (see Chesaina, 1991:76ff), this being the name for ogre among some northern Kalenjiin dialects. *Kaap-am-jit* also refers to the bush into which human corpses were deposited for the hyena to come and devour and thereby release the spirit so that it may go to the underworld heaven, the spirit world, and be ready to reincarnate. *Am-jit* in this instance would be the hyena.

The *Am-mit* of the ancient Egyptians ate the souls that were too heavy, burdened with sins, and could not be let into the presence of Osiris in his underworld heaven (Cf. Budge, 1934:295). But perhaps *Am-mit* differs from the *Am-jit* of contemporary Kalenjiin in that *Am-mit* waited patiently until the weighing of the soul had been done and the results were out, while the *Am-jit* of the Kalenjiin, as *Chemoosiit*, or *Kaapkoamjit*, took part in the process of misleading the soul so as to finally eat the flesh of their converts, the wayward.

Am-jit, as “hyena”, however, was as patient as the *Am-mit* of ancient Egypt, waiting until the victim was quite dead and he could eat the flesh, releasing the soul. But on the basis of semantic field, we are really talking about the same thing under more or less the same name. It constitutes one of those huge blocks that complete the foundation towards the necessary proof of the Kalenjiin claim of descent from the ancient Egyptians.

From interviews with elders and from the close and innovative examination and appreciation of culture and religion in practice, the following seems to be the more sophisticated, unwritten Asiisian moral code. First and foremost, unlike in some western-fronted faiths, the Asiisians are not threatened with the frightening conditions of hell in order to tow the line. The Asiisian has been taught that all he or she has to do on this earth, is follow the *maat* moral and ethical code, i.e. avoid incurring *ng'ooki* and the fines and curses that come with it, for such fines and curses have the effect of pushing one down the poverty line, actual and moral. Work hard to succeed and prosper in life here on earth and assist those to whom it is your duty to assist in order to succeed and prosper also. Ensure the passing on of your lineage button to the succeeding generation as required by *maat* rules. Ensure in all your dealings and relationships: ethics, fair play, truth and justice so that you

may incur no curse, formal and loud, or even that which is uttered under the breath by other parties, living or dead. Settle your debts and any homicide fines levied on the wider family according to the proportion required of you. Alleviate, as you can, the suffering of those whose predicament you witness, be they animals, enemies (in time of peace or in capture), or your own people. It is your moral duty to contribute to the genuine beggar on your path. Pray, sacrifice to and thank the Creator for what accrues to you and to the society. Attend collective prayers and meetings at the appointed place and time. Remember and honour the deceased ancestors in times of need, suffering and disease, but also before indulging in pleasurable pursuits in better times. Go through all your rites of birth and pass all those still under your charge through their proper birth rites in turn (also see Xhosa code for comparison, Chidester 1997:145). Ensure to apologise genuinely and accept genuine apology in the spirit in which it is given for any wrongs done to anyone or anything. Repent and be cleansed for any uncleanness witnessed or caused to you or by you in the manner decreed by the ancestors. Do not knowingly, during a period of personal ritual uncleanness, of suffering from a contagious disease etc., pollute or infect another party.

If you follow all the above do's and don'ts and others, all of which amount to, or lead to a righteous living on earth, you will prosper and multiply, and this status, for you; shall be continued forever in the netherworld. You will be reincarnated most numerous and soonest as your offspring multiply without end.

Thus an Asiisian, while still living, almost knows precisely, and it is common knowledge within the wider family and within the general neighbourhood; what reward awaits him or her in the next world. But, as already pointed out, the Asiisian does not even think, let alone be constantly preoccupied with the preparation for this inevitable eventuality.

Looking and listening through old Asiisian prayers, one seems to discern a silent rule: ask for help from but do not attempt to pester or flatter the Creator for these have the effect of belittling the very Person being pestered and/or praised. The assumption that the Creator would love constant praises, as you would do yourself, leads to your committing the spiritual offence of verbal flattery as well as blasphemy for so belittling your Creator (Cf. Patrick, 1892:39).¹

Here the author is not trying to imply that one religion is better than the other, for then he would be just as guilty of the sins of prejudice as the person he is criticising, the one who says that

¹ Celsus (about 178 AD) in attacking the then nascent movement of Christians, reminds the Christians as follows: "A conscientious judge is unmoved by the wailing of criminals; but your God is influenced in His judgements by flattery rather than truth" (Patrick, 1892:39). The message intended by Celsus here is that God should and does take account of sincerity and does not take into account the loudness in which it is proclaimed.

some religions are primitive! The author is only bringing to attention what he thinks is an important difference as concerns the management of the means to one shared end by the respective peoples.

To fittingly end the discussion, we may recall, in summary, the respective views of Lévi-Strauss and Stark, from Chapter 2:

“To be sure, the term primitive now seems to be safe from the confusion inherent in its etymological meaning and reinforced by an obsolete evolutionism... A primitive people may possess, in one realm or another, a genius for invention or action that leaves the achievements of civilised peoples far behind (he sites the *maat*-like sophisticated social management system of Native Australians’)... integration of emotional life within complex system of rights and obligations... the utilisation of religious feeling to establish a viable, if not always harmonious, synthesis of individual aspirations and the social order” (Lévi-Strauss, 1958:102).

Stark’s (1974:xiv) “anti-primitive” statement is based on experience in Africa: “Now we must modify our attitude from one of condescension to appreciation for the Bantu’s early perception of that which we are just now ourselves apprehending.”

12.8 Tout, Thout or Tehuti or Taiitta? Maat’s Companion



Tehuti, 𓂏𓂏𓂏𓂏𓂏𓂏 Thout

The ancient Egyptian, perhaps in order to facilitate easy dissemination of certain desirable norms, and to warn effortlessly against the incurring of taboos, personified most concepts in what the Egyptologists have called “gods”. They personified truth and justice in the “goddess” Maat. They also personified intelligence and wisdom in the “god” Tehuti. To the ancient Egyptian, truth and justice, *maat*, was only attainable if intelligence and wisdom were part of the equation. Both Maat and Tehuti were, therefore, the inseparable pair who set the course of Ra’s solar boat across the sky.

Tehuti, the “god” of Hermopolis, was either portrayed as an ibis or as a baboon. He was lord of wisdom, and particularly of laws and sacred writings. He was the lunar eye who provided the timing service; counting of days, months, and years—he was master of chronology. He is also the inventor of writing, mathematics, books, astronomy, medicine, rhetoric, names for objects, the alphabet etc.¹

¹ Gardiner, *ibid.* p. 113&197 and various.

This role, of being master of wisdom and intelligence, was one to imitate. Just as the strictly monotheistic Kalenjiin did not personify the total *maat* moral code in a “deity”, they did not personify wisdom and intelligence. But an individual, who is wise, or intelligent, is referred to as *utaat*, “smart, and skilful”. The noun is *utotyeet*, “brilliance, skill.”¹

The Coptic first month is named *Thout* in honour of this “god”, and the naming must therefore predate the coming of Christianity and the Coptic Church to Egypt. Coptic ΤΑΗ (*t-hi*) meaning “front”, or “before” (Kalenjiin *taai*), is the root of this word. *Tehuti* also means the “beginning”, and the name of the month may have initially had this simple meaning. *Taa*, *toun-eet*, are Kalenjiin words meaning the same. From the root *taa*, all first born children are referred to as *taaitta* in Kalenjiin, and a woman’s act of giving birth to her first child is *tuat*; the last born child is referred to as *toweett* and a woman’s act of completing the bearing of children is *towaan*.

A passage from the ancient Egyptian “*Book of the Dead*”, confirms the possibility that, like the Kalenjiin *taaitta*, as described above, the ancient Egyptian Tehuti merely got his name from his position in order of birth—namely number one. He was therefore *Taiitta*, and the Egyptologists’ rendering, *Tehuti*, is most likely a wrong transcription. In the passage, Tehuti describes himself as “*the eldest son of Ra whom Atum has fashioned, created from Khepri... I descend to the earth with the secrets of what belongs to the horizon*”. Tehuti wrote either part, or the whole *Book of the Dead*, outlining some of these secrets (Cf. Armour, 1986:156).²

The Greeks called Tehuti Hermes, and the literature whose ultimate origin is attributed to Tehuti is called “Hermetic literature”, or “Hermetica” and dated to AD c.50-c.300. This is a body of works in Greek and Latin on philosophical, theological, and occult subjects which are attributed to Hermes Trismegistos (“thrice-great Hermes”) i.e., Tehuti, as patron of the literary arts and originator of all mystical wisdom. His reputed works are both popular and learned. The popular ideas fall in the province of alchemy and astrology while the learned ideas fall in the province of divine revelation and the redemption of humanity through knowledge of God—the line that the Gnostics exploited and based their movement upon. Hermetic writings are set in Egypt although they come out as Greek interpretation and translation of what they learned in Egypt from the ancient Egyptians. They reflect the then-prevalent respect for Egyptian wisdom and occultism. Hermetic literature is frequently alluded to in medieval and Renaissance writing and is now regarded as an important source of information on the social and intellectual history of the early Roman Empire

1.C.C. Ng’elechei’s *Kalenjin Dictionary*.

2.Egyptologists have transcribed Tehuti’s hieroglyphically written name in many different ways: *Thoth*, *Dhwty* etc. Here the author uses Dr. Towceit’s spelling of the word *taaitta*. This is also Towceit’s first name. He is first born in his home and it is proper to think that, being a respected sage, he has lived up to the name in what turns out to be its ancient Egyptian context!

(Cf. Batchelor, GME 1993). Needless to say, the Romans spread aspects of Hermetica all over their large Empire that spanned much of Europe, Western Asia and Northern Africa. Much of African contribution to the civilisation of the world may be learned from the Hermetica.

Summary of Chapter 12: Ancient Egypt's Metempsychosis, or Reincarnation; a Concept continued under Asiisianism's Clan System of *Maat*

We acknowledged the fact that religions aim to promote and preserve moral order either by the stick or by the carrot or by both, and none of them can be judged primitive as failure and success rates attending to this objective can only be ascertained most finally in heaven or in any other such abode where, on a serious, empirical level, no witness has been and come back.

A clan that had not paid the homicide fine for a murder committed by one of their own against a person of another clan, found itself unable to take part in marriage rites, for example, because *maat* rules required them to be morally wholesome before they could take part in sacred rites. This proviso ensured speedy settlement of outstanding homicide cases. The stumbling block of unresolved cases and fines, to be effective, relied upon the old understanding to the effect that marriage was between the two *kootaapchii* involved and not so much between the immediate families and the couple: the direct opposite of the obtaining situation today.¹

The *maat* doctrine, whether it is in the ancient Egyptian or in the Kalenjiin context, hinged upon the belief in reincarnation of souls and the simultaneous continuation of life in the underworld after death. These societies had a more or less Gnostic philosophical outlook with regard to the inhabitation of the body by the spirit, the spirit being considered the superior holy element that would once in a while enter the inferior element of matter that was the body by way of reincarnation. The spirit would then inhabit the vile body for a temporary period. Since the spirit was the *maat* that was borne and transmitted by the father, it was the mother who bore and conferred the complimenting body, or blood, the physical, less desirable element; the matter. Some societies, for this reason, viewed the mother as playing the less-desirable role of conferring such matter and this affected negatively the woman's esteem within those societies. But, among the Kalenjiin, the mother still retained honour and, besides, her capacity to facilitate

¹ The elders explain that the family that is poised to receive dowry for their daughter would like to be assured that the dowry cattle given by the suitor do not include any that should otherwise have been used as part of homicide compensation if there were such a case pending settlement. This would also imply that the suitor family's assets, especially cattle, are believed to be polluted by the homicide act, a condition that can only be discharged after the compensation has been paid in full. Besides, the suitor family has to balance its obligations: a life is dearer than marriage.

reincarnation, a paradoxically desirable outcome in the Asiisian thought, was still to be counted on for renewing and propagating the man's *maat* without which he would be considered a spiritual disaster, *cheemukta*, for not rekindling his *maat*. As we saw, this was the Asiisian's equivalent of being in hell: the inability to reincarnate.

The Kalenjiin believed, precisely as the ancient Egyptians did, and this we read from the cited works of Hollis and Massam respectively among the Kalenjiin, and from Homung's work on ancient Egyptian religion, that the quality of life that one led on earth was continued for him or her in the underworld.

The diligent observance of the *maat* doctrine on earth led to the desired acquisition of material wealth and higher social esteem. Besides, one was rewarded with plenty of descendants who would not only propagate his *maat* but also reincarnate him in multiple new bodies as soon as he was down. Soon he would pass into a *kootaapchii* founder in his own right. The following was his idea of attaining heaven, i.e., his carrot: to observe, promote and fulfil all his *maat* obligations while he lived.

We have seen that the "heaven" of reincarnation was so attractive that the oldest men and women of the community would at times commit mass or individual holy suicide just to hasten, or to facilitate, such renewal.

A reincarnating soul could enter the body of any foetus irrespective of its sex and a man could reincarnate as a woman the next time round and vice versa. A woman had the opportunity of reincarnating in her natal family line as well as in the adopted line of her husband. Her theoretical chances of reincarnation were, therefore, twice as many as the man's and this compensated somewhat for her disadvantage in that she could not, under normal circumstances, pass down her own natal *maat* to and through her offspring.

The prospect of reincarnating in the sex other than one's present one, saw to the fair treatment of the weaker sex by the stronger, for who knew of which sex one might turn out to be come the next reincarnation!

It was no secret who went to the ancients' version of heaven and who did not. Anyone could tabulate the result by merely counting the reincarnations who bore the deceased's name and, not least, by merely taking note of the deceased man's personal achievements and his contribution to the welfare of his immediate *kootaapchii* and to his nephews to whom he was part of the *kaamaama*. This was the subtle manner in which religion, through *maat* and the social office of *kaamaama*, regulated and enhanced the prosperity of society.

The elders were the social and mental superiors, the moral custodians of the cumulative wisdom of the society. They held sway in spite of their physical frailty, not least because they

were held to be close to the netherworld sphere of the all-knowing spirits of the departed ancestors. They alone had met, knew the likes and dislikes of such ancestors who were now influencing matters from the spirit world. They drew their authority from this privilege and that is how come Kalenjiin, and most other African societies' social and political hierarchy, was essentially gerontocratic. This was the basis of ancestor veneration, the absolute regard for the departed as directed by the living elders. The numerous feasts and sacrifices in their honour, led to the accusation of ancestor worship, an erroneous double-standard judgement delivered by visiting anthropologists and missionaries who overlooked similar practices such as those of Halloween and *lemuria* in their own socio-religious backyard.

We listed some explanations by scholars for the obsession, on the part of the living, with the attempt to please the departed. The psychological theory suggests that the survivors find it difficult to acknowledge or come to terms with the loss of their loved ones and, through regular propitiation and feasts, try to involve them in their own lives as if they were still around. Others do it out of guilt feelings arising out of the perception of not having pleased the departed enough while they were still alive. The economic theory comes up with the suggestion, inter alia, that some survivors believe that their right to inherit property hinges on their being seen to remember the departed benefactors through such sacrifices and feasts. The sociological theory lists speculations such as the use of memorials and festivities by the elders to demonstrate a continuation of society and to thereby assert claim to leadership in the quest to maintain such social order.

We have theorised that, given the technology, the oratorical power to convince and the power of the sword with which to coerce, if necessary, and given other resources with which to attract and bribe, if necessary, a departed momentous personality can be universalised by his own descendants as an ancestor. With success, this could become a cult, or even a fully-fledged religion, claiming converts outside what the Kalenjiin would call the *kootaapchii* of the particular departed ancestor. The converted will not only desert their own ancestors, but they will also, through baptismal names, "reincarnate" souls from outside their own *kootaapchii*, despising the latter and, in the process, terminating their continuity. This would be *maat* shock of *kiime kooninda* given a few generations back in Kalenjiinland. And yet we know how so horrendous such eventuality was considered that even women had to "marry" others of their own sex just to make sure that their husbands' *maat* was rekindled! We even have a biblical verse (Deuteronomy 25:9) that supports the imperative to rekindle a deceased man's *maat* at all costs, material and moral.

Having said the foregoing, we mentioned further the fact that the Catholic Church had been instructed by its leader, Pope John-Paul II, to study what amounts to *maat* and to respect those that practise it.

The elaborate description of the doctrine of *maat* as it obtains in the Barabaig Kalenjiin nation of Tanzania by Klima, together with the summary from the ancient Egyptian sage, Khun-Anup, illustrate very well the association of *maat* moral and ethical code with the ideal of family continuity, tranquillity and prosperity. That if all families practised *maat*, the aggregate of their effort would be the total upliftment of the economic and social conditions, i.e., the standard and quality of life for the whole nation. Poverty is a symptom of *maat* gone wrong and is a *maat* don't, not only to the individual afflicted, but also to the rest of his *kootaapchii* who are by *maat* impelled to alleviate it and by so doing, fulfil their own *maat* obligation. These constitute the essence of *maat*.

The *kaamaama* lot is equally constrained by its own set of rules to intervene here too. These provisions go a long way in narrowing down the gap between the relative rich and the relative poor, i.e., in redistributing the economic resources within the community concerned.

There were ethical rules in place that effectively quarantined certain individuals because of one type of moral uncleanness or another. The provisions relative to moral uncleanness saw to it that wrongs were righted, or compensation paid, as soon as possible or else this or that social function would be disallowed to the individual concerned and even to his entire *kootaapchii*. The rules of moral uncleanness also compelled others to come to the aid of the afflicted, a good example being a woman who had just given birth.

Other morally unclean cases saw individuals being avoided, for they could soil. This was ostracism, an extremely cruel form of punishment. However, there would be another social outcast somewhere around who had been similarly quarantined in the past and he would be obliged to come to the aid of the latest addition to his ignominious club.

The rule and practice that required a convicted murderer of a kinsman to cleanse himself by killing at least four enemy men and one woman from the enemy camp in war time, will remain etched in our memory for its cruelty, set, as it is, against an economic objective to be realised at the risk of losing "only" a morally unclean person. Otherwise combat ethics discouraged unnecessary and wanton killings of the enemy soldiers and civilians.

Maat type of social arrangement and management, coming under different names, was in place in many parts of the world and the relative uniformity in their structure suggests a single inspiration from the long past, a common origin. Together with the complimenting, and sometimes rivaling, *kaamaama* system, they may go back to the time when the human specie was

still confined to the African continent. The universal words for “father” and “mother” are probably its contemporaries.

SECTION E

THE SERVANTS OF ASIIS: RELIGIOUS PERSONNEL AND DIVINE KINGSHIP

A General Introduction to Section E

Judging from installation ceremonies, the Kalenjiin would appear to have believed that the following key leaders were either appointed to, or were approved in their offices by Asiis: *Oorgoiyoot*, the monarch, and the priest, *Poiyoot aap Tuum*. Besides the two, there were the minor appointees of Asiis, the soothsayer/prophet, the herbalist, the surgeon and the diviner. The key office of the *Kiirwogiindet ne oo*, (lit. "Judge which big") the chief judge—or chief minister—who was more often a previous military commander, *Kiptaaiyaat ne oo nebo murenik*, was rather a secular executive extension of the *Oorgoiyoot*.

The key offices and their occupants will be described in this section, mentioning, where appropriate, the minor offices. By discussing the offices and their occupants in detail, we will be learning more about the history, the culture, the religion of Asiis and its adherents, the Kalenjiin. And through continued comparative analysis we will be uncovering the veracity of their claim to ancient Egyptian origin. And we better know about those offices because the colonial authorities, as well as the missionaries, realised their importance early, and, as a first priority, targeted them for removal by all means, so that the now-leaderless, hapless natives, as a result, succumbed and offered less resistance to foreign control, both political and spiritual. That move by the foreign powers, and the effectiveness of their action, is testimony to the fact that the Kalenjiin nation had truly relied, for strength and survival as a nation, on the sustenance and continuity of those traditional offices.

the function of the ancient Egyptian priesthood and how the priests related the huge bundle of beliefs that so much is known about, to the people's daily lives. Egyptologists have concentrated a great deal on the movement of the souls of the dead in the underworld and rarely is the priesthood, the institution that prepares those souls for the journey, brought sufficiently into relevance. However, the little that is known about that institution that has come our way, is contrasted here to the mass of information still known about the Asiisian rites of the Kalenjiin. Our contribution in this respect might help unravel more of the ancient Egyptian mysteries.

The rite of circumcision is one of the most outstanding socio-religious activities in Kalenjiinland. We get to know the much allowed with regard to this most secret of rites by following one priest as he performs his duties up to the permissible point.

We also discuss the priest's role with regard to the performance of marriage rites and take the opportunity to explore Asiisian marriage and priesthood in general. We thereafter examine his role as the central figure in major annual processions and prayers for rain that involve actual and symbolic sacrifices that he performs on behalf of the people. We follow that with a short discussion on the qualities required of a priest of Asiis.

13.1 The Paraphernalia of Priesthood and Temple Equipment

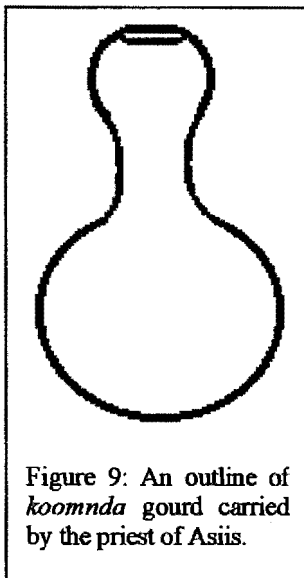


Figure 9: An outline of *koomnda* gourd carried by the priest of Asiis.

The priest of Asiis, *Poiyoot aap Tuum* or *Paiyoot aap Tuum*, "Father/Elder of rites", holds the position for life, unless prevented by the loss of sight, or by other disabilities, such as: loss of mobility, loss of the control of the faculties, or if beset by other conditions of senility. His most important staff of office is the ceremonial gourd called *koom-nda* and he earns his other nickname from it: *Poiyoot aap koomnda*. His son inherits this gourd upon the *Poiyoot's* retirement, or the same, upon his death, is handed over to his son.¹

Koomnda is an odd-shaped one-litre or so gourd with a thin neck that swells near the tip then narrows again at the mouth. It is strongly phallic in profile and is, therefore, a fertility symbol *par excellence*, a counterpart of the wooden phallus that the priest of the related Ingassana of Ethiopia/Sudan carries (Cf. Cerulli, 1956:31). However, the choice of this shape may also have been dictated by practical considerations. The thin area, or the neck, of this ceremonial gourd facilitates firm and sure grip while the swollen upper part of the neck, or base

¹ However, this does not signal automatic succession as we will see further ahead.

of head, acts as a check against slipping off the occasionally infirm hand of the ageing priest (of whom sobriety is not one of the requirements while on duty).

The priest may carry, with the help of his assistants, the multi-nodded *nogir-weet* stick (another fertility symbol on account of its many nods), a special stool, and a flywhisk, *saruur-yet*. While these latter are highly respected symbols of fertility, age and wisdom, and may even be used in ceremonies, they are not as indispensable as the one most sacred staff of office, the phallic gourd, *koomnda*.

The Asiisian priest has no temple. All rites are performed in the home of the client concerned, or in the home of one of the initiates if it involves more than one client. The major annual prayers that used to involve every member of the community were held, as we have seen, at the designated place of prayers, *kaapkoros*, which was an open field. Prayers for rain and cleansing prayers that followed a major calamity of one sort or another, tended to take place along the banks of rivers, where the running water would be available for the purpose of cleansing (see Peristiany, 1939:220-221).

The absence of a temple may have restricted the number and size of physical symbolisms. Any paraphernalia and actions that would, in the faintest, seem to suggest idolatry, if ever they had existed before, were discouraged so long ago that they are not even in the vocabulary of Asiisian priesthood. Completely absent are actions such as those described of a Hindu priest by Pancholi (1982:24) as follows: "A priest has to perform rituals in a temple similar to those performed by a Hindu householder, that is to awaken, bath, dress and feed the statue (a hand-crafted anthropomorphous likeness of Deity) before visitors arrive to worship."

However, what amounts to the same as the Hindu bathing of statues, is reported of the High Priest of Ptah in the temple at Memphis who meticulously clothed the "gods" with the finest products of the temple's looms (Cf. Thompson, 1990:106), apart from appearing before it worshipfully on a daily basis, then cleaning, anointing and performing other rites to ward off evil (Cf. Velde, 1995:1733).

However, appearing before and seeming to worship the temple's anthropomorphic figures need not be interpreted as elements of Pharaonic idolatry. This can be confirmed with the attitude of the adherents of the major world religion that still keeps and treats idols in the same way as the ancient Egyptians did: the above-mentioned Hinduism. We quoted Pancholi (1982:21, 25) earlier on here, in Chapter 7, where he says that such an anthropomorphic image is God's *murti*, "form", made manifest for His worshippers. That it is treated as one would treat God Himself: "This statue, as God's representative in personal form, is fundamental to the meaning of *Puja*,

“worship”. Hinduism’s symbols, or images, are merely external aids for the upward march of the soul.”

One of the most influential literary champions in promoting the image of the ancient Egyptian religion as an idolatric, animistic, henotheistic and polytheistic system of belief is Erik Hornung. With regard to the Egyptian temple images he says:

“On earth, however, the gods live only in images, in the king as an image of god, in cult images in the temples, and in sacred animals, plants, and objects... But for Egyptians an image is not ‘merely’ empty an image; it constitutes a reality and a physical presence. The temple is a sky on earth, which contains the efficacious image of the god and may serve as an abode for the god himself” (Hornung, 1982:229).


Hornung here portrays a typical very simplistic and literalistic understanding of African symbolism, especially as executed in physical art by the ancient Egyptians. It is quite unfortunate that this school of thought is never short of pupils, being, as it is, a direct result of long years of abuse of ancient Egyptian intelligence by some of the early Egyptologists who were, understandably, confused by the profligacy of physical symbolism in the temples and in the tombs, especially as it manifested itself in its apogee in Pharaonic Egypt.

We are supposed to believe that an Egyptian sculptor would carve an image out of stone, in full consciousness, then when it was ready, he would suddenly grovel and prostrate himself before it as his instant “god” and proclaim that this was the actual “god” who created him and not the other way round. Even if he had handed it over on completion to the priest who then consecrated it as a sacred image for the temple, it would still be, to the sculptor, a product of his hands. So would it be to all those who had seen him carve the image. So would it be to all intelligent people who could tell between Deity and a sculptor’s hand-made image.

It takes a great deal of naiveté, therefore, to even suggest, as Hornung does, above, that, “for Egyptians an image is not ‘merely’ empty an image; it constitutes a reality and a physical presence.”

Perhaps it might help if we would employ the simple analogy here of a Catholic or Coptic priest referring to the icons and statues such as those of the Christian saints, Mary and Jesus included, in his church as “images of saints and of God” and to the church building itself as the “House of God”. All these are the products of human hands, just as are the Egyptian statues and temples, and it is the act of consecration that turns them into sacred images and abodes that only *symbolically* suggest the appearance and presence of Deity.

13.2 The Priest's Role in Circumcision

The current *Poiyoot aap Tuum* of Matobo Ward, Kericho (the author's ancestral home ward), *Poiyoot* Tiong'iik araap Leelgo, is from the House of Kabechereek.¹ Pyt. araap Leelgo must attend and preside over all circumcision ceremonies within his parish. Two assistants, the first *motir-yoot*,² "ritual witness", or "godfather", and the second *motir-yoot*, often accompany the priest of Asiis when he is on duty. On festive occasions the priest is referred to simply as *Poiyoot*, meaning, "father", or "the elder"—even if he is not the oldest around. This is probably a carryover from ancient Egyptian , meaning "father" or "a class of elderly priests", according to Gardiner (1927:555), and Coptic Παῖῶτ³ as demonstrated in Chapter 6.

During circumcision ceremonies, the word *Poiyoot* assumes great, even mystical, significance and is often uttered in hushed tones. As we have said, during ceremonies, the word *Poiyoot*, if it is uttered without qualification, only refers to the priest.

On a typical boys' circumcision eve, Pyt. araap Leelgo would arrive at the appointed House of Rites, or one nearby, with his two assistants and be on hand to avail his advice when needed from time to time. He sits indoors with other elders, sipping beer from the communal pot, and when the critical moment arrives, he emerges from the house and orders everyone to (face east and) kneel down: "*Olenjin tumi kutuny ole kutuny!*" (Tell this ceremonial congregation "Kneel", say "Kneel!") The crowd falls to knees, and some people actually sit, as they reply "*kutuny*".

The *Poiyoot* then proceeds to arrange, *roop*, the circumcision candidates, in order of seniority of their fathers. The son of the senior-most father leads the queue, while the son of an equally (or next) senior father, brings up the rear. Boys who make up the middle portion of the queue are generally the sons of junior fathers. Boys from the former ruling clan, Talai, also occupy the middle positions and that is notwithstanding their fathers' seniority in age or social rank.

Whoever decided, in antiquity, that the royal neither be the first nor the last to encounter the surgeon's knife, seems to have meant to especially protect them from the rustiness and atrophy on

1. This *kootapchii* is of Gusii ancestry. Their founder joined the larger Kalenjin Kibyegen clan, whose emblem is the baboon, in the not too distant past in the southern parts of Kipsigiis country.

2. *Motir*, if we were to follow Coptic tradition, is of Greek origin. This may or may not be true. The English word "martyr" is, for sure, inherited from the Greek μαρτυριον (*marturion*) "witness", "testimony". This is close enough to the Kalenjin *matiryoon* (sing. indef), "witness", "guide" or "guardian"—all in the ceremonial or religious sense.

³ Coptic has since reserved Παῖῶτ (*Paiyoot*) for use only with respect to God in the sense of "the Father" while Παπα or Αββα is reserved for great popes, archbishops, bishops and saints (Cf. Crum, 13a&b). The priest otherwise goes by the respectful term *Abuna*, which is quite close to Kalenjin, *Aboiyoon*, "father". However, a number of people, including some Copts, have told the author that *Abuna* is of Arabic origin.

the part of the surgeon which he is bound to suffer because the operation is performed only during one season in a year. The decree that the royal not be the last in a circumcision queue seems to have been meant to protect them against the infirmity of the hand of a surgeon who has become very exhausted operating on all the boys in the queue.

The two extreme positions in the queue, *kibooretiet* and *koyumgooi* are, however, the most prestigious. In the processions around the altar of Asiis, *mabwaii-ta*, in the approach to the confession box at the ceremonial house of rites, *Koot aap Tuumndo* etc., the *Poiyoot*'s first assistant leads the pack ahead of the appointed *kibooretiet*, while his second assistant brings up the rear immediately behind the hindmost candidate, the *koyumgooi*. This will be the order to be followed during the plethora of more circumcision rites to follow involving that particular pack of boys.

As soon as the formalities of arrangement and parental anointing are over, the *Poiyoot* chants more of the ancient prayers to Asiis, and ends as follows: "*Sere ole sere*" (blessed say blessed!), the crowd replies "*sere!*" Then, to set the crowd at ease: "*Olenjin tumi ng'eet ole ng'eet!*" (Tell this ceremonial congregation "Stand" say "Stand!"). Most stand up and uncontrolled crowd noise resumes.

All the men from now assume a hostile attitude, declaring *kang'uu kaameet!* "The mother has begun stinking", meaning that from that stage onwards, all the female members of the crowd, and the uninitiated, are unwelcome and should depart forthwith. The mothers of the boys, who were so desirable before this stage, as they anointed their sons, garlanded and loaded their cloaks and jewellery on them, now become "undesirable".

During girls' initiation ceremonies, a similar stage, which declares the fathers and the other males undesirable, is styled *kang'uu kwanda*, "the father has begun stinking". The author does not intend to describe in this work any circumcision proceedings beyond the stage of *kang'uu kameet*. The social and religious import of the various individual stages may be described, but not the actual procedures followed. The limit is clearly and formally delineated by the declaration "*kang'uu kaameet*". Any procedures that may be performed only before the candidates and the already initiated of the same sex (save for the exceptional cases) are embargoed. And the author would not wish to pretend to be in an eye-witness or participant position, were he even to be intent upon imperilling his soul, to describe what goes on after the declaration of *kang'uu kwanda* of the girls' ceremonies!

Only a brief word regarding the essence of the first major event in *Koot aap Tuum*, “House of Birth” or “House of Rites” may follow here. Since initiation by circumcision is a process of rebirth, i.e. “true birth” into the community, a people who believe in reincarnation were naturally disposed to an enactment of death in order to precipitate a fresh, more complete birth. That is why the rites are called *tuum*, a word meaning, “to give birth”. The whole circumcision duration is therefore passed in symbolic death so that emerging out of it can with justification be called a birth (Cf. Mbiti, 1969:121, 125). This is all what baptism, or other forms of rite of passage, are about, whether Christian or other; a rebirth or, as they say without realising the weight and original meaning of the words, “being born again”.

That being so, an Asiisian initiation candidate must enter that period and state of symbolic death as morally pure as possible because “judgement of the dead” lies ahead. This connection may have long been forgotten but it is what is being re-enacted and only an interpretation of the Osirian drama of ancient Egyptian Judgement of the Dead scenes can help us put it into such perspective.

Confession of sin, therefore, is the first major item in the long list of initiation rites and it is the most important event of the first night of removal from the rest of society, at the “House of Birth”, *Koot aap Tuum*.

To confirm that what is being re-enacted in the Kalenjiin rite of circumcision is really the death and defeat of death motif, such as by Osiris, we quote two lines of a song of triumph at the coming forth which was collected from Keiyo by one Kiprono and published by F.B. Welbourn over three decades ago. The two very revealing lines of this special tune called *suiye* or *suiyo*, say: “Our sons have seen the underworld and have returned”, and “Our sons have succeeded”.¹ Which is to say, “our sons have died the symbolic death”—for that was the only way they could have seen the underworld—and “have defeated death,” i.e. they rose again from the dead, *ng'eet*, “arise and come forth”, i.e. they were re-born, or resurrected (also see Chapter 10).

The following is Professor Goldshmidt's (1986:22) summary of the baptismal death-and-rising motif that is the essence of circumcision, which he wrote following a long study of the rite among the Sebei sub-nation of Kalenjiin. It unequivocally supports the argument that it is basically a baptism:

“The rite of passage is a classic example of a ritual with the death and rebirth motif that is widely found in puberty ceremonies. As they entered the ritual, the boys and girls become non-persons, not called by name but by number, their restrictions and seclusion

¹F.B. Welbourn with D.K. Kiprono, from *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol.1, Fasc. 3, 1968, page 213-232-on Keiyo circumcision rite.

depriving them further of personhood, and their rebirth as new persons, with new names, meant that they were unknown and unknowing until the necessary rites were performed.”

Because of the massive influence upon Christianity by the ancient Egyptian religion, Christian baptism is also described in Osirian language (below), of symbolic death and rising, just as is characteristic of the Kalenjiin baptism by circumcision.

However, the Kalenjiin do not push initiation as an end-in-itself kind of baptismal rite. Rather they characterise it as a key to the entry into the community as a full participating member rather than a child of it. Thus a rite that is in truth rooted in the concept of salvation is packaged and pushed as a socio-cultural imperative. As an essential cultural activity, the initiation seclusion period is a time during which the initiates are taught “and indeed graduate into full members of the Kalenjin society. The ceremony revives the cultural commitment of an entire community and indirectly contributes towards social cohesion” (Chesaina, 1991:6).

The man who wanted to de-link surgical circumcision from the entire concept of salvation more than anyone else in New Testament times, St. Paul, ironically provides the evidence of the Osirian death-and-rebirth motif in Christian baptism more than most other sources. The Christian church at Colossae, Asia Minor, was under the influence of teachers who, among other ancient doctrines, subscribed to the idea of surgical circumcision as an essential part of spiritual completeness. In *Colossians*, Paul writes to oppose those teachings:

“In union with Christ you were circumcised, not with the circumcision that is made by men, but with the circumcision that is made by Christ, which consists of being freed from the power of this sinful self. For when you were baptised, you were buried with Christ, and in baptism you were also raised with Christ through your faith in the active power of God, who raised him from death” (Colossians 2:11-12).¹

It is important to note here the fact that Paul uses the words: circumcision, baptism, and death together in one message. The idea of defeat of death is also firmly there. Welbourn and Goldshmidt, writing about the Kalenjiin rite, are saying exactly what Paul says about the Christian spiritual baptism, which he prescribes to replace the surgical baptism.

Having put the circumcision rite in that historical and inter-religious perspective, we may follow the Asiisian priest a little farther. The following is part of the priest’s invocation to Asiis that is relevant to the blessing of the circumcision candidates immediately prior to the *kang’uu kaameet* stage and the irreversible procession into the “House of Birth (rites)”, *Koot aap Tuum*. Perhaps the word may be unfortunate, and nobody ever utters it, but since the candidates on this

¹Using the *Good News Bible, Today’s English Version*, published by the Bible Societies.

first entrance into the “House of Birth” are really enacting the entrance into a condition of symbolic death, this house on the first night of initiation is what in Osirian parlance may have been called the “House of Death”. And it indeed reminds us of the Osirian nature of these proceedings. This is where the initiand meets his first shock of what must appear to him as a world truly turned upside down.

The house earns its proper definition as the “House of Birth” when the candidates are finally through with the tormenting lengthy process and are passing out and triumphantly re-entering society again through the same house. The word used for passing out, *ke-ng'eet*, which means, “to rise”, adds the resurrection motif to the death and rebirth motif and therefore, the Osirian message, as we read in Chapter 10, is complete. The ancient Egyptian death, resurrection and rebirth motif as inherited by Christianity in the form of baptism, is more or less admitted as being Osirian in origin by the Copts, although, being loyal Christians, they prefer to put it that the early Copts accepted Christianity quickly because they saw in it similarities to many of their own ancestral beliefs (Cf. Masri 1987: ch.3 par. 19).

We may now once again rejoin the priest, and we do so by taking a look at the words of his prayer. Stems of words in the priest’s blessing, prior to the said procession to the *koot aap tuum*, that have been confirmed by the author to be cognate with ancient Egyptian equivalents, are underlined. English words roughly corresponding to the relevant stems are underlined too in order to facilitate quick comparison.

After the kneel-down order and the *ropeet* formalities, the priest chants:

O-lee-njin tuumi baibai ole baibai!

You tell this ceremony happy say happy!

O-lee-njin tuumi sere ole sere!

You tell this ceremony blessed say blessed!

O-lee-njin tuumi kiim ole kiim

You tell this ceremony strong say strong

Nge-cheng'-chi lago-chu tugun che ome ko iis ole iis! etc.

When seek for these children things to eat blessed say they are blessed!

The crowd responds by repeating—in unison—the priest’s last word in each statement. The words of this prayer as uttered by the priest must be ancient indeed although they are present in modern Kalenjiin vocabulary. Nearly all are traceable to ancient Egyptian. And getting the congregation to kneel down from time to time, which is a current practice common within e.g. the Coptic, Catholic and Anglican churches, alas, may have been inherited by all these religious

movements from a single source, probably ancient African! An extension of the discussion on circumcision, although largely as a controversial practice that the missionaries would have wished to ban, is to be found under Appendix 4.

As to the tone of the priest's prayer, the reader should note that the Kalenjiin speak to Asiis as they would an equal, or a friend, and not a God(dess). The prayers even sound like commands to Asiis and the western observer, who is used to praising, begging, beseeching, and cajoling his God; cannot fail to notice this. The British retired chemist, Orchardson who, as we already know, lived among the Kipsigiis early in the 20th century, as was mentioned in Chapter 2, did: "... it was very noticeable" he wrote, "that there was not the fear of God that one found among so many peoples. One did not speak of Him (sic) in a hushed voice, but openly and freely, but with respect" (Orchardson, D.C./KER/3/1).

Indeed the first friend of the older Kalenjiin man was his Deity; his family and cowherd came after. Asiis was first and foremost a friend, mother and father, listener and helper in all situations, and, for Her troubles, She did not need the introductory flattery before the invocation of the begging line.

This should remind us of Otto (Cf. MEE 98/6), who, as we saw in Chapter 2, says that the non-rational apprehensions of the Holy, or "numinous", has two aspects: fascination, or attraction, and awe. The awe limit, i.e., the constant and irrational fear of the Holy, which approaches theophobia, as preached by certain "saved" fanatics and zealots, who say "Fear God", is alien to the African brand of apprehension of the Holy as the creator who remains a duty-bound friend and a guaranteed ally and never one of delicate temper who is so perilous and worship hungry.

Celsus, the 2nd century Greek philosopher, in his attack on early Christianity, put forward a similar view although his attack here was tied to the biblical instances where Yahweh is reported either to be threatening or to have punished or eliminated whole peoples: "To attribute anger and threatenings to God as if He were subject to human passions is impious and absurd" (Patrick, 1892:47).

It has been claimed that some other African sections go to the extreme with regard to the issue of Deity worship, or the absence of it. It has been noted, for an example, that the Bakongo people of Congo actually do not worship Nzambi Mpungu, the Deity according to them: "He

intervenes in the creation of every child, he punishes those who violate his prohibitions. They render him no worship, for he has need of none and is inaccessible” (Eliade, 1967:6).¹

Mircea Eliade (1967:6) summarises what he believes is the image of Deity to the African, which is as a distant transcendent being:

“The High Gods of a great number of African ethnic groups are regarded as creators, all-powerful, benevolent, and so forth; but they play a rather insignificant part in the religious life. Being either too distant or too good to need a real cult, they are invoked only in the case of great crisis.”

Indeed the Africans in their theosophical and abstract thought had so advanced before western intervention came to reorient their spiritual direction that they had considered that to constantly “pester” the Deity with beggary, or to praise Him or Her ever so incessantly was, theosophically-speaking, unhealthy and disrespectful of the object of those incessant prayers (Cf. Kenyatta, 1937:308-309). It portrayed the attitude of one who would put the Deity in the station of and project to Him, or to Her, the attendant weakness of man. For man likes to be praised, worshipped if possible, and the conscious or subconscious temptation is to impute those weaknesses to The One “above”. Maybe the Africans had keenly looked at the harbouring of such images and the treatment of Deity as if a mortal, with the attendant weaknesses, and viewed them as constituting a blasphemy.

It is remembered of the first Nandi to encounter Christians who had come to settle on their land, that they nicknamed those missionaries and their converts *Kipsoomasiis*, i.e. “those who beg Asiis”. This nickname, though then intended to be derogatory, may help make plain the fact that the Nandi thought of God, as re-introduced to them by the missionaries, as being one and the same as Asiis. This is a theosophical predisposition that is characteristic of any genuinely monotheistic society, but they “found it rather difficult to comprehend the need to keep on begging him in prayer!” (Cf. Langley, 1979:129). From this reaction we make out the fact that the priest of Asiis in Nandi, as among the other branches of Kalenjiin, did not occupy himself overly with conducting prayers to Asiis.

¹ From Van Wing’s *Etudes Bakongo* (Brussels, 1921:170ff.)—as translated by Edwin Smith in Smith (ed.) *African Ideas of God: A Symposium* (2nd ed; London 1910:159).

13.3 The Priest and Marriage

We, once again, go back to the life and work of the priest of Asiis, Pyt. araap Leelgo, and continue to look through his eyes and his experience at the nearest thing to formal conduct of religion among the Kalenjiin. He attends and presides over marriage ceremonies of the traditional Kalenjiin kind within the parish as well. He also presides over the earlier parts of the girls' circumcision ceremonies, during which function he is assisted by his female counterpart, *Chepyoos-eet aap Tuum* together with her two *motir-eenik*. The *Poiyoot* takes charge of any ceremony of the women that is done in the presence of the general public and none may go on without him. The secret stages that may be witnessed by initiated females only¹ are conducted by the priestess with her two assistants.

When presiding over a marriage ceremony, the priest assumes the title *Poiyoot aap ka-tun-iis-yeet*, "The father/elder of Marriages". But the title *Poiyoot aap Tuum* tends to stick more, owing to the fact that all the ceremonies he is involved in are "fertility" or "birth" ceremonies, *tuum-iin*, of which marriage is one.


The words *koo-tun*, "to marry" and *tuum* are both traceable to ancient Egyptian as preserved in Coptic: KOITON (*koitooon*) and $\text{T}\omega\text{B}\text{B}$ (*toohm*) respectively. And the total phrase, *Poiyoot aap Tuum*, is made up entirely of ancient Egyptian words, with identical Kalenjiin meanings. With these, we continue to build our list of Egyptian-Kalenjiin cognate religious vocabulary.

In earlier times the *Poiyoot* officiated in several stages of weddings, some of whose particular ceremonies lasted weeks, depending on the wealth of a particular bridegroom, or his father. A Kipsigiis man, for example, married his first wife "twice". The most important aspect of the drawn-out ceremony of the "first" wedding was the critical part involving the exchanging of the *seguut-yet*, which was a kind of bracelet made from the stalks of *seguutyet* grass (*sp. vernonia*—Hollis, 1909:314).

The priest made the bridal pair stand on some *seguutyet* grass inside a room. They had to face east—even if the particular stage was being performed in the afternoon, in the evening or even in the night. As they stood thus, they exchanged the *seguutyet* bracelets. The bridegroom tied a bracelet on the bride's wrist, and she reciprocated by tying one on his. This was the effective vow, and from that moment; they were man and wife. But she was to remain a *murereet*,

1. A man, technically known as *che-po-tip-iik*, who has been admitted to ceremonial womanhood and treated as a woman during the conduct of such rituals, may attend all the intimate ceremonies of females. An example of men who qualify to be named *chepotipik* are those who have lost all their sisters and brothers. Some childless women, or women who have been afflicted in certain other ways that custom has defined, can also witness all the male rites including visiting the initiates in seclusion. Women who have been given this privilege are called *chemeenyjo*.

“sweetheart/bride”, and not really “wife”, for as long as she had not born a child. As soon as she bore a child, she became *kwoondo* (from *kwoony-to*), “a wife”. Thus “the marriage was nevertheless to some extent uncertain and could be annulled or terminated by divorce at any time before a child was born” (Snell, 1954:26).

The Egyptians also called a man’s beloved, , here transcribed by Budge (B.Dict. 310), *merr-t*. The consonants are *m-r-r-t*, and from the Kalenjiin language, we know that with the missing vowels incorporated, this should be *murereet*. Budge included a “helping” /e/ here, which some Egyptologists resort to, in order to make the all-consonant ancient Egyptian word forms at least pronounceable. The sorry truth is that the “helping” /e/ renders the words so un-Hamitic-sounding and sooner confuses rather than helps.

Some Egyptologists seem to have thought that the hieroglyphic representation of the word *mrret*, next to the portrait of an ancient Egyptian king’s “wife”, constituted the wife’s proper name. For example one Meryet-Neit is said to have been the wife of a Pharaoh of the first dynasty (dynasty duration: 3100-2890 BC—Watterson, 1984:177). There are many more wives named *Mrret* or *Meryet*. The truth is, if we are to draw from the Kalenjiin situation, every wife was a *mrret* as long as she was a sweetheart, or “bride”, which period extended up to her first childbirth.

Armed with the knowledge of the Kalenjiin concept of *murereet*, a further research into the many Marys of the canonised and the still apocryphal Gnostic texts will reveal why the Egyptian Gnostics named many young biblical and the still-apocryphal women characters of virtue Mary. It may have been solely in reference to their status of being as yet childless as well as to their being virtuous. Among the Marys we have: Mary Salome, Mary mother of Jesus, Mary of Bethany and, most importantly, Mary Magdalene who, according to the Gnostics, was the closest person to Jesus, “the most spiritual of the disciples” described as “the woman who knew the All” and, sometimes, the spiritual, or even “the legal wife of Jesus” (Cf. Walker, 1983:93).¹

The wedding procedures, processes and stages as well as their timing, differ from one Kalenjiin sub-nation to another. Langley (1979:77) says that the Nandi marriage could be accomplished in full in a matter of “two or three days and embraces several rites separated by months and years among other Kalenjin peoples.”

In Marakwet, betrothal formalities of the first stage of marriage, *kaip chii koorgo*, “man takes woman” only allow a man to live with his bride. They may not make any attempts to solemnise the marriage until they have had children. Since the second stage of *katuniisyo*, the

¹ For the latter controversial statement, Walker cites Katherine Folliot in her *Jesus Before He was God* (Printed by Hazell Watson and Viney, Aylesbury, Bucks), Folliot, London, 1978.

wedding proper, is an expensive affair, some couples may opt to take their time before accomplishing it while living as if man and wife. But this is only possible until a certain rule catches up with them: none of their children may even attempt betrothal of his or her own before the parents have solemnised their own marriage. If things get to this desperate stage in the case of a son who may be anxious to marry, for instance—assuming that he is of better means—he may opt to finance the solemnisation of the marriage of his own parents in order to open the way for his own (Cf. Kipkorir, 1973:51).

The stages of Kipsigiis marriage is akin to the Marakwet one except that the rule that bars the marriage of the children before the parents' own marriage is concluded, appears a bit watered down because *rateet*, "betrothal", is given a greater legal force here. *Rateet* (lit. binding) is the most important stage and the *katunisyet* (marriage) is only a repetition of it, a confirmation. However, it can take place only after the dowry payments have been completed and the pair, or the parents of the bridegroom, are in a position to foot the expense of the big wedding, *katunisyet* (Cf. Orchardson, 1961:76).

It of course follows that parents are unlikely to spend their meagre resources meeting the expense of marriage for their son instead of giving their own marriage the priority. However, they may not use the bride-wealth earned from marrying off their daughters for financing their own wedding. On the other hand, it is perfectly legitimate to apply the same bride-wealth against the marital expense of the son's marriage, provided the bride-wealth was earned from marrying off the son's full sister, i.e. sibling by the same mother. It was, therefore, technically possible for there to be enough resources for a son's wedding before one's own final stage was accomplished.

However, as we have said, provided the parents had completed their own *rateet*, they could supervise the *rateet* of their own children and *rateet* was not prohibitively expensive. In the case of extreme poverty, or even impatience, there was always the illicit vent of elopement, which had the same effect though done in secrecy and with nobody's permission, and followed by the solemn apology and promise to the bride's parents, to make good the bride-price debt. All provided that that ubiquitous, indispensable operative, *Poiyyoot*, was present at the critical moment to tap the couple's shoulders four times with his beer tube and to spray them with beer from his *koomnda* (Cf. Fish and Fish, 1995:108-124).


The elderly informants of the author mentioned the final and highest and most extravagant form of wedding, *toror-yeet*. This now rather-forgotten event could take place as soon as a couple was rich enough and inclined sufficiently to attempt it. It was very expensive, involving the slaughtering of oxen and the small livestock and providing fountains of wine and liquor for the numerous guests.


The critical point of *tororyeet* wedding, was the solemn vow of “till death do us apart” action of couples feeding themselves with mealiepap, *kim-yeet* (and milk)—the Kalenjiin staple food, holding one *segeetyet*, “cutting spoon”, together and moving their hands about feeding themselves as if the hands were tied together—thus signifying that they were now one and would continue acting as one. This was a repetition of the *katunisyeeet* procedure (Cf. Fish and Fish, 1995:108-124). This last act is akin to the “modern” reciprocal feeding of the cake between the bride and the bridegroom.

Tororyeet wedding could take place at any time within the lifetime of the couple, and most couples only accomplished it when they were already old mothers and fathers. Some never got to the stage of exchanging the *tororyeet* vows, and they died considering themselves not yet quite completely “married”. This highest and most prestigious type of wedding took place only between a man and his first wife who was technically referred to as *cheep-ko-ree-guutwo* or *cheem-nyo-gaa*. *Cheepkoreeguutwo* and *Chemnyogaa* can respectively be translated approximately into: “the bringer of prosperity, or luck (as symbolised by a successful man’s feathered ceremonial head-dress called *kuutwo*)”, and “the first one home”.

A man’s junior wives experienced only a “first” wedding and, apparently, were never considered real wives, for they went by the technical name *cheplaakweet*, “baby sitter”. This word emphasised the fact that the younger wives were married for the express purpose of assisting the first wife with the daily chores. And, in virtually all the cases in the past, the man’s first wife identified the younger brides for him to marry. These “baby sitters” were mere spectators of the proceedings as their husband married their eldest co-wife again in a *tororyeet* wedding. They were, like everyone else who had not accomplished the *tororyeet* stage, barred from seeing some of the secret stages of the higher wedding.

For as long as a junior wife and the senior wife lived as the wives or widows of one man, the junior wife had to obey and remain subservient to the senior co-wife. She even called her *iyoo*, “mother”. Ultimately, one would say, junior wives were really just legalised mistresses of their man and, alas, after all, like the ancient Egyptian who had only one legal wife as a rule but could keep concubines on the side (Bleeker, 1983:29), the Kipsigiis man was, in the final analysis, as demonstrated by the *tororyeet* marital practice, a monogamist too! This is a key distinction and need have been the practice throughout Kalenjiinland; perhaps it only happened to be very clear in Kipsigiisland, at least as told by the Kipsigiis elders.

It so happens then that the Kalenjiin word for “co-wife”, *syeeet*, corresponds to the ancient Egyptian word for “concubines”  *hsyt* (F.Dict. 177) although the Kalenjiin word for “a

wife" *kwoondo* (from *kwoony-to*) corresponds to another ancient Egyptian word for "concubine"  *khent* (B.Dict. 558a).

The man's children by subsequent wives, the so-called "baby sitters", were, however, legally equal in their paternity claim with his children by the first wife. Those children only took inferior positions vis-a-vis the senior wife's children during circumcision ceremonies and during any other ceremony where the man's children, from more than one wife, were involved in one particular "birth" rite. In such a situation of joint ceremony, the elder wife's child would be attended to before any of the other wives' children, irrespective of the actual age of the individual children.

What the author's informants called *tororyeet* seems to answer to the *eworga* stage of marriage solemnisation which Orchardson mentions in passing together with very old couples' ceremonies called *ketepi ng'echereet*, "to sit on the stool", and *sonoieek*, "beads" (1961:76). All these latter stages are necessarily dead ceremonies that have neither *motireenik* nor informants. Any rite of the Kalenjiin that runs out of *motireenik*, the official witnesses who have been processed through that particular rite themselves, is necessarily dead. Particularly so where a priest who has himself passed the same stage is lacking.

Marriage is mandatory to everyone in Kalenjiinland. A senior bachelor soon finds himself ostracised by his age-mates and becomes the local butt of jokes, being nicknamed *Kip-songoi-yaat* "the hanging one". This nickname has such a horrendous tone to the Kalenjiin ear that no man can live with. Even the poor struggles to avoid it by finding himself a wife, by eloping with one if necessary as we have said, and undertaking to pay the dowry for as long as it takes, which could be a lifetime, or even beyond it, in which case his children will be left to complete the dowry of their own mother! This "mortgaging" provision saw to it that no man who was normal enough to marry went without a wife who would bear him children and keep his lineage *maat* flame burning rather than dying with him.

Widowers and divorcees that do not remarry are, however, still respected as if they still had wives living with them because after participating in their respective marriage ceremonies, they had joined the married club for life. But the lack of offspring, should this be the case, can still elicit painful jokes and a man so afflicted soon makes another effort to marry.

So important was the joining of the married club to the African—perhaps in general—that odd methods that nevertheless led to the entry into it, were resorted to in certain places. For example, the Ba-Nyankole, also called Ba-Hima (who are, loosely speaking, members of the larger Tutsi ethnic stock) of Uganda, traditionally allowed cases of polyandry just to ensure that each man from the community tied one nuptial knot once in his lifetime at least. A poor family

that could not afford to pay dowry cattle for more than one son made arrangements for all the unmarried sons of the house to marry one wife. This woman would have to allocate attention for each of her brother-husbands, living with one at a time, although all her children would be assigned to the eldest of the brothers, who also acted as the "official" husband, but only in order to facilitate easier identification in the wider society. But the younger brothers were happy just to have had the opportunity to use the one woman to tie the all-important knot that admitted them into the married club. Thanks to this arrangement, they would not die bachelors, neither would they die childless. Both conditions bore stigma (Cf. Frazer, 1910:538).

Besides, having joined the married club, such men were free to have intercourse with the wives of their age-mates all over the country with impunity. When they visited an age-mate friend, "hospitality (required) that the host should abandon his wife to his guest in the early morning; and in her husband's absence, a wife (was) bound to receive and grant her favours to a visitor" (Cf. Frazer, 1910:539).¹

With all sorts of *tumiin* occasions falling due so often in the year, the *Poiyoot* of old was kept busy, almost continuously, officiating in this or that class of wedding and re-wedding, the circumcision festivals, and the others. He had to remember all the rules and procedures relating to the ceremonies such as those discussed and more.

These customs must be ancient indeed and we can see, from the foregoing, that the "western" form of wedding seems to have borrowed rather heavily from the same source where the Kalenjiin learnt theirs, most likely ancient Egypt. The finger ring (the Kalenjiin use a bracelet instead) and the cake are outstanding as Pharaonic items possibly borrowed by the West.

¹ This free-love life within the married club was analogous to the one the Maasai are still famous for but which was traditionally also practised by the Kalenjiin as reported by Hollis (1909) and Snell (1954). Kenyatta (1938) reports the same in respect of the Gikuyu of old. Kenyatta, however, emphasises that a visitor did not sleep with a man's wife if the man was absent altogether and neither did they sleep secretly in the bushes for both these scenarios would count as adultery. We learn from him also that it was the woman who selected whom to sleep with if there were more than one male visitor of her husband's circumcision age-set. The age-set system, which was key to membership of the married club of each generation, was regulated by circumcision timetable. It is, therefore, surprising to witness the form of hospitality discussed being practised by a non-circumcising community such as the Ba-Hima.

The author's research in Maasailand revealed that only visitors from distant places are so entertained, and only if they are themselves married and are of the host's circumcision age-set. The author learned here too that once a woman has received a visitor, she takes his weapons inside the house, gives him food and from there she controls all the proceedings, encouraging or discouraging him from sex depending on her cycle, because no child should result from such union on peril of stigmatisation and virtual ostracism of the man from the club of gentlemen. The woman has no choice whether or not to participate in this kind of hospitality on peril of being scandalised by other women and her husband being denied similar hospitality during his visits elsewhere. No woman wants to see her husband discriminated against! The young generation scorns this extreme form of hospitality and it is certainly going to die with the men and women who are of middle age now.

Incidentally, the word “cake” is also probably of ancient Nile Valley in ultimate origin, for it is preserved in Coptic ⲕⲁⲕⲉ (*kake*).¹

13.4 The Priest’s Role in Major Prayers and Processions, and his preference for unblemished White or Black Colours for Sacrificial Animals

One of the priest’s most important functions, up to 1903 in Kipsigiisland—a bit later in other Kalenjiin territories—was at the *rooteet* annual event. Some early colonial officers witnessed *rooteet* and recorded what they could see. Peristiany got the story second hand from Kipsigiis elders who had attended those prayers, and his description is more detailed, and seems to tie very well with the author’s own field findings in other parts of Kalenjiinland. All these sources, considered together, will, hopefully, help reconstruct a picture of the now-extinct *rooteet*, and of its presiding priest of Asii of the time:

People used to attend these annual prayers whose timing was sanctioned, if not determined, by the *Oorgoiyoot*, the effective monarch. Prayers were generally referred to as *koros-EEK* and the venue of the communal prayers, *kaa-aap-koros*, the “place/home of prayers”. The word *koros* is also to be found in ancient Egyptian as preserved in Coptic ⲕⲟⲣⲟⲩ (*korsh*), and given the meanings: “request, cajole, persuade” in Crum’s Coptic dictionary.

Some of the modern Kalenjiin think that the word *koros* is the name of one, or some of those plants used for prayers, and the various rituals, especially the *kerunduut*. The Kalenjiin of Marakwet seem to remember it correctly, however, as they actually refer to the various types of prayers, or special rituals, as *koros* of this or *koros* of that, e.g. *koros-ep kyak* (for blessing of stock); *koros-ep rop* (for rainmaking, i.e., direct offerings and prayers to *Iilat*); *koros-ep bar* (on clearing virgin land for exploitation) etc. (Kipkorir, 1973:33).

There is no single plant whose name is *koros* or *koros-yoot*. But when any four of the key sacred plants applicable in Matobo, Kericho, for an example (mostly but neither exclusively nor indispensably: *kerunduut*, *chorweet*, *lemeyweet*, *tebesweet*, *labotweet*) are put, or tied together, by means of the fifth plant, the creeper, *nyeelweet*, they are loosely referred to as *koros-EEK*. Other sacred plants common in this area, and throughout Kipsigiisland, are *simotweet*, *tebeng’weet*, *sirtiityet*, *teegaat*, *sinendeet*, *kosisitiet*, *sapteet* and *emiityoot*.²

¹ The Oxford Dictionary traces origin of the word “cake” to Scandinavia, however, as *kaka* or *kage*. But the oldest written source is, with little doubt, Egyptian.

² *Emiityoot* is believed to be respected by *Iilat*, and that that agent of the Evil *Iilat*, lightning, avoids it. That is how this tree has earned a place among the sacred trees. Most others earned their place among the sacred lot either because they were
Footnote continued at bottom of next page

Owing perhaps to variations in altitude, climate and soil types, from one end of Kalenjiin territory to another, plants which are held to be sacred may differ from one ecological environment to another. But *kerunduut*, *labotweet*, *Simotweet*, and *sinendeet* seem to be more or less universal. To such more “universal” list, the Marakwet add: *ang’urwa* (*Coleous*, *Barbetus*), and *taraakwa* (*Juniperus procera*) (Kipkorir, 1973:32). The rule of thumb seems to have dictated that any four of any of the recognised sacred plants—excluding the sacred creeper used for binding them together—be present at any ceremony, and be collectively referred to as *koros-EEK*.

The useful word, *koros*, thus defined, a colonial administrative official, who witnessed a *rooteet* in 1903, said of the events associated with it as follows:

“A very large stack of sticks called *Kapkoros* is erected and tied with its special creeper (the small ones outside the huts are just replicas of this). When the sun rises a procession leads the goat around the pile, and the milk and beer is scattered towards the sun while the chief old man asks “*Asista*” to prosper them for the year. At eight o’clock the ceremony finishes” (D.C. KER/3/1).

That was as matters were—before colonial settler disruption in 1903—but in 1918, I.Q. Orchardson, who, in his contribution to *The East African Standard*, described the *Kaapkorosuut* of the annual *rooteet* as “a huge cone of poles and trees... it corresponds to an altar...” added that when the British Government arrived and built the road from Kipkelyon station to Kericho, they turned out all the people from the south side of the road and the old people said, “God has forsaken us and we are scattered’ so they had given up the great festival and it had never been held since (D.C. KER/3/1). Peristiany wrote in respect of roteet as follows:

“*Rötet* was performed every year, not only for members of one group, but also for a whole district. Thus Peelkut, Waldai, Puret, and Sot had four different *rötet*. A large *ormarich* (*oormariich* is an archway constructed entirely out of the sacred plants—author) with mixed cow and goat dung at its foot was built in the early morning, and a *mabwai* erected by it, and thousands of people gathered round it. The *Poyot ap Tumda* of the group where the ceremony is performed is standing by the *ormarich*. The warriors, in full war-dress and paint, form four *kwanai*k, composed according to the old custom, so that each includes the members of only one *puriet* (*poryeet* = military regiment), and go through the *Ormarich*. As they pass the *Poyot ap Tumda*, he spits on them beer sipped from his sacred calabash... About three yards from the *Ormarich* a hole has been made, into which milk from a cow having had its first calf, milk from a goat pregnant for the first time, and beer made from the grain of the newly gathered harvest (a calabash-full from each ward) have been poured. Round the hole the *tug’ab labot* (*tuug-aap-laboot*, “the cattle of *laboo*” = Sodom’s apples, *solanum campylanthum*) fruit has been placed.¹ It signifies fertility and plenty, as it belongs to

thought to be prolific (hence their association with fertility rituals), or possessed a milk-like non-poisonous sap. The value of milk was long cherished by pastoralist peoples.

1. The *tuug-aap-laboot* fruit is embedded in cow-dung, and according to the information gathered by the Rev. and Mrs Gerald Fish, upon which they had a discussion with the author, there was a trench dug round the huge altar in which the *Footnote continued at bottom of next page*

the commonest shrub of all the Kipsigis Reserve and grows with amazing rapidity. Round this hole stand an old man (any elder), two uninitiated boys, and one spotless white goat. As the warriors pass this group, the youngsters put *soosiot* sticks in the mixture and sprinkle the warriors with it...¹ All those present now kneel down and the *Poyot ap Tumda*, facing the sun, addresses to him (sic. All Asiis' names used are feminine—author)... Special prayers are then said for the four military regiments of Kipsigiisland, *Kebeeni*, *Kipkaige*, *Ng'etunyo* and *Kasaneet*. He beseeches Asiis that the soldiers be blessed and be obedient. The priest then prays for the strength of the country... As the *Poyot* is saying this prayer, he is holding the white goat next to him by a rope made of the sacred *senendet* (*sinendeet* is a creeper species of plant which has a milky sap). After he has finished the prayer, the warriors, always accompanied by the goat, go four times round the *mabwai*. The ceremony is now finished. The old men go to their beers, and the warriors and young girls to the *kambaget*, song and dance. The white goat (cf. with the white bull of *saget ap eito*—see further below [*sageet aap eito*]) is said to be the opposite of *sinda* (uncleanness) and thus to represent cleanliness and health" (Peristiany, 1939:222).

Our key informant on processions and prayer in Nandi, Mrs Martha Bomet of Kapsabet, Nandi, who was born about the same time as Hollis was writing his book, experienced the Asiisian religious life before converting to Christianity in 1926, at the age of 18. She took part as one of the virgins who used to sprinkle people with the holy solutions (of wine, salt lick, water, and milk; all contained in the cow-dung-plastered trench by the archway) at the *rooteet* prayers of the *pororyeet* she was born into, Kaptumoiis.

Nandi was then divided into 15 socially, administratively, and "spiritually" independent Grand Houses, "counties" or "parishes", *pororyoosiek*, one of which was Kaptumoiis. The others were, Kaameliilo, Kaapchepkeendi, Kaagipooch, Kaapyaanga, Kaapsiile, Tipin'got (making the famous original seven?), and Kaaptaalam, Koilege, Kaagimno, Kaapsyondoi, Tugen, then the Murgaptuuk and their administrative allies of Cheeptol and Kimng'ooror.²

Martha said that it was mandatory for the sick to pray early in the morning, facing the rising sun before it became too bright and hot. They spat towards the sun by way of seeking Asiis' healing and blessing. Sick babies and adults, who were too ill to move outside the house in order to catch the rays of the rising sun, were carried outside, borne aloft—or made to face east somehow—as the prayers were said on their behalf. This had to be done before the sick had touched or eaten anything since they had, or been, woken up. Prayer had to be their first performance of the new day.

solutions mentioned here were contained. The labootweet fruit was embedded in the cow-dung mixture that plastered the walls of the trench.

1. Add *suguteek*, water mixed with saltlick, to the solution that the soldiers filing past were sprinkled with by the youngsters (virgins essentially).

2. Some of the now-obscure *pororyoosiek* obtained from Hollis, *ibid.*, p. 4.

Whereas the departed spirits of the family were beseeched to leave the living alone, not to bother them with diseases and other calamities, all prayers were directed to Asiis, Mrs Martha Bomet asserted. The souls of the departed dwelled in the underworld but all worship was directed to *chemii parak*, "those that are above" (perhaps meaning Asiis in, or Asiis and Her triad of *Ileet ne miee*, Asiis and *Ileet ne ya*. But most likely the plural reference is still to Asiis alone, the pluralising only being a mark of respect).

According to Hollis, writing about the Nandi, among whom probably not a single soul had been proselytised as yet, around 1908; every adult, as an individual, and independent of the priest, is supposed to pray twice a day and the commonest form of prayer

"but which is more particularly used by old men when they rise in the morning, especially if they have had a bad dream, is addressed to both Asista (sic) and to the spirits of deceased ancestors. The attitude assumed when saying this prayer is a sitting one, with the arms crossed so that the elbows rest in the palms of the hands. It is as follows:-

*"Asiis, Ka-a-sa-in tuk-u-a lakôk ak tuka.
Ka-a-mus-in korirun ak lakat.
Asiis, ka-a-som-in i-ru-e ak i-wend-i
Asiis, ka-a-som-in a-mati-ile: 'Ka-a-ng'et.'
Oik-chok, amu ki-o-pek-u, a-mo-o-'len:
'Ki-par-ok chii', o-tuk-w-ech che-mi-i parak".*

A Mr W.J. Monson did the following free translation of the prayer for Sir Claud Hollis although his effort to create a rhyme of it in the traditional English style of verse, forced him to alter the message a bit, giving it more words, meanings and a western flavour.

O God, do Thou thine ear incline,
Protect my children and my kine,
E'en if Thou'rt weary, still forbear
And hearken to my constant prayer.
When shrouded 'neath the cloak of night,
Thy splendours sleep beyond our sight,
And when across the sky by day,
Thou movest, still to Thee I pray.
Dread shades of our departed sires,
Ye who can make or mar desires,
Slain by no mortal hand ye dwell,
Beneath the earth, O guard us well (Hollis, 1909:42).

As for her *rooteet*, "procession", personal experience, Martha recounted that she had been selected as one of the virgins who stood by the archway because she had been, at the time, all-round *lipwoop*, "unblemished", i.e. apart from being young and sexually undefiled, she came from a home where no one had died (rules specifically required that the sibling that a virgin

participant of *rooteet* followed in order of birth and the one born after the participant, had not died).

People of Martha's *pororyeet*, Kaptumoiis, assembled in their *kaapkoros*, a high ground almost clear of major vegetation but for grass and the sacred *eemdit* tree. Where there was no *eemdit* tree, a branch of it was planted for the occasion. *Kaapkoros* otherwise resembled a large football pitch. An archway was erected by the *eemdit* tree and Martha was made to stand side by side with an equally unblemished *subeendo*, female young of goat or sheep, to the left-hand side of the archway entrance. Opposite her, across the entrance to the right as one entered the archway, stood a young boy who was also unblemished, *lipwoop* (sometimes pronounced *likwoop*) by all the standards. Next to the boy stood a young ram or he-goat, equally *lipwoop*.

Thus a little bit of dualism was enacted here: To the left of the archway as one entered, stood a virgin girl together with one virgin of either sheep or goat. That was the female side of the entrance through the archway; to the right of the archway as one entered, stood the virgin boy with either a ram or a he-goat, also unblemished. That was the male side of the entrance.

The ground under the archway had been trenched, plastered with cow-dung and filled with the holy solution already described. Everyone, one at a time, stepped ankle-deep into the solution as the virgins ensured that some of the solution touched the rest of the leg. The holy puddle had to be refilled several times as the level of the solution dropped, especially owing to the fact that the entire thousands-strong-congregation trod on the sacred trench a mandatory four times. As the people filed past the entrance of the archway, facing *east*, Martha sprinkled the holy solution on their legs from their left-hand side, using the *sosioot* sticks ("*kiisiisye soosik*," says Martha, "sprinkling is by means of *soosik*"—*soosik* is pl. of *sosioot*). The boy opposite her simultaneously did likewise from the people's right hand side. The unblemished virgins were thus transmitting their certified holiness and radiating the unique glory of virginity to each and every member of the congregation that they touched with their *soosik*, something that even the priest of Asiis could not transmit as he would have lost it decades before!

The archway was approached from the western side so that, as one entered, one was facing east—where the fresh morning sun was rising. Entering the archway was symbolic of conjoining oneself with the Holy as represented by the golden rays of the rising sun. The congregation filed to enter this archway "entrance" into the Holiness of Asiis, then moved on in a counter-clockwise circling motion round the altar which, in the case of Kaptumoiis, was composed of the *eemdit* tree in particular, as it was of the other sacred plants. This altar was always to the left of the congregation as the congregation circled it single-file. The highly disciplined file, then re-emerged from the western direction as before and re-entered the archway for a repeat of the

treading-on-the-holy-solution and being-sprinkled-with-it-by-the-virgins action, until they had done so four times as we have already said.

Four is the most sacred number to the Kalenjiin (Cf. Fish and Fish, 1995:207) as it was to the ancient Egyptians and every sacred ceremony involves, as it did in Egypt, the repetition four-fold of its critical phase (Cf. Hornung, 1982:221, Budge 1895:cxxxix). It is one way of identifying a community that claims either descent from the ancient Egyptians or parallel origin with them. It is not a widespread phenomenon because four has little attraction attached to it and is not a readily identifiable popular number like three and its multiples (see detailed description of Kalenjiin and ancient Egyptian use of number four in ceremonies in Appendix 5). Having supplied that extra bit of information we may rejoin the *kaapkoros* procession.

After the people had emerged from the archway for the fourth time, they went forward and, on the orders of the *Poiyoot*, they knelt down facing the rising sun and sang a hymn whose refrain Martha remembers as:

Amin Mbatyany, Amin Ngai ehee-iy,

Amin Mbatyany Amin Ngai ehee-iy, ee-hiyo, four times.¹

While all this was going on, people from other *pororyoosyek* other than Martha's Kaptumoiis, would sort of be cheering the solemn Kaptumoiis procession on from a distance. The outsiders clapped and danced. Martha refers to such clapping and dancing by the onlookers as *ke-ooren* or *oorendoos piik*, "people are cheering on (in song)."

All processions in Nandi were *pororyeet* based and no male, however old or young, from outside the *pororyeet*-in-procession, was allowed to join the procession. Women and girls could attend any procession, even those of *pororyoosiek* outside their own. But if a woman had a baby boy strapped to her back (even one of her own but) who, through its father, belonged to a *pororyeet* other than that whose procession the mother sought to attend, the baby boy had to be off-loaded before the mother could set on her first approach to the archway.

It was after the speeches, or sermons, that the sacrificial meat was probably partaken of. Such meat would have been roasting, fuelled by wood from the sacred plants, as the people circled the bonfire mentioned by Hollis above. The sweet aroma issuing from the steam of the

1. This seems to tally with the Nandi prayer and hymn of thanksgiving after a successful cattle raid which included the Maasai words *Aoomon Enkai ai, naoomon Mbatyany*, "I pray my God(dess), I pray Mbatyany" (Hollis, *ibid.*, p. 44). But Martha's *rooteet* version seems to be incorporating—and she says it does—the word *amin* rather than *aoomon*, Maa(sai) for "I pray".

roasting meat combined with the incense smoke from the burning of the sweetest honey that was dug out from the burrows of solitary bees, *kusumeeek*, and smoke from the burning sacred plants themselves, would be expected to climb in a straight perpendicular column of smoke into heaven.¹ This constituted the share and pleasure of those in heaven who existed in spirit form and who, in accordance with their spiritual nature, could be satiated by the smoke and vapour, the spiritual counterpart of the solid incense and meat, these being the people's collective offerings. Besides this, the smoke transmitted to heaven the prayers that were said by the priest of Asiis on behalf of everyone. These prayers were enwrapped in the sweet-smelling incense and vapour.

The object of the prayers was Asiis even though the sun at this time was only young and in the east while the smoke aimed straight for the position of the sun at noon. There was no contradiction in this because the object of those prayers was not the sun, *asiista*, but Asiis. The column of smoke mixed with vapour was itself one of the signs of omen; the more it was straight and perpendicular the more it was auspicious.

Rich in solar symbolism, this ceremony resembles the *Adha* sacrifices of Islam and pre-Islam because at sunrise, *Tashriq*, the pilgrims to Mecca would sacrifice animals too. Pre-Islamic legend regarded this special sunrise to be the moment that Light (the sun), in the form of a white bird, conquered Darkness who came in the form of a black cloud, and saved the children who had been left exposed as sacrifice to the black "god" of rain. Interestingly, these children were sacrificed in the first place to the then much-desired black "water-god" who would come (in the form of a black rain cloud) and collect his prize. In the process of collecting the offering, he filled the empty *wadi* with water and ended a long draught (Cf. Baldick, 1997:30, 31). The sacrificial animals were probably substitutional ransoms for the children in the Abrahamic fashion. What is being acted out is the victory of spiritual light over spiritual darkness: the success of a new religion over the old, the arrival of a saviour.²

We have another eyewitness report on religious discipline in the context of old Egypt, by Herodotus, to add on to the above and to compare with a quotation with regard to processional prayers, further below, from a book written by the eminent Kalenjiin pioneer linguistics and

¹ Cherongoos araap Lang'at, OI, Kipchinchim, Kericho, 1991.

² Many pre-Islamic myths speak of the killing of the old "god" by the new "god" who then ushers in new spiritual light and a new age. He reigns supreme even as he awaits his time to be killed by another brand new "god" (Cf. Baldick, 1997). Does this represent the encoding of an old message to the effect that religious systems and the philosophies that spark, fire and then underpin them, come in epochs and eras that, in the fullness of time, tire and must be replaced by fresh new epochs and eras? That if we reckon in denominations of millennia, religions are, ultimately, vogueish just like clothes? When the coming into and going out of fashion by the bygone eras of Ptah, Amon, Osiris, Isis, Imhotep, Ahura Mazda, Baal, Cybele, Zeus, Mithraism, etc. are considered, history does indeed support this view. Many of the listed belief systems were in vogue for much longer periods than the still-running 2000-year old Christian era.

cultural writer, Dr Taaita araap Toweett. But we must remember that the Kalenjiin, until only recently, were semi-agricultural pastoralists who were only a few years before that nomadic. Nomads did not build permanent temples. Neither did they bury the bodies of their dead as a rule—simply preferring to dispose of them in hyena-infested forests or throwing the bodies into the bigger rivers. That habit necessarily came with nomadic tradition, which meant constantly moving on at short notice to greener pastures (literally).

The presence of graves, and permanent temples, implied and required permanent settlements around them. This was inconsistent with nomadic life, and the Kalenjiin in the East African context, much as he followed his religion as of ancient, neither buried his dead, as a rule (only burying the very old and the babies¹), nor constructed permanent temples, as the practice had probably been back in Egypt. It makes sense to assume that after the persecution of the Isis movement in Egypt, from the time of Emperor Constantine, and culminating in the final shut down of the temple of Philae by Emperor Justinian in the 6th century, no one worshipping Isis wanted to be seen doing so (Cf. Asimov, 1967:224). So the construction of temples, or worshipping in them, was discontinued. But the die-hard adherents probably continued their allegiance to Isis clandestinely, preferring to pray in open spaces and in their domestic confines. Might this be the situation the proto-Kalenjiin brought with them to the south?

1. The Kalenjiin of the pre-colonial times buried the very old great-grandparents who were usually social, spiritual and economic achievers—most were—and the babies. All others were disposed of as mentioned. Orchardson further specified about the Kipsigiis that, “Children who have not cut their teeth and men and women who have a grandson through a son are buried” (1961:104). The tricky argument about burying only the very old and the babies, is that apart from possessing a higher level of spiritual purity, by virtue of proximity to the ancestors, one was headed to the underworld while the other had just emerged from there. The departed great-grandparent, or grandparent in extreme cases of generational gap, and his or her just-born great-grandchild, or grandchild, were often one and the same person. They usually belonged to one age-set and the baby was likely to be the re-incarnation and, therefore, bear the name of the old departed since by definition they both belonged to one *kootaapchii*. That is how come great-grandparents, or even grandparents usually did, and still do, refer to their great-grandchildren and grandchildren as “my husband” or “my wife”. So, when it came to the ultimacy of interring, you did for one what you did for the other (see Chapter 12). So spiritually pure and efficient were the souls of the aged and the newly born that they got to the underworld without the “assistance” of the hyena. That was why their bodies were not fed to the hyena as was done to the bodies of other age groups. In a way, the very old, who might have been declared living saints during the final rite of *boore*, were considered to be as innocent as the newly born babies and they did not need purification through the body of the hyena.

Perhaps the stomach of the hyena was, after all, the cleansing, or purifying agent, i.e. purgatory, in the eyes of those that fed him with the bodies of their relatives. The hyena would drop the soul of the individual it feasted on next time it disembowels, or “when it goes to earth (Huntingford, 1953b:137) as it lives in burrows, symbolically closer to the underworld home of the departed spirits.” Incidentally, the disembowelling act of the hyena after such a feast, i.e. *purgeetan* (dianthoea) in Kalenjiin, sounds suspiciously close to “purge”, “purgative”, and “purgatory”.

This manner of body disposal may be contrasted with the Zoroastrian counterpart practice of disposal of the dead by exposure on ‘towers of silence’ for vultures to come and feed on (Cf. OIE, 1997). Perhaps it was believed that since these ravens were symbolically operating closer to heaven while in their daily hunting flights, they were best placed to transmit the souls to heaven. You chose your undertaker-beast according as to whether you associated the sky with heaven or associated it with the underworld.

Where Egyptian temples are mentioned in comparative analysis, or discussion, the corresponding Kalenjiin context would have it as *kaapkoros*, the said open space that was set aside for collective worship.

About the discipline in temples, Herodotus who, as we are now familiar, wrote after visiting Egypt about 2500 years ago, said,

“Further it was the Egyptians who first made it a matter of religious observance not to have intercourse with women in temples, nor enter a temple after such intercourse without washing. Nearly all other men are less careful in this matter than are the Egyptians and Greeks, and hold a man to be like any other animal; for beast and birds (they say) are seen to mate both in the temples and the sacred precincts; now were this displeasing to the god neither would the beasts do so. This is the reason given by others for practices which I for my part dislike; but the Egyptians in this and in all other matters are exceeding strict against desecration of their temples” (Herodotus, Bk. II).

And from Toweett (1979:39):

“The Kipsigis before the missionaries arrived, used to worship their Asis at *Kapkoros*. *Kapkoros* is the same as an altar, or the place of sacrifices to Asis... It was customary to keep oneself clean and pure before going to *Kapkoros*. This meant that all people who wanted blessings for the general good of the tribe had to abstain from all forms of sexual vice. It did not matter whether it was a wife and her husband affair. All was ruled out. Also the first night after *Kapkoros* worship no sexual union was allowable.”

The choice of the colour white for Asiisian type of sacrifices, whether bloody or symbolic—as in recent Kalenjiin habit (see Toweett, 1979)—dates back to Egyptian times, as described by Herodotus (Book III) with respect to bull sacrifice, of which *sageet aap eito* would appear to be an obvious continuation. But we should not read too much into it as another (women’s) ceremony, *Kiiya peek*, “cleansing (or baptising) of the grain”, reads the colour of “cleanliness and health” the opposite of Peristiany’s above designation of colour white.

After a calamity, say heavy loss in war, or after the eruption of an epidemic, men performed the *kipire peek*, “beating the waters (or swimming)”, ceremony where they went, naked, to the river early in the morning and beat the black river-bed stones against one another on their backs before emerging from the water, facing east and never looking backwards.

The women who performed their version, *kiiya peek*, some secluded place downstream, also naked, each planted her sacred *koroseek* plants in the river, next to the altar of Asii which stood right in the middle of the water, then circled it four times. “When this is done,” writes Peristiany (1939:220-221),

“each tries to find a black stone in the river. All stones found in the bed of the river are said to possess great power against all forms of *simda* (uncleanness) as they have been in contact with the water for so long... but the reason why the stone should be black, I have

been unable to discover... When the women have found their black stone, they put it on top of the peek (eleusine) in the kerebeet (basket) and, always facing the rising sun, they climb out of the river without ever looking back."

They then take each her basket-full of eleusine with a black stone atop it to the house where the beer party for the *Poiyoot* was going on. The *Poiyoot* blesses the eleusine and asks Asiis to drive away the calamity and make the people, the animals and the country strong.

From here each woman goes to her own house "and puts the black stone in her water-pot, where it will always remain" (Peristiany, 1939:220-221).

From Hollis who wrote in 1909 about the Nandi *rooteet*, we gather corroborative information to the effect that the annual *rooteet* was actually a thanksgiving procession and therefore came after the year's harvest and during the month of *Kipsuunde nebo oeng'* (meaning "second offering to God"—Hollis). According to the Nandi calendar that Hollis recorded, *Kipsuunde nebo oeng'* coincided with the month of October. In Belgut (Peelguut) division of Kipsigiisland where Peristiany carried out his research, the *Kipsuunde nebo oeng'* month coincides with the month of December. It would appear then that the Belgut thanksgiving ceremony came two months after the same event had taken place in Nandi.

From Hollis we also learn that there was a bonfire near the archway which was fuelled by sacred plants such as *eemdit* or *emityoot* (*olea chrysophilla*), *teegaat* (*arundinaria alpina*), *labootweet*, *kemelyeet* shrubs, and finally, when the fire was raging: sticks of *simootweet* were cast on it.

Hollis did not say it, but the women would later take home each a burning piece of charcoal from the *Poiyoot's* sacred bonfire of *kaapkoros*. This was similar to the Gikuyu practice. The glowing piece of charcoal went to start the fire of the new year in the homes and because fires were not allowed to die out—or when they did in a home, its inhabitants borrowed burning charcoal embers from their neighbours—the fire lit at the *rooteet* would actually live on until the next sacred bonfire of the following year, when it would be extinguished to be replaced by the new one.¹

From *Kaapkoros*, Hollis noted, the women, their bodies oiled, went down to the river, from the bottom of which they each picked up two pebbles which they carried home, one destined to the bottom of the water jar and the other to the granary store. The stones remained there until the next *Kipsuunde nebo oeng'* ceremony. The old men were left behind at the *kaapkoros*, roasting and eating the meat of a pregnant goat that they had meanwhile strangled. The young men, on

1. The Gikuyu example read from Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya* (first published 1938 by Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd.) Kenway Publications, 1978, p. 256.

their part, were occupied with their war dance, *kambakta* (or *kambageet*), not far away from the sacred spot (Cf. Hollis, 1908:47).

The *Sageet aap eito* ceremony, referred to above, involved the sacrifice of a white bull—similar to the old Egyptian practice recorded by the Greek eyewitness, Herodotus about 25 centuries ago. The Nandi, Keiyo and Kipsigiis bull sacrifice procedures were recorded respectively by Western writers who were also more or less eyewitnesses. The similarities between the Egyptian practice and the Kalenjiin counterpart leave no doubt that it was one and the same practice; at least as far as the general sacrifice rituals were concerned. In this ceremony too the *Poiyoot aap Tuum* was the central figure of authority.

Herodotus noted (5th century BC) about the Egyptian bull sacrifice as follows: First of all the bull had to be spotlessly white:

“They hold that the bulls belong to *Epaphus* (Egyptian Hapi, the Nile “god”) and therefore test them thus to see if there be such as one black hair on them; if there be, the bull is deemed not pure... All Egyptians sacrifice unblemished bulls and bull-calves” (Herodotus, BK III).

It is ironic that the “owner” of all bulls, the Nile “god” that the Greeks called *Epaphus* (Egyptian *Hapi*, *Apis* in other Greek rendering), who is himself otherwise remembered in the form of a black bull, would prefer for sacrifice white bulls with not a single black strand of hair, his own type of hair. But in what sense was *Epaphus*, *Apis* or *Hapi*, considered the owner of all other bulls? Is *Epaphus* the *Apees* of Kalenjiin circumcision initiates’ ageless “anthem” *Kipoesit*? The following words from this “hymnic anthem”, *kipoes tyondaap Apees* (or *Poeso*), “*Kipoes*, the animal of *Apees* (*Poeso*)”; referring to cattle, assign all cattle to *Apees*. The Kalenjiin youth, by this virtual “anthem”, would be reminded to go and collect cattle from the then enemy communities because all cattle were the animals of *Apees*.¹

As for the related sacrificial practice among the Kalenjiin, the sacrificial animals always had to be unblemished. Black ones had to be hundred per cent black (a white patch at the forehead allowed²) and the white ones one hundred per cent white. Those of the colour cream had to be of that colour uninterrupted all over the body.

¹ It is unlikely that *Apees* was the eternal fool who must be short-changed at the time of dividing the spoils of war, as an informant told the author near the sacred Tuluap Sigiis, Londiani. This most important of hymns of the circumcision confines, *meenyjo*, cannot be dedicated to an act of treachery and the short-changing of a fool. The name *Apees*, whose meaning probably no one knows, and the word *apees*, “foolish” may not be related.

² As explained by Mr Kiboiit araap Ngeny of *Maiina* age-set (90+) to the author’s field assistant, Mr David Kiprop, in Nandi, 1991.

Now, after the Egyptians had cut off the sacrificial bull's head, all sorts of insults were hurled at it (the head). It was to carry all the sins of the Nation. The head could not therefore be eaten—Egyptians did not eat animal heads—Herodotus tells us. Such a head was taken to Greek traders in any market and sold to them.¹

If there was no Greek buyer, the sin-laden head was thrown into the river. The Greeks usually bought and ate such heads and Herodotus, himself Greek, wrote, "For this reason no Egyptian man or woman will kiss a Greek man, or use a knife, or a spit, or a caldron belonging to a Greek, or taste the flesh of an unblemished ox that has been cut up with a Greek knife" (Herodotus Bk. III).

This is Peristiany's account of *sageet aap eito*, bull sacrifice to Asiis, among the Kipsigiis. Peristiany got it from several informants who had themselves passed through the rite before its abolition by the British at the turn of the century: "A spotless white bull must be sought. He is quite a rarity. When found, he is brought to the hut of the old man (*Poiyoot*, the priest of Asiis)... The white bull is made to lie on its left side and its feet are bound together..." (Peristiany, 1939:34).²

J.A. Massam, the colonial District Commissioner of Keiyo, personally attended a *sageet aap eito* power-handing-over ceremony in Keiyoland during the twenties of the 20th century. He observed that the bull had to be of light colour and unblemished in the manner of the one described by Peristiany which was brought before the Priest of Asiis for certification. The ceremony took place at sunrise like all other important prayers to Asiis. But preparations for it went on from the day before and throughout the night. But the critical hour was sunrise:

Immediately before sunrise the chosen ox is taken into the enclosure, where it is hobbled and then thrown near the entrance. Its legs are strapped together so that it cannot struggle. A noose is passed over its nostrils and tightened, so that the beast is wholly strangled... The procession finally arrives at the enclosure at the moment when the ox has almost ceased breathing. Ushered in by two elders standing at the doorway, the first warrior enters. At once he finds himself close to the dying animal, lying on its right side. His right foot is seized and placed in position between the body and the thong tying the ox's fore and hind legs together. Then he is told to bend his right knee until it rests on the flank of the beast. He next has to bring his left foot forward up to the other, *step over the body*, and then walk round to the right to make way for the other candidates. He now joins in the chanting, which the elders have been carrying on during the ceremony. The other warriors, one by one, pass over the body in like manner. Then the youths have their turn. They are permitted to *step over the forelegs and neck only*,

¹ The Dinka of the River Clan also sacrifice bullocks to their ancestors whom they believe to inhabit rivers. Like the ancient Egyptians, they do not eat the head of the sacrificed animal, instead they throw it into the river (Seligman, 1932:148).

² The bull was probably made to lie on its right side and not on its left side as Peristiany says here. Massam was a direct witness and he says that the bull was made to lie on its right side. That is a typical Asiisian tendency and we go with it.

not over the body itself. When all have finished, the younger men are sent outside the enclosure... Those who went through the ceremony as warriors now become the elders, the youths become the warriors. The latter are now at liberty to grow and plait their hair, and may with impunity associate with young girls" (Massam, 1927:58-66).¹

The Keiyo, Massam expounds, ate all the meat from the ox except that from the head. All the flesh was stripped from the bones. The bones were then burnt completely and the old people left the site. The youths that had just been ushered into service would come later to cook and eat the meat from the bull's head, burn the remainder and leave the site. The site became sacred thereafter; the structure and the *Poiyoot*'s temporary hut are never pulled down or burnt.

The timing of the *Sageet aap eito* (which in Keiyo is shortened to *sakobei*) among the Keiyo, like many of their other affairs, observed Massam, was controlled by the constellation *aquilae*. The old men kept tracking some four stars from the group, which, to them, represented: a soldier, his wife and their two children. When the ideal formation was noticed, the necessary announcement was made (Cf. Massam, 1927:56-63).²

Massam's description of the *sageet aap eito*, or *sakobei*, bull sacrifice ceremony, matches in the key respects what the author personally saw painted and engraved on the walls of the tomb of King Mereruka, Sakkara, Egypt. The whiteness of the bull is so dramatised: all the soldiers, carved in bass-relief, are painted in the traditional ancient Egyptian ochre-brown, but the bull remains as white as the soapstone background, this being the material of which the tomb walls are made. One can fail to notice the presence of the bull among the men, because it is as white as the background, and there is not enough light in the tomb. But once the eyes register the outline of the bull, it is possible to follow the proceedings step by step. When the author reached the stage where one soldier is depicted coming into contact with the flank of the fallen white beast, Massam's description of the *sageet aap eito* in Keiyoland sprang to his mind. Another look at the entire proceedings and, yes, we are getting somewhere!

But you ask, as the author did, the tour guides and the explanation will be something like, "this is a butchery scene and what is shown here is the step by step procedure of slaughtering a bull"! Now, there is no likelihood, whatsoever, that the ancient Egyptians would find space on the spiritually precious walls of a tomb to engrave thereon images of an ordinary butchery scene.

1. The italics are this author's, intended to highlight the important differences in the manner of crossing over the bull between the service men who were retiring on the one hand and the young men being ushered into military service on the other. When it was the latter's turn to retire after about 15 years of service they would be required to step over the body of the ox.


2. I.C. Chesang says, in his dissertation (1974?:55) that Massam's claim that the stars controlled the timing of the *sakobei* event "is true but rather superficial".

The rest of the pictures on the walls of the tomb of Mereruka depict the important stages of the king's life as a grown up. *Sageet aap eito* is only one of them.

Once again, the fact that "white" was the priest's chosen colour for these pan-Pharaonic sacrifices; we should not read too much into. This preference may have been arrived at even before the inventors of the practice, who are most likely the Africans of the interior, knew of the existence of white people and the triviality of colour sensitivity in the modern context of racism was, therefore, non-existent among them at the time.

Perhaps it is worth reasserting, at this juncture, that the bull "god" *Epaphus*, *Apis* or *Hapi*, himself, who owned all the other bulls as Herodotus put it, was a black bull of divine birth. Herodotus described it thus:

"The Apis, or Epaphus, is a calf born of a cow that can never conceive again. By what the Egyptians say, the cow is made pregnant by a light from heaven, and thereafter gives birth to Apis. The marks of this calf called Apis are these: he is black, and has on his forehead a three-cornered white spot, and the likeness of an eagle on his back; the hairs of the tail are double, and there is a knot under the tongue" (Herodotus, Bk. III).

We need to remember, from a previous section, that the sacred black bull, Hapi, was considered to be the reincarnation of Osiris, the one "god" whom the artists always remembered to paint pitch black. Before the Osirian movement became fashionable, Hapi used to be considered the renewal of Ptah,  *Hapi whm en Ptah*, lit. "Hapi, a repeat of Ptah." And since Horus was the reincarnation of Osiris, Horus and Hapi may be said to be one and the same (Cf. Budge, 1904:196-197, 350).

While on this, we may note that the divine birth of Jesus is like that of Hapi in the sense that His conception was considered divine (via Matthew 1:18ff. and Luke 1:26ff—being the two references to virgin birth in the Bible). Like the Isis cow, the mother of Hapi (Cf. Thompson, 1990:105), Jesus' mother was a virgin during her divine conception and, after giving birth to Him, like the Isis cow that gave birth to Hapi, Mary too reverted to virginity, i.e., she retained immaculacy, and, according to the doctrine of immaculate conception, she never conceived again. Why? Because she had been freed from the Original Sin in preparation for the divine birth, according to the Papal decree of 1854. The ancient church saw an inconsistency in her being the Mother of God, *Theotokos*—the title that previously referred to Isis—and inheriting, like everyone else, the Original Sin, with its association with the sex act and the consequent absence of virginity (Cf. Brandon, 1972:350).

The Coptic Church was reputedly founded by St. Mark himself, and is thus held (at least by its members) to be the oldest extant Christian church on earth; the direct successor to the

movement that was founded by the Egyptian Gnostic Christians, who were easily the most consequential of the founding Fathers. In their Catechetical School (Didascaleion) of Alexandria, "The first system of Christian Theology was formed and the allegorical method of Biblical exegesis was devised" (Fr Malaty, 1987:28).

Now, the Copts, being the successors of those acknowledged early shapers of the Christian movement and doctrine (see Appendix 5 for more on this), hold dear the concept handed down to them by those founders, that Mary promptly reverted to virginity after bearing Jesus. That is how come the Copts named important institutional buildings and the most beautiful natural physical features that are associated with the Holy Family's visit to Egypt, according to an unmistakable formula that runs as follows: St. Virgin Closet (at El-Ezrawia); St. Virgin Mary's Church (at Zaytoun, and in many other places); St. Virgin Monastery (At Assyout) etc. (Cf. Fr Malaty, 1987:12-14).

The multiple parallels suggest that in the mind of the Gnostic philosopher, as seen through the symbolism of the sacred bull Hapi, Ptah incarnated in Osiris, Osiris in turn incarnated in Horus who later came back as Jesus, all connected by the common thread of the symbolic Hapi bull of divine and immaculate birth. The Egyptians were happy to keep things as they always were; Osiris and Horus rising and dying symbolically in the sacred Bull Hapi (Cf. Brandon, 1970:558). Like other Africans, they preferred dealing with difficult sensitive issues by resorting to animal imagery. Things were like that until perhaps the circumstances of anti-zoolatry Palestine combined with Egyptian resurrectionist and reincarnationist symbolism to desire change from spiritual reinvigoration by celebrating the birth of a sacred bull, which, by dint of the shorter lifespan of a bull, was more frequent, to one of a "saviour-god" incarnate in human form.

Jesus entered when Hapi was already being celebrated as Serapis, as we have said, a combination of Osiris and Hapi, and, in fact, St Mark, the founder of Christianity in Egypt, was killed by a mob for celebrating the Judaeo-Christian Easter during a Serapis festival in 68 AD (Cf. Fr Malaty, 1987:18).

The Gnostic followers of St Mark hang on until the festival of Serapis safely passed on to Christianity and the ancient Egyptian religion had been abolished. Meanwhile in their records, they had managed to place the execution of St Mark to the same day as the execution of Jesus 38 years or so earlier. Otherwise what became Easter was originally the day for commemorating the death and resurrection of Osiris in Egypt. In Rome it was observed later in commemoration of the sorrows of Isis when she lost Osiris (Cf. Garnier, 1904:141), which is the same thing. The Phoenicians also adapted Easter as a solar festival in honour of the "goddess" Ishtar, Astarte or

Astaroth (Cf. Stone, 1927:59), who wore cow horns and so is, in reality, Isis, as Herodotus was able to tell in his *Histories* (Book I).

The word “Easter”, therefore, makes sense if it is traced back to the Phoenicians rather than to the spring festival of the Anglo-Saxon “goddess” Eostre (Cf. Fuller, “Easter” GME 1993). It makes sense so because the Phoenician records are older than the Anglo-Saxon records and even predate the Jewish ones. All the same, Easter is a happy spring festival in the northern hemisphere, and others there would still have invented it even if the ancient Egyptians had not, probably some even did.

That then is the story of the sacred black bull of the Nile by whose reason of colour, black animals are still being immersed in river water, or even drowned, as sacrifice to the “god” of rain, in Nilotic Africa.

One early description of a purely symbolic offering dating back to early 20th century may help illustrate the priest of Asiis’ use of a black animal as an offering to Thunder, the equivalent of the “god” of water. When rains fail in Nandi, Hollis (1909:48), tells us that

“the old men collect together and take a black sheep with them to a river. Having tied a fur cloak on to the sheep’s back, they push it into the water, and take beer and milk into their mouths, which they spit out in the direction of the rising sun. When the sheep scrambles out of the water and shakes itself, they sing the following prayer,

<i>Asis! Kakisain,</i>	Asiis we pray to thee,
<i>Konech rob,</i>	That thou may give us rain,
<i>Irocho maiyo ak chei,</i>	We have offered wine and milk
<i>Mami chii nemaiio,</i>	As we all have multiplied,
<i>Tukwech tomono</i>	Do protect the pregnant
<i>nebo chi ak tany”¹</i>	of man and beast.

“Thunder God”, of either the beneficent or of the evil nature, is associated with deep waters. The drama being played out here amounts to showing Thunder what he has forgotten to do, which is to come out of its watery abode and shake the water off its wet feathers in heaven the way the sheep did when it emerged out of the water and attempted to shake itself dry and in the process showered the people.

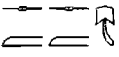
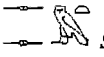
Another way of looking at it is that the people had so longed for rain that when they saw the sheep shake itself, showering all those about, soon rain would follow and shower the people in a similar manner. That is to say, by the sheer force of the focussed collective wishful thinking on the part of the people as they viewed the sheep, Thunder would be influenced into imitating that sheep.

1. The rough English translation is by the author.

The use of black animals for sacrifice, for rain (sometimes only symbolic, i.e. no actual slaughter of the animal is involved, as in this case), was widespread among the Hamitic speakers.

The pair of life-size, majestic images of black horses—decorated with silver and bronze chains, bells and cowry shells—and which were intended for sacrifice, that are to be seen in the section dedicated to the Nubian period in the Egyptian Museum; comes to mind at this juncture.

Unblemished black was the colour generally associated with prayers for rain in the southern hinterland of Eastern Africa. But since much of Egypt did not depend on rain, at least directly, one wonders why such horses were sacrificed, as indicated by the museum caption. The horses were probably sacrificed to the Nile “god”, or to whoever “up there” controlled the rain in the south, which rain caused the welcome inundation of the Nile.

It is instructive that the word for “horse” in Egyptian,  *semsem* or  *sesem-t* (B.Dict.598b, 618b), probably pronounced *soosimo* and *sosimeet* respectively, happens to be very akin to the Kalenjiin term for prayers for rain, *soosimo*. It may, therefore, follow that the sacrificial animal for rain, or for inducing the inundation of the Nile, was initially a black horse. The Kalenjiin may now not be associated with horses at all. But they have a name for it, *mbartany-it*, which literally means the “cow of the farm”, implying that some time in the distant past horses may have been used to pull the plough. Besides, their cousins in South-eastern Sudan, the Ingassana, are known as skilled horsemen, the horse being indigenous to them (Cf. Seligman, 1934:429). Since the Ingassana inhabit the approximate area of the legendary Burgei of the Kalenjiin, we can only guess wisely that the Kalenjiin parted with the horse in Burgei. They similarly parted with the camel soon after and equally retained the name of that beast of burden without the beast itself, *tombees-yet*.

“Marrying”, for the sake of argument, the Egyptian black horse with the Kalenjiin story of the Thunder “gods”, the benevolent Thunder “god”, *Ileet ne miee* (probably styled *Hiila* or *Horr*—though well publicised by the Greeks as *Horus*—in ancient Egypt), who fights with a single-blade sword, surely needs a horse if he has to outmanoeuvre the evil Thunder “god”, who fights with a dangerous forked sword. But to maintain balance of good and bad—for too much good was as bad as too much evil—the evil Thunder “god” (perhaps styled *Set*, or *Seseet*, in Egypt), needed a horse too—hence the pair of identical black horses whose spectacular regal image dominates the Nubian-era exhibits.

The Xhosa prayers for rain consist of the drowning of a ground hornbill, *ntsikizi* along with a brown mole snake. The ground hornbill, a heavy turkey-like poor flier of a bird, is believed to control rain. It is caught and put in a grain bag with a mole snake, *majola*, weighted down by a

stone and cast into the deep section of the river. When the carcass rots, rain falls (Broster, 1967:56).

The Xhosa rainmaking apparatus here may be alien to Kalenjin rainmaking. But the symbol of deep waters with regard to prayers for rain may recall a semblance. Probably the Xhosa associated thunder with the hornbill—this bird makes a pleasant, deep, droning call which might remind one of thunder—and the drowning of the hornbill ought to make thunder cry tears of rain. The snake here may represent evil and so what we may be witnessing here at work is the dualism principle of recognising Deity in two ambivalent natures, good and evil.

In collective sacrifice and prayer proceedings in Kalenjinland, like those we have described, all looked up to the *Poiyoot aap Tuum* for guidance and leadership in chanting prayers to Asiis. The *Poiyoot* therefore dominated all the people's spiritual affairs, of the collective kind narrated above and, more often, those that marked their pivotal points in life, i.e., the life crises, individual and collective; so completely.

The people brought their sacrifices in a process called *keroot*, "to bring gifts", for example, of eleusine flour during collective prayers for rain, which they first purified at the river, *kiiya peek*, and deposited at the priest's home where beer would be consumed (Cf. Peristiany, 1939:216 – 219) as part of the libation shared with Asiis and with the departed spirits of ancestors. Although the gifts brought to the priest's house were principally meant for Asiis, the priest's family consumed it on behalf of Asiis and Asiis only got a symbolic quantity poured at the base of the altar of Asiis, the *mabwaaita*, and what went to heaven by smoke of incense¹ and vapour from the burnt offering (from the sacrificed goat, or ram) during the climax of the sacrificial procedure. In the manner of "left overs"—in truth it was the bulk of the offerings—the priest got something in return for his service as he was not paid directly for his services during a communal worship. This may be compared to the use into which ancient Egyptian priests put similar gifts from supplicants:

"The meal was consecrated with prayers and gestures. As in other ritual contexts, water was libated and incense burned. After the god had been satisfied, the offerings were presented to the other gods and goddesses of the temple, who had been propitiated with comparable but more sober rituals of sanctification. The offerings were then presented to the statues of deceased kings, priests, and other officials and finally taken out of the temple and divided for consumption by the priests according to their rank and position" (Te Velde, 1995:1742).

¹ The use of incense, which is largely forgotten and is rarely associated with the Kalenjin traditional life, was narrated to the author by Cherongoos araap Lang'at, *Chuumo* age-set (now 75+), of Kericho in 1991. Cherongoos is the son of the oldest informant to this project, Kiplang'at araap Chepkwony. The latter passed away a few years after a taped interview with the author.

The Asiisians differ here in the sense that Asiis was merely symbolically fed and the question of “being satisfied” did not arise, although it is perhaps ultimately a question of semantics here. There were no other “gods and goddesses”. The statues of deceased kings, priests and other officials, did not exist here and instead offerings were made to the spirits of the ancestors, which was, in fact, the same thing. The big contrast here is raised by the complete absence of the element of idolatry in Kalenjiinland. But having said so, we ought to remember that the Egyptians were not offering to those statues as such, but, as Pancholi puts it in respect of the Hindu worship, to the Deity through them and, we may add, similarly to the ancestors through the statues of departed kings, priests and officials.

Surprisingly, the priest of Asiis did not officiate in funerals. Pyt. araap Leelgo told the author that the priests are strictly involved in “birth” (meaning promotional) rites only, the ones that go by the term *tuumiin* (from the word *tuum*, “give birth”), and burial is not one of them. He does not even pray for the sick and the dying, unless there was an epidemic that called for collective prayers and sacrifice. He would lead those. But as far as the individual cases are concerned, he is a layman and only prays for his own sick members of his family—just like all other men and women must do.

Perhaps that is as it should be because, in earlier times, most sicknesses were attributed to the work of the departed spirits of the deceased persons within the victim’s agnatic ancestral line. Any supplication to these spirits, with a request to leave the living alone was, therefore, strictly a family affair.¹

Although the priest deserts his flock at such a spiritually needy moment as when a family is bereaved, he comes some days later, to cleanse the bereaved members together with the property of the deceased. This is necessary because death is believed to pollute the close members of the family as well as the deceased’s property and any one who as much as sets eyes on a corpse whether intentionally or accidentally.

This attitude towards death and dead bodies is largely similar to those of ancient Iran’s Zoroastrian religion whose members, as did the Kalenjiin in the pre-colonial past in respect of the majority of interments, laid out human corpses for the beasts to eat—their preferred scavenger being the raven rather than the hyena of the Kalenjiin inclination. The members of the Shinto

¹ However, see in the Appendix section cases of experts whose business it was to pry into the affairs of other families and their respective departed spirits. These were the necromancers variously called *Cheepsogeiyoot*, *Cheepisach*, *Cheemng’orei* etc. who were thought to have the power to communicate with the spirits from the family of a patient and those from his or her own who guided him or her in medical practice. He or she reported back to the patient what the demands of the departed spirits were and how the patient and his or her relatives would go about appeasing the angry spirit.

faith of Japan, although their custom is to bury all their dead, view death and dead bodies with similar disdain. That is to say “death is regarded as a source of pollution, and after burial both the house of the deceased and the mourners are submitted to purification rites” (Cf. Brandon [D.H.S], 1970:297, 165).

The origin of this widespread necrophobia may either have been pathological in that the ancients in their wisdom instituted taboos that automatically enforced quarantine, or it may have originated from sheer fear and dread of death and the spirits and ghosts associated with it.

The Asiisian custom that requires the priests to avoid witnessing dead bodies and funerals as much as possible, may guarantee the priest’s desirable state of moral cleanliness at all times, but it is self-defeating for the Asiisian faith as a movement in a world of competing religions and sects. Often staunch Asiisians find themselves, quite in spite of their religious convictions, inviting Christian clergy to come and preside over their deceaseds’ burial rites. Of course one retains friendship and spiritual bonds with the one that identifies with one during one’s moment of deep stress and sadness and this might be another way of thinning the already much denuded virgin Asiisian forest of Kalenjiinland. If Asiisians should ever become organised, this question of the priest deserting his flock during moments of spiritual need, surely ought to be reviewed. Their predecessors of antiquity, the priests of Isis, are reported to have been involved in performance of burial ceremonies for other priests and kings in their time (Cf. Thompson, 1990:116).

13.5 Qualities expected of the Priest of Asiis

The versatile Asiis priests of today are largely the regular people, and they live and behave as such although, on the average, they seem to be financially rather less endowed. On ceremonial occasions, however, they are there, occupying the most important positions spiritually, socially and physically.

But as already noted, in the past they enjoyed greater all-year-round prestige, as they presided over many ceremonies related to a birth of a child, his or her circumcision and later, his or her marriage. In between there were the annual processions, *rooteet*, to the *Kaapkoros*, the said grand altar of Asiis where the priest led in the collective prayers and offerings to Asiis. There were those other occasions such as the collective praying to Asiis to remove calamities such as epidemics, famine, cattle disease, drought and war.

Peristiany (1939:216-223) recorded facts that he saw for himself, as related to the office that he calls the “High Priest of Asis”. Other experiences that related to older ceremonies, which had

been abandoned by his time, were narrated to him by men who had taken part in those ceremonies themselves. The old religious ceremonies that we have discussed, and those that are still to be discussed ahead, go to describe further the role and qualities expected of the priest of Asii, especially during his heyday—now long gone.

There was a priest for every group of *kokwootinweek*, “wards”, just as there was a *Kiirwogiindet neoo*, “presiding judge”, and a *kiptaiyaat neoo nebo murenik*, “the grand commander of the army”, respectively, for the same geographical, administrative and socio-political entity. “This *Poyot* has no power of his own”, Peristiany (1939:219) records, “he is only an intermediary between Asis and his people.”

There are often many men who are knowledgeable enough to assist the priest of Asii in any parish but they may not be called priests, i.e. *Poiyoot aap Tuum*, until ordained and none may be ordained while there was a priest around within the parish still willing and able to serve. They are not organised into phyles and priestly orders of the Pharaonic kind so that one finds a concentration of priests in one area. As *Poiyoot aap Tuum*, “father/elder of the rites” he is therefore the equivalent of the Pharaonic “higher grade” priest, *hmw-ntr*, also known as “the father of the god”, who is reported to have had a large number of junior grade priests, the *wab* priests, under him (Cf. Velde, 1995:1734).

One of the requirements listed by Te Velde (1995:1733), that the ancient Egyptian priest had to be circumcised because circumcision was connected with purity, and that it was a “distinctive mark of priesthood and formed part of the rites of induction in the late periods”, can be said of the priest of Asii although it is a moot point here given that all Asiisian men (and women in the past) must be circumcised. It probably was a moot point in ancient Egypt too, given that circumcision, as Herodotus puts it, was a “sign of Egyptianness”¹ (Cf. Harris & Weeks, 1971:126, 127).

The priest of Asii practises pure religion and no magic. He is not expected to perform magic and neither is he inclined to pass himself off as one capable of performing magic. Not even the power of clairvoyance is expected of him. The foreseers who, for all practical purposes, no longer exist, belonged to another profession, of *maotik*, whose brief was to inform or warn people, including the *Oorgoiyoot*, who, however, theoretically possessed similar powers of clairvoyance himself, about future events. The priest does not, therefore, impersonate Deity by

¹ The unexpected existed however. It has of late been proven that even on the royal throne of ancient Egypt itself, once sat at least one indigenous Egyptian man who was uncircumcised! Recent X-ray photographs of the mummy of Pharaoh Ahmose I, also known as Amasis I (16th century BC, 18th Dynasty), have revealed that he reigned and died uncircumcised. Yet he sat on the Egyptian throne for about twenty-five years! His successor, Amenhotep I, also known as Amenophis I, was probably—not certainly—uncircumcised too. This one sat on the throne of Egypt for about twenty years—Cf. Harris and Weeks, 1971:125, 126 & 130.

way of prophesying and giving oracles like his ancient Egyptian counterpart (Cf. Velde, 1995:1744).

The said two assistants of the priest of Asiis understudy him for long periods—most visibly in the conducting of circumcision rituals—sometimes even for a decade or two. When nature overtakes the *Poiyoot*, ideally the first *motiryoot* should be elevated to the exalted office of *Poiyoot aap Tuum*, while the previous second *motiryoot* is, in turn, promoted to the position of the first *motiryoot*. A younger man from within—but not necessarily—the neighbourhood, is then co-opted to begin duty and training as the second *motiryoot*. In the theoretical event that old age overtakes the priest and his first assistant at the same time, then the second assistant will leap forward straight into the *Poiyoot's* shoes. But, ideally, a first assistant from another neighbourhood may come and take over.

In most cases, however, the ideal is not followed. The priest always has an official trainee (who has worked as a first assistant to a previous priest) waiting in the wings. He should be younger than the priest but be closer to his age than the elder of the two assistants. This is the priest's official trainee to whom he eventually hands over. The first *motiryoot* who ideally should inherit the office of his master, now becomes the official trainee of the new priest, retires to the wings and will take over after the latter in turn retires (Cf. Peristiany, 1939:217).

This complicated arrangement is made necessary by the fact that the first assistant is often too young to perform certain ceremonies, especially the various stages of marriage rites. *Pyt. araap Leelgo's* official trainee is a man rarely seen in the functions but he has been groomed sufficiently. He is soft-spoken and easily commands respect. In the meantime, *Poiyoot* is busy with his two ubiquitous assistants who carry his priestly paraphernalia around.

Dying of old age in office as is reported of ancient Egyptian priesthood (Cf. Thompson, 1990:101) is not possible on the part of the priest of Asiis as he is expected to retire as of old when the entire age-set at grandfather level retired during the defunct *sageet aap eito* (bull sacrifice) ceremony.

The priest, and the two assistants, may come from only a handful of clans, or families, *koot-aap-chii*, who have between them kept priesthood since time immemorial and, in fact, in the not too distant past, it used to be a father-to-son affair—just as the case had been back in Egypt (Cf. Petrie, 1924:44). Dr Peristiany found this father-to-son tradition still in operation in Kipsigiisland in the late thirties of the 20th century (1939:216-222).

Among the Kipsigiis of today, most priests happen to come from the Kipaek and Kabechereek houses, but there is a possibility that the Kipasiiseek clan, whose totem is the sun, *asiista*; may have dominated this priestly profession in the more distant past. Which is not to say

much, considering that the entire population of the pioneering Kipsigiis was composed of only two clans, the Kipasiiseek and the Kipsamaeek. The former who were endowed with the powers of blessing, naturally, produced the Priest of Asiis, while the latter, who were given the power of cursing, led that profession.

The office of the priest of Asiis, Peristiany observed, was hereditary, but he thought it was not the attribute of any particular clan. The *Poiyoot* taught his eldest son after the latter had married, had raised a *lipwoop* family, i.e. a family that lived in love and peace, observed all the social and cultural norms and had never been polluted by the death of the first wife or even that of a single child. The recruit would have attained the age of between thirty and forty before he would be eligible for informal training. The informal teaching went on until the old man retired and handed the sacred staff of office, the *koomnda* bottle gourd, to his fully trained son. But, as we have said, often he handed over his priestly role to his official trainee, who had his own *koomnda* from his father. The official trainee was much older than the priest's eldest son and the latter would have to fulfil his priestly aspirations in later years after having waited on his father's successor as his official trainee. Alternatively he was ordained as the priest of a neighbouring parish as soon as an opportunity opened up there (Cf. Peristiany, 1939:216 - 219).

The training of a priest is really an apprenticing affair. It consists largely of following the *Poiyoot* around, observing him go about his work and generally assisting him with his paraphernalia of a stool, the *koomnda*, the *nogirweet* stick and perhaps a flywhisk. As was customary in ancient Egyptian temples where inter alia a lot of astrological teaching went on (Cf. Velde, 1995:1745), the *Poiyoot* imparts much astrological knowledge to his understudy because he will in turn be required to teach the basics of astrology to circumcision initiates in their confines. They must be able to identify and make use of: the evening star, *kipokyoot*; the morning star, *taboiita* (or *taboiyaat*); the midnight star, *kookeelyet*,¹ the "seven sisters", Pleiades, *koremeerik*, conceptualised here in pure symbolism as eight and not the seven of Greek mythology (Cf. Peristiany, 1939:134), and the very important family, Orion's belt, *kaakipsomok*, "the trinity", or "the triad" of father, mother and son (Cf. Hollis, 1909:299), whose movement (sometimes considered together with the sword as the fourth member) influenced planting times and the timing of ceremonies.

Talking of the Kalenjiin's association of planting with Orion's belt, it is instructive that the ancient Egyptians regarded the Orion as Osiris and also associated him with the seed that they

¹ This is the general word meaning "a star" in most of the northern Kalenjiin dialects. To the central and southern sections, the word for "star" in general is *kecheiy*, def. *Kecheiyaat*.

planted after inundation was over: "Osiris is god of grain and god of the Nile. But anything which seems to come forth from the earth may be considered a manifestation of Osiris" (Frankfort, 1948:195). In a way the trinity of the Orion, *Kaakipsomok*, of the Kalenjiin, was an equivalent of the trinity of Osiris, Isis and Horus/(Set?). It was vital; therefore, that the priest of Asiis be familiar with the movement of these holy symbols which so much determined the people's fortunes.

Most sons of priests had a *koomnda*, which was given to them by their priest fathers after the informal training period. Such *koomnda* did not necessarily come with ordination and only indicated a capacity to rise to priesthood should the vocational desire be there and an opportunity present itself. This, of course, after undergoing adequate official—in addition to the informal—training and fulfilling all the other requirements. Because the *koomnda* was the prerequisite for eligibility, by means of it priesthood was kept within the particular families.

Marriage for the priest of Asiis is an absolute prerequisite. One of his key roles being to marry couples; he ought to be married himself in the first place. Asiisian doctrine of *motireet*, "official " or "ritual witnessing", in which every promotional ceremony must be witnessed officially, says that one cannot preside over a ritual that one has never gone through oneself. A *motiryoot* is a person who has gone through what he or she is officially witnessing and a priest is *motiryoot* before he becomes a priest and a participant in the particular ritual before he becomes a *motiryoot* of it.

The requirement that the priest be a married man and have a household of the quality described above, as a prerequisite to clerical leadership, may date back to Egypt. The founding Christian fathers of Egypt had put in place a similar prerequisite of marriage for church leadership. This ought to have been a carryover from the original religion of the ancient Egyptians, especially the Isis movement of which the Asiisian culture of the Kalenjiin may be a successor, but reports like the one about minors succeeding the high priests of Ptah upon their sudden death (Cf. Thompson, 1990:101) could not be replicated in Kalenjiinland owing to the basic requirements of: high lower age limit; marriage; possession of own family, and the long informal and formal training expected of Asiisian priesthood.

As we have demonstrated, celibate priesthood could not obtain with respect to the Asiisian religion and neither was it acceptable to the early shapers of Christian doctrine. Clement of Alexandria, 2nd century, was quite categorical about this when he said:

"What reply to these directions (of the Lord) have those who recoil from intercourse and birth? For he also lays down that the bishop who is to rule the Church must be a

man who governs his own household well. A household pleasing to the Lord consists of a marriage with one wife."¹

However, the Copts, who are the direct inheritors of the early church of Clement of Alexandria and Co., have since barred married priests from ascending to the higher offices of bishop and pope. Such offices are preserved for the celibate priests and monks. Just as it is with the Greek Orthodox Church, a priest may not marry after ordination, but a man who is already married may enter priesthood if he so wishes, of course with the full understanding of the complete absence of upward mobility in clerical ranks (Cf. Brandon, 1970:179).

This would appear like a movement away from the original position of the early church fathers as demonstrated in the above quotation from Clement of Alexandria. However, even Clement contradicted himself on this issue; at one time recommending marriage for higher clergy and at another saying "Moreover, God has allowed us to marry wives, because not everybody is capable of the superior condition which is to be entirely pure (celibate)."²

It may be this kind of ambivalence, considered along with the popular ascetic and monastic tendencies and movements that were later initiated by Egyptian Christians themselves, that led to the imposition of the celibate imperative for clergy by the Western (Catholic) Church. The first of such official edicts came from Pope Siricius in 385 AD. This was not without opposition and over a millennium later, the protestant movement, inspired by none other than the breakaway leader himself, Martin Luther, who was originally a monk and who, by way of active demonstration of his opposition, married a nun (Cf. Brandon, 1970:179).

The Asiisian religion and its priesthood may entertain no concept of celibacy, but like his ancient Egyptian counterpart (Cf. Velde, 1995:1733), the priest of Asiis is required to observe abstinence the night before leading communal prayers.

Asiisians would definitely frown at castration of priests in the manner of the priests of a Goddess similar to Isis/Asiis, Cybele, of pre-Christian Anatolia. A self-castrated Asiisian priest would disgrace and disqualify himself instantly, as would be expected of a Catholic priest who did the same to himself even today (Cf. Brandon, 1970:177).

As we have said, it was not unusual for the aged Asiisian priest to be incapacitated or die before the son was ready to assume the functions of a *Poiyoot* due to the former's young age. In such a case, we said that a *Poiyoot* from a neighbouring parish would take over immediately with

¹ Clement of Alexandria on "Marriage", *Alexandrian Christianity*, Library of Christian Classics, p. 92.

² Clement of Alexandria, Book VIII, 55, *Alexandrian Christianity*, Library of Christian Classics, p. 494.

a view to installing the retiree's successor who would serve until such a time as he also needed to retire and the son of the original priest took over.

The official ordination of a new *Poiyoot* takes place immediately prior to the first ceremony that he is going to preside over, this being his first official function, as a priest. Elders assemble a day before the intended ceremony at the hosting home for the *maiyweek aap Poiyoot*, "*Poiyoot's* beer party", which is a mini ceremony. A male goat is sacrificed during the beer party and its entrails read. If the entrails prove auspicious, Asiis will be understood to have sanctioned and the candidate will, from that moment, become the priest of the parish (Cf. Peristiany, 1939:216–219).

There is no "junior" priest of Asiis as such. The first *motiryoot*, the heir apparent, or even the official trainee who is often closer in age to the priest, cannot deputise in the absence of the *Poiyoot* as such an assistant may only preside over ceremonies after being duly anointed in the above manner, and that only takes place after the retirement, or death, of his mentor. In the absence of the *Poiyoot* of a parish, for reasons other than death or retirement, a *Poiyoot* of a neighbouring parish is invited to preside over ceremonies on behalf of the absentee priest, usually at the latter's advance request to his counterpart.

Perhaps we need to mention, in passing, that the reading of entrails of sacrificial and of any slaughtered animals, is an old skill and practice that has been handed down for countless generations. This practice of reading entrails for omens, or as an exercise in divination, also existed in ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome, the surrounds, Peru in South America (Garnier, 1904:143) and, indeed, in the whole world—the world of Stoics included in spite of themselves, as Glover (1909:16-17) asserts.

The books of the Gnostic Copts of Egypt have a fuller version of Isaiah 19:3-12 in which the reading of animal entrails is mentioned as such and not in general terms as is characteristic of the canonical scripture versions (Cf. Doresse, 1960:68).

As it relates to the ancient Roman and Hellenic worlds that we have mentioned in passing, the following books carry stories of animal sacrifices that entailed the reading of entrails: Plutarch's *Caesar, Crasus, Galba, Marcellus*; Tacitus P. Corneliu's *Histories*; Euripides' *Electra*, Cicero's works, etc. In almost all the incidents mentioned in the cited books, the priest handed over the entrails to the interested party to interpret for himself. They seem to have followed a definite formula and two men reading the same entrails separately, came up with a reasonably similar interpretation of omen (Cf. Walker, GME 1993).¹

¹ Walker includes "behaviour of birds". This is a significant element in Kalenjiiin omen reading and interpretation.

The reading and interpretation of the entrails used to be a job for the priest in Egypt as was the reading of stars for similar guidance (Petrie, 1924:41). However, the priest's participation in the reading of auspices only applies to public occasions in Kalenjinland. The author witnessed as he grew up that every head of family had the skill of reading the entrails and the interpretation of other signs of omen. Star-gazing was left to a neighbourhood expert who poured liquid snuff, *kirongiisyet*, into his nostrils and peered into the heavens, looking out for and studying the position of the *koremeerik*, Pleiades, that we have mentioned (Cf. Peristiany, 1939:134).

As we have said, the family head's reading of omen happened only where a family ceremony over which the family head was presiding was involved. Where the occasion involved more than one family and the priest duly presided over, all duties of libation pouring and entrails reading would officially be his, as narrated of Egypt by Sir Flinders Petrie in his *Religious Life in Egypt* (1924:44). However there was never a shortage of a neighbourhood expert who would help the *Poiyoot* with entrails reading.

The gentlemen who become priests do not demand special respect from their "flock" although they, naturally, deserve and get it. The soft-spoken, unassuming Pyt. araap Leelgo, for a man who controls so many aspects of so many people's lives, is a study in humility. And, no doubt, this is a quality that his predecessors, who enjoyed even more salient power, also exhibited.

In the pre-colonial times, the big man, the *Oorgoiyoot*, was the ultimate boss, yes, but he needed the *Poiyoot* more often than the *Poiyoot* needed him—beginning from shortly after the future *Oorgoiyoot* was born. The *Poiyoot* presided over rites to do with the prospective *Oorgoiyoot*'s circumcision; his military passing out ceremony, *sageet aap eito*; his retirement from the military; his wedding to each of his plenty wives and, crowning him king! There were the *Oorgoiyoot*'s children as well whose rites for the successive life crisis phases the *Poiyoot* similarly controlled. Such was the power the office of *Poiyoot aap Tuum* enjoyed, but with unmatched humility on the part of the office holders.

Although the *Oorgoiyoot* was considered to be in direct communication with Asiis, he was not a priest himself and neither was any member of the royal clan eligible for priesthood. Unlike has been said of the Pharaoh, namely that he was the only qualified person to approach and address the "gods", and that "in principle only the Pharaoh could perform rituals" but in practice delegated these powers to the priest (Cf. Velde, 1995:1731), the *Oorgoiyoot* could not carry out priestly duties because, in the first place, his Lion clan was closer to and may have even been a splinter of the Kipsamaeek clan that was gifted with the art of cursing, not of blessing, and whose totem was lion—the same as that of the king. The priest and the king, therefore, necessarily came

from two vocationally opposed moieties, and, ideally, no one could encroach upon the turf of the other.

Having said that however, we ought to remember that rainmaking rituals belonged to the *Oorgoiyoot*, which he performed in the confines of his palace. But when his rainmaking magic failed him, the priest took over and led the *soosimo* procession that we have described, to the river. In the appeal to Asiis, therefore, the priest seems to have been the more ultimate of the two men, especially when it came to communal and collective prayers.

The priest's humility may not have been taken for granted always throughout the greater history of Nilotic priesthood. The priestly humility occasionally slipped through the fingers of the ancient Egyptian priests and the priests usurped political power. But this was possible only in a situation such as that of Egypt because the priesthood controlled enormous temple property where sometimes temples collectively were wealthier than the throne. The priest of Asiis has no temple and temple property to control. Poverty is a defining factor of the lot of him. But in Egypt there are many instances recorded where the Pharaohs incessantly channelled a lot of wealth to the temples, probably to bribe the priest so they may allow them some measure of independence from them (Cf. Petrie, 1924:54). But the temples were certainly wealthy, at one time owning 15% of total land during the New Kingdom (Cf. Thompson 1990:98) and very often were the priests the real centres of power as the popes once became and as Imams still are in theocratic Islamic states.

Kibeet araap Ruutto, a close friend and age-mate of Pyt. araap Leelgo, told the author that since he had got used to obeying the *Poiyoot* so religiously during the various ceremonies that they attended together, he found it hard to argue with him even on occasions that had nothing to do with the religious ceremonies. Even the men who are older than the *Poiyoot*, obey and listen to the priest and may advise but never argue with him. His word on cultural and religious matters is final. His well-earned respect is for twenty-four hours a day, everyday.

The younger generation, however, may occasionally, quite unnecessarily, rudely argue with the priest when they think the *Poiyoot* has gone wrong here or there, skipped a requirement of ritual here or there, and it takes the priest's sharp rebuke to silence them. At one point in the presence of the author, the priest offered to leave the priestly role he was playing for some drunken hecklers to perform if they knew better as they seemed to suggest. That sarcastic offer elicited the deepest possible silence in the centre of a largely tipsy crowd. The *Poiyoot* had sobered everyone up and stamped his priestly authority by playing his indispensability card. Without him no religious ceremony of the Asiisian kind that involves a critical stage can go on. It is beyond imagination to even contemplate such an eventuality. There is no precedent.

That this priestly rebuke is increasingly becoming necessary may be a sad pointer to the erosion of the esteem and the slow demise of the institution of Asiisian priesthood in Kalenjiinland. Should this come to pass then its death will bring down along with it much of the Asiisian religion and the rest of the culture, wisdom, history, identity and the pride associated with it.

The importance of the priestly institution for the survival of the culture, customs and traditions of a people could never be overemphasised. Alberti observed, 1807, what could come of a nation's socio-cultural history in the absence from a community of the priestly institution. He did so under the false impression that the Xhosa had no priesthood, nay, had no religion at all. Nevertheless, they indulged in socio-cultural practices whose purpose and origin, for want of an articulate priestly institution, the Xhosa could not explain to Alberti. So he wrote 1807:47):

“Among the priests of a nation, information concerning the origin of their practices and traditions are generally propagated with unusual success, which can frequently lead to possible conjectures; to the want of which, the fact must be ascribed that among these Kaffirs information of this sort was completely absent.”

Joan Broster, writing 160 years after Alberti, referred to the diviners and herbalists as the priests of the Xhosa. She cites a case in which a diviner/herbalist prays before admitting a new apprentice. He said “God (*Thixo*) help me cure this neophyte and may she who loves her rejoice. Upon this, the people replied *Camagu!* Meaning ‘Let our cry come to you (1967:98).’” These medical practitioners seem, therefore, to have been the only ones who appealed to *Thixo* directly, probably because they dealt with clients who came from a wider spectrum of the population which, necessarily, encompassed all the genealogical and clan units of the Xhosa community. Everyone else appealed to his or her own ancestors (who then extended their request in turn to *Thixo*).

The Xhosa sacrificial ceremonies that concerned only the genealogical unit were presided over by the eldest man available from that genealogical unit and he acted as a priest in the sense that he chanted the invocation and invitation of the spirits of the departed ancestors. However, for the collective ceremonies such as circumcision, where boys from many different genealogical units were initiated together, the parents concerned elected one of their own as the presiding official whose technical term for that duration (two to three months) was *u-Sosuthu*. For that period he played the role of and enjoyed the esteem and aura of a Kalenjiin professional priest, *Poiyoot aap Tuum*, even though *Thixo* was only the indirect object of his appeals—the ancestors being the intermediaries—rather than direct as in the case of *Poiyoot aap Tuum* within whose brief and competence it was to address the ultimate, Asiis.

In all, most of the traditions and customs of the Xhosa were kept by diviners and herbalists who were well-trained—the period of training reportedly could extend to between five and six years. They are still the principal dispensers of medicine as is prevalent elsewhere in South Africa, western-type doctors notwithstanding (Cf. Broster, 1967:99, 125-141). The priest of Asiis, in contrast, is a layman in medical matters as well as in matters of diagnosis by divination. These were the roles of other professionals.

Summary of Chapter 13: The Manager of Rituals: the Priest of Asiis, *Poiyoot aap Tuum*

The king, *Oorgoiyoot*, and the priest, *Poiyoot aap Tuum*, are considered the major direct appointees of Asiis. They may initially be appointed and prepared, especially in the case of the priesthood, by the previous occupant, but it remains for Asiis to confirm and communicate such acceptance through signs that are hidden in the entrails of a sacrificial animal. Only people who have been trained in the art of divination, especially the priests on formal collective occasions, can read and interpret the message. Many elders can also read and interpret the omens that are communicated by Asiis through entrails of slaughtered animals. Other appointees—similarly confirmed in their professions by omen reading but who are minor in that their operations only impact on the fortunes of the individual client—are the soothsayers, or prophets, the herbalists, surgeons and diviners.

The priest of Asiis carries and uses a phallic gourd, *koomnda*, as his vital staff of office although there are no signs of idolatric attitude towards it. According to early sources on Kalenjin culture and religion, the priesthood passed from father to son although there would often be a stopgap priest who would play the role and then later hand the office over to the son of the original priest. The stopgap priest's son will succeed to office in a similar delayed manner. Inheriting priesthood from one's father is a situation that obtained in ancient Egypt as well according to Egyptologists.

The priest of Asiis presides over and, by invoking Asiis by means of manifestly ancient prayers, whose words are largely traceable to ancient Egyptian, blesses most of the rites of passage, i.e. life crises rites, such as circumcision and marriage. He is an intermediary between Asiis and the people. Some of his roles that are now defunct, included the bull sacrifice, also traceable to ancient Egypt; the annual post-harvest prayers of *kaapkoros* in which he lit the new fire for the year; prayers for rain (still current); emergency collective prayers to ward off an epidemic or other catastrophes etc.

The major annual prayers of *kaapkoros*, whose manner of procession we have described, were discontinued by the Kipsigiis after a huge chunk of their land was forcefully appropriated by the British government. They claimed that Asiis had deserted them, implying that their prayers were not being heard.

We acknowledged others' observations to the effect that the rite of circumcision, which is supervised by the priest of Asiis, has a death and rebirth symbolism—a characteristic of most baptisms, including the Christian one. It is Osirian in the sense that the drama incorporates death and rebirth, or death and resurrection motif. The secrets of the rite are embargoed as demarcated by the declaration of *kang 'uu kameet* from which point non-initiates remove themselves from the precincts of the House of Rites. We also acknowledge and comply with that requirement here.

Most Africans, including the Kalenjiin, address Deity quite infrequently, believing that this is a mark of respect, besides, Deity is too good and perfect to need prayers except in the direst of need such as during or following an epidemic, or during or following any other catastrophic occurrence. The Kalenjiin, during their prayers, address Asiis without a show of pious fear.

We noted that the final phase of Kalenjiin wedding ceremony resembles a great deal what is known as the Christian, or western wedding tradition to the extent of hinting at a common origin. Besides, the Kalenjiin marriage rite in total suggests a monogamic past; the ancient biblical type of monogamy that permitted a man to keep concubines, or his real wife's "helpers" who are called *cheplaagok*, "baby-sitters", here.

Many of the Kalenjiin higher forms of wedding, for lack of formal witnesses, *motireenik*, who became witnesses by virtue of having been processed through such rites themselves, have been discontinued. For a rite to survive it is necessary to have such witnesses around.

The priest of Asiis, who presides over marriage rites, has to be married himself in the first place and have children, all of whom, together with the priest's *first* wife, must be alive for the priest to remain morally wholesome, *lipwoop*, enough to perform his duties. Neither celibacy nor asceticism is required of the priest of Asiis. In fact, as the leader and manager of fertility rites, he ought to lead by example. We saw that this also was a standard that was set for the early Christian bishops of Egypt by Clement of Alexandria. But we also observed that it was the Egyptians who spearheaded asceticism and celibacy for certain cadres of clergy as a most pure form desirable if one could manage it. A western Pope of early Catholicism, decreed that this Egyptian example be compulsorily adopted by the ordained Catholic clergy. It is still kept.

Up until the onset of colonial rule and the concomitant arrival of its spiritual corollary, Christianity, Kalenjiin marriages followed the ancient Egyptian model (see Herodotus Book II), as did the Maasai and many other Nilotic people's notions of marriage, of men accepting brides

on behalf of the entire age-grade and allowing full hospitality to go on within marriage. Far from suggesting abuse of women, we will continue to witness that this form of hospitality between age-grade comrades may owe origin to earlier polyandrous forms of marriage in which the wives had the upper hand in conjugal partnership.

Sacrificial animals had to be of one uniform colour, preferably white for the annual post-harvest prayers and black for rain prayers, i.e. for the rain “god” *Iila* or *Iilat* of whom we said in Chapter 10, is probably *Horr*, i.e. Horus, if not the Semitic Deity of the same name or variations of it: *Al Ilah*, *Allah*, *Al Ilat*, *El*, *Elohut* etc.

The associating of black animals with a water “god” can be traced back as far as the ancient Egyptian association of the Nile with that river’s black bull “god” Hapi, the bull thought to be the reincarnation of Osiris. Like Osiris, its conception is divine and after giving birth to it, its mother, the Isis cow (Cf. Thompson, 1990:105) never conceives again, i.e., it reverts to virginity. The Copts, whose church is the oldest in the world, talk of Mary, mother of Jesus, reverting to virginity (like the Isis cow) after giving birth to Him. This tells us that, in the mind of the spiritual ancestors of the Copts, the Christian Gnostic Egyptians, who were the pivotal originators and shapers of much of the early Christian doctrine; Jesus was a successor to Hapi (the calf of the Isis cow) who was a successor to Osiris. With the removal of the bull Hapi, who, being only a beast, was just a symbol, we are left with the equation in the mind of the Gnostic theologian: Jesus = Osiris. Or, since Horus and Hapi were one: Jesus = Horus = Osiris and Isis = Mary.

The Storm “god”, *Iilat* or *Iila*, later of the Kalenjiin, needless to say, in its Near-Eastern context, belonged to this equation too. There are other “gods” from the Near East who can be part of the equation.

Why prayers for rain from Cape to Cairo, figuratively speaking, involved drowning of animals, real, as among the Xhosa of South Africa, probably real as among the ancient Egyptians as we learn from the images of the two identical Nubian-era black horses (Cairo Museum) intended for drowning in the Nile; and symbolic, as among the Kalenjiin and their mock drowning of a black sheep; can only suggest origin to the belief that the Storm “god” lived in water. There has to be one origin and it sounds like a typical East African or Great Lakes thought.

The 15-yearly festival of the bull sacrifice in Kalenjiinland, during which everyone, except the pre-circumcision children, moved one social rank up, required the sacrifice of a white ox that had to be white, or closest to that colour, without the blending in of any other colour. This was similar to the ancient Egyptian practice described for us by Herodotus. Peristiany and Massam, both Europeans, described for us the identical Kalenjiin practice early in the 20th century.

With the aid of the respective works of Massam and Peristiany, combined with material from the oral field, we get to know the purpose of the bull sacrifice with regard to ancient Egypt; an awareness so far, to the best of the author's knowledge, denied even the greatest of the Egyptologists. A scene of such bull sacrifice ceremony is preserved in bas-relief on the walls of the tomb of King Mereruka in Sakkara, Egypt.

The Zoroastrians, of what is today Iran, the Shinto believers of Japan, and the Asiisian Kalenjiin, perhaps among many other communities, considered death to have a polluting effect upon the relatives of the deceased and post mortem cleansing ceremonies were performed for them. Certainly the Priest of Asiis was shielded from the pollution of death that occurred outside his own family because he had to remain morally pure as often as possible, this being the requirement essential to priesthood. He only came much later to preside over the cleansing of the survivors and the deceased's property, which was also polluted by the death.

A bit of dualism was played out during the *roteet* processions of *kaapkoros*. The right-hand side of the archway, as one entered, was the male side while the left-hand side, was the female side. Both sides were "manned" respectively by virgins of man and beast of the corresponding sexes during a procession. The glory of the virgins was thought to rub off the participants in the procession when the former sprinkled them with the holy solution.¹

The priest of Asiis presided over the defunct *roteet* processions of *kaapkoros*. He also presided over the burning of incense and other burnt offerings whose smoke and vapour was considered appropriate for those in spirit form. A column of smoke that rose to heaven perpendicularly was considered auspicious.

The Kalenjiin, who were nomadic, not many generations ago, did not build temples because permanent structures were not consistent with the transhumant lifestyle. Transhumance also affected burial customs, perhaps leading to the use of the hyena as the undertaker. Even if they did not construct temples, the appointed open spaces were reserved for the purpose and, as it was with regard to ancient Egyptians, demanded that anybody taking part in the procession be bodily as well as morally clean. Sex the night before and the night after was prohibited.

There is also a possibility that the construction of temples was discontinued right back in Egypt owing to Roman persecutions of the Isiac, i.e., Egyptian Asiis', movement. If this was the

¹ Indeed the obsession with virginity was such a typical Hamitic spiritual preoccupation that itself perhaps immediately rubbed off anybody that associated with the Hamitic speakers in the past. So much so that the Hamitic word for "virgin", as retained in the Kalenjiin *peergeij-*, ancient Egyptian *nefer-t, t-nefer*, (or even *farn-t*, as in Kalenjiin and Maasai *parnoot*, "youth"), is evident in Arabic *bikra*. This is *virgo* of Latin from where the English version is derived. The ancient orthodox and Catholic Christian churches still glorify it, probably thanks to Hamitic-speaking Gnostic founding Fathers.

case, the temple-less culture began in Egypt during the dying years of the Isiac movement and was brought in that clandestine form all the way to Eastern Africa.

The Priest of Asiis was a bundle of humility considering the enormous power he enjoyed as an indispensable person in his area of jurisdiction. He presided over everybody's life crisis rituals, the *Oorgoyoot* notwithstanding, and over the greater processions and other private and collective prayers and cleansings without appearing to throw his weight around.

We saw an example of temporary priesthood among the Xhosa whose elders appoint one of their own to preside during a festival but who must surrender the powers at the end of the ceremony. The *Poiyoot* of the Kalenjin, in contrast, may not be a full-time priest, but he is, like his ancient Egyptian counterpart, permanent—to the extent one can be on a job—once appointed.

Chapter 14

Kiirwogiindet, the Politico-Judicial Head of the Government of the Divine King, *Oorgoiyoot*

Abstract

Before we begin the discussion on the kingship institution, we here first explore that institution's secular administrative arm which was entrusted to the charge of a political cum juridical figure called *Kiirwogiindet ne oo*, at once the equivalent of "Prime Minister" and "Chief Justice" in today's parlance as we said in the previous chapter. We explore the royal, political, juridical and administrative nomenclature and relate them to the names of similar institutions in ancient Egypt. Any evidence of systematic correspondence in nomenclature would go to confirm the claim of the Kalenjiin to have been part of the Pharaonic Empire in ages past.

14.1 An Overview of the Structure of the *Kiirwogiindet's* Politico-Judicial Council in Relation to the King, *Oorgoiyoot*

Major examples as relate to the structure of the spiritual and secular administration that was overseen by the *Oorgoiyoot*, whose office and person we shall discuss below, have been picked from the Nandi and the Kipsigiis countries for use as practical illustrations here. The reason being that, in both sub-nations, the offices and their hierarchical power structure that the *Oorgoiyoot* oversaw were most defined and effective. The two sub-nations, situated on Kenya's best agricultural and pastoral land, were the richest and most powerful of the larger Kalenjiin nation as a whole. Was it these underpinning favourable economic factors that made their *Oorgoiyoot* rise quite inordinately in power and esteem in relation to similar institutions in other Kalenjiin sub-nations? Or was it that the *Oorgoiyoot* institution actually facilitated the realisation of that prosperity, thence basking in its glory? Or was it a dovetailing of both scenarios that took place?

Hollis described the administrative structure that he personally witnessed in place in Nandi during the first decade of the 20th century. The British had not quite taken over the country yet. But of the day-to-day administrative and judicial functions of the *Kiirwogiindet*, he does not say much. However, Huntingford, long after him, did fill in a bit in his book *The Nandi of Kenya*, while the work of Peristiany, who wrote about the Kipsigiis juridical, political and administrative institution before Huntingford, but long after Hollis, helps fill our gap of knowledge regarding the traditional Kalenjiin politico-judicial administration. These western anthropologist eyewitnesses shall be the major written sources to be used in our discussion to follow. However we will use snippets from other minor works carried out in other Kalenjiin areas and in the rest of Africa where a comparative view may be needed for contrast purposes. Data from the oral fieldwork shall supplement and, as always, it is blended in seamlessly.

Old Nandi was divided into several parishes, *siritoiik*. These were grouped into 15 districts, *pororyoosyek* (sing: *pororyeet*)¹, which fell into six *emootinweek*, “counties” (lit. “countries”) as follows: Wareeng’, Masoop, Soiin or Pelguut, Aldai, Chesuumei and Em-kween (“Centre of Country”).

“The whole country acknowledges the over-lordship of the *Orkoiyot*, or chief medicine man;” says Hollis (1909:48-49),

“But each district is governed by two men, one called *Maotiot* who is elected by and represents the *Orkoiyot*, and the other, called *Kiruogindet*, the spokesman or counsellor, who is chosen by the people. The real rulers are the *Kiruogik* (*kiirwoogik* is pl. of *Kiirwogiindet*), who are responsible to the *Orkoiyot* (through their *Maotik*) for the good government of their respective districts, and for the enrolment of troops in time of war. Each parish is under a captain called *Olaitoriot* (*laitooryaat*), who is responsible to his *Kiruogindet*. A parish generally contains from twenty to fifty warriors... The old men of each district meet together from time to time to discuss the affairs of state, the *Maotiot* and the *Kiruogindet* being present. The assemblies are held in the shade of a *teldet* tree, and the places of assembly are called *kâp-kiruogutik*”.

Huntingford differs with Hollis in some respects here: according to Huntingford, in the council of the *Kiirwogiindet* sat two *maotik*, the representatives of the *Oorgoiyoot* who were nominated by the *Kiirwogiindet*’s council and not only one that was nominated by the *Oorgoiyoot* himself as Hollis says. Huntingford characteristically itches to discount the responsibility of the *Kiirwogiindet* to the *Oorgoiyoot* whom he miscalls “religious authority”, but all other evidence, including his own, attest to the opposite. Importantly, however, Huntingford informs us that the king, the *Oorgoiyoot*, had no representative at the lowest government tier of *kookweet* council. The *kookweet* council was still indirectly answerable to him, however, in the sense that this

lowest level of government was answerable to the *Kiirwogiindet* who was in turn answerable to the *Oorgoiyoot* (Cf. Huntingford, 1953b:34).

Kipsigiis country was governed in the same manner and, in fact, one of the Nandi *emootinweek*, the southern Soiin, or Pelgut, was contiguous with, or was in fact one and the same northern Pelgut of Kipsigiisland. However there were important differences: the Kipsigiis *emootinweek* were four as opposed to Nandi's six. The Kipsigiis used the word *pororyeet* to mean a whole people, a nation, but the Nandi used the same term to mean a district that functioned independently. In the Nandi context, it had a strong, overriding military connotation. The Kipsigiis military functioned independently, as a unit, at the level of *emeet* and, as we saw earlier, each army was divided into four regiments called *poroyosyek* (*sing. poryeet*), which may not be confused with *pororyosyek* or *pororyeet*. The entire Kipsigiis sub-nation, therefore, maintained four very large independent armies that occasionally raided jointly while the Nandi maintained 15 (originally reportedly 7) separate, inevitably smaller independent armies that almost always fought separately, especially in offensive warfare. But there were the occasional situations that saw the Nandi armies raid, or defend, jointly as one army and sometimes a *pororyeet* or two would fight alongside their Kipsigiis counterparts (more on this can be read in the author's upcoming book tentatively entitled, *The Military Clan of Pharaoh*).

Other Kalenjiin nations seem to have based most administrative and military matters on the *pororyeet* territorial entity in a similar manner to that of the Nandi. For instance, the Tugen term for the elders' council that controlled the autonomous *pororyeet* territorial entity, was itself *pororyeet*. This Tugen *Pororyeet* council controlled their army, advising the men as to whether or not, and when to go on raid. Disobedience, on the part of the military, of the *pororyeet*'s orders, or ignoring these elders' misgivings, brought the risk of incurring a curse from the council. This threat of a curse was the latter's chief enforcing agent.

The Tugen *pororyeet* geographical entities were translated into colonial administrative "locations" by the British with minimal interference with their traditional names and boundaries. The map has remained more or less the same to this day.

Each Tugen *pororyeet* council was

"headed by a prominent elder (*kilwogin* [*kiirwogiin* is the indefinite form of *Kiirwogiindet*). A *pororiet* council was composed of elders (*poiyoet*, *poisiek*) representing the constituent patrilines (*oret*, *ortimwek*). The *kilwogin* had no authority to lead; he gained his status by force of personality, his ability to reconcile conflicting

1. See above.

parties, and his eloquence and generosity. Authority was vested in the council, never in an individual no matter how much he was respected" (Kettel, 1975:chap. 2).

The Tugen *pororyeet* council also controlled religious affairs, directing sacrifices and prayers.

"For services rendered, such as blessings and completion of rituals, it is customary to give a gift of stock for a feast, or beer, or both, the amount varying with the service and the circumstances. Fines were imposed on wrongdoers, whether individuals or a warrior age-set, and paid to the council in stock. A gift of stock and beer was also necessary for the removal of a curse. The judgements of the *pororiet* council were enforced by the warriors of the location, so that the elders had the sanction, not only of their curse, but also of punishment" (Kettel. 1975:chap. 2).

The Tugen and Keiyo *kookweet* subdivisions of the *pororyeet*, were heavily clan based, more so in the latter. The *Oorgoiyoot* institution in these places did not control government either directly or indirectly as happened in Nandi, Kipsigiis, and in one or two other sub-nations such as those of Mt. Elgon. He seems to have been confined here, as in most other northern Kalenjiin territories, to medical and prophetic practices. In these areas, where rain was scarce, a member of the rainmaking clan of Toiyoi (Lightning or Thunder is their totem), was bound to wield some *Oorgoiyoot*-like influence over the people. In the (more or less) traditional agricultural areas, like Marakwet, *Oorgoiyoot* used to be a man of the Toiyoi clan.

But in a development that will require further research, the *Oorgoiyoot* of Nandi, Kimnyoolei, who was executed around 1890 AD, reportedly had his representatives, *maootik*, in Tugen, Keiyo, Terik, Cherang'any (Marakwet and Pokoot), Kony, as well as in Kipsigiis, whom he invited to come and listen to his final prophesy, as the soldiers prepared to execute him. The *Oorgoiyoot* used to place the *maootik* in areas that owed allegiance to him, and where they would sit in the local *Kiirwogiindet*'s council as we have already pointed out. If this oral tradition held by the Nandi elders were based on historical fact, it would appear that Kimnyoolei, at least, had wielded some influence that far a field. But, again, there are clear records in the archives, which indicate that the Gusii and the Nandi paid tribute to Koilegeen, who was the *Oorgoiyoot* of Kipsigiisland up to 1914 when the British Government exiled him (D.C. KER3/1). The upshot of it all is that there were no boundaries that subdivided the Kalenjiin landmass into distinct sub-ethnic territories that are known today; that these boundaries were indeed fixed by the colonial government, which settled European farmers along the railways thus effectively separating the people; that the present sub-ethnicities are, therefore, largely the creation of these boundaries and not the other way round.

Among a Hamitic-speaking agricultural-pastoralist community, the Bari of Sudan, the most important men were the rainmakers, the "chiefs of water" *kimak ti piong*, while the related Lotuko

neighbours, of similar economic inclination, honoured the *Kobu*, their rainmaker, whether man or woman, above all other mortals (Cf. Seligman, 1932:241, 309).


Rainmaking seemed to gain in esteem where agriculture was an important feature among an otherwise pastoral people who had found themselves living in areas that suffered long and frequent spells of drought. Among the other people who were of similar stock, and who were less afflicted by droughts, like the cattle-rich Ingassana and Lang'o, both of Sudan (Seligman, 1932:357, 430), the Maasai, the Kalenjiin clusters of Mt. Elgon, e.g. the Sabiiny of Uganda, just as was the case among the Kipsigiis and the Nandi; the absolute leaders had to be those who were associated with the acquisition of cattle wealth. The man who had identified himself most with this aspiration, and provided leadership during crises that had devastated this type of economy at a particular point in history, found himself being elevated to the supreme office.

But whether one was monarch by virtue of rainmaking, or by virtue of stock-wealth inclination of his or her society, he or she needed a "commoner" to see to the day to day affairs of governing a vast territory—hence the office of the *Kiirwogiindet*, and those below him.¹

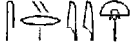

14.1.1 *Egypto-Kalenjiin Political, Administrative and Territorial Nomenclature*


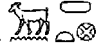
Through the work of Peristiany, 1939 AD, we have actual examples of how the *Kiirwogiindet*, in formerly *Oorgoiyoot*-ruled Kipsigiisland, functioned on a day-to-day basis. We may also note that the nomenclature with regard to administrative structures is replete with Kalenjiin-ancient Egyptian cognates. Just as other linguistic cognacies would suggest, at least one party obtained its stock of office and administrative structures from the other. And since we are dealing with a people whose tradition says that they originated from Egypt, we have no alternative but to ascribe such words to ancient Egyptian and hold these cognatic items to be proof of truth in such tradition. The word stems in bold, below, are traceable to ancient Egyptian.

The *Poiyoot aap kook-weet* was the judge and day-to-day administrator of a ward, *kook-weet*. He was also referred to as *Ki-p-sarur-yaat* (Toweett, 1978:69), "of the fly-whisk", probably owing to his habitual use of the flywhisk as the staff of office. The Egyptian equivalent was

 *sr*, "nobleman", "magistrate" and this too may have come from the "fly-whisk",

 *sir-pata* (B.Dict. 647).

The *Kiirwogiindet ne oo*, the chief judge, was the chief minister of the entire *em-eet*, “country”, made up of several *kook-wotinweek* (pl. of *kook-weet*). He was the chief judge and supreme *kook-weet* (council) president. The larger *em-eet* grouping of *kook-wotinweek* was also referred to as *koor-eet* or *sirit-yeet* (Cf. Peristiany, 1939:176). *Sirit* is from ancient Egyptian,  *siri*, “the budge of a regiment, flag, fan, umbrella” (B.Dict. 376). Also  *sryt*, “military standard” (Gardiner, 1927:591). The larger Kipsigiis territory, controlled as *em-eet*, *sirit* or *koor-eet*, was also the basic military unit that could initiate war independently.²

From sheer agreement of administrative office and territorial nomenclature, as we see here, it would appear that the Myoot brought along with them, not only the nomenclature as we have mentioned, but also the basic ancient Egyptian structure of government, and installed it virtually intact. *Emeet* is ancient Egyptian  *kemet*, “country”; *koor-eet* or *koora*, is as in Coptic ⲭⲟⲣⲁ (*koora*) meaning “country”. *Kook*, the stem and the indefinite form of *kookweet*, is from ⲭⲟⲩ (*goog*), “head” or “capital”.³ *Em-kween*, meaning the central division of the country is composed of *em*, “country” and *kween*, “centre”, or “middle”. The corresponding Egyptian name for the middle of Egypt, or any of the capital cities, or the innermost part of the body, is  *khen* (B. Dict. 575b). The goat symbol (Kalenjiin *kwe* = “he-goat”) suggests, however, that the hieroglyphs should be read *kween* or *kwen-eet* and not *khen* as Budge transcribes it.

The ancient Egyptian origin of *sirit* and the *Kipsaruuryaat* office name, among others, have been mentioned above. Other key derivations, relevant to government and kingship, from old Egypt, are discussed below as they crop up.

1. We use the tedious “he or she” with regard to the monarch, here because although most rulers in most places were men, the Lotuko’s supreme office of rainmaker, happened to be in the hands of a man (*kobu*) as often as the honour went to a woman (*nobu*). (Seligman: 1932:309).

2. Peristiany, 1939:165 and various. The ancient Egyptian *siri* “fan” or “umbrella” sense of this word is akin to Kalenjiin word *saasur-yeet* (botanical family *scitamineae*: *musa ensete*- Hollis, 1908), whose long wide leaves—similar to the leaves of the banana plant—are used as umbrellas. The traditional Kalenjiin umbrella—not the leaf—is called *aoiyo(aoiyoot)* but has been completely replaced by the modern types which were introduced from the west.

3. Crum’s Coptic dictionary.

14.2 Juridical Council of the Kiirwogiindet in Action.

Several lesser *kiirwoogik* (pl. of *Kiirwogiindet*), or *poiisyek* (pl. of *Poiyoot*) *aap kookweet*, who headed the various *kookweet* councils within one Kipsigiis *emeet*, had their difficult cases referred to the *Kiirwogiindet neo*'s supreme (and appellate) council. The appellant council was a grouping with no specific office name, each grouping only being known by the larger territorial name. Several such larger groups formed the real *emeet*. There were four such *emootinweek* that comprised the entire Kipsigiisland. These were Pelguut, Pureeti, Soot and Waaldai.

Orchardson noted that the chief source of the *kiirwoogik* were the *ki-p-taa-inik* (pl. of *ki-p-taa-iyaat*, the military leader). These were men who had proved themselves in the field of military leadership. Despite this, the

“power of the *kiirwoogik*... seems to have depended on their character, justice and popularity only. They made no greatest show as regards dress, ornament or living and gave themselves no airs. This is a general characteristic of the Kipsigis” (Orchardson, 1927, D.C. Ker 3/1).

Peristiany writes (1939, Chap. X):

“... To be a *kiirwoogik* is not for the Kipsigis a method of acquiring wealth but an honorary function, creating a halo of fame and renown round the name of a man... The only external sign of *Kiirwoogik*'s authority is the black tail of *ingotiat*, which he carries and waves while speaking in the council of elders. From this *saruriat* (tail) is derived his secondary name *Kipsaruriat neo*, the great tail-waver... The *Kiirwoogik neo*, as president of the *kapkirook* (*Kaap-kii-rwook* means “court”) council, has two functions to fulfil; he is a judge and a Governor... As a Governor, the *Kiirwoogik* rules also with the help of his council, without the approval of which he cannot give any important order... As a Judge he tries all the unfinished cases, heard in the first instance by his *Poisyek ab kokwotinweek*... and directly in the first instance, all cases of *Divorce, Murder, and Witchcraft*, all of which are considered of such outstanding importance that the *Kiirwoogik* and his council must be informed at once (these include cases that involved members under two different *kookwotinweek* as the *Poiyoot aap kookweet* of either could not try someone from outside his *kookweet*)... Kipsigis trials seldom finish in one sitting alone. Endless assemblies sit and discuss the case from all possible angles, but, when the *Kiirwoogik neo* has made his award, the same case cannot be brought up again for discussion...”

“At long last”, continues Peristiany, regarding his 1939 experience in Kipsigiisland,

“by attending all the trials I could, and by studying the behaviour of the warriors, I was able to satisfy myself that the Kipsigis have an efficient and centralised form of administration, without which, no doubt, they would never have been able to oust the warlike former occupants of their territory” (Peristiany, 1939:chap. X).

By way of the council, of any level of authority and territorial charge, a centralised form of administration existed, therefore, and we have this on the authority of Peristiany whose many

proceedings he attended in Kipsigiisland in 1939. We also have the authoritative information from Kettel's work in Tugenland, which certifies that as far as the Tugen were concerned, there was central authority with powers to effect decisions on peril of punishment that would be carried out by the soldiers if the need arose. This was a last resort that was also applicable in Nandi as elsewhere (Cf. Huntingford, 1953b:29).

We have seen how Hollis is definitive about the question of centralisation of authority in the Nandi situation that he wrote about in 1909. We cannot, therefore, take Huntingford's position that there were no central governments and no central authorities in the countries of all the "Nandi-speaking groups", as he puts it. Even measured against Hollis' information alone—for both their works deal with the same community, the Nandi—Huntingford's (1953b:25) contention stands out sorely mistaken when he says, "The tribe has no central authority. There are neither hereditary nor elected chiefs of the *pororiosiek*, and there are no hereditary or elected chiefs of the *korotinwek*."

"Election" in the sense of balloting may not have existed but this was replaced by public acclamation, which amounts to the same thing as long as the person so chosen is by this fact sufficiently conferred the necessary authority to run the affairs of the state from a central position, be it a *kookweet*, *pororyeet* or *emeet* council. The fact that the *Kiirwogiindet* seemed to have no power as an individual outside a council sitting goes to count as a democratic plus rather than as an administrative minus. The government was the council, not the individual who was its leader in sitting. Decisions were made by and defended as a council even though the mouthpiece was the *Poiyoot aap kookweet*, at the lowest level, or the *Kiirwogiindet* at the higher and wider territorial level.

This style of managing affairs of state left little room for the manipulation of, or even the personal development of a would-be dictator. Huntingford (1953b:29) contradicts himself, in fact, when he says, "Once the *poiyyot* (*Poiyyoot* = "elder", i.e., the *kookweet* head) has spoken his words are sooner or later obeyed in most cases without compulsion ... though his orders are not always expressed as direct orders." Here Huntingford is describing what amounts to a recognised lawful central authority whose existence he tries to deny elsewhere.

Other bits of information gathered by Peristiany, who, like Herodotus of 500 - 400 BC, was of Greek origin; are that: the Chief Judge was not elected but was instead the previous deputy, the *Chemengech*, "junior", also called *mestowoot*, "shepherd" or "herdsman"—in the sense of "assistant"—of the retired or deceased boss. He was often an ex-military leader, was usually not a poor man, and was practically not paid for his services but for the meat donated by the parties to the case. That the magistrate level *poiisyek aap kookweet* did not offer verdict where the cases

were too hard for them. They instead referred such cases to the Chief Judge. The latter's court therefore, was more of a high court than a court of appeal. But it was the final court all the same. Or, was it? Like the junior courts sometimes did, the Chief Judge, where it was not possible to decide which of the parties was telling the truth and which one was lying, subjected both parties to the ordeal of *muumeek*, "oath". In that case he had referred the issue to, quite literally speaking, higher authorities: Asiis and *Iilat*, to act!

As Kipkorir (1973:16) says, with reference to traditional Marakwet trials, the strength of *muuma* (indef. sing. of *muumeek*) lies in the complete surrender of man's judgement to Asiis, who is omniscient. *Muuma* is an integral part of belief in the ultimate justice of Asiis and therefore the stability of the social order. If *muumeek* was the actual eventuality, be it in the lower, or in the higher court, there was no referring of the case to a higher mortal authority. And because "of the deep-seated belief in *muumeek* and *chubisiet* (*chub-iisyeet* [noun] = the act of cursing) may be followed by immediate and tragic consequences" (Peristiany, 1939:192-193).

Orchardson adds that when a man had taken oath, no man would accuse him again, or even express any suspicion of his innocence for to do so would have transferred the *muumeek* from the accused to the accuser. That a man who took the *muumeek* oath falsely was subject to the most terrible curse which affected his whole family and the entire clan (he means *maat*, the *kootaapchii* level), so that his wife, children, relations and livestock, would sicken and die. Belief in this was absolute, and there was no lack of instances, Orchardson says, of the awful consequences that followed when the oath was taken falsely. However, when the effects of false swearing became too severe, the people relented, as it was not considered good that the miscreant's whole clan should be wiped out. A rite that amounted to divorce, *kiilgee*, "to anoint one another", from the miscreant's *kootaapchii*, was performed. And from that time all the negative effects of the curse affected only his own nucleus family and the *kootaapchii* that he would be founding following the divorce from his father's *kootaapchii* (Cf. Orchardson, 1961:26-27).

With regard to such negative accretions from falsely taking *muumeek*, Peristiany wrote about a divorce case that had been occasioned by adultery on the part of a woman. Peristiany attended the hearing himself. The adulteress pretended that she had become deaf and dumb in order to sabotage the case. The court cursed her that if she was actually feigning dumbness, "may the same condition afflict her for real and forever." She went back to her father's home, stopped simulating dumbness—but soon after—hanged herself.

"The effect is said to be the same", Peristiany (1939:192-193) writes,

“as the culprit is said to die very shortly afterwards; and I have come across two cases of people upon whom the ‘*ongechuptim*’ (“let us curse bush”)¹ had been thrown and who died during my stay... the deaths were due to that sense of fear and awe in which the collective curse is held.”

14.3 Qualities required of a *Kiirwogiindet*

Huntingford got the definition of a *Poiyoot aap kookweet* from the Nandi who told him that the holder of the office was “the most important old man who takes counsel, and leads the business with the other people in the *kokwet*.” The qualification for this office, he says, required that:

(1) he be an old man, from any of the four senior age-sets in existence. The minimum prerequisite was that one have an initiation-age son. The old men, usually those of the oldest two age-sets, were excused from governorship because they were too old to take active part in public affairs which involved talk and travel about a good deal “and so senility is a practical bar to indefinite continuance in office.” Retirement from service as a soldier automatically made a man an elder, *Poiyoot*, and therefore eligible on the score of age. The assumption was that experience and mature judgement, i.e. wisdom, came with age. Besides, his proximity to the ancestral spirits by virtue of his having “neared the end” conferred an old man immense power, for the real power was vested in those ancestral spirits he was soon to meet—besides Asiis.

(2) Mere advantage of age was not enough and the old man had to have a force of character, and personality strong enough to impose itself on the assembly. Coupled with this, he had to have an entertaining, decent sense of humour besides the prerequisite of a demonstrable and impressive intelligence and knowledge of communal laws.

(3) He had to be in a position that commanded an appreciable amount of personal wealth in order to maintain a reasonable standard of hospitality and generosity as a public man in his private residence. The chief reason: he was sure to continually entertain visitors and others who came to seek advice. The minor reason: no one would listen too attentively to an economic failure, no matter how

¹ “The bush” here stands for the criminal’s name as no one wanted to take direct responsibility for his/her death by mentioning the name during the cursing ritual. The cursing was usually an impromptu action that took place as an incidental event at a beer party.

versed and wise he otherwise was, if he stood to talk in court (this corroborates Peristiany's account above). It would appear on the surface therefore, Huntingford concludes, that the Kalenjiin were not altogether free from snobbishness (Cf. Huntingford, 1953b:25, 29).

This office corresponds to the *halaka* position in the Omotic people's administrative hierarchy. The qualification for the *halaka* office has been defined well for us by Baldick (1997:146), which he does in the process of interpreting and disputing certain views about Omotic culture that were carried in Dan Sperber's publication on the Dorze branch of the Omotic peoples of Southern Ethiopia. He might as well be describing the qualifications required of the *Poiyoot aap kookweet* of the Kalenjiin context when he says: "The 'dignitaries' or *halakas* have to be full citizens, circumcised, married, rich and free from moral defects. They have to spend a lot of their wealth on feasts during their period of office."

One probable reason that neither Peristiany nor Huntingford listed, is that a leader who was poor was more likely to succumb to bribery and other forms of corruption in order to better his lot while he was still in office and thus misuse the power thrust upon him. You did not lump power together with poverty in one hand because power and poverty were mutually exclusive entities! That power would first and foremost be used, by all means, to unshackle its wielder from poverty. The experience with the new African governments that won independence and were suddenly led by previously disadvantaged and impoverished persons must come to mind. These leaders were not necessarily corrupt by inclination. They were morally upright people until they suddenly found power in their rough and dry poverty-ravaged hands. The ferocious and ravenous effort to expel that poverty and oil those dry hands with the might of that power, has taught us a lesson on how devastating the evils of corruption and outright theft of public wealth can be. Many other governments that were taken over by hitherto impoverished leaders the world over have behaved in the same way and this is, therefore, not a weakness that is unique to Africa. We are not saying that wealthy leaders who found political power in their hands anywhere in the world were necessarily incorruptible. We have enough examples to the contrary. The argument here is based on near-statistical facts that indicate a definite correlation between poverty conditions and *sudden* acquisition of power with theft of public wealth and general corruption.

Now, the general reluctance to listen to a poor man in court, unless, of course, he was a party to a court case, arose partly from circumstances that were subtler than the claim of mere snobbishness, and even of the fear of his potential propensity to corruptibility, could explain. It stemmed partly from the belief that the condition of poverty was the symptom of *maat* gone

wrong. A man was poor for reasons of his own making; either he had wronged the ancestral spirits, family, relatives, the neighbours, or Asiis at large, by an act of omission or commission. Certain curses were also inherited from an accursed ancestral line. An elder may have been in his youth a man of poor guts or a lazy never-do-well. As a result of such wrongs and defects, therefore, the ancestral spirits kept taking away his property and his family members through losses and deaths, and yet members of his *maat* may have given up and been reluctant to bail him out. Neighbours would not come to his help either and neither would Asiis give him blessings. Listening to such a man's counsel in court would have amounted, at best, to listening to the advice of a failure and, at the worst, listening to the counsel of a moral or social criminal.

Poverty was stigmatised in order to get the men working hard to eradicate or keep it at bay at the personal level. The chief method by which to enrich oneself was raiding the cattle kraals belonging to neighbouring non-related communities who had been classified *puunik*, "enemies", by the Kalenjiin. Those who would not participate were considered cowards and, therefore, cowardice was held to be one of the causal factors of poverty. The Oromo of Ethiopia/Kenya too had similar stigmal attitude towards poverty and coined the following rather humorous if harsh proverbs: 1) "God makes a poor man break wind, so that he is driven away. 2) When he wishes to harm a poor man he begins by killing his mind" (Baldick, 1997:130).¹

It has been said that the *Poiyoot aap kookweet* of the lowest government tier, like the *Kiirwogiindet* of the higher government tier, together with their respective councils, received no remuneration for their services except in the form of meat from the animals donated by the parties to a case. Nothing was sent to the *Oorgoiyoot* either. In this way, "government" and its officials did not enrich themselves from the misfortune of the citizens. The rule that the contribution to court-expense by the parties be slaughtered right there within the court precincts may have been designed to prevent corruption and greed from consuming the *Poiyoot aap kookweet*, the *Kiirwogiindet*, the *Oorgoiyoot* and their respective officials, the army commanders, but yet still inflict pain of loss to the parties that are disputing. These not-altogether-painless contributions to court by the parties to a dispute did not only discourage crime and injustice but they also had the effect of stemming the proliferation of incidences of unnecessary, time wasting litigation. Up until now the Kalenjiin cannot be termed as a generally litigious community even though, in the new dispensation, plaintiffs who win cases may be compensated for all their litigation expenses as

¹ Quoting from George Cotter, *Proverbs and Sayings of the Oromo People of Ethiopia and Kenya with English Translations* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1992).

well as for their initial losses on orders of the modern courts, all collected from the losing defendants.

An example of a potentially corrupting scenario coming to pass, in a pre-colonial African setting comparable to the Kalenjin setting discussed above, was reported by Ludwig Alberti in 1807 among the Xhosa. There, officials would fine the party that was adjudged guilty quite excessively, almost always in form of live cattle. Some of the animals were taken by the officials while the aggrieved party would receive his or her due yes, but the monarch was also entitled to more or less the same number as that due in compensation to the plaintiff. In a case where an accused was sentenced to death, all his cattle were appropriated by the monarch. Alberti notes that this opportunity for gain did not induce the monarch to pass unjust sentences at all. However, the case was not always quite as decent where the presiding officers were other than him, Alberti (1807:87) summarises:

“As the officials receive a certain share of every judgement, they are not infrequently induced to make prejudicial use of the influence they have on the chief, to gratify their own self-interest in the case of persons to whom they are not well disposed.”

Summary of Chapter 14: *Kiirwogiindet*, the Politico-Judicial Head of the Government of the Divine King, *Oorgoiyoot*

The *Kiirwogiindet ne oo* presided over the difficult cases that were referred to his court from the parishes as the highest placed judge. There was no court higher than his, not even the institution of *Oorgoiyoot*, in matters judicial. A case that proved too intractable and difficult was referred to Asii for arbitration through the ordeals of the oath and the curse. *Iilat* carried out the sentence that the intractable litigants invited upon themselves by opting for the ultimate method of trial by ordeal.

The qualities required of the *Kiirwogiindet* were outlined: great age, wisdom in matters legal, moral uprightness, mirthfulness, a developed sense for consensus, seniority in military service while he still served, possess personal charisma and command some wealth. The latter requirement intended to ensure that poverty was not glorified as well as to guard against poverty-driven corruption. Besides, he was not paid directly for his services, but, to the contrary, he incurred great expense, which he met out of his own “pocket”, in entertainment. He derived his satisfaction from the fame, popularity, and prestige—if devoid of personal power—that came with the office.

With great age counting as the first requirement for the council members, but with no real power for the individual member, political government of the pre-colonial Kalenjinland was, therefore, a consensual gerontocracy, a type of gentleman's democracy in which the franchise, or the voting age, began from the middle age at the earliest.

The *Oorgoiyoot*, the effective commander in chief of the army, had two men representing him in the highest court and council of *Kiirwogiindet*, where military matters were discussed pending his approval for action. But in areas that had no effective *Oorgoiyoot*, such as Tugenland, the *Pororyeet* Council controlled the activities of the army completely as well and used that army when it became necessary to enforce the decisions of the court or council. But the strong belief in the efficacy of *muuma*, "ordeal", and the curse, saw to it that perjury, false claims, pretences and lies were minimised.

The territorial and administrative office nomenclature of pre-colonial Kalenjinland parallels the ancient Egyptian equivalent so much that the incidence of chance can hardly be suspected. It stands as one of those proofs that support the oral tradition to the effect that the proto-Kalenjin came from *Misiri*.

Chapter 15

The *Oorgoiyoot*

Abstract

Chapter 15 launches into a detailed discussion on the institution of kingship as a divine one. It touches on certain speculations as to the origin of this institution in antiquity in general and as it relates to the later *Oorgoiyoot* institution in Kalenjiinland in particular. The function and powers of the *Oorgoiyoot* are discussed. Here we also revisit the issue of totemism that was covered in Chapter 11, but this time only as it applied to royalty.

Natural death or ritual murder, where applicable, of the king, and the manner of his burial, constitutes an interesting area that should confirm whether or not a kingship was divine. We relate that to what is known regarding such eventualities as far as the epitome of divine kingship, ancient Egypt, was concerned. We involve other African kingship institutions, notably those from the Great Lakes region where they were well developed in relation to the Kalenjiin one, as well as study some examples from Nilotic Africa, Southern Africa and Western Africa. These examples help us understand the Kalenjiin institution as well as the ancient Egyptian one better and thus be able to recognise the similarities that will enhance our theme.



15.1 The African Origin of the Terminology of, and the Kingship Institution itself



In the previous chapter we discussed, in fair detail, the *Kiirwogiindet* office that served under the *Oorgoiyoot*; the ultimate mortal servant of Asiis. We may now introduce this highest of offices on earth as most of the ancients and the not so ancient, within our scope, saw it: Kingship. The title *Oorgoiyoot*, in its different pronunciation versions, was a fairly widespread word along the entire Nile Valley, in the Rift Valley and in its neighbourhood. The Luo, for example, traditionally called their leader *ruodh* while their cousins in Sudan, the Shilluk called their rainmaker—the highest authority in the land—*ruot*. The Nuer, of Nilotic Sudan, called their ruler *kwor* while their neighbours, the Ingassana, called theirs *aur* (Cf. Seligman, 1932:130, 207, 216, 431). The chief, or king, of the ancient great kingdom south of Egypt, Meroe, was the *t'rogu* (Palmer, 1970:9).


Much of the western world too uses variations of the above for, or in association with royalty, e.g. archon, reign, *regnum*, *rex*, *regina*, *regius*, *regia*, *roi*, *royaume*, *regie*, *regal* and even “royal” itself. All these, no doubt, came from the same source as the two Kalenjiin words, *kii-rwoog-iin* and *oorgoi-yoot* as did the other Nilotic variations listed above. The first one in the

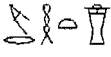
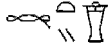
above list, “archon”, from Greek *arkhōn* or *arkhōnt*, compares quite favourably with Kalenjiin version *orgoiyoon* (and *werkoiyontet* of Mt. Elgon Kalenjiin), “king”.

As a western scholar admits, below, the west most likely got the terminology from the more ancient royalists, the Africans, where genesis myths were made to coincide with the origin of kingship “because personal rule had existed in Africa since time immemorial” (Frankfort, 1948:236). The institution was exported probably through the land that gave the ancient regal power its finest definition, Egypt. From here it was conveyed to the rest of Europe via the Graeco-Roman cultural conduit (this likeliest of probabilities, with which the German scholar, Frankfort, is comfortable, represents a scenario that is hardly mentioned in western works).

Two ancient Egyptian words that demonstrate this clearly are:  *aurekhu*, “men who know, the learned” (B.Dict. 35b) and  *ur-qahu*, “chief of district” (B.Dict. 170b, 172a).

However, a different etymological scenario can be discerned in the parallel royal domain words of the Kalenjiin language. It is most probable that, originally, the word for “big”, “large”, “great” etc. in Kalenjiin was pronounced *woor* as in ancient Egyptian  *ur* or *wr-r*. Over the ages, and probably while still in Egypt and gradually with time and distance, the various dialects, at their own pace, lost the final /r/ and we now have only *oo* or *woo*. The following late forms also existed side by side with the probably more ancient form *woor* in ancient Egyptian and Coptic as follows:  *au* (B.Dict. 2) and $\omega\omicron\updownarrow$ (*oou*) respectively.


This gradual loss of the final /r/ happened and, in fact, is still in the process of happening in respect of a few other lexical items and this continuing development supports the argument philologically. These are e.g.: central Kalenjiin *kooi* “long”, “tall”, which was probably also originally universally pronounced *koor* as still happens in almost all the northern Kalenjiin dialects. This is ancient Egyptian  *qai* (F.Dict. 275).

Another example is Kalenjiin *mwaai* (*mwaai-ta*, def.), “oil”, which was originally *mwaar* (def. *mwaar-ta*) as can still be heard in Cherang’any and Toot dialects of northern Kalenjiin (Cf. Distefano, 1985:266). The ancient Egyptians used the latter form *mwaar-ta*  transcribed by Budge (315a) as *merh-t*, but also without the /r/ as follows:  *mehti* (B.Dict. 318b).

So, according to the argument being advanced here, the old word *oor*, “great” combined with the word *ko*, “house”, to give *oorko*, “(of) great house”. This was easier to pronounce *oorgoi* as the letters /g/ and /k/ often interchange in Kalenjiin.

Those leaders who were called “of great house”, being only “chiefs of district” were, however, still smaller in status than the better-known Pharaoh who was of an even greater house, a nation. “A nation” in Kalenjiin is *poror-yeet* as in *Poror-yeet aap kaap* Chepkeendi, the large “clan” descended from the house of the Nandi woman called Tapkeendi (Chepkeendi). The stem of the word *pororyeet* is *poror*, and “(of) the great *poror*” would be *poror-oo*.

The Kipsigiis use the term differently: *poryo* (def. *por-yeet*), “military regiment”, or “military clan” as they often built up regiments along these lines and up until now the purely theoretical military regiment membership approximates agnatic lineal descent. A big regiment would therefore be *poryo-oo*. All these “house”-based speculations should suggest the etymology of the name “Pharaoh”, which we confirm from Gardiner (1927:75) that in ancient Egyptian it also meant “of great house”. That it was rendered in Coptic $\pi\rho\rho$ or $\pi\sigma\rho\rho$ much like the *poror-oo* and *poryo-oo* suggested etymological scenarios from the Kalenjiin usage above.

Not to be dismissed without conclusive research, however, is the possibility that *Oorgoi* (indef. sing.), as a term, is a carryover of the epithet associated with the ancient Egyptian kings, for they preferred to call themselves Horus (Cf. Breasted, 1908:40), more correctly rendered: *Horr*, or even *Horakhti*, for they were believed to be incarnations of Horus, as we said in Chapter 2, and had the Horus symbol  *Hr*, preceding their names. This was especially common during the 1st 2nd, 3rd, 6th, 11th, and 26th dynasties, 3000 -500 BC (Cf. Gardiner, 1927:74-75, B.Dict. 917-940, Alford, 1998:428).¹

At least one important western historian of our time, Frankfort, as we have seen, admits that their forefathers imported the kingship institution from Egypt in earlier times, and does recognise the Egyptian oneness with the rest of Africa, at least as far as the historical existence of and the nature of this institution were concerned. As already pointed out, writers seldom mention that the west learnt the very idea of orderly organisation and management of human beings from the black people (Cf. Diop, 1996:51).

However, as regards this institutional plagiarism by silence, we may exempt the older western greats such as Herodotus (*Histories*, 440 BC Book II), Aristotle, *Politics* (350 BC, Book 7:10) and Plutarch (*Lives*, 1st cent. AD) who respectively admitted that their nations learned a

¹ The briefly attempted etymology of *Oorgoi* leads us to another unprecedented speculation: namely that the said Coptic rendering $\pi\rho\rho$, or $\pi\sigma\rho\rho$ (*p'rrro* or *p'uro*), may supply the etymological explanation for the word “Pharaoh” itself along the lines of Pharaoh being thought to be a reincarnation of Horus and, therefore, bearing his name. The /p/ is a masculine prefix common to both Kalenjiin and Coptic, meaning “of”. The /p/ is indeed a contraction of *ap* or *pa*, again in both languages, as we saw in Chapter 6. So the stem of $\pi\sigma\rho\rho$ (*p'uro*) is really $\sigma\rho\rho\omega\sigma\rho$ (*urou*) as can be confirmed with Crum’s *Coptic Dictionary* (299). “Of *Horr*” or “of *urou*”, therefore, becomes *p'horr* or *p'uro* or even *pa'horr* or *pa'uro*. These are probabilities that are difficult to dismiss when discussing the etymology of the word “Pharaoh” since even the well-known etymology, “of Great House”, is also a speculation anyway.

great deal in this respect from Egypt. But for certain other writers, where they admit this inevitable reality, the word "savage" must qualify Africa, perhaps in order to throw mud where some inevitable, if incidental credit had to go to Africa, just for the purpose of completing a pressing argument that could not be concluded satisfactorily without acknowledging a genesis (for examples see Tylor 1871, Frazer, 1910).

Now, if one learns an idea from someone and then goes ahead and refers to him or her as a savage, does that not push one, the learner, down to a lower level of savageness than the savage tutor, at least as far as that idea which one has borrowed from him or her is concerned? Put simply, if one has appreciated, learned and borrowed a whole package of ideas from a "savage", where does that leave one in the scale of savagery? One may improve upon the idea subsequently but one's indebtedness to the benefactor who was a "savage" does not end there. It will remain permanent and grow in intensity each time one improves upon the original idea so borrowed. All simply because one would have had nothing to improve upon had the "savage" not introduced the idea, or institution, in whatever "crude" form, in the first instance.

May be one Henri Frankfort, who is otherwise familiar by now, and who is quoted here, has an idea as to where, in the scale of savagery, to place a borrower from a "savage", but he has swallowed it instead of what he should have swallowed, his pride:

"Pharaoh was divine... it is very difficult for us to attach any precise meaning to that phrase. And yet if we were to understand the ancients, it is essential that we grasp so fundamental a concept... There are two ways to penetrate behind the words of our texts. In the first place, there are alive today in Africa groups of people who are true survivors of that great east African substratum out of which Egyptian culture arose. Among other things we can study there how deeply the divine nature of the kings affects both the ruler and his subjects. Yet this evidence requires correction, for we are dealing here with savages who, either by tenacity or inertia, have preserved through several thousand years the remnants of primeval world of thought, while Pharaonic culture was the most highly developed and most progressive of its age..." (Frankfort, 1948:6).

15.2 The Origin of Oorgoiyoot Institution

Kingship was with all the Myoot from the beginning as the derivation of royal and administrative nomenclature that we have discussed so far, shows. However, the fact that the last of these rulers happened to be of Maasai extraction, has led many outsider students of the old Kalenjiin system of administration, to conclude that the concept and office of *Oorgoiyoot* were imported from the Maasai, where the same office goes by the term *oloiboni* (e.g. Huntingford, 1953b:38).

However, according to Maasai oral tradition, the first Maasai *laibon* was a fugitive, probably from Kalenjiinland. He had been found as a small boy by a Maasai *moran* (soldier), hiding in a forest deep inside Maasailand. He was gazing at the sky. On being found, and after intense interrogation, the boy expressed a wish to be adopted. He later, as he grew up, successively performed positive miracles, sparing the Maasai the perennial droughts and their devastating ravages on their cattle. He could make rain, or cause dry riverbeds to flow with water by merely striking them with his rod. That led to his being recognised as the undisputed leader of the Maasai people. He was named by his adopters, who were of the Maasai Ilaiser clan, Lemuya (Sankan, 1971:73), or ole Mweiya (Fr Mol, 1978:104).

This name has a definite Kalenjiin ring to it. It means (in Kalenjiin) “the fugitive”. The boy had probably said in Kalenjiin; *a-mwei-ye*, “I am fleeing”, or *a-mwe-uu*, “I am fleeing hither” to the *moran* who found him in the forest.¹

And it is not, therefore, surprising that in his line of successors in Maasailand, some of the names sound Kalenjiin and one or two are almost definite Kalenjiin names. These were the successors to ole Mweiya’s throne: Lesikiriaishi, Kidong’oi Kipepete, Parnyompe, Sitonik, Mbatyany, Senteu. Senteu inherited half of the kingdom because of a Jacob-like theft of blessing that was organised for Olonana, his junior half-brother, who then took a portion of the kingdom.² Olonana was succeeded by Segi and Olonana’s dynasty seems to have effectively died on Segi. The portion of Maasailand that went to Senteu is currently under the control of Simel (Sankan,

1. The House of Kipkeles, of the larger Lion clan of Kipsigiis, are descended from the House of Chee-mwei. The related House of Kapchemweieek are descendants of the brother of Kipkeles. But Kipkeles himself was of Chemwei, although this part of the legend is played down owing to the Kapchemweieek’s discredited alleged attempt to resist the loss of power and influence by resorting to witchcraft. The legend of the founding of the House of Chemwei as maintained by the Kipkeles descendants, namely that he fled to, or from Maasailand, is very akin to ole Mweiya’s. The Maasai House, now clan, of ole Mweiya, Ilaiser, is also of the emblem Lion— quite tellingly in a community not known for totemism. The chances of Chemwei being ole Mweiya of the Maasai, are indeed great.

² Narratives involving Jacob-like (Genesis 27) theft of blessing are found elsewhere in Africa, e.g. among the Oromo of Ethiopia and Kenya (Cf. Baldick, 1997:118).

1971:76) who has reason to and does indeed believe that he is the lawful leader of all Maasailand. From the above list of names of successive Maasai rulers then, Parnyompe, ole Mweiya and, especially, Sitonik; sound very Kalenjiin indeed.

We should not forget that, at any rate, the Kalenjiin *Oorgoiyoot* institution, as did the Maasai *laibon* counterpart, thrived on a huge amount of secrecy and mystification, especially as concerned the origin of their clansmen. In both nations, the clan in power ensured that the facts relating to its true origin remained as obscure and as mysterious as possible. This allowed their self-generated rumour that the *Oorgoiyoot* was divine, being descended from the direct offspring of Asiis that had descended from heaven to thrive. There seemed to be something in obscurity of origin that attracted the people to them all the same. One would think that this was only in line with the well-known adage to the effect that a prophet did not find followers from among his own people. But one may see it differently in the light of the following:

There was an established Kalenjiin preference, and this probably applied to the Maasai as well, for outsiders as founders of dynasties. This was explained well by the elderly informants in the field. In short, it had been established that a ruling family, somewhere down its lineage, would sooner or later produce a leader who would incur the wrath of the subjects, for one reason or another, and end up being cursed, or even being executed. The people disliked the prospect of having to curse one of their own, let alone having to execute him somewhere down the line of succession. Rather than have to curse or execute their own—either action amounted to the same result, death—they readily accepted outsiders as dynasty founders.

The attitude of preferring the obscure and mysterious stranger to the well known, for leadership, is said to persist and examples were cited of some of the recent, and even contemporary, Kalenjiin elected political leaders in one or two districts. Indeed a surprising number of them trace origin to neighbouring non-Kalenjiin communities, while a number of them originally hailed from Kalenjiin districts other than the one they now represent in politics.

Indeed some Kalenjiin political aspirants have in the past found it easier winning parliamentary seats in Kalenjiin districts other than those of their own by ancestry. To this effect, two of the five members of parliament from Kipsigiisland around independence time came from Nandi. But the previously otherwise advantageous halo of obscurity, as concerned one of the two from Nandi, later embarrassed the conservative Kipsigiis of the time when one supposed detail of his background was allegedly uncovered. It was rumoured, when he later sought re-election at the expiry of his term, that he had all along been an uncircumcised man. Thus allegedly unveiled, his electoral performance was disastrous thereafter.

In the discussion to follow, where necessary, the terms *laibon-Oorgoiyoot*, or *laibon-Talai*, are used to differentiate between the indigenous *oorgooik*, or Talai men, on the one hand, and the *laibon* of Ilaiser clan men who came from Maasai and usurped the roles, assumed the titles, adopted the clan name and totem of the indigenous counterparts, on the other.

15.2.1 *The Founding of a Maasai Laibon Dynasty in Kalenjiinland*

As stated above, the *Oorgoiyoot* institution was no new idea to the Kalenjiin, that it therefore owed its inception to the coming of the Maasai *laibon*. The latter, Maasai or non-Maasai, came in and assumed, peacefully though, the long established institution of the Kalenjiin *Oorgoiyoot*. The author's field research has yielded as many versions of the story of the coming of the *laibon-Oorgoiyoot* as there were informants. Apart from the officially entered bits of information, such as those found in the National Archives, and quotations from reputable books, we can repeat only two or three oral versions here, one from the reigning paramount chief of Nandi District who, although a government appointee, talks and comes through like a highly sagacious *Kiirwogiindet* of pre-colonial days. The other versions are from the living direct descendants of those *laibon-oorgooik*.

There appears to have been a long established tradition between the Maasai and the Kalenjiin, bitter rivals by all accounts, several centuries ago, that if one side prospered in terms of cattle wealth—which is all that mattered then, anyway—at the expense of or in relation to the other, then the disadvantaged party would seek the secret of success from the more prosperous party. In times of peace such exchanges took place. Both pastoralist, martial communities, respectively experienced ups and downs from time to time. The secret of one community's success, or its failure, was thought to lie in the institution of *Oorgoiyoot* or the *laibon*, depending on whether we were talking within the Kalenjiin or within the Maasai context respectively.

It was with that understanding in mind that one young man, Mariich, of Kapkogos, Nandi, was sent to a then prosperous and powerful Maasai country to consult the *Laibon*. For some good reason he was dressed like a woman. He carried beer and wine in gourds meant to be presented to the Maasai Purko section's *Laibon*. According to the custom of the time, "she" was to spend the night with the host, the *Laibon* himself. When they were left alone in the room, Mariich disclosed to the *Laibon* that he was not a woman. That he had been disguised as such for his own security, and to get easier and private access to the leader of the Purko section of Maasai. He had come to fetch none other than him, the *Laibon*, to take him to Nandi country where he would be king of the whole people (a promotion considering his status in Maasailand of a mere sectional *laibon*).

The *Laibon*, Turuugat, the son of Kobogoi, who did not disclose to anyone that he had passed the night with not a woman, but in company of a man; asked Mariich to go back to Nandi and then come back to him a month later. When he went back to Maasai a month later, Mariich was surprised to find a palace almost empty of people. The *Laibon* had conveniently despatched all his soldiers to war in another direction. Things thus made a lot easier, the *Laibon* deserted his country, and accompanied Mariich back to Nandi.

The Nandi made the Maasai *Laibon*, Turuugat, their king. In doing so they dethroned the then reigning king, Kipsegoon, who had earlier come from either Rongai or another Maasai royal home in Samburuland. Kipsegoon had, in turn, earlier taken power from the indigenous Nandi royal house of the Talai clan, the Kapchesaang', who, in turn, had replaced the House of Kaamwaige. The Kaamwaige were not of the Talai clan. However, Kaamwaige is the oldest indigenous Nandi royal house that Paramount Chief Kirwa could remember.

Soon after, *Laibon-turned-Oorgoiyoot* Turuugat's leadership saw the Nandi raiding in all directions, including his own native Maasailand, with great success. Nandi was a wealthy country again.

It was to the house of the above Turuugat that was born the next king of the Nandi, Kimnyoolei araap Turuugat, who was the father of Koitaleel Samoei whose reign was curtailed by the British who murdered him on 19th. October 1905. His crown was, with the help of the British, passed on to Kipeeles araap Tamasoon, his nephew.¹

The eldest son of Kimnyoolei araap Turuugat went to Kipsigiisland around 1890 AD, and became the latter's most famous *Laibon-Oorgoiyoot*. This was Kipchomber araap Koilegeen.

The following is a version told by a great great-grandson of the great Nandi *laibon-Oorgoiyoot*, Kimnyoolei araap Turuugat. The narrator is Kipsaang' araap Busienei of Nandi. He is from the *kootaapchii* of Kaapturuugat, of the larger Talai clan. He is no relation of Kimeli araap Busienei. It only happens that the descendants of the recent *laibon-Oorgoiyoot* houses, both in Nandi and in Kipsigiis alike, tend to prefer for surnames certain old favourite Kalenjiin nicknames called *salanik*. Men were given nicknames after circumcision that were descriptive of the general appearance of their fathers' bullocks. And because bullocks share a limited number of characteristics, the variety of names descriptive of these animals that have to go round the *laibon*-Talai men is equally limited. So if one is not araap Busienei (of-the-father-who-owns-bullocks with black and white spots), he is likely to be araap Leleei (of-the-father-who-owns

¹ According to Hobley (1902:59), Kipeeles and Koitaleel were reigning at the same time, at least in 1902 when Hobley wrote. According to Hobley, Kipchomber (Koilegeen) had by then already fled to Kipsigiis country. The reason: "Kipchomber did not approve of the policy of the other two *laibons*."

white bullocks), or araap Tueei (of-the-father-who-owns black bullocks), or araap kebeneei (of-the-father-who-owns bullocks which are black with white spot on the stomach), or araap Tororeei (of-the-father-who-owns bullocks of massive build and great height) etc.

This narrow choice of surnames is, however, an “improvement” over what one got used to during their reign, e.g. araap Manyei (of he who swallows without chewing), Koilegeen (of marble stone i.e. Mt. Kenya), Koitaleel (of white stone), Koitaba(i) (grinding stone), Kobogoi (*ko-po-koi*, house of stone), Kipkeles (the hulk), Kipeeles (?) etc.

The remotest non-*laibon Oorgoiyoot* that Kipsaang' araap Busienei could remember, was Mong'o. Mong'o had been found by men of the Chesumei Nandi section in a cave, as a young boy of non-Kalenjiin origin, he was probably of Luhya origin. He was suffering from a serious skin disease. He was taken, treated and raised in a Nandi home.

When he had come of age, Mong'o began to exhibit unusual leadership and creative talents. He showed the Nandi people all sorts of ways to alleviate their periodic suffering from the then recurrent ravages of famine when the animals in the wild could not be caught, and the fruit trees were off-season; for the Nandi were at the time still hunter-gatherers. Mong'o taught them agriculture. As for the first seeds of the various types of millet, he led the people to a cave in which the animal *chesicheet* usually hid the seeds. Many people went to plant the seeds according to his instructions. Those became good farmers.

Others preferred hunting and Mong'o taught them game trapping techniques, one of which was to dig a deep hole on an elephant or buffalo path and conceal it with grass. Animals tumbled into the cleverly concealed holes and hit spikes that had been planted at the bottom. They died instantly. The people were happy because, under Mong'o, they had plenty of game meat and grains from the new plantations with which to make fuller meals. The hunter-gatherers and the now-mixed farmers particularly the Chesumei section, loved Mong'o a great deal.

Later, while Mong'o was still reigning, some men from Kipsigiisland found a Maasai boy who was stranded on the Kipsigiis side of River Kundos, which is one of the tributaries of the great River Sondu. He had accompanied other Maasai herds boys to water the cattle but had in the meantime, as the cattle drank water, waded across the river to the Kipsigiis territory to pick some fruits from the trees. The river suddenly swelled while he was still on the wrong side of it. The others lost him and that is where the Kipsigiis found the Maasai boy whom they were later to baptise Kimnyoolei (kind of “smart dresser” or one who looks nice in any dress, “dress-o-genic”—to coin an English word for it); on top of a tree. They took him to Mong'o, all the way in Nandi.

Mong'o raised the Maasai boy as one of his own family. When he was a grown up man, now named Saawe Kimnyoolei araap Turuugat Cheebochok, he began to develop a special interest in cattle. At that time few Nandi had cattle. And those who had them only maintained very small herds. Kimnyoolei asked his foster father, Mong'o, to let him lead men to raid cattle from the neighbouring countries. He was given permission. After a string of successes in cattle raiding, and more of the same, the people recognised him as a leader. He had the blessing of Mong'o who retained his leadership in hunting and agricultural matters and left Kimnyoolei to run the cattle-raiding side of things. When Mong'o died, Kimnyoolei became the ultimate ruler of the Nandi, the *Oorgoiyoot*.¹

We need to remember, from Chapter 1, the warnings from Seldon and Pappworth to the effect that an emotionally involved interviewee may lack perspective and go to the extent of ascribing the benefits of a fortuitous natural phenomenon to his ancestor (Cf. Seldon and Pappworth, 1983:22). On the other hand the achievements might have come as a result of good advice regarding animal husbandry or regarding the best military strategies that led to the acquisition of large herds.

Kimeli Araap Busienei, who is Kipsigiis, although he refers to those who are not of his immediate *laibon*-Tal'ai lineage as "you, the Kipsigiis", produced the following genealogy of the important line of the *laibon-oorgooik* from the fingertips: Kobogoi ("of stone house"—because he was born or created by Asiis in a stone cave) was the first king ever, either in Maasai or in Kalenjiin country. He bore Barsabootwo whom Kimeli and many others believe to have been the first Kalenjiin—and specifically Nandi—*Oorgoiyoot* of (probably) Maasai descent. Barsabootwo passed the mantle down to Kipsegoon (who is the founder of Kimeli araap Busienei's own *kootaapchii*) who, in turn, passed it down to Saneet. Saneet sired araap Turuugat who was executed in 1890 by his own soldiers in Nandi. His son, Kipchomber araap Koilegeen fled to Kipsigiis country during the wars with the British, either because of these wars or due to a succession problem occasioned by his father's execution.

The version of the coming of the *laibon-Oorgoiyoot* that was collected by PK arap Magut and published in *Ngano*, 1969, has it that the first *laibon-Oorgoiyoot* was a fugitive from the feuding Maasai of the 19th century. This was Barsabootwo and he was from the nearly

¹ This version concentrates on the House of Turuugat, the narrator's own *kootaapchii*, but even then, ignores the well-established fact that there were two Turuugats, the father and the son. A living "grandson" of Mong'o, the elderly Kipkeino araap Saang', in any case, confirmed that his "grandfather" had been a *maooiyoot* and not a real *Oorgoiyoot*. His real grandfather may actually be *kuureneet*, "a re-incarnation" of the original Mong'o, after so many cycles of life, but this does not change the fact that the original Mong'o may have actually been a *maooiyoot* to a greater king, and not a king himself. A number of subsequent Mong'os appear to have played key roles in the running of pre-colonial Nandi political and administrative affairs as the name is bound to crop up in any discussion on Nandi history.

exterminated Il-Uasin-Gishu section of the Maasai who were then neighbours of the Nandi. He gradually replaced Kaamwaige and Kaapchemuri *oorgooik* through a process of instigation and propaganda, which led to the execution of their elite by mobs (Cf. 1969:95-108).

Reproduced below are three lists of the better-known *oorgooik* of Nandi and Kipsigiis. One represents the author's own re-construction from impromptu information that he gathered from Kimeli araap Busienei. The other two of the lists are from published sources: Hollis, 1908 and David Ngasura Tuei, 1995. These tables are not genealogical tables as such as this would imply that the kings all belonged to one family, son-succeeding-father. The fact is that the Kalenjiin sub-nations changed the principal ruling houses quite often. The changing came as soon as the performance of a ruling house at any one point during its reign appeared to deteriorate. This deterioration in effectiveness was manifested in: the failure of rains, leading to famine situations, and either great or successive losses being suffered by the community in cattle raiding wars—both defensive and offensive.

The people also perceived deterioration of service, as expected from their leader, if their economic performance vis-a-vis other sections of their own—or if their true rivals, the Maasai—appeared to do relatively better than them in the economic sphere. In the Nandi as well as in the Kipsigiis context, where a provincial *Oorgoiyoot* excelled in economic management and therefore earned higher social esteem vis-a-vis the supposed principal *Oorgoiyoot*, then the overall leadership would shift to him. The new “capital” would be his palace. The alternative centre of power did not even have to outshine the original centre in performance for overall prestige to shift to it. If its *Oorgoiyoot* happened to be senior in descent or age-set to an *Oorgoiyoot* who had just succeeded the principal *Oorgoiyoot*, then the centre of power would shift away, with no complaint from the younger heir. His day would, perhaps, come in later years. As said above, age-set and status in descent (i.e. how many generations one was removed from the founder of the ruling House, the fewer the more senior one was), more than any other factor, determined the psychological centre of power.

“Psychological” because the provinces, whether they went by the name *pororyeet*, as in Nandi, or *emeet*, as in Kipsigiis, were fully autonomous and each had its *Oorgoiyoot* who wielded immense power. The provincial armies sought clearance before going to war from their own *Oorgoiyoot* who, some elderly informants said, needed not, in fact, belong by birth to that province: “people sought out the best ‘teacher’”, said Martha Bomet.

Ludwig Alberti noted in 1807 that it was the eldest son of the chief by his principal wife who succeeded his father in Xhosa country. According to Alberti, being principal wife here did not necessarily accrue to one by virtue of being the first wife of the chief. Rather the seniority of

wives was arranged in such a way that the position of principal wife went to the wife who descended from the oldest senior-most chief irrespective of the position in which she came in order of marriage to the chief. The mother of a chief here, it is important to note, retained an unspoken political seniority over the chief for as long as she lived (84).¹

Perhaps to solve the potential problem of having to subordinate the king's first son by the first wife to a younger first son by a younger wife, the king would be expected not to marry a subsequent wife who was more senior in descent than his first wife. However, this is only an attempt at understanding, or rationalising Xhosa system of succession under the light of an analogous Kalenjiin setting. We saw in the Kalenjiin example, under Maat, that the first wife enjoyed immense power over all other wives of the man not least owing to the fact that this was the wife whose marriage was arranged and financed by the man's father. All subsequent wives were acquired and dowry settled by the man himself, all with the consent, if not at the initiative, of the first wife. And being referred to as helpers of the first wife; the later acquisitions were necessarily inferior within the family hierarchy and ever beholden to their eldest co-wife whom they often addressed as "Mother".

When the overall military and economic performance of a Kalenjiin entity appeared poor in relation to that of the Maasai, it was time to set out to discover and acquire the Maasai's "secret" of success. For, to the people, although these *oorgooik* actually ruled, they were first and foremost consultants, initially meant to be so, and they were therefore hired as such. This is what Mrs Martha Bomet of Nandi meant when she said, "people sought out the best teacher".

Competition for and to the "teachers" was immense, and they were kept on their toes. No king had a title deed to his throne! If there ever were anything like democratic monarchy, or monarchical reign on merit, then the Kalenjiin attained that level of sophistication before the west introduced forms of democracy in its place that were, in many respects, not up to that standard.

And, what is not often said: when familiarity had taken root and the ruling house had lost its aura of mystery, then a newcomer's possession of that gem of obscurity, would tend to make him appear more attractive. It was time to change the bottle as well as the wine.

¹ Alberti noted that the "chief" was called *inKossi*, which, as we know from the South African national anthem and from daily usage in today's South Africa; also means "God" or "Lord". They were, therefore, considered divine, or sort of demigods, and there having been no other power superior to the senior-most chief except Deity, the station that Alberti referred to as "chief", was really the office of "king". The Europeans of his time would not bring themselves to call an African monarch "king" as they had reserved this most esteemed of earthly designations for their own respective sovereigns back in Europe. However, the "big chief" of the Zulu, who was also called *inKossi*, had such overwhelming power and trappings that the European settlers could only too quickly accept to call him "king". Centuries later, the sovereign of Zululand still goes by the designation "king" while all other hereditary leaders of other black communities have to contend themselves with the title of "chief" as they had to during the colonial and apartheid times.

The old ruling houses which were replaced for this and other reasons, are those that are today referred to by a term somewhat derogatory, *kwilkwilik*—something to the effect, “the expired” ones. “Expiry” here qualifies the prophetic potency in the men of a ruling house. Apparently this potency was, with the benefit of hindsight; thought to diminish with distance in descent from the usually revered founder of the particular ruling house, or dynasty. Just for an illustration: an *Oorgoiyoot* who was five generations removed from the founder of the dynasty, was likely to be regarded to be closer to the state of *kwilkwilyoot* (sing. for *kwilkwilik*) than an *Oorgoiyoot* who was only three generations removed from the founder of his dynasty. However, men who belonged to, or were, by virtue of paternal blood relations, still close to the centre of power owing to continuity of the original founder’s staff of office in the family, were not about to become *kwilkwilik*.

Considering all the foregoing, compilation of an objective, factual “genealogical table”, is an impossible task. What we end up with are supposed “Genealogy of the last famous *oorgooik* tables”, and even these are so subjective, because informants from different locations, have differing names, here and there, for the most influential *oorgooik* up the line of succession, while the surviving descendants of those *oorgooik* will each tell things from the standpoint of his own *kootaapchii*, making his *kootaapchii* founder the pivotal point of the entire royal business. Some of the unfamiliar names may relate to kings who were better known by other names, but no one can be sure which of the names had been which king’s hidden names. And yet again these obscure names of kings may actually have represented different independent principal rulers.

Those rulers whose reign happened to take place during a cataclysmic moment, either locally or nationally, in the history of the community, are likely to be remembered most; that vividness in memory being confused with the extent and depth of power the rulers may have actually wielded in their time. A lot of glory, deserved or undeserved, will go to the founder of such ruling house or houses.

For instance, the names of Koilegeen and Koitaleel, both of whom came from the House of Turuugat, and who became centres of attention as heroes in the resistance to colonial rule, because of their deserved heroic fame—despite losing heavily—have propelled the House of Turuugat to the pivotal point in the entire life-span of the royal institution—especially as relates to the Kipsigiis and the Nandi sub-nations.

Apart from the House of Turuugat (*Kaapturuugat*), there were the houses of *Kaapsaneet* and *Kaagipsagoon* among others, some of whose members became as important as the well-known ones of *Kaapturuugat* minus the privilege of having had to stand for their people against the British. Little is known, therefore, about such families, but that is not to say that at some point or

other in history they did not produce a principal *Oorgoiyoot* who, together with his descendants, became the centre of power to a whole sub-nation for a considerable length of time.

So whereas it has been argued well, by some early western observers, that the independent Kalenjiin territorial entities had maintained central governments, it should not be forgotten that such centres of power shifted quite often from House to House, from family to family and from location to location, and all because of that unique element of democracy attached to the institution of monarchy here. For the Kalenjiin monarchy was subject to the will of the people, and not the other way round—as was customary in the west.

It is important to remember that it happened so often that a son of the *Oorgoiyoot* who was unable to succeed him would branch off and move to another location, to another Kalenjiin sub-nation altogether, or even to Maasailand for that matter; to establish his rule there, either on an absolute or on a provincial basis, remaining loosely answerable to the most senior *Oorgoiyoot*, if he does not himself become the most senior. Some such are forgotten. A few such families are vaguely remembered by some elders, e.g. Kaapcheboomet, Kaameneei, Kaapkinegaat, Kaapnyaanja etc., who may or may not have been related to the better-known Houses.

When Kipchomber araap Koilegeen went from Nandi to Kipsigiisland, he found a recently created vacuum in the local office of the *Oorgoiyoot*. Araap Kaabwos of Kipkenda (totem: bee) who is thought to have been in his time the most visible *Oorgoiyoot* in Kipsigiisland had just died (Mwanzi, 1977:127)—or been executed. The Kipsigiis were just smarting from the biggest loss that can be remembered: their entire army had just been virtually wiped out by the Gusii defending with their allies in a valley deep inside Gusiland known to the Kalenjiin as Moogoore.¹ Koilegeen and his brothers and cousins assumed office smoothly.

But other oral accounts have it that he and his cousins found his own more distant cousins of the lion clan in charge. These were the descendants of some of the early Maasai-Nandi *oorgooik* who moved to Kipsigiisland generations ahead of Koilegeen's group.

The author put together Barongeen araap Mosoonik of the Kipkeles *kootaapchii*, a *kootaapchii* said to be among the earlier groups to branch to Kipsigiisland. His *kootaapchii* is within the larger Lion clan but whose prophetic potency is said to be renounced, or lies dormant, and Kimeli araap Busienei whose prophetic potency is thought to be intact and active. Both men are relatives in

¹ We mentioned this in the previous section. However, other accounts have it that the disastrous foray into Gusii country took place during Koilegeen's reign and against his advice—David Ngasura Tuci, *The Once Powerful Talai Clan among the Kipsigis of Kenya*, 1995, p. 12-13. Thus one account has it that Koilegeen took advantage of the power vacuum that the disaster of Moogoore created in Kipsigiisland to come in and set himself up while the other has it that the disaster happened after the disobedient fighters refused to heed Koilegeen's advice—meaning he was already king. Either version leaves Koilegeen blameless.

another way, by marriage; despite the possible distant relationship at the greater clan level—it is in order, see the discussion on *maat*.

Araap Mosoonik heard in his youth that his ancestors were bewitched out of power by the incoming rivals, probably led by Koilegeen. The incoming team slaughtered a sheep and threw the carcass into a river—or did something of taboo to that effect. This had the effect of rendering their collective prophetic faculty impotent. That is a long established oral tradition, the painful ending to a collective pet reminiscence of greater times on the part of the members of that house of Kipkeles. As to why this reminiscence is so resilient within that *kootaapchii*, we may revisit Jan Vansina's view to the effect that reminiscences that are recalled in the family set up have the goal of preserving family identity and cohesion and to explain one's individuality to the family; that, besides this, reminiscences are given to teach from experience, to assert the visible or invisible prominence of the family (Cf. 1980:270-271).

However, in the presence of Kimeli araap Busienei, his brother in law, araap Mosoonik gave a more diplomatic version of the story. That his own line at some stage in greater history was junior to araap Busienei's and that of Koilegeen—hence the smooth transfer of power on the arrival of the Koilegeen group in Kipsigiis country. Beads were crushed, *kigitui sonoek*, which is *muumeek*, “oath”, of parting ways, and the two parties have since regarded each other as strangers.

The parting of ways was to prove somewhat beneficial to araap Mosoonik's line in a later twist in fortunes. When the British colonial government rounded up and deported the lion clan of Kericho in 1938, araap Mosoonik's group was considered indigenous Kipsigiis and harmless enough and was unaffected. Araap Busienei's group, conveniently referred to as Nandi, or Maasai *Laibon* by the colonial officers, were deported to Luo country.

Araap Mosoonik was careful not to confront or offend araap Busienei throughout the three-way discussion. Araap Busienei however spoke without such excessive inhibition towards his relative and age-mate. This pecking order which was quickly put in place between the two in the presence of the author, either owed its arrangement to the awe in which the average Kipsigiis holds the more recent ruling families such as Busienei's (what with the alleged atrocities—thanks to British and the African Christian propaganda machine), or the fact that araap Mosoonik married araap Busienei's sister, or both. As we saw under the ethical codes of *maat*, a Kalenjiin man must by custom always consider the family from where he took his wife to be superior to himself. His children and grandchildren by that wife will always refer to male members of the family from which their mother, grandmother or great-grandmother came, by the term *abule*, “maternal uncle” and play inferior to them and their offspring for as long as the relationship will be remembered. What cannot be denied however is that

both the respective families of the two elders, araap Mosoonik and araap Busienei, historically played a pivotal role in the affairs of the Kalenjiin, especially those of Kipsigiis and Nandi.

We have mentioned that there was a possible kinship between the founder of the existing Maasai dynasty ole Mweiya and Kipkeles. According to the tradition of the House of Kipkeles, either Kipkeles, or an ancestor of his, was found in a bush by a woman as a child. The baby was being guarded by a python that had him encircled in a loop created by its serpentine body. The python allowed her to take the baby away. This was the baby who later performed beneficial miracles and was accepted as a leader. This is closely akin to the story of the making of the *Oorgoiyoot* institution that Huntingford collected in Nandi (1953b:44).

The story of going back and forth between Kalenjiinland and Maasailand is unique to the House of Kipkeles but is partly apparently corroborated by the Maasai story of ole Mweiya. Kipkeles personally entered Kipsigiis history in that he was able to mediate peace with the Maasai when this became necessary. He was able to move between the two communities quite easily probably owing to the fact that he descended from both. However, he performed that diplomatic duty once too often and the rest, as they say, is history. Orchardson, the Briton who came to live among the Kipsigiis from 1910, collected the facts of Kipkeles' tragedy and preserved them very prominently in his "Historical Notes" which were published posthumously by his compatriot A.T. Matson in 1961 in the book, *The Kipsigis*. We reproduce a part of that historical report here:

"The story of the final expulsion (of the Maasai) is well remembered in Kipsigis legend. Kipkeles, a prominent Kipsigis elder, who was often called upon to negotiate with the Masai, went to make peace with them. The Masai suspected him of treachery and killed him. Being afraid that when the Kipsigis heard of the outrage, they would attack, the Maasai sent a chief, Lununya, by a devious route to the Kipsigis to deceive them into believing that the death of Kipkeles was unknown to the Masai. On arrival among the Kipsigis, Lununya expressed surprise when he learned that Kipkeles had not returned. The Kipsigis distrusting Lununya's protestations of ignorance, made him swear that Kipkeles had not been killed; the curse was also laid upon him that if he were lying his tongue would be broken. On his return journey, Lununya tripped and bit his tongue off. War was made with the object of avenging Kipkeles and of driving the Masai out, and not merely for cattle, as was usually the case when the Kipsigis attacked the Masai. The Masai were defeated and tried to escape through Nandi. As they fled northwards, great toll was taken of the Masai by the Nandi and later by the Keiyo and Tugen. The Kipsigis then occupied Belgut and have since continued to move northwards, or as they say, towards their old country" (Orchardson, 1961:6).

The Kipsigiis, who were not hero worshipers and did not name rivers, mountains and other geographical phenomena after people, went out of their way and named a stream for Kipkeles in Belgut (now part of Ainamoi Constituency). Perhaps the personal sacrifice in pursuit of peace for both communities had seen him do more by the manner of his death in the eyes of the Kipsigiis than the recognition of regular work of leadership could have earned the average leader. The stream, Ain

aap Kipkeles (pronounced Ain-ooop-Pkeles) is a shouting distance to the West of Kericho Boys' High School and the Highland Bible College in Matobo.¹

Oral tradition has it that the Maasai man who came to found the *Laibon-Oorgoiyoot* dynasty was called Lumenya. Was this ole Mweiya or the Lununya whose story is linked to the tragedy of Kipkeles? It is possible that the tradition preserved in writing by Orchardson was attempting to explain in a cryptic way the overthrow of Kipkeles, of the Lion clan, by the incoming Maasai *Laibon* who adopted the lion as their totem as well.

It is said, however, that when the first Maasai *laibon* arrived in Nandi, they had found *oorgooik* in power that had not been of the Lion clan. Some say that the ruling clan was then either the Kaapchemuri (of *Kiptusweet*, "wild cat" totem), or the Kaamwaige clan (of *Taiyweet*, "partridge" totem) under one araap Chelilei (Cf. Mwanzi, 1977:132, Snell, 1954:16).

But there were also the indigenous ruling Houses of Kaapcheperng'weny (?) and Kaapchartoloch (probably but not necessarily both of lion totem) etc. Kaapchartoloch was noted and is still remembered for harbouring a permanent grudge against the new-comers who had claimed to have originated from Maasailand and who, with support from the citizens, had broken their traditional hold on the reins, completely usurping their prophetic role and thus relegating them to the level of *kwilkwiilik*.

Whichever of the many versions of the story of *laibon* entry into Kalenjiinland is true, western historians have recorded what followed the *Laibon-Oorgoiyoot* acceptance in Nandi and in Kipsigiis:

"With a *laibon*-like figure in their *orkoiyot* to give direction to their energies, they (the Nandi) raided with impunity to most points of the compass, and cast a disdainful eye over their less adventurous neighbours. Around 1890 their close kin, the Kipsigiis adopted an *orkoiyot* too, and thus armed themselves for similar proceedings" (Harlow & Chilver, 1965:4).

¹ This is the ancestral locale of the author and the author thinks himself intellectually duty-bound to declare his personal "interest" here although he was gladly fortunate to obtain objective, arms-length, disinterested sources. The author is a direct patrilineal descendant of the historical figure, Kipkeles, being a member of the House of Kipkeles. The author takes solace in the fact that the great master of African cultural and historical awareness drive, Cheikh Anta Diop, when he thought it right to disclose his descent from the House of N'diandian N'Diaye, the first king of the Djoloff, through his first son, Guét, he did (1996:29). No one has accused Diop, to the knowledge of this author, of conveniently tracing his ancestry to royalty the way Alex Hailey of the Roots fame was accused. Perhaps it is unfair to expect any writer to sacrifice, out of pretended humility, his or her own genealogy at the altar of so-called objectivity, especially if one of his or her ancestors helped shape the history of his or her nation. Leaving out such contribution would result in a distortion of history. It should also not be forgotten that at the heart of some of the most successful research projects, was the desire of the researcher to discover his or her own family background. You remove such motivation and you will have removed the driving force and the researcher altogether.

The impression given by the British writers quoted above, however, is that the Kipsigiis did not have the *Oorgoiyoot* institution before the arrival of the first known Nandi *Oorgoiyoot*. As we saw above, and as we shall see further on, the fact is that all Kalenjiin communities always had an *Oorgoiyoot*, of whatever persuasion—cattle, crops and, or rainmaking orientation—at the reigns, and it did not take the Maasai-*laibon* type family to come and found the concept. And, in any case, the fact that the indigenous royal words describing the office of the *Oorgoiyoot* and those of his assistants, existed and were in place in Kalenjiinland before the arrival of the Maasai royal exiles, or royal “borrowings”—and indeed date back several thousand years to Egypt—suggests that the practice of maintaining the royal institution may have remained unbroken throughout all those centuries during which the Myoot were wandering in the deserts and in the semi-deserts as they moved southward.

A theory, said to be supported by evidence, has been postulated, by J.B. Webster, that the institution of the prophetic kind of monarchy spread out from “Suk Hills” i.e. Pokoot Kalenjiin country, before late 17th century, to Maasailand where it evolved into the *laibon*; to Teso land in Uganda where the all powerful ruler went by the name *emuron*; to Tepes and Sebei countries etc.¹ The “supporting evidence” has not been given, but this, as inadequate as it is, serves to illustrate the futility of the all-too-often proffered theory that the *Oorgoiyoot* institution owes everything to the Maasai *laibon* institution. Which claim, anyhow, ignores the Maasai’s own assertion that their own first *laibon* came from outside their community. The Kalenjiin-sounding name of that particular *laibon* and the names of some of his descendants corroborate this tradition.

15.3 The Person of *Oorgoiyoot*

“The person of the *Orkoiyot*”, wrote Hollis (1909:50), when the *Oorgoiyoot* still ruled among his quarry, the Nandi—one Kipeeles araap Tamasoon was then reigning:

“is usually regarded as absolutely sacred. Nobody may approach him with weapons in his hand or speak in his presence unless first addressed, and it is most important that nobody should touch his head, otherwise it is feared that his powers of divination, &c. will depart from him... It is commonly believed that the *Orkoiyot* can detach his head from his body, and that he is able during a fight to send it to the scene of hostilities to watch his troops.”

For this “ability” to detach his head from his body and send it to the battlefield where it hovered above his fighting soldiers, the Kalenjiin called the monarch *ki-p-seet-met* or *pseetmet*,

¹J.B. Webster in, *The Iteso During the Asomya*, co-written by D.H. Okalany, C.P. Emudong and N. Egimu Okuda, East African Publishing House, 1973, p. 36-37.

“he whose head goes to war.” The children of *pseetmet* would proudly form a ring, hold hands and sing a song that was exclusive to them: *kipoo kipseetmet, komii poorto kaa*, “we belong to the person whose head goes to war whilst his body remains in the kraal” (Hollis, 1909:83).¹

The Pharaoh, in his time and place, performed similar tricks of detaching his head, or sending his double to war. This helps strengthen the hypothesis to the effect that the successive *Oorgoiyoot* rulers, as people moved south gradually over the millennia, saw themselves, and people saw them, as playing the role of the ancient Pharaoh of Egypt. Indeed the continuity was unbroken until political subjugation by the colonising powers came to deal it a permanent deathblow.

According to the renowned western Egyptologist G. Maspero, the Egyptian soldiers went to war with the Pharaoh’s blessing as evidenced by an ensign, which he gave them:

“This represented either his sacred animal, his emblem or his double, or a divine figure placed upon the top of a pike... this constituted an object of worship to the group of soldiers to whom it belonged.”²

The head, or double, of the Pharaoh and, by extension, that of the *Oorgoiyoot*, it would appear, was metaphorically flown to the battlefield by a hawk. This impression comes following the observation of an exhibit in the Egyptian Museum. It is a monument carved from one of the hardest stones in the world, diorite. It was recovered from Giza, i.e., where the three great pyramids are located. It depicts a Pharaoh said to be Chephren himself, the builder of what is still the world’s second largest man made structure (the Great Pyramid of Cheops, his predecessor, to the side of it, being the largest man-made single structure in the world³). He was a 4th Dynasty

¹ One hardly comes by a record or tradition that the *Oorgoiyoot* went to war in person. Perhaps the overriding belief that he could kill by other means, other than physical, precluded this. His Xhosa counterpart, however, went to war with his soldiers and stationed himself in the middle of the storming party. This requirement had the effect of lessening attacks and the resort to faster armistice because the risk was felt personally by the decision-maker; the king himself (Cf. Alberti, 1807:92).

2.G. Maspero on the Egyptian army during the 18th. Theban Dynasty, Vol. IV, p. 318.

³ The very wide pyramids of Central America, notably modern Mexico, are not traditionally counted among great feats of man although some of them are quite large: the pyramid at Cholula, near Puebla is about twice as wide at the base as the pyramid of Cheops, Egypt, although it is about half as tall. It may be the height that gives the Egyptian one its prestige and visual splendour, also the heavy building blocks employed in constructing it—some individual blocks weighing 30 tons or more! The Mexican ones in contrast were built successively, one pyramid upon another and the centres were filled with mud. But the notion of pyramids was well represented among the natives (miscalled Indians) of Central America although their pyramids are more recent than those of Egypt. The famous pyramid of Cuicuilco, Mexico, for instance, was carbon-dated to 600 BC (*Encyclopaedia Americana, International Edition*, 1977). Africa may still be the inventor of pyramids and with the story of the Olmec who were reportedly left, or sent there by Rameses III (circ. 1200-1000 BC), we may yet hear that their descendants had a hand in such construction (Cf. Jairazbhoy, 1974:7).

ruler (around 2650 BC). A hawk, with wings outspread—and therefore in flight—gently holds the king by the base of his head from behind by its claws.

The museum caption, however, reads something to the effect that the hawk was symbolically protecting the king with her outspread wings. One wonders why a king should select a hawk to protect his head while he was seated on his throne. A hawk belongs in the sky and it was the best agent to fly the royal double and why? Because this bird was known for its keen sight: the better for the king not to miss to detect a thing that might harm or hamper his soldiers in the battlefield down below.

An *Oorgoiyoot*-in-waiting could be picked only from the sons of the ruling Talai clan, especially but not exclusively from among the immediate nephews of the reigning *Oorgoiyoot*. The sons of the king may have had an added advantage but in contention too were their close cousins. In theory, only Asiis “picked” one of them to succeed the reigning monarch.

This system of succession may, therefore, have been less defined and certain. But it was still a lot better than the one of the Ba-Nyoro of Uganda in which, although the king customarily planned and executed his own death via suicide, he never took it upon himself to appoint a successor. If we are to believe the account left behind by Mr Roscoe—and retold by Frazer—upon the death of the king through the prescribed suicide, the princes were left to fight to the death for the vacant throne. The one that remained standing at the end of the fight succeeded the king (Cf. Frazer, 1910:530).

The successor of the Kalenjin *Oorgoiyoot*, who was chosen in the rather random manner narrated above, was, regretfully, not trained in leadership or otherwise prepared for the throne. It was left to Asiis to “instruct” him and no special training was needed for him in order that he might be able to understand better those supposed divine instructions in the first place. Perhaps this was what contributed to the weakness of *Oorgoiyoot* leadership and its relatively fast crumbling before the British onslaught.

The refusal by the unyielding *Oorgoiyoot* to take lessons and learn quickly from the methods of a conquering power, soon consigned his institution to an inferior position compared to the government of the invaders—in the eyes of his own subjects—when the *Oorgoiyoot* expected the opposite to happen.

The instinctive reluctance to take lessons, or even listen to new ideas, can still be detected when one converses with some of the living immediate descendants of the last *laibon-oorgooik*, especially those who possess little formal education. While they seem ready for and are in fact thirsty for news and current affairs, apparently in order to stay ahead of the average villager; they appear inflexible and seem hostile to any appearance of superiority in knowledge possessed by

others in any field. You follow that “patronising” path and you are soon caught up in an argument that you know that you owe it to your “well-being” to loose!

You have their best ear as long as you are bringing them news—and let it be news only. Not disguised lessons, or real or imagined exhibition of superior knowledge in any field. In fact some may listen to your news item, while all along, with nods of the head and interjection with spoken acknowledgements, and clever, somewhat accurate anticipatory but guarded remarks; try to give the impression that they already knew all about the newsworthy happening by telepathy of sorts, and that your narrating to them was either mere confirmation or just a formality. Whatever item of news you report to one such, it is that item of news that he will pass on to the average villager in such a manner as to appear as though he had himself received it via telepathy.

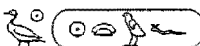
This psychological pressure to stay a step ahead of the “commoner”, on the part of the men of *laibon*-Talai, has somewhat ensured that they are, or seem to be, quicker-witted people, on the average, than the former especially among the illiterate lot.

Someone said that the famous *Oorgoiyoot* of the Kipsigiis early in the century, araap Koilegeen, was not the most senior Kipsigiis *Oorgoiyoot* during his time. He said that araap Koilegeen was junior to one araap Riiga, who ruled from Molo/Olenguruoni area. Araap Koilegeen was like a son to araap Riiga. For araap Riiga had been, by virtue of descent, at par with the father of araap Koilegeen. Araap Riiga was, therefore, a generation above Koilegeen, and such factors as age-set and lineage position vis-a-vis a common ancestor, are what mattered in establishing the *Oorgoiyoot* seniority pecking order.

But apparently araap Koilegeen, owing to the sheer coincidence that the colonial district capital, Kericho Town, was built within his area of jurisdiction, was elevated in the eyes of the British to that most senior position, treated, then later mistreated, as such. How this was done may be read in Appendix 4.

15.3.1 The Royal Totem

Examples have been mentioned that demonstrate as an incidental historical fact that eligibility for kingship was not always the preserve of the Lion clan. However, the lion, as an emblem, or totem, has generally been associated with kingship and royal power within any society in which it appeared either as a totem or as a symbol (Cf. Diop, 1996:29). It is, therefore, not surprising that the lion image often forms part of the coat-of-arms even in the case of republican states that inherited power from monarchical set-ups. The association of royalty with the lion, apart from other merits, may point back to the association between this beast with the “mother goddess” as her symbol (Cf. Vermaak, 1995b:19). Since the kings often claimed direct descent from the deity that was recognised within their respective jurisdictions, it followed that where Deity was perceived in the feminine form, i.e. “mother goddess”, the kings also appropriated to themselves the symbol of that “mother goddess”, often the lion.

However, the association of the lion with royalty may owe a lot more to the totemic systems in which animals were allocated as symbols to the clans to identify themselves with and by. It followed that since these were mostly wild animals, their fabulous king in the wild, lion, would also pass into the clan of the king of the humans as its fitting totem. The earliest examples of this are to be seen in Egyptian relics wherein many kings were represented in art in the form of a sphinx, the imaginary creature of a lion with the human face of the king’s likeness. The great sphinx of Egypt stands as a powerful and permanent monument to this fact as it is said to portray the looks of an ancient king, probably  Chephren, of the 4th Dynasty, 3rd Millennium BC.¹

If the term “Talai” generally signified the ruling clan among the Kalenjiin, then this, considered with the following, should serve as additional evidence, though it may be of the linguistic rather than historical nature, to the effect that clan members whose totems were other than lion, served as the ruling clan among some of its constituent sub-ethnic communities. We have adduced, albeit as incidental historical facts, evidence to the effect that this also occasionally happened within the major sections of Nandi and Kipsigiis who were, otherwise, well known for their old Talai ruling clans that were invariably of the lion emblem. According to records dating back to before 1910, among the Marakwet, the Talai clan was of the crow emblem. Among the Eendo the Talai also had the crow as their totem but the jackal and frog as well. Among the

¹ *Oxford Interactive Encyclopedia*, 1997 Inc.

Tugen, Talai referred to the leopard clan but also to the frog as far as their Toraiis section was concerned (Frazer, 1910:428-430).

The vastly more developed, more influential, more famous Ba-Ganda kingship, which is extant and vibrant; is of the Leopard (*Ngo*) clan although the Lion (*Mpologoma*) clan is referred to as the royal clan. In fact the Lion clan traces its descent to the 14th century founder of the dynasty, Kintu himself, through Sabaganda (Cf. Frazer, 1910:480). It would appear that somewhere along the line they were overthrown by the Leopard clan whose members were, at least up until 1910, when this information was collected by Mr J. Roscoe; the only ones eligible for the crown.

The royal house of the neighbouring Ba-Nyoro kingdom, who are of the Babito clan, belongs to the Bushbuck, *Ngabi*, totem (Frazer, 1910:518), whereas the king of the other major kingdom in Uganda, the Ba-Nyankole, after his death, incarnated in the form of a lion cub, or, rather, a maggot from his body metamorphosed into a lion cub. This suggests that Lion was the royal totem, or the ideal royal totem to them (Cf. Brandon, 1970:38).

15.4 The Major Functions and Powers of the *Oorgoiyoot*

The Kalenjin *Oorgoiyoot* (where the institution existed) also played the role of chief medicineman and soothsayer (prophet). There were many specialists, men and women, within the population who dedicated themselves to one form of treatment or another. Most people were plain herbalists and treated simple diseases, while the more serious practitioners diagnosed and dispensed herbs for the more complicated cases. Others yet foretold the future while others were able to communicate with the spirits of a troubled patient and tell the patient precisely who of his or her departed relatives was bothering him or her and how to go about appeasing that particular spirit. But the *Oorgoiyoot* was the only one who was a combination of all these professions. Yet he only either handled cases that had reached the epidemic level or the most serious medical cases involving individuals. He was, therefore, the physician of last resort, the referral doctor of doctors at the individual patient level and at the communal level, for human and animal alike (Cf. Huntingford, 1953b:46-47).

With such ability to heal not only the serious cases of the individual, but the pandemic ones, the *Oorgoiyoot* was naturally much more powerful than the president of the highest council, *Kiirwogiindet ne oo*, this influence filtering down to matters political. Besides medicine, he alone knew the wishes of Asiis through some direct communication that gave him immense clairvoyance. Necromancy, like it was for the Buddhist Tanist magician, was his province too and

by so communicating with the spirits of his dead ancestors who, after their death had become all knowing, he received wisdom and insight way above all his subjects. He could, like the Buddhist Tanist magician, bring rain in time of draught—resulting in the attendant plenty and prosperity to the nation—as well as cure the sick by magic (Cf. Garnier, 1904:115). The *Oorgoiyoot*'s position was, therefore, divine even as it was temporal.

Huntingford's (1953b:45) attempt at denying that the Kalenjiin *Oorgoiyoot* institution was a divine kingship is dismissed by his own evidence which is delivered in such a contradictory manner as could only be done by him. For instance, he endorses Hollis' statement that "The person of *orkoiyot ne oo* (great *Oorgoiyoot*) is sacred." And when he further says, "When the Nandi killed the *orkoiyot* Kimnyole, they committed so great an act of sacrilege that the whole tribe suffered", he is conceding to the fact of the *Oorgoiyoot*'s divine kingship. Still he would not concede directly even when his own statements come so close to admitting the inevitable fact as by the following example:

"It is true that some of his (*Oorgoiyoot*'s) functions are those which a central chief performs in tribes with a higher type of organisation; and there are some slight similarities between the *laibons* of the Masai and Nandi and the divine kings of certain Nilotic and Hamitic peoples" (Huntingford, 1953b:49).

One of the reasons Huntingford proffers for his denial of divine-kingship to the *Oorgoiyoot* is the fact that the *Oorgoiyoot* was not put to death when senility had set in and his powers had failed him as divine kings in similar position were done with elsewhere in Nilotic Africa. But if putting him to death as he says, was a sacrilegious act, does that not make the *Oorgoiyoot* even more divine in nature?

Huntingford's self-contradictions, probably owing to his emotional, almost morbid, urge to demean the office of the *Oorgoiyoot*, are as numerous as they are farcical. It was his preferred role as a colonial officer, in any case, to so demean the African monarch's place in the society. He had to justify, like the rest of his colleagues, direct rule of the Nandi and not to invite an indirect rule through the *Oorgoiyoot* which method would have been required of them to adopt by the British Home Office if the *Oorgoiyoot* were to be recognised as king. This was done in Uganda and in West Africa where native kings were recognised as such by the colonising power and it was not a good method of creating jobs for colonial officers!

In a typical self-contradictory verve, Huntingford, at the opening of a statement, says that

"The chief *orkoiyot*, *orkoiyot ne oo*, is not an executive authority. He is not the 'chief' of the tribe, he is not a judge, and he is in no way a supreme or central authority to whom appeals may be made... (But Huntingford goes on to say that) The person of the *orkoiyot ne oo* is sacred... provides a mystical focus for public activities, and thus

to a certain extent some of the most important parts of tribal life—war, circumcision, and planting—are centred on him, by reason of the necessity for obtaining his sanction before they can be undertaken... (These activities) could not take place without his sanction” (Huntingford, 1953b:45,49,50).

Here Huntingford is describing a person who wielded absolute power with regard to the social, cultural, and economic life of the people. What major collective human activity is left outside his control? And how do Huntingford’s words “and thus to a certain extent...” tally with his “could not take place without his sanction”? The *Oorgoiyoot*’s control here was obviously total in Huntingford’s own words and not “to a certain extent”. The *Oorgoiyoot* had absolute power over the people; he was a monarch by any definition, a king. The king or queen of England is neither an executive authority nor a judge but he or she is accepted as king or queen and no British army may go to war without the sanction of such monarch who, for this reason, is called the Commander-in-Chief.

The *Oorgoiyoot* was believed to be in a position to cast a spell and cause the reversal of the prosperity that he, if he wished, could bestow upon the people. He could cause general havoc, such as epidemics and droughts, which, answering to his command, might visit upon the subjects. He was capable of healing and, if he deemed it necessary, of bewitching the individual or even an entire community.

The *Oorgoiyoot*, indeed, seemed to replicate the dualism of Deity on earth. Such beneficence and such malice, the thoroughly human council president, *Kiirwogiindet neoo*, was not capable of. The *Kiirwogiindet neoo* was answerable to him, naturally, who knew and was capable of doing so much good or harm. Huntingford (1953b:46) puts it this way, “He alone can give such sanction (to commence all major socio-cultural and economic activities) and he therefore stands between the people and Asis as the principal human intermediary.” The *Oorgoiyoot* was, therefore, like the Pharaoh and the subsequent Roman emperor—both of whom were respectively under the immediate guidance of Isis—who were believed to be “operating in the immediate sphere between the terrestrial and the celestial” (Cf. Takács 1994:205).

The *Oorgoiyoot* neither sat in nor was he subject to the national councils presided over by the overall *Kiirwogiindet* who was the equivalent of modern-day prime ministers. Neither did nor was any other member of the ruling clan. One of the early British administrators of Nandi noted to this effect as follows:

“No member of the Talai clan is eligible to become a member of any Native Council or to be judged by one... In addition to the *orkoiyot* every member of his clan, the *Ng’etuny* (Lion) Talai, that is all the descendants of the three original *orkoiyots*, is believed to possess occult powers, including the power to call down lightning to strike

people and to bewitch them or their cattle with a look... Their numbers were formerly kept in check by periodical killings..." (D.C. Nandi/3/1).

Thus the obvious danger of having whole sections of the population with potent supernatural powers while remaining virtually above being arraigned on any charge in a court of law, on mere pretext of being of royal descent, was dealt with rather crudely; by culling.

The early colonial officers noted: "The British were equally irked by the Talai presence in the population: They were the only people in the tribe possessed of real authority and they always used this authority in active antagonism to the administration" (D.C. Nandi/3/1).

The *Oorgoiyoot's* position was apolitical, although all major decisions were made after consulting him, either directly or through his intermediary, *maoot-yoot*. He sometimes pushed his wishes through the council by sending his *maootyoot* to meet the overall *Kiirwogiindet* and there express the *Oorgoiyoot's* wishes. He had his way almost without exception.

The aloof mysterious being, the *Oorgoiyoot*, was the real power in many of the Kalenjiin nations. He was, furthermore, the only one to whom people paid taxes in form of cattle and farm produce, either directly or through the *maotik* (this is plural for *maootyoot* the *Oorgoiyoot's* chief representative). He had several of them representing the *emootinweek*, "count(r)ies". They too had their own assistants, the *mestow-EEK* (lit. Shepherds or herdsmen) who in turn were assisted by a pair of *alamal-aik*, "messengers", each.

Hobley noted as follows with regard to the Nandi in 1902: "The Nandi are firm believers in their *laibons* or witch doctors, and these individuals exercise a great influence over them, and very often for evil, as was clearly demonstrated by the recent Nandi rising. They are in great fear of the *laibons*, because it is believed that they kill many people by witchcraft; they are supposed to be able to kill people at a distance of many miles" (Hobley, 1902:40).

The *Oorgoiyoot* office was hereditary, which the "premiership" was not. The latter office was filled by consensus.

As to how great the Kalenjiin *oorgooik* were held to be we have some descriptive written as well as oral records. One relates to a powerful *Oorgoiyoot* running the Kalenjiin country of Sebei (Sabiiny) in Uganda, 19th century, Matui. Regarding this monarch, an informant told a researcher (Goldshmidt, 1976:57) as follows:

"... If people quarrelled over the kill in hunting, they would bring the case before Matui; it was like the government. The one against whom Matui charged would have to lie down and be whipped, so Matui was halfway like government and halfway like prophet (*Oorgoi-yoot*, or *workoi-yontet* in Sebei dialect)."

He was told that when you went to see Matui you thought you would be the only one coming to see him, but on arrival, you found others already seated, waiting. Matui would wait until the meeting place was full before he majestically walked in, wearing a leopard skin robe with circular metal jingles attached to the seams so that the “announcement” of the coming of the *Workoi-yontet* was loud and clear; from the jingling metal pieces (Cf. Goldschmidt, 1976:57).

Koitaleel, the *Oorgoiyoot* of the Nandi at the turn of the century, had his home raided by the British around 1900 AD, where the latter recovered the remains of one Wrot, a European trader earlier killed by Nandi soldiers—probably on the orders of Koitaleel. Koitaleel was reported to have been about 40 years old then, and he had “a force of about 150 Elmoran (Maa[sai] word for “young men”, “soldiers”) living in his immediate vicinity as a bodyguard” (DC NDI/3/1).

Juxon Barton, Collector and Assistant District Commissioner of Kericho during the first decade of the 20th century, wrote in April, 1907 as follows:

“The *Laibon* (Maasai word for *Oorgoiyoot*) arap Koileke (sic) is a Masai by birth, and is a direct descendant of the great Masai chief Sikilai... The *Laibon* should in all important things concerning native matters, be consulted, as he will always command a supreme influence over the people and can in this way materially assist the administration... It is a great mistake to call the *Laibon* to Kericho without the occasion justifying it, and his appearance I consider should be reserved for important shauris (consultations) only...” (D.C. KER 3/1).

The legendary colonial District Commissioner of Kericho, C.M. Dobbs, was later to write, in October 1915, under the same file about Koilegeen as follows:

“The influence of arap Koileki (sic) extended beyond the confines of his own district and the Kisii and Nandi used to pay him tribute... Eventually his machinations reached such a pitch that he was deported in company with two lesser *Laibons* in January 1914 to Fort Hall (now Murang’a, in Central Province)... The case of the *laibons* shows the inadvisability of allowing temporal and spiritual (or supernatural) powers to be combined in the hands of one person...” (D.C. KER 3/1).

Temporal powers were vested in the *Kiirwogiindet*, and Koilegeen apparently usurped this when he thought that his *Kiirwogiindet* had turned traitor, or switched allegiance when the invading power entered his territory. Otherwise the *Oorgoiyoot* always remained an apolitical “Head of State” and was never involved in active politics as implied by Dobbs.

Richard Kimeli araap Busienei, over 63 (1992), the son of araap Matutu, the *Oorgoiyoot* of the Nakuru/Solai area early in the 20th century, confirms that the Gusii, the Luhya, and the Luo, actually consulted the *Oorgoiyoot* and paid tribute endlessly to the latter; in the form of grain and animals. At least Dobbs, the colonial DC of Kericho, as we saw earlier, confirmed that the Gusii actually paid tribute to the *Oorgoiyoot* who was situated in Kipsigiis country. When the Gusii

people wanted to organise a raid into the Luo country, for instance, they consulted him and he gave them instructions as to how to behave in the battle field, telling them that he himself would send his invisible double (or head), to the battle field to witness the proceedings. The Luo would also come to him with their plans to raid the Luhya or the Gusii. He would similarly advise, give his approval, and bless them. They all duly drove part of the loot to him subsequently, when they succeeded.

It can never be absolutely clear whether or not the *Oorgoiyoot* received regular tax payments from these non-Kalenjiin people and not just proceeds from loot that he helped organise in the first place. If there was a regular payment, which the colonial officers called tribute, then indeed there was a measure of sovereignty over them involved. How he maintained impartiality and defeated conflict of interest before these diverse competing “foreigners” is difficult to comprehend.

These outsiders did not, however, by this apparent show of allegiance and subservience to an external power, prejudice their right of raiding the Kipsigiis and the Nandi, the *Oorgoiyoot*'s own closer subjects. Raids they did attempt on occasion, but of course they did not consult the *Oorgoiyoot* before attacking his own people.

The Kalenjiin *Oorgoiyoot* was in fact apparently so powerful in the eyes of his people that Hollis was to conclude that the king was actually exempt from praying to Asiis (Hollis, 1909:51)! That his was continuous communication with the all-knowing spirits of dead ancestors through dreams or other media such as snakes, ugly lizards etc. with whom he could communicate.

Kimeli araap Busiinei protested vehemently the claim that the *Oorgoiyoot* was above worshipping Asiis. He told the author that his father, like all his contemporary fellow *oorgooik*, and those before him; were the children of Asiis¹ and indeed they worshipped Asiis and directed others to do so. The *Oorgoiyoot* appointed days of “national” prayer and even described, through the *Maooyoot*, how the procession was to behave around the altar and what sacrifices to carry. A future *Oorgoiyoot*, or a petty *Oorgoiyoot*, from around, joined the procession. But once at the prayer site, be it at the riverside (for rain) or around the *eemdit* or the *Simoot-wo* tree (a *ficus sp. near F. elegans*-Hollis) and the massive *kaapkoros* altar and archway, on the normal annual national prayer day, all proceedings and authority to guide them, were left to the non-royal priest of Asiis, *Poiyoot aap Tuum*, who conducted the prayers.

¹ This claim to direct descent from Deity, which then underlined the justification for their assumed position over all other mortals, was a claim common among the kings of Babylon, Egypt, India and probably many others (Cf. Garnier, 1904:viii). The Gnostics even claimed that the archon (from a Greek term similar to Kalenjiin *orgoiyoon*), “ruler” came from the first of seven heavens, i.e. the lowest heaven (Cf. Walker, 1983:33).

Kimeli araap Busienei also takes issue with Hollis' claim that the *Oorgoiyoot* employed ugly lizards, snakes and other paraphernalia associated with witches. He says that the *Oorgoiyoot* was never a witchdoctor. Neither did he even cast the divining stones, *parpareek*, in order to foretell the future or diagnose diseases. Indeed one was the function of some of the *maootik*, who then advised the *Oorgoiyoot* accordingly; and the other was the work of *cheepsogeiinik*, those gifted with diagnostic powers, diviners and herbalists. He says that early western writers, African Christians, and Kalenjin "commoners", are responsible for the persistent and inaccurate impression that the *Oorgoiyoot* was a witchdoctor.

He says that the *Oorgoiyoot* was in continuous direct communication with Asiis even as he sat and drank with his guests, or hosts, whichever was the case. He received more divine instructions through dreams. He was specifically in touch with his ancestor, of whom we have said, had attained an all-knowing status upon death. The dead *Oorgoiyoot* is, therefore, comparable to the Egyptian Pharaoh who died, became an Osiris in death, omniscient and able to continue guiding his successor (Cf. Frankfort, 1948:110).

By the time the British came, the *Oorgoiyoot* office had accumulated so much power that abuse of it appears to have started creeping in. The *Oorgoiyoot's* sons, or himself, married any woman they wanted. All they did was point a finger at a girl and no ordinary mortal would marry her thereafter. The mother of the eligible prince usually performed this duty. She would attend the *Kayaaet*, (water baptism) ceremony of the girls that took place during their circumcision seclusion (Cf. Toweett, 1978:45). Observing them in their nakedness as they took the baptismal dives, she was in a position to pick the prettiest.¹ Here, out of a wide choice, she would mark a bride for her son, her decision being final. Alternatively the *Oorgoiyoot* could personally point out the girl for himself especially for a second, third, fourth etc. wife. His eldest wife, however, more often did this for him.

The bride thus marked, the royal suitor would later on turn up to marry the fortunate or unfortunate girl in his own good time, but not too long after her coming out of circumcision seclusion. Care had to be taken as custom forbade the Talai men from marrying a woman who had already conceived (Cf. Hollis, 1909:9). This rule was of course meant to preserve the clan's throne and other privileges for true "blue bloods". The cliché, "blue blood" does not apply to black Africans, of course, and the Talai men of Kipsigiis and Nandi were known as the "red

¹ The Southern African monarchical systems achieve the same result by assembling young girls periodically for the reed dance. Reed dance is performed by the young maidens almost in the nude before the monarch. He then picks the one that he fancies the most to be his latest wife.

eyed” ones. Indeed many among the Talai men of the two communities, to this day, are said to have bloodshot eyes.

The bride so picked by the *Oorgoiyoot*, or his agent on his behalf, was fortunate if she considered: a large home, several servants, mandatory freedom from house and farm chores, for “the wives of the principal medicine man may do no work, all their household duties being performed by servants, called *otuagik*” (Hollis, 1909:51). Equally attractive to the bride so chosen, was the possible opportunity to bear the next *Oorgoiyoot*.

The bride so picked would consider herself unfortunate if the suitor: was a very old *Oorgoiyoot* who would have already sired a future king in any case; was an extremely ugly *Oorgoiyoot*; was known to be despotic, cruel and callous; already had too many wives, etc. The danger of crossing a Talai man’s path in fact kept many beautiful pre-circumcision girls home.

Not every Talai clansman of Nandi and Kipsigiis was an *Oorgoiyoot*, as only one among them was chosen by Asiis at any one time in any Talai-ruled Kalenjiin province, to be *Oorgoiyoot*. The provincial, junior *oorgooik*, similarly blessed by Asiis, were loosely answerable to the principal, elderly *Oorgoiyoot*, who was honoured as such in deference to seniority in age-set, as for proximity in descent from the initial great *oorgooik*. In the *Oorgoiyoot* seniority pecking order, relative closeness to the dynasty founder carried more weight than seniority in age-set.

Other Talai men, who were not so elevated, nevertheless had things revealed to them through dreams and they were duty bound to hurry to the *Oorgoiyoot* for interpretation of the dreams, and for the *Oorgoiyoot* to benefit from Deity’s instructions to him (*Oorgoiyoot*) through his clansmen’s dreams. It was illegal for the *Oorgoiyoot*’s brothers and cousins to conceal dreams from him. Clever men they were, for they knew that the nation’s collective dreams could reveal the people’s aspirations, fears and political scheming. The success of their leadership and security depended on how well they could keep their finger on the pulse of the nation.

15.5 Vulnerability of the King

The descendants of the great Maasai *Laibon-Oorgoiyoot*, as well as those of the traditional indigenous Kalenjiin types, occasionally faced the peoples' wrath when suspicious, unexplained calamities befell either the larger society or individual families; when those *oorgooik* failed consecutively in their prophesies; or when they failed to foresee calamities; or if they persistently predicted such calamities which either materialised subsequently, or turned out to have been hoaxes.

The most notable of the *oorgooik* that were executed for whatever reason, was Kimnyoolei araap Turuugat of Nandi. His story is told further below. Notable too was araap Koipot, the *Workoi-yontet* of Sebei Kalenjiin, Uganda, who was executed for what was alleged to be his habitual negative prophesying. He was executed by soldiers who, after finishing their job, stuffed pieces of fat in the dead monarch's mouth—to symbolically silence him so that he could not continue prophesying in his death and thereby “cause” the occurrence of undesirable things. Just before his execution, he had prophesied that a flash flood would descend Mt. Elgon slopes, submerging the people's farms and homes down the slopes. This did not happen, because he was silenced in time, so believed the Sebei (Cf. Goldschmidt, 1976:57).

Killing of a failing or a “capricious” reigning *Oorgoiyoot*, traditional or, and especially, *laibon* type, and lesser members of their clan, was apparently not a difficult decision to arrive at among the Kalenjiin of yesteryear. Apart from the more publicised executions of the actual and high-profile rulers, several lesser ones and ordinary male members of their clan were less ceremoniously despatched.

A neighbour of a *laibon*-Talai man would complain that his children or his cattle were dying. If his *laibon*-Talai neighbour, or passer-by of similar background, was known to have “looked” at the children, or looked at the cattle, not so long before the occurrence of the catastrophe, the afflicted neighbour would apply to the elders for the execution of the suspected *laibon*-Talai neighbour with “an evil” eye.

The ruling clan members were not liable to trial in a court of *Kiirwogiindet*, so a decision was arrived at somehow, but quite easily. The “convict's” own clansmen were invited to outlaw him for the purpose of execution. They would comply by throwing a leaf at their condemned kinsman. This action had the effect of removing the inviolable right to life as a member of the community. Once that outlawing act was effected the killing that followed would not count as murder, *rumiisyeet*. Execution by the throwing stick, which was sharpened on both ends—called “the negator of birth” or “the reverser of birth”—*mosigisyeet*, followed. As many men as possible

took part so that the particular stick and its thrower that actually killed the "convict", could not be identified, for, although his rights to life had been withdrawn, the killing was still not exactly a heroic act.

One of the descendants of the *laibon-oorgooik* said that (what he calls "the notorious") *kootaapchii* of Kaapchartoloch was known for its malice against the *laibon-Talai*. It will be remembered that Kaapchartoloch was one of the "more indigenous" *oorgooik* houses, which the *laibon-oorgooik* of the Maasai persuasion, had replaced. So it would appear that Kaapchartoloch, having been removed from leadership against their will, had adopted cold warfare tactics, intending to discredit the usurpers of their power and thereby somehow hope to regain their leadership. At the same time, the new rulers seem, on their part, to have readily blamed everything that went wrong with their leadership, or with their welfare, on Kaapchartoloch. Such tensions between political power rivals were natural human reflexes that were to be expected.

The informant says that Kaapchartoloch had become witches. For example, one of them would stalk a *laibon-Talai* man all the way as the latter visited homes to be treated to beer and roasted meat by people who were eager to please him. The stalker would soon after poison or bewitch some of the families that the *laibon-Talai* man had visited. Deaths then resulted in a number of the homes in the wake of the *laibon-Talai* man's visit to them, and it was not difficult to see the linking factor—the common visitor to the afflicted hosts. The *laibon-Talai* man who had visited the afflicted homes would be executed.

The propaganda machinery of Kaapchartoloch and perhaps others, such as the missionaries and their converts, seem to have been very effective. So poisoned was the opinion of the average Kipsigiis about the *Laibon-Talai* that many came to regard them to be outright witches rather than leaders. That is if the public opinion collected and portrayed by Orchardson was accurate. Orchardson lived for about four years only in Kipsigiisland under the big *Oorgoiyoot* Koilegeen. The latter was deported leaving behind minor clandestine successors who exerted little control over the majority of the population. Orchardson lived for decades with such failed would-be successors. It is possible, therefore, that amid frustration of powerlessness, these lesser *laibon-oorgooik* began to behave rather dishonourably, playing up their terror-inspiring witching reputation, hoping, by so doing, to obtain a semblance of obedience that the more gifted Koilegeen had secured effortlessly during his reign. These are the men we have said Orchardson came to experience longer and he says of them:

"All evil working *orkoiik* belong to the family of the notorious Masai born *orkoyot*, Arap Koylegen, who came to Kipsigis from Nandi shortly before the advent of the British Government. That these men are regarded by the Kipsigis as being *ponik* (practitioners of *ponisiet*, "witchcraft") rather than *orkoiik* is shown by the fact that the

tribal leaders always talked of putting them to death by *lageet* (*lageet* = mob execution), the normal penalty for *ponisiet*" (Orchardson, 1961:119).

The displaced Kaapchartoloch do not seem to have successfully prolonged an aura of gentility and humility either; in order to affirm the necessary cloak of mysticism so that they may sustain their hold on the imagination of the subjects, they had claimed the impossible. These Kaapchartoloch—the name means “those that bleed the pillar”—may be the ones alluded to by Hobley (1902:40) as follows:

“On a certain day the *laibon* will come out of his house and proceed to shoot an arrow into one of the posts of his veranda, and blood will be at once seen to be oozing from the post. This blood is said to be that of a cow belonging to the people he is proposing to raid. He drinks this blood, and the following night his head leaves his body and goes off and fetches a cow out of the enemy’s kraal, and in the morning the strange cow is found tied up outside his house.”

This, of course, is a poor description by Hobley of the concept of *kipseetmet*, the belief that the *Oorgoiyoot*, and even the Pharaoh, could detach his head or his double and send it to the battlefield where his men were involved in a military campaign of one sort or another.

We may now narrate the sad story of Kimnyoolei whose tragic end bore enormous ramifications all over Kalenjiinland. With the benefit of hindsight, his manner of going affected the Kalenjiin nation probably as catastrophically as British colonialism itself did by coming.

Kimnyoolei araap Turuugat, the *laibon-Oorgoiyoot* who was executed in 1890, is remembered more for his execution than for the fact that he had come from the great House of Turuugat, his father, and for the fact that he had overseen the tremendous growth in cattle-wealth in Nandi during his earlier years on the throne. “The fourth *Orkoiyot* was,” writes Hollis (1909:50),

“however, clubbed to death by his own people. This was done as he was held to be responsible for several public calamities. First of all came famine; this was followed by sickness; and then a raid, which the *Orkoiyot* had sanctioned against Kavirondo (Kavirondo meant Luo or Luhya) was so disastrous that out of 500 warriors who set out but two returned alive...”

According to Ex-chief Torongei araap Taptugen’s memoirs, taken down by Toweett in 1951, The Nandi executed Kimnyoolei because they suspected him of bewitching their cattle. Before the cattle began dying, the Nandi had raided cattle from the Pokoot fellow Kalenjiin. The Pokoot cattle brought a disease called *kimukusi*. All of the cattle raided from the Pokoot died and were soon followed by most of the Nandi original stock—hence the general anger (Toweett, 1909:Chap. LX).

Poor King Kimnyoolei, there had erupted this deadly rinderpest cattle disease, starting from a place far out of his area of jurisdiction. The disease was all over Rift Valley and beyond, and Maasai cattle had died in even larger numbers than what was recorded of Nandi cattle. The use of ox-drawn carts by traders and colonial officers had helped spread this animal disease along the caravan route to Buganda (Matson, 1972:22, 34, various). But to the Nandi, Kimnyoolei, who had apparently stopped them from further raiding at that time—they seem to have gone to raid Pokoot in defiance—had visited the disease upon their stock because of the disobedience. According to Matson (1972:31), the Nandi

“were enraged by his failure to protect them from Natural calamities and to ensure the success of a combined raid against the Kavirondo or Suk (Pokoot). It was also possibly a manifestation of uneasiness at the *Laibon*’s growing authority and the encouragement his pretensions had received, at a time when conditions were especially favourable for their rapid advancement. The tribal frontiers had been secured by the expulsion of the Arabs and the defeat of the Masai, prosperity in the form of looted cattle was enjoyed by the Nandi as never before and morale was at its peak. This happy state of affairs was attributed by some sections to the *Laibon* and to tribal obedience to his commands.”

The second speculative reason supplied by Matson effectively proposes that Kimnyoolei was executed out of the jealousy that was aroused by the phenomenal success of his economic policies and management. This is the line of argument that Kimnyoolei’s own descendants love to pursue, on occasion splicing, as one of the likely causes, a scenario of clashing modes of economy that competed for limited space. Of course it was very un-Kalenjin-like to murder someone on account of his success and it is, therefore, easily the unlikeliest of the speculations proffered so far either in the oral field or in the written works.

Kimnyoolei’s own living descendant, Kipsaang’ araap Busienei, has a version of the same event which is, naturally, a lot more sympathetic to his ancestor. The wealth in cattle which Kimnyoolei had led the Nandi in acquiring, was to be the monarch’s own undoing. The Kaapchepkeendi *pororyeet*, whose immediate consultant *Oorgoiyoot* Kimnyoolei was, had benefited most from the cattle raiding that Kimnyoolei organised. But their huge herds of cattle later on inconvenienced some sections of the Chesumei county as well as the Kaptumoiis *pororyeet* of Nandi. These sections had not taken part in cattle raiding but had instead stuck to Mong’o’s farming methods and game hunting. The cattle of Kaapchepkeendi often trampled on the plantations in the Chesumei County, destroying the crops. And out in the wild, Kaapchepkeendi’s cattle fell into the elephant and buffalo pit traps that had been set up by the men of the Chesumei County alongside the men of Kaptumoiis *pororyeet*. Kaapchepkeendi were angry, so they fenced off the game pit traps, rendering them useless. Arguments followed, tempers flared and Kaapchepkeendi men beat up the men of the Chesumei-Kaptumoiis “league”.

The Chesuumei-Kaptumoiis "league" would not take the beating lying down. So they went to address the "source" of it all, Kimnyoolei, at his Saamiytui palace, Nandi. They gave him an ultimatum, that he use his powers to immediately restore the previous economic status quo by reversing the wealth in cattle (as held by Kaapchepkeendi and other Nandi *pororyoosyek* other than sections of the Chesuumei county and the Kaptumoiis *pororyeet*), failure to do which he should leave Nandi, or stay put and await execution.

The rigid, ageing king, by this time blind and a bit senile, could not bring himself to precipitating a magical action or a proclamation that would set in motion the reversal of the national prosperity that he had helped generate. And rather than go into exile, or go back to his original Maasai home under humiliation, he chose to be executed. And because, ironically, he was above judicial proceedings, though not above mob injustice, or "jungle" law, his exchange with the youth of Chesuumei-Kaptumoiis "league", had constituted a "full trial".

Kimnyoolei was given time to talk to his sons and the *maootik*. His sons were Kiptoing'eeny (Kipchomber) araap Koilegeen, Kibuiguut araap Sing'oei, Kimng'eetich araap Boiisyo, and Koitaleel araap Samoei. He informed these sons of the inevitable, and then sent for the *Maootik*.

Quite interestingly, Kimnyoolei had *maootik* all over Kalenjinland. This can be interpreted to either mean that he had actually been the recognised leader of all the Kalenjin people, or that some of the *maootik* had only amounted to mere resident ambassadors of his that served in lands which fell under the jurisdiction of other *oorgooik* (and *kiirwoogik* where the *oorgooik* institution did not exist). Anyhow, apart from the Nandi-based *maootik*, the following were summoned and they came to Saamiytui: araap Muroon from Keiyo; araap Tapteigaat from Tugen; Mugeeni from Kipsigiis; Aneene from Terik; araap Samoiywot from Cherang'any and araap Sungula from Mt. Elgon, among others.

His *maootik*, who were his personal representatives as well as legal advisors, pleaded with the ageing monarch to even consider shifting to the Kaapchepkeendi area where the local army, which he had benefited a great deal more, would be sure to guarantee his continued rule and dear life. But he would not hear of such "cowardly" act.

Instead, in a moment of prophetically possessed mood, Kimnyoolei produced a special tiny earthen pot of beer, a divining machine that all the *oorgooik* used for peering into the future. The liquid content of the divining pot reflected images of events that were yet to unfold. Kimnyoolei then passed the special pot around so that all the *maootik* could see the reflections for themselves. They reported to the *Oorgoiyoot* the images that they had seen in the magic pot. They had seen in it certain reflections which Kimnyoolei interpreted for them as follows: what appeared like men

carrying sticks that spat deadly fire were white men coming with their deadly guns; what looked like smoke-puffing snakes were the railway and the trains. These things were coming, and the earth would inevitably be rendered unworthy of continued habitation by the self-respecting people who valued freedom.

The *Oorgoiyoot* took the pot back from his now-perplexed *maootik*, then tossed it westward of him, and it broke into little bits. He was cursing as he did this. He cursed the Nandi—if they would actually kill him—to break up, after the event, like the earthen pot that he had just smashed. This was later interpreted to have meant that under that spell, the Nandi would break up so totally they could not be mended up, because broken pots were irreparable. He also cursed the Kipsigiis. The Kipsigiis were cursed to break up in the manner of a gourd. This was later interpreted to have meant that under the spell, the Kipsigiis would break up but unlike in the designated fate for the Nandi, their broken state would be repairable—because gourds were, unlike earthen pots, mendable.

Probably Kimnyoolei did not impress too many of his listeners with this prophesy, because this was 1890 AD and white men had criss-crossed Kalenjiin territory several times before the time of the prophesy, armed with guns, which the trading Arabs before them, had had anyway. The latter had even demonstrated gunpowder power before some Nandi youths about thirty years or so before the prophesy. A white man, J. Thomson, had passed through Uasin Gishu seven years earlier, in 1883, on his way to Lake Victoria and returned to the coast in 1884 via Mt. Elgon and Keiyo, the latter two being parts of Kalenjiin territory in which Kimnyoolei had *maootik*. The Arabs had been here, in Kipsoboi, right in the centre of Kimnyoolei's own home turf of Nandiland, in the 1850's and 1860's, when they had fought Kimnyoolei's men with guns. The Nandi soldiers, with the blessings of the *Oorgoiyoot*, had won that battle hands down (Cf. Matson, 1972:41, 47, 59).

And rumours about a railway, and what it meant, must have reached Kimnyoolei and his *maootik* through their network of secret agents, because European survey teams were criss-crossing Rift Valley, surveying the railway route before Kimnyoolei's tribulations had started. So the Old Man seems to have prophesied, if indeed he ever did, what was almost common knowledge all over east Africa at the time, but some interested parties seem to have since twisted the facts to incorporate a prophesy, and a "fulfilled" one at that.

If the act of prophesy itself, and its contents, be doubtful, then doubtful also must be the claim that he at the same sitting cursed his own people in the manner narrated. Not all the Nandi sections were involved in his tribulations, in fact others were anxious to see him spared, why would he then curse all of the Nandi? Why would he curse the Kipsigiis who were not involved in

his tribulations whatsoever, and whom he was, in fact, asking—through Mugeeni—in the same sitting, to shelter all his (Kimnyoolei's) sons if he should be executed?

Kimnyoolei would still be great enough without being accorded false credit, and he would certainly be better off without being, perhaps unwittingly, cast in the mould of a capricious, malicious, inconsiderate elder who would, though in desperation to save his own skin, throw curses about so needlessly.

Kimnyoolei died the death of a martyr, pure and simple. A hero wronged in his twilight years. But so persistent are the "curse" claims and most of the elderly informants in the field, felt that a form of cleansing of the Nandi people has been overdue for so long.

The killing of the Great Man alone is probably enough to justify a cleansing ceremony of a sort—of the sections that were involved in the act. A continued feeling of guilt, especially among certain sections of the Nandi, that something is still amiss and will remain so until such a cleansing will have taken place, psychologically inhibits the desired proud march forward, as well as provides a ready scapegoat for everything that goes wrong in Nandi.

To continue with the story: while Kimnyoolei asked Mugeeni to take and shelter his sons in Kipsigiis, away from those that might want to murder them as well in Nandi; he instructed araap Tapteigaat, the *maootyoot* from Tugen, to go to Tindireet Hill and shoot down the benevolent Thunder so that rain may forthwith cease to fall. This way those who would execute the king would come to know that they had killed an innocent man.

The assembly broke up, and the brave blind Old Man "saw" everyone off. One night, not long after the big meeting, Kimnyoolei was woken up by the soldiers from the Chesumei county and the Kaptumoiis *pororyeet*.

"What is it my children?" the old man asked from inside the house, "Have you come to seek permission to go on a raid?" He inquired of them, although he knew well that his time had come.

"No, Old Man", replied the soldiers, "It is you we have come for. Can you come out, or shall we have to burn down the house with you inside?" They demanded. The king then instructed his wife to open the door, and he groped about his way out into the dark—not that it made much difference to him, blind as he was—and into the hands of the impatient soldiers. At his own request, the soldiers led him all the way up to the arch-shaped entrance that led to one of the wealthy king's cattle pens.

At the archway, the king swore. There are no details as to what he swore by, but the Kalenjiin expression of which "swearing" is an inadequate translation, *ki-waal-gee*, is usually understood by listeners of stories without being given the details as to what exactly a swearing person might have uttered at the extremely tense moment. For the benefit of the uninitiated, he

might have uttered a summary of his enormous achievements in life; rumbled on and swore by his equally great father; by his clan's lion emblem; by the best of his bullocks—especially the *kamar* bullocks, the bullocks whose horns had been twisted in the ancient Egyptian style, so that one horn faced the back while the other one faced the front, etc. A Kalenjiin person, who has sworn in that manner, is psychologically and physically ready to do anything or suffer any consequences whatsoever.

When the *kiwaalgee* rumbling stopped, and the king stood silent in the middle of the eager youth, the latter took it to be a sign that the monarch was ready. It is not said whether anyone, or who, from the king's own clan, outlawed the king in the prescribed manner of throwing a leaf at him for the purpose of allowing the execution to take place. But, with hundreds of the two-foot long throwing sticks, *mosigisik*, the "reversers", or "negators of birth", that were sharpened and burnt black on both ends, the men soon had the king's body looking like that of a reclining porcupine, with the blackened sharp ends of the throwing sticks sticking out from all parts of the royal body. They had sent him to the underworld, in the dark of night. A deep sense of guilt and self-doubt followed. It has never been completely erased.¹

Araap Tapteigaat, the *maootyoot* from Tugen, meanwhile reached Tindireet Hills in Nandi country. Following the instructions of the *Oorgoiyoot*, with his bow and arrow, he carefully aimed and shot at, no minor mortal beast, but benevolent Thunder himself: Thunder who releases rain, and who is therefore responsible for all that is good that accrues to man and beast on earth as a result of that rain. The poisoned arrow hit Thunder, seriously wounding him. Thunder wriggled his way in great pain across the sky in a northeasterly direction. After some distance, he weakened—from the arrow poison—wings sagged, and he died two days later in the Tugen sky. Its lifeless body, the shape of an enormous cock, plummeted at great speed and crashed into the earth.

¹ This observation was written down in 1991. The author's field research assistant, Mwalimu David Kiprof arap Kolil, updated in 1997 as follows: Mr Kipsaang' araap Busienei, the grand old man who narrated this story, has since passed away. Sad news indeed. However, Mr Kolil was able to report authoritatively, and with much relief, that a cleansing ceremony was held early this year at the graveyard of Kimnyoolei and the psychological weight of his undignified death has since been taken off the shoulders of all the Nandi.

Mr Kolil also reported that some time in 1997, a party of Nandi elders visited the burial site of Koitaleel araap Samoei—the successor of Kimnyoolei. Samoei was killed by the British Captain Meinertzhagen in 1905. The party of elders then performed a memorial service for the first time since his death 92 years before.

An old man from the *pororyeet* of Kaptumoiis has since brought information to the author to the effect that there has always been a dispute as to which *pororyeet*, especially between Kaptumoiis and Kapchepkeendi, performed the execution of Kimnyoolei. This is quite interesting considering that Kapchepkeendi was Kimnyoolei's own *pororyeet*. However, Magut (1969:101), citing his oral interview with William araap Basi, Sept. 1969, says that seven or eight *pororyoosyek* took part in the execution. This information virtually establishes a consensus where tradition often blames a unilateral action. This makes all the sense since all Kalenjiin affairs were subjected to a consensual process, how much more diligently would a consensus be sought where the overall leader's life was involved?

Soon after the fall of Thunder, locusts came; the deadly cattle disease followed; then a prolonged drought saw to the death of most of the surviving cattle. Consequently, a serious famine followed, as a result of which the human beings died in the thousands. Then the devastating Kalenjiin resistance wars with the white man crowned it all.

There was an eclipse of the sun, which coincided with the killing of Kimnyoolei, and the Kipsigiis associated this temporary "death" of the sun with the killing of the great leader in Nandi (Toweett, Chap. LX).

To the extent that Kimnyoolei's killing seems to have occasioned the very calamities that some accounts claim that he was killed for allegedly visiting on the people in the first place, the story has to be treated with caution. Needless to say, the incident of the shooting down of Thunder has to be treated in the same manner.

Killing an *Oorgoiyoot* for real, or perceived, inadequacies, or for real or imagined malice on his part, was no big deal apparently; and because most of them had been acquired from outside Kalenjiinland, their human and legal rights seemed to have been that much more restricted than would have been the case where the life of an indigenous person was involved. What worsened, instead of making better the defence of an *Oorgoiyoot* was that he was above the court, which, under normal circumstances, would have been bound to listen to plenty of evidence from both sides before sentence was passed. An ordinary indigenous citizen, because he appeared before the great judges, the likes of *Kiirwogiindet neoo*; had the option of trial by the ordeal of *muumeek*, "oath". Oath was taken in situations whereby the adduced evidence was not conclusive yet it appeared that one of the parties to the case was definitely guilty, and yet he or she would not own up.

The *laibon-Oorgoiyoot* and his *laibon-Talai* clan, enjoyed immense privileges over the rest of the people, but when it came to matters of life and death, it was the former who were despatched sooner.

This is not to mention the periodic culling, which was common among the Kalenjiin as well as among the Maasai, of the royal clan. This meant killing large numbers of them in order to "check" the incidence of evil occurrences that some of them, who possessed the "evil" eye—many of them were thought to do—allegedly visited upon the people.

The readiness to dispose of the king at relatively slight excuse seems to have been a development from, or to have been inspired by a practice in the past among some erstwhile neighbours of the Kalenjiin and the Maasai in the near north, amongst whom virtually all kings who had attained great age were killed as a ritual imperative. The Dinka of Sudan, for an

example, “killed their Divine King or Rainmaker, ceremonially in the fullness of years when he feels that he is no longer of use to his people” (Seligman, 1932:215).

Otherwise these populations up north maintained the same policy of summarily executing rulers who were perceived to have failed in their primary duty, which usually was to make rain for them. Those rulers who “failed” in this vital role were not spared until they were old enough to qualify for the ritual killing, which, in itself, was an honour whose ushering and timing was determined by the ageing monarch himself. Death of the “failures” had to be a totally disgraceful departure.

However among the Gule of the Ingassana/Mao Ethio-Sudanic clusters, the life of the king had lately been ransomed by killing a dog in his place (Seligman, 1934:423, Cerulli, 1956:26). This may, of course, not be, but it appears like a re-enactment of an Osiris versus Set drama where the king represents Osiris and the dog represents Set as in the past. In this motif, Set is sacrificed to save the king.

The Ankole people of South-western Uganda maintain a royal clan whose descendants are thought traditionally to have come from the north. Their looks, great height, supported by the said oral tradition, suggest an Ethio-Sudanic origin. The Ankole kings do not wait until they are too old or senile to rule effectively. These human susceptibilities and weaknesses should not be seen to be a characteristic also common to the lot of them. So the king commits suicide by taking “royal poison” the moment he notices signs of appreciable ageing (Cf. Brandon, 1970:38). Fear of public failure due to the waning of prophetic potency brought on by age, was uppermost in the mind of such kings; for this could invite a more painful and disgraceful manner of exit; public execution.

As already mentioned, the kings of the neighbouring Bu-Nyoro Kingdom, followed similar custom of royal suicide. The moment a Nyoro king realised that he was getting too weak to lead or too ill to recover, he went into a private room where only his chief wife could visit him. There he asked her for “the cup”, which request was unambiguous to her. It was always kept ready because the king might not disgrace himself at any time by dying a commoner’s natural death just for want of the poison; not even under emergency conditions, such as of cardiac arrest, should this be allowed to happen. The chief wife obediently produced the poisoned cup from which the king then drank and died almost instantly. Should he be too ill to even communicate the request for “the cup”, it was his wife’s sad duty to administer the poison (Cf. Frazer, 1910:530).

Seligman, in his *Egypt and Negro Africa, A Study in Divine Kingship*, sees an obvious analogy between the Ancient Egyptian divine kingship and that of the Nile Valley generally on

the one hand with that of many other African regions on the other. He refers to Professor Moret's lecture of 1926, entitled *La Mise à mort du Dieu en Égypte* in which Moret imagined a time when

“after a reign of definite or indefinite length the ageing king, taught by the example of Osiris, ‘the dying god’ prepared to inflict upon himself the supreme sacrifice in order to secure not only the safety of his people but of the universe” (Seligman, 1934:2).

Were these societies from much of Africa re-enacting the demise of Osiris by slaying their own monarchs when they aged or failed as speculated by Moret? Or was Osiris, after all, murdered according to the manner prescribed for the end of an ageing monarch, and not solely due to the greedy treachery of Set, his brother, as Egyptologists believe—much thanks to Plutarch? The truth is difficult to ascertain now, but it should be clear that we are in a territory in which much of the continent acted in a uniform manner in reaction to similar circumstances affecting the divine king. This is a cultural cognacy that can only be another demonstration of unity of origin of the ancient Egyptians and the sub-Saharan Africans.

A major example that Seligman (1934:37) cites with regard to the analogy between sub-Saharan Africa and ancient Egypt, is the Jukun kingdom of West Africa:

“We find repeated in West Africa a number of the most remarkable features of the cultures of the Nile Valley, including some which most definitely remind us of ancient Egypt. Divine kings, attempts at mummification, even reinvestiture ceremonies—all are there.”

The King of the Jukun people, just like those of the Great Lakes region, was not allowed to die a natural death. The reason here had more to do with Agriculture. It was believed that his life, being so inextricably linked to the crop harvest and its success, if allowed to decay and finally expire, would herald the permanent expiration of crops as well. Moreover, “a succession of droughts or bad harvests is ascribed to his negligence or to the waning of his strength, and he is accordingly secretly strangled” (Seligman, 1934:38).

The Jukun king, apart from having to deliver without undue or repetitive failure, on peril of his soul, additionally had to be careful never to disgrace himself publicly such as by breaking social taboos, or even by merely falling from his horse, because he was put to death immediately. The deterioration of his health, infirmity and senility led to the same result (Cf. Seligman, 1934:38).

This traditionally prescribed tragic end for kings was certainly a source of terrible worry for them throughout their lives, even though they lived such comfortable lives. It is only natural to expect this human weakness to have obtained. But if they had been schooled from youth to eventually die this way should they ever reign, then this inevitable eventuality may not have been

cause for too much anxiety on their part. But they were still human and it may explain why the Great Lakes region kings who were expected to take their own lives when their time came, for example, were generally very quick to adopt Christianity when the missionaries came to them. Christians were not expected to commit suicide at any time and for any reason whatsoever!

As we pointed out earlier, the general European royal nomenclature points to a crucial ancient African influence through Egypt. It would appear that the habit of certain African nations, such as those cited above (and including ancient Egypt), of disposing of the king as a ritual imperative, went to Europe along with the nomenclature. It is thought that European kings such as Olaf of Norway; the Anglo-Saxon king "St. Edward the Martyr" (979 AD), who was murdered on the orders of his stepmother "perhaps as part of a continuing tradition of the sacrificial king who must die for his people"; William II Rufus, also of England, among many others who were called the "sacred" kings; "died violently on days close to the cross-quarter days (being) victims of the tradition of sacrificial kingship." William II Rufus, who was the second Norman king of England, was killed by an archer in the New Forest in 1100 AD (Pennick, 1992:52, 95).

Such cheap royal dispensability also visited one Kalenjiin *Oorgoiyoot* in the following manner: when the Tugen were urgently suing for peace in the wake of a severe punitive expedition into their country by the British in 1897, their peace emissaries came to meet F.J. Jackson, the colonial district officer. He refused to negotiate with them unless they "gave up their 'One-eyed'" *Oorgoiyoot*. "The Kamasia (Tugen) eventually murdered the *Laibon* after getting him drunk..." (Matson, 1972:275).

To the Tugen, the *Oorgoiyoot* had failed in his duty to protect the people by not putting into force the "proven" supernatural means at his disposal, against the marauding cruel Sudanese soldiers who were under the control of British officers. People had been murdered and many others had died from starvation because the invading power had burned up most of the South Tugen grain stores and confiscated a large number of their livestock. All "under the nose" of the *Oorgoiyoot* whom the people thought had the divine power to stop the carnage even before it had started! Moreover, was he or was he not, in the first instance, the initiator of the raids upon the British and their allies' interests, which action had invited the mighty ruthless arm of the British deep into Tugenland?

The periodic as well as the occasional killings of the Talai people, especially the *ex-laibon* families from Maasailand, form a regrettable chapter in Kalenjiin history. It is impossible to apportion blame, or credit, retrospectively, of course, when the facts have largely given way to myth, as things are now. But it is natural to imagine that if one or two things were, or were not

done, or that if so and so had behaved this way instead of that way, then this other party would not, or would have reacted in this or that manner. Idle speculation, if one could be allowed.

To some modern-day thinkers the *Oorgoiyoot*, like the rest of his counterparts throughout the rest of Africa (certain of whose cases we have cited above), had erred in allowing himself to be psychologically elevated by the people to something of the divine. To these thinkers, the *Oorgoiyoot* wallowed in glory that did not belong to him when he accepted credit and praise for bringing rains and the resultant plenty by way of pasture and agricultural output. He took credit when health and wealth reigned all over the land. He allegedly often threatened the people, "Shall I take all these away?" "No *pakwoo*, give us more", the people would plead. "Then you must do this or that and I will leave the heavenly gates of rain open." The king would say.

Or, it is claimed by this school of thinkers, the people's representatives would go to the *Oorgoiyoot* when a prolonged drought was looming large: "*Pakwoo*, give us rain." The king would give a condition or two, or blame some section of the population—some perceived rivals for power—such as Kaapchartoloch, for a misbehaviour that was allegedly displeasing to benevolent Thunder. By the time the people had "righted" what was "wrong"—had perhaps pushed the Kaapchartoloch even further up against the wall—it was time for the rains to fall. And the clever weatherman that he was, the *Oorgoiyoot* would wait until the rains were due, and then he would say, "Ok, there you are!" And the much needed rains fell.

But then, say the modern thinkers, there were those days when none of these antics would "work", and the drought persisted. Animals died of dehydration and lack of pasture. With no milk and no meat, no grains as well as greens, people died of opportunistic diseases, having been laid bare by malnutrition and starvation. Simple diseases killed the already weakened. *Soosimo* sacrifices and prayers had been held, and nothing by way of rain had happened. Was it not natural for the people who had been led to believe that the *Oorgoiyoot* could give rain as much as he could withhold it, to now blame him for the droughts and all its effects?

The modern thinkers philosophise that no one knew better than the *Oorgoiyoot* that these things were beyond him. Then the philosophical question is posed: why would one indulge in the habit of accepting credit when one knew too well that there would be a time to come when the same credit would have to be taken away, all for and about things beyond one's control?

But to do the honest thing, according to this school of thought, that is, to own up to his mortal limitations and renounce pretence to divinity, like the Mesopotamian kings of the 2nd millennium BC, as we saw in Chapter 2, would probably have been a grave political mistake on the part of the *Oorgoiyoot*. For he would then have been seen to be at par with all and sundry. So what business would he have had being the ruler, being as naked as all the others were? If the

Mesopotamian king saw himself as a mortal standing apart from the realm of the “gods”, unable to influence nature, the *Oorgoiyoot*, like Pharaoh, was part of that nature, able to influence natural phenomena such as rain, acting in their divine role as the official rainmakers (Cf. Frankfort, 1948:248).

The circumstances, in fact, had forced this metaphorical straight jacket upon the king as much as he had erred in accepting to wear it. He had no alternative but to act as people expected of a king. Most other institutions of kingship the world over, up until our own time, e.g. the Romans, the Japanese monarchy and the English, as late as Charles II (Cf. Frankfort, 1948:36), similarly thrived on mystification and the claim to the possession of supernatural power. Some monarchs, perhaps with the unlikely reported exception of the Mesopotamian kings, were held by their subjects to be real reincarnations of “gods”, who were temporarily residing on the planet earth, performing a divine duty.

The traditional as well as, and especially, the *laibon Oorgoiyoot*, were smart military strategists. The immense wealth in cattle that accrued towards the end of freedom and the coming of colonialism, was all due to the leadership of the *laibon-Oorgoiyoot* in matters that concerned the acquisition of these by military force—considered legitimate at the time—from the neighbouring nations.

The raiding soldiers had fought in the battlefield with courage and valour, knowing that their king’s double was watching over them from the skies. Written as well as oral histories have it that they won most of those battles.

The king took full credit for the victories. But, pose the modern thinkers, what reaction was expected on the part of the ordinary subject, who had full faith in the king’s supernatural powers, when only two out of 500 soldiers who had set out on a raid that the king had sanctioned as well as underwritten, returned from the battle field? The subject who had lost a relative or two—and most did in such a closely-knit society—would wonder, had the king been asleep up in the skies as the enemy massacred his troops? Or had he forgotten, out of sheer negligence, to send his double to the battlefield as he had assured the soldiers before they had set off, that he would?

The *Oorgoiyoot*’s and his patrilineal male relatives’ very privileged position that otherwise delivered “heaven” to them right here on earth, was counterbalanced by the constant fear of the vagaries of weather. A prolonged drought might cause social, economic and political instability, and real disaster to their reign. But the king always assured the people that all was well and under control. And when the soldiers were out there on their campaigns deep inside foreign lands, the king would sometimes smile with apparent confidence, being careful to ensure that the people thought that he was busy watching clairvoyantly over his troops in the field—and that those

battle-field proceedings were such as would force a royal smile. But the truth may have been otherwise, that he was the most worried man in the whole nation. He was taking chances each time he allowed the troops to go out on a campaign. He had the best soldiers in the region, but still one false move out there in the battlefield and disaster followed, he would have to pay for that, sometimes with his own life and throne. But he alone knew that these things were beyond him.

A more sympathetic, almost royalist, school of thought says that it was Asiis indeed who had given talent, the supernatural powers, and the leadership mandate to the *oorgooik*. That it was true that they foresaw disasters and warned the people ahead of time and in most cases the worst eventualities were averted. They could also see opportunities in the economic front that the ordinary man or woman, could not. It was the duty of the *Oorgoiyoot* to point these opportunities out to the “commoners”. This school believes that it has been the Almighty’s practice since creation, to maintain regimes of diviners and rulers, so that the will of the Creator may be done through them.¹

South Africa’s Xhosa had reportedly come by an innovation that spared the monarchy the perilous role of rainmaking. They sought out Khoisan (known more widely by the derogatory name “Hottentot”) rainmakers to make rain for them for the payment of some heads of cattle. The Khoisan, who had been socially and politically completely subjugated by the Xhosa, other Kintu-speaking peoples, and later by European settlers—in a manner quite analogous to the treatment of the Ogieek by the incoming Kalenjiin settlers—would often be desperate enough to gamble with their own lives. A Khoisan volunteer would reportedly come forward, accept the payment and perform a rainmaking ceremony before his Xhosa clients. He would later retire to his home and hope for success. If within the period promised by him there was no sign of rain, he was sought out by the angry Xhosa and was speared without trial, and quite unceremoniously, by the first Xhosa man to see him. For this reason, they were known to flee as the deadline drew near (Cf. Alberti, 1807:52).

The vulnerability and tribulations of the *Oorgoiyoot* institution just before and during its final overthrow by the British Government is discussed further under Appendix 4. From here we move to a discussion on burial in general and on the burial of a divine king in particular.


1. Based on a discussion with Mr David Kiprof araap Kolil, the author’s field research assistant, who is a historian of note in his own right.

15.5.1 Burial of the Dead in General

As we said, we are here going to discuss burial of the dead in general and in preparation for a fuller discussion of the burial of the king himself as practised by the Kalenjin and their Nilotic kin, including the ancient Egyptians. Interesting, contrasting and more enlightening examples will come from the rest of Africa.

Peristiany (1939) in his section on "Death and Inheritance" says that where the body was disposed of in the bush, a small enclosure was erected around the body and a small entrance left for the hyena to come in through.

According to Hollis (1909:72) the "old men are sewn up in ox or goats' hides, and milk, beer, and food are put in their graves. After the grave has been filled in, a *lepekweet* (*dracaena* sp. of *liliaceae* family) tree is planted in the cow dung (cow dung is the esteemed material used to fill in graves)."

The practice of sewing up, or wrapping up corpses in ox hides for burial, dates back to ancient Egyptian times and Hollis' observation in Nandi may be compared with Budge's (dictionary) definition of  *meska* (327b) "the skin of an animal, the bull's skin in which the dead man was wrapped in order to effect his resurrection."

The concept of resurrection and the well-publicised ancient Egyptian habit of burying the dead with the best of their personal property in preparation for the next world is indirectly alluded to by Peristiany in relation to the Kipsigiis. However, like the other European anthropologists working in Kalenjinland, he does not bother to draw comparison with the corresponding ancient Egyptian practice.

The eldest son (of the first wife)

"will dig a grave for his father and, returning to the hut, will lift the body and carry it, while the first son of the second wife follows behind him, carrying all the beloved objects of daily use of the deceased, such as his beer-tube, clothes, liquid snuff; also a calabash of milk for use in the next world. These objects are placed in the grave near the body, which is made to lie on its back, with feet outstretched, the right hand under the head and the left hand drawn across the chest and holding the right arm... bids his father, "'Go to stay safely that may be good the name to come safely', i.e. 'go now and be calm, as soon you will come back in the *kurenet* name that we will give to one of our children'" (Peristiany, 1939:207-208).

Laying the body on its back, as recorded by Peristiany, is a habit that is further partly consonant with ancient Egyptian practice. However, the other practice which is familiar to the author, and whose example was well narrated by Hollis (1909:72), went as follows:

“The corpse (of an old man) is placed in the grave in the same position as with ordinary people, that is to say, males are laid on the right side and females on the left, with the hand supporting the head and the legs outstretched.”

In the experience of the author, however, the legs are not outstretched completely: they are drawn a bit at the knees, the left thigh resting on top of the right thigh but the legs are parted at the knees, the left one being bent backwards at a slightly more acute angle than the right leg so that the ankles of both legs touch the earth, or touch the hide if the corpse is laid on, wrapped in, or sewn in one. The top of the head, *turyeet*, is oriented to the east for both male and female so that the eyes of a male actually “look” north since it is laid on its right side while the eyes of an interred female “look” south because it is laid on its left side. This custom may lead back to a likely ancient practice that required that after the husband, especially if a king, died, the wife committed suicide in order to immediately join him in the next life and hence were laid together side by side facing each other in the natural sleeping manner.

We would expect the Kalenjiin, and the others who revered the sun as the chief symbol of Deity, to bury their dead eyes facing east, because that was where they faced when praying. That indeed was the practice in Egypt during the dynastic times up to the Middle Kingdom (2050 – 1750 BC): head pointing north, face east. But the Kalenjiin were following the 9th to 11th Dynasty (about 2200 to 2000 BC) burial customs of Denderah, closer to their Tto and Sebbeney legendary cradle-land, of orienting graves and bodies heads East, legs West, face North or South (Cf. Petrie, 1924:142).¹

It would seem that the would-be natural choice of orienting the face to the east in a north-south grave was compromised when it was considered that a man and his wife ought to face each other even in death. If the man had to face east, the woman would have had to face west and no one would want to face west, not even in death! In death, they were beginning a new life with great hope, and new life and hope symbolically lay in the east, while death and despair symbolically lay in the west. So, finally, it would seem that a compromise was struck: the man “looked” north lying on his right side while the woman “looked” south lying on her left side. That way, both bodies were laid in an east-west axis, the crowns of the heads pointing east—the most esteemed point on a compass.

Even if the burials of husband and wife were separated by long periods, at the time of burying the one that died later, he or she would be laid side by side in the prescribed manner—joining the spouse late but, nevertheless, in the traditional sleeping position of living couples. A

¹ Dynastic dating from *Oxford Interactive Encyclopedia*, 1997.

nomadic lifestyle, such as the Kalenjiin lived for certain lengths of time in the past, would not always allow the side-by-side burials because homes shifted often. But the required symbolism would still be fulfilled by laying corpses in the prescribed manner wherever the individuals fell. This included even the circumstances where a body was laid for the hyenas to devour. Such a corpse still had to be laid down in the prescribed manner.¹

Among the Kalenjiin, funerals remained an almost casual affair and participation in actual burial was minimised to the extent it was physically possible. It was an unpleasant duty to carry, *keesut*, a corpse either for burial or for disposal otherwise. This, as well as the entire work of arranging the body on the ground, as we have already seen, was done by the man's eldest son *alone*. He held the body by the armpits lifted and carried it. This was witnessed by the deceased's second son, but preferably by the first son by the second wife if there was one who was old enough for this largely passive role. The witness would help from behind with the legs if it became necessary, but he was still technically a mere witness who by so doing incurred only minimal additional moral uncleanness (Cf. Huntingford, 1953b:147). If the sons were too young or if there was none, the man's oldest surviving brother did, if none, a paternal relative, if there was none still, a man was hired. And any of the substitutes would have to do it all alone as well, with the inevitable witness tagging along.

All were paid for the undertaking job, even if they were the deceased's own sons. They were paid because they had handled a body, of whose mere sight polluted morally, let alone the touching of it. Because of the "polluting" effect of death, and the high handling charges, the handlers were reduced to the smallest number possible.

Disposal of bodies whether by burial or by laying them down for hyenas to eat, was always towards any convenient direction in relation to the home of the deceased, such as where there was a bush, but strictly excluding the East, "since the East is the direction of health, life and prosperity *sopondo*" (Orchardson, 1961:104).

¹ The author's personal experience of a traditional Kalenjiin-style burial is still limited to that of the male in Kipsigiis country. It is important to note that while the traditional body orientation may be as described, it may not be practical everywhere, but only owing more to variations in topography than in culture. The Kipsigiis country is more varied in topography than Keiyo and Marakwet for instance, and gives the people the choice to orient interred bodies more strictly in accordance with ancient custom. The latter two northern countries are characterised by land sloping West to East, where Kerio Valley lies to the East. So homes are built to the west, higher up the hill. The rule seems to dictate that if the body is interred on sloppy land, the legs will have to be oriented downhill and the head oriented uphill. The example comes from Marakwet where land slopes from West to East. So the bodies are buried here head to the West, i.e., towards the higher ground where the houses are located. The feet are oriented to the East, i.e., towards the valley below. Since the male lies on his right side, his eyes "look" South while the female's eyes "look" North (Cf. Kipkorir, 1973:66). Whether this custom came as a result of the desire to orient the head homewards, as Kipkorir says, or it came as a result of the desire to lay the body in the natural manner of a person lying down resting on sloppy ground, i.e., legs downhill and head uphill, we may never be certain.

It is said of the Sebei (Cf. Goldschmidt, 1986) which ordinarily would go for the rest of the Kalenjiin, that the chief mourner was the deceased man's next younger full brother. The chief mourner, unless he was too frail, would have to be the bearer of the body. But in certain ways, some of the Sebei customs sound so un-Kalenjiin-like and more Luo-like—what with the reluctance on the part of the Kalenjiin old to discuss death and burial and thereby leave us in a wiser position. The younger full brother would supervise the burial, and afterwards “inherit” the widows. If no suitable brother existed, then the deceased's eldest son would do the job and later “inherit” his father's widows except his own biological mother.

After death had been “chased” away on the fourth day during a ritual ceremony, the man who would inherit the widows was to have ritual sex with each one of the widows in order of seniority—excepting his own mother, where a son performed the chief undertaker's duty. By this sexual act, the man cleaned off the ash (also literally) of moral uncleanness, from the private parts of the widows. Otherwise, he and everyone else within the *kootaapchii* had abstained from sex until after this fourth day since the day of burial. The deceased's widows, who were confined for four days, during which time the ash that they had applied all over their private parts would stay undisturbed, were supervised in their roles and behaviour by another widowed woman who had been passed through the same procedure after her own husband's death. In this role of supervising newly widowed women, she was referred to as a *motirioot*, a technical term applicable to all official ceremonial witnesses.

The man who would inherit the widows was also confined with the widows. During those four days of intense moral uncleanness, they observed the no-touching-food-by-hand rules. These were similar to the rules that the newly circumcised inmates were subjected to before *labeet aap euun* (being allowed to use their hands) ceremony. It would appear that the four days originally represented a period of fasting. Not touching food with one's hands was symbolic of not having eaten. But since they ate anyway by means of a wooden spoon, *segeetyet*, the stress seems to have been more on the *moral uncleanness* of their bodies in relation to the *wholesome* food than on a fasting.

All were later shaven and led to the river to bathe, and they came back from the river wearing brand new clothes (this meant that they had changed status, but it also meant that they had cast away the impurity brought about by a death that was so close to them). On their journey back from the river, they were forbidden to look back. Of this Prof. W. Goldschmidt says “I also believe the ancient symbols of Orpheus and Lot's wife—the taboo against looking back—are part of this context of fear of the evil inherent in death, not of the spirit of the deceased” (Goldschmidt, 1986:66-68).

The burial of a woman was the responsibility of her youngest son. A woman's body was laid on the ground in an identical pose as that described above in respect of a man, except that she lay on her left side.

Death of very old people, of great grandfather or great grandmother level, was not supposed to be mourned. And, as a rule, no one was allowed to mourn a grandparent. As for the very old, it was said that they had reached the place where they had expected to reach for many years and, therefore, there was no cause to cry over their demise. The people, in fact, chat happily away as they perform the last rites for the elderly deceased (Cf. Huntingford, 1953b:149).

15.5.2 *The Burial of the King in Particular*

In the fairly classless society that the Kalenjiin had managed to build, the *Oorgoiyoot*, who was the most senior person within his jurisdiction, enjoyed the privileges of a royal, but when it came to his “burial”, he was “buried” just like the “commoners”. This meant that he was buried in his cattle yard, *boma*, under some earth and cow dung if he had died a grandfather and especially if he had attained the coveted status of great-grandfatherhood by the time of his death. But, like the younger “commoner”, he was disposed of in the bush for the hyenas to devour, if he had died younger. This was irrespective of his moral reputation in society, irrespective of his personal level of economic achievement, and irrespective of the esteem and power that he had enjoyed within his area of jurisdiction. It was age that counted the most in determining whether the dead qualified for real burial closer home or for disposal out there in the bush.

An early British colonial officer, Hopley (1902:37), made reference to a Kalenjiin *Oorgoiyoot*'s burial thus:

“Formerly, when an important chief or a big medicine man (*Laibon*) died he was buried in a shallow trench in his cattle yard, and a big mound of cattle dung was built over the body, and the mound was covered with a pile of thorns. Poyisia, the father of the present *Laibon* Kibeles, was so buried.”

An informant from a former *laibon-Oorgoiyoot* house told the author a story about the demise of his father, and the manner of the disposal of his body. His father was the one-time *Oorgoiyoot* of an eastern province of the Kipsigiis country. The province was later seized by the British government for the settlement of Europeans. But the informant's father retained the informal charge of the affairs of the African workers and “squatters” in the European farms after his entire territory had been so expropriated and settled by Europeans. When he died, around 1929, his body was taken to the bush and left for the hyenas to do their sacred duty.

The informant remembers this vividly although he was only five or so years old then. As an innocent boy, he had gone to the bush and tried to wake up his beloved father so that they may come back home together. Unknown to him then, the hyenas had refused to grab the great man's body soon enough after it had been disposed of in the bush. The body was beginning to swell up and if it had been allowed to burst before the hyenas would co-operate, a terrible curse would have befallen his entire family. The hyena being the vehicle by which the spirit left the earth, according to Kalenjiin belief, it was important that a body which had been laid out should be eaten, because if it was not, the spirit could not get to spirit-land, and would stay above ground from where, as a ghost—distinct from a spirit—it would haunt the living (Cf. Huntingford,

1953b:139, 150). A goat was therefore urgently slaughtered and parts of its carcass placed beside the king's swelling body. The hyenas were duly baited and they performed their turn before the worst could happen. The *laibon-Oorgoiyoot* had therefore lived an honourable life as his body, in death, had passed the test, for it had been accepted in the prescribed manner and the soul was duly processed and transmitted forth to the world of spirits from where it would see to the welfare of its own descendants or, at least, leave them alone.

Huntingford (1953:137) lists a number of observations with regard to the role of the hyena as a principal player in "burials" in his book, *The Nandi of Kenya*. He says, "The Hyena is the vehicle by which the spirit leaves the earth and travels to spirit land". He then recounts a story told him by the Nandi that hyenas talked to each other at night—making innocent people come out of their houses at night—and compares the fable favourably with similar beliefs told about the hyena by "Hamitic peoples of North-eastern Africa" (i.e. Egypt). The latter accounts were recorded by Agatharchides in the 2nd century BC. Huntingford also compares the Nandi belief that the hyena was hermaphroditic, i.e. bisexual, as recorded by Hollis in 1909, with similar beliefs recorded by Aristotle of Greece in his *History of Animals* VIII, in which he also says that hyenas spoke like human beings at night. They would call out a man by his name at night. Thinking that someone who knew him was visiting, a naive man would come out of his house and he would be grabbed immediately. The hyena of the Greek fables was called *crocottas*. We now continue with the discussion on burials.

The king of the Ba-Nyankole whose self-poisoning for fear of great age and its possible ramifications, we have alluded to, also had his body arranged and left in the forest for the hyena. It rotted and, ideally, a maggot emerging from it turned into the royal totem, lion, as we said further above. This what amounts to a metamorphosis, heralded the onset of the process of organising or, as often happened, fighting for succession to the throne by the princes (Cf. Brandon, 1970:38).

This treatment of corpses, whether royal or non-royal, was typical of the nomadic pastoralists, which the Ankole and the Kalenjiin were prior to settling on their present respective territories. The more settled peoples, like the Baganda, had evolved elaborate burial customs. The Baganda, like the Kalenjiin, are arranged in segmental, patrilineal, totemic clans. Unlike the Kalenjiin, however, the Baganda maintained clan burial grounds. They buried the body in the designated burial ground, but not before breaking off one lower jaw. The jaw was retained in the shrine in order that during prayer, by means of and through it, the survivors would obtain communion and communication with the ancestor it represents together with all the other ancestors whose severed jaws had been similarly interred in the shrine of the clan. The Baganda

king's body, after the inevitable dismemberment of the jaw that was destined for the royal shrine, was treated in more or less the same manner although his body was buried in large impressive tombs that were and are still superbly maintained in perfect condition to receive the bodies of successors. Such royal tombs are a big tourist attraction in Buganda today (Cf. Brandon, 1970:38). The Baganda, unlike the historically nomadic peoples, the Kalenjiin, the BaNyankole etc., have always been a settled community and could therefore afford to view burial, tombs and the burial grounds, with a sense of permanency.

Compare the Kalenjiin people's method of disposing of the body of a king, as well as anyone else's, to the extremes recorded further north, where the related Bari, in much older times, buried the body of their dead ruler, the rainmaker, along with two of his servants who had to be killed for this purpose following the death of their master. One was the man who used to carry his royal stool wherever the monarch went, while the other was his royal pipe bearer. They were buried under the platform on which the king's body was interred (Cf. Seligman, 1932:294).

The Lotuko nation of Sudan, also related to the Bari and to the Kalenjiin, buried the rainmaker with a living person from a particular clan. The latter was tied up and laid to one side of the lifeless body of the monarch, who may or may not have been a woman, before being covered all over with soil. The bones of both were later exhumed and kept in separate pots. It was believed that the exhumation averted sicknesses within the family while at the same time it promoted fertility.

The Lotuko, royal or non-royal, who died violent deaths, such as in war, were not buried. They were left to rot where they had fallen. But should they escape death on the spot and they were then able to stagger, or be carried home still alive, only to die of those wounds later, they would still be disposed of in the wild (Cf. Seligman, 1932:339).

The death by appointed suicide, as we have seen, of the king of the Kintu-speaking Ba-Nyoro of Uganda, similarly brought bad news to those closest round about him. The first was his chief wife whose last duty to him was to hand him his cup of poison. She was clubbed to death herself on top of his open grave. So was the virgin boy whose duty had been to drive the sacred cows daily to be milked for his royal master. This boy would be the one who, by virtue of his virginity, would drink daily the milk that remained after the king had had his fill. He also kept strictly to the king's diet of beef and milk and no vegetables. He lived like a little but, by virtue of his virginity; holy double of the king. The chief wife, the virgin boy and the king—the physically, technically, and morally closest of buddies when still alive—were then buried together (Cf. Frazer, 1910:530).

Perhaps this innovation was meant to reduce incidences of assassination of the king, such as by secret poisoning by or with the complicity of those physically very close to him. The close servants of the Bari and Lotuko monarchs respectively; the chief wife of the Nyoro king, and the virgin boy who drank the remainder of his milk, always had to keep in mind the fact that the well-being and the fate of the monarch was absolutely intertwined with their own.

We perhaps should introduce, at this stage, an enlightening speculation about the role and essence of the Nyoro virgin boy, the closest soul mate of the king. This speculation has been sparked by a recent controversy in the court of the Buganda king. When the current king was ready to marry in 1999, he was required to "marry" a virgin in a mock ceremony prior to marrying the wife he desired. No one expected the 38-year old woman he desired to marry to be a virgin, so the mock marriage to the young virgin became even more crucial. The king ought to have a "perfect" bride, and this included her virginity. But this "perfection" would soon be interfered with when the queen submitted to the king. The king needed to have his cake and eat it too. So the virgin wife that he ought to keep was left untouched by the king and no other man would be allowed to touch her. She was the double of the king's effective wife, but the perfect double that was condemned to virginity and "perfection" for life on behalf of the queen; and this so that the king retained at least one "perfect" wife for as long as he lived. During the recent controversy, the Baganda "traditionalists" insisted that the king marry and retain such a "perfect" wife while the "progressives" argued for such a virgin's human rights: inalienable rights to sex, children and family. The parents of the virgin girl were the least bothered—who would mind a king for a son-in-law and a daughter as the "shadow queen"?

By the process of simple analogy, we may appreciate that the virgin cowboy who drank the remainder of the king's own milk and kept to the king's diet, was entrusted to live a celibate virgin life, at the time considered a moral perfection, on behalf of the monarch. He was additionally, and this is quite telling in itself, expected to maintain a perfect body, no one may touch him and people even cleared away from his path as if for the king himself. He may not get involved in risky pursuits that would as much as even scratch his skin and draw blood; for that was the king's skin and the king's blood and the king would feel the hurt just as if he had been injured himself (Cf. Frazer, 1910:527).

The virgin boy who sacrificed his pleasure and lived a holy celibate life on behalf of the Nyoro king was, therefore, the philosophical counterpart of the virgin shadow wife of the Buganda king who sacrificially kept the same virtues on behalf of the effective Queen of Buganda.

Now the virginity or otherwise of a man, unlike that of a woman—a mere peep into whose pudendum would confirm either way—was impossible to ascertain. So no chances were taken and as soon as the virgin cowboy attained puberty he was married off by the king personally and was replaced by another virgin boy who would continue to live a chaste life on behalf of the king (Cf. Frazer, 1910:528). It follows, logically, that the virgin boys who were recruited into this role by kings who had attained great age, were the ones that risked the most being buried together with the monarch as well as with the latter's chief wife in the manner touched on above.

It may never become absolutely clear to us why Africans in general came near to worshipping virginity whether it related to the male or to the female. Perhaps the limit of the practice was represented by the Borana (Oromo) treatment of young boys who were of the first grade, called *dabballe* and who, being so young, were naturally virgins. Borana women who had no children of their own would look for a boy who was still in *dabballe* grade and seek to absorb blessing from him so that they may have children of their own. Men, who were unable to acquire property, or to succeed otherwise in society, would also seek out a *dabballe* and receive his blessings through what we may call spiritual osmosis. The *dabballe* boys were held to be among the principal mediators between man and Deity. Intriguingly, a boy in *dabballe* grade was regarded as a girl, dressed and addressed as one, even took a girl's name. And even more intriguingly, the *dabballe* boys never had sisters who would rival them in "girlhood". Any baby girl who was born to a mother whose son was still a *dabballe* was exposed and left to die. The occasional childless woman from afar off would see in this a chance to adopt a child at this stage, although all would prefer adopting a boy who would become a *dabballe*.¹

Nobody dared punish a *dabballe*. The entire grade was treated like the virgin boy who was the little double of the Nyoro king; they were not allowed to wander off too far from the precincts of home lest they were harmed. This was a stage they occupied for eight years. After that they graduated into boys and into the next grade, junior *gamme*, which was less voluptuous for them for they worked, got real boy's names that they kept for life, and could be punished for mistakes. A few would probably loose virginity here and there at this stage and there was no knowing who

¹ The exposing of baby girls just so that the favoured boys may grow up unrivalled in their acted girlhood and in order to allow the "smooth flow" of the age-grading system, may sound barbaric to anyone. Should a retrospective condemnation be duly called for here, then the same treatment ought to be extended to those that did worse in this infanticidal respect: the ancient Greeks and their kin who "could never understand why the Egyptians took good care of all their children instead of exposing three quarters of them, disabled or not, on heaps of refuse" (Diop, 1996:131).

had not; so the entire membership of grade II set were apparently assumed to have lost that coveted morally "excellent" status (Cf. Legesse, 1973:52-53).¹

The preoccupation with the virginity of the females was, however, the more widespread and prevalent variant practice among the related and the more distant African peoples. The great examples of Cheemarus, or Cheptaleel, of Kalenjiin, and Isis (Asiis) of ancient Egypt, who may be one and the same person, come to mind. But mention of virgin girls and women leads us back to the era of human sacrifices where the most valued victims were such virgin girls.

The king of the Janjero, an Omotic sub-ethnic group of south-western Ethiopia, who are ethnically and historically related to the Kalenjiin, would be buried quite sinisterly, one might put it, standing on a virgin girl. The requirement was that she be physically and morally perfect and the perfection requisite demanded that she be alive at the beginning of her "journey" with the lifeless king. The grave was dug in a virgin forest and the girl was wrapped in cotton cloth and laid horizontally at the bottom of the grave. The king's coffin would be lowered and rested vertically so that his "feet" stood on the virgin, both bodies describing letter T upside down. The walls of the grave were plastered with cotton cloth and the grave closed with wooden planks. The girl was thus buried in her perfect state, dying no one would know how long after the lid was placed on the mouth of the grave (Cf. Baldick, 1997:142).

We note, with relief, that although key cultural traits of the Omotic-speakers mirror those of the Kalenjiin, unlike them the Kalenjiin had maximum respect for life, no matter whose and human sacrifice was unknown in Kalenjiinland since the sacrifice-for-rain days of Cheemarus, the mythical version of Cheptaleel, or Asiis, who might be Isis. It is remembered though that once,

¹ It may be of interest to note that the *dabballe* boys were given ugly derogatory names in a manner reminiscent of the *tegeriisyek* children of Kalenjiin. Their hairstyle, which required that a tuft of hair be left untouched at the fontanelle (immediately behind the forehead) is also identical to the hairstyle required of Kalenjiin *tegeriisyek* (Cf. Van de Loo's pictures, 1991 #14). This hairstyle would seem to have been inspired by the tuft on the head of the kingfisher or the pileated woodpecker. The Kalenjiin call that tuft of hair *song'onyet* (Cf. Orchardson, 1961:56). *Tegeriisyek* were children who were born subsequent to the death of an immediate preceding sibling. Such babies were taken to the roads for strangers to "carry off", for they were "unwanted" babies. Others would mockingly be "disposed" of in the burrows of ant bears and hyenas. The mock exposure of *tegeriisyek* babies, together with the derogatory names of ignoble animals, or names from neighbouring enemy communities, that they were given, it was hoped, would reduce the interest of the evil eye in such children and, therefore, they would have greater chances of surviving than those they followed. The Kalenjiin limited this treatment to only those children whose preceding siblings had died by the time they were born and extended the regard for the lifetime of the individual although at puberty they were free to dispense with the curious hairstyle after a ritual shaving. On their part, the Borana widened it to include all boys for a temporary period (eight years), and for the same reason as that of the Kalenjiin; to mockingly disfigure them (including giving them ugly names) in the eyes of the evil ones. The practice of dressing them in girls' attire, allowing their hair to grow like that of girls and giving them ugly names as well as females' names, may also have been calculated to mislead the external enemies, apart from the local evil eye, who would want to kill men and boys and spare women and girls during a cattle raid. The Tugen and Keiyo also employed the same trick quite often. It was based on the same rationales although their boys would often carry the females' names for the rest of their lives unlike among the Borana where exit out of the *dabballe* grade required that the ugly as well as the females' names be ditched as well (Cf. Legesse, 1973:54).

during the early days of colonial rule when the Kalenjiin *Oorgoiyoot* were still ruling under the colonial superstructure, a Nandi *Oorgoiyoot* decided to test the then new (to him) weapon, a gun, on a member of his court who died on the spot. The act was considered so morally injurious that the *Oorgoiyoot* had to abdicate thereafter. By the one act of murder, he had squandered all his moral capital and was unfit to tread on grass let alone rule. Contrast this with the situation in Southern Ethiopia where it was one of the requirements of the king to kill a sacrificial victim, a man, before ascending to power and from there expect the subjects to sacrifice at least one man—usually an old man who had no family—every year in order to keep the rains falling (Cf. Baldick, 1997:142).

We may note, with relief as well, that the Africans themselves were gradually dispensing with some of the cruel royal funerary customs even before the twin forces of colonisation and Christianity had set in. For instance, a relatively more recent innovation had reduced the burial of the Bari king's assistant to mere symbolism. This positive, humane innovation saw one of the servants descending to the king's grave, and remaining (alive) for some time under the latter's burial platform. Meals were lowered down to him, as he stayed put down below, for as long as it took the king's body to burst open—usually approximately three days. Only then would he come out of the tomb (Seligman, 1932:294).

The above examples may indicate an unexpected material difference between the customs of the Kalenjiin on the one hand, and those of at least two of their kindred groups of Sudan, one from Southern Ethiopia, and a fellow pastoralist group from Uganda on the other, in such an important custom as that to do with burial. However, it should not be forgotten that the Sudanese, the Ethiopian as well as the Ugandan counterparts, have been agricultural and sedentary for much longer than the Kalenjiin have been. People who were constantly on the move did not, as a rule, bury, let alone come back at a later date to exhume the bones. In fact, among the Kalenjiin, one's coming into contact with a human corpse, or even a human skeleton, required that one be cleansed immediately!

In contrast, the burial customs of at least the Xhosa people of South Africa, who in this respect as well as in others, are supposed to have little in common with Kalenjiin burial customs owing to the great distance and linguistic gap, if nothing else, tell a different story. According to Alberti, writing in 1807, a dead Xhosa king was honoured with a burial in his cattle kraal by his officials who first wrapped him up in his leather clothing. Then some oxen which, for this reason, became impure and not fit for slaughter and human consumption thereafter, were led over the burial mound where they trampled on it back and forth until the graveyard achieved evenness with the surrounding area and would soon be unidentifiable. The Xhosa "commoner's" body was

laid down on the grass in the bush for the hyenas to come and devour. The dyeing person was led out to such a favourable spot to die conveniently because if he or she died in the house, the body would be left to rot therein, everyone else fleeing the house (93-96).

The burial in the kraal for the king was comparable to the burial of any elderly person in the cattle pen among the Kalenjiin, although among the Kalenjiin, the immediate area of the burial mound was secured and marked by pegs. The pegs were planted in a circular manner around the mound and seedlings of a plant called *lepekweet* were planted on the mound as a permanent marker, while the Xhosa, on their part, according to Alberti's early 19th century report, went out of their way to erase memory of the burial ground. The dumping of bodies of "commoners" for the hyena in Xhosaland may be compared to similar treatment of the bodies of pre-grandfather level persons among the Kalenjiin of the time.

The milk from the cow, technically called in Kalenjiin *chemuusit*, "she of corpse", that was given as compensation to the man who carried the corpse, could not thereafter be drunk by anyone else other than him because it was held to be impure by association. In fact as morally impure as the cow that produced it and which had been acquired as payment for a dirty job. He alone could drink such milk because he had sunk to such low levels of moral impurity at the time of undertaking. Among the Xhosa of that time, the cow whose milk the principal relative of the recently deceased used to rinse his or her mouth to rid self of moral uncleanness after the statutory confinement and bath, was never milked again and it was never slaughtered for meat or eaten when it died a natural death (Alberti, 1807:93-96). The subtle differences, subtle sameness and multiple direct resemblance between the respective Kalenjiin and Xhosa mortuary dispositions, are strong hints to either a common origin or to the receiving of influence from a common source that dates back to prehistoric times.

The similarity of the symbols linked with death and impurity i.e. milk, cattle, cattle kraal and the hyena—which, incidentally, neither of the communities would kill—not to mention the many other areas of cultural congruence such as in initiation by circumcision, in singing and dancing, is astounding. It should be enough to induce an active search for possible cognatic connections, or contiguous coexistence at least, in greater historical and prehistoric times between the Xhosa, the Kalenjiin and other Nilotic pastoral kindred groups of Eastern Africa such as the Maasai and the Turkana.

The old African burial customs that required that the king be "accompanied" to the other world serve to indicate to us graphically how important and all-powerful virtual earthbound demigods those monarchs indeed were.

In Eastern Africa, however, there are no reports made of royal burials whose wakes were so devastating, at least none close to the West African and Dahomean scale in particular, as reported by T.E. Bowdich in his *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashante* (1819):

“The death of the king was the signal for the women of the palace to destroy furniture and utensils and then kill themselves, that they might at once join their lord with his belongings. At the death of Andāzū II in 1789, 595 of these women are said to have perished, in addition to a suitable following of soldiers, Amazons, eunuchs, bards etc.”

These were later followed by annual sacrifices of men, these being the king’s messengers “to the other world” each one of them going to report every good act by the serving king (Seligman, 1966:43-44 quoting Bowdich, 1819).

If the reports of Bowdich (1819) and others (e.g. Sir Richard Burton in 1862—Seligman, 1966:46), Rattray (1927, 104 ff) of such barbarism are true—the writings of Rattray seem well-supported with illustrations and therefore are highly convincing—then these acts are not beyond condemnation even by the modern Africans, the descendants of those people. However, caution is needed as European explorers and missionaries were not above adding colour to field reports in order to justify forceful foreign intervention by western powers which would then soften the African people by the power of the gun, and thereby prepare the ground for commercial exploitation and missionary work.

Rattray (1927:106) went a step farther than the stereotypical limits of the earlier missionaries and explorers. He made an attempt at unearthing the philosophy behind the killings that followed the death of a king among the Ashanti. The elders told him that it was “incumbent upon those left on earth to see that the king entered the spirit world with a retinue befitting his high station. Such killings thus became a last pious homage and service to the dead.”

Although the majority of those killed in order to accompany the Ashanti king were slaves, jailbirds and criminals awaiting execution, some high ranking officials, among them selected or volunteering wives of the dead monarch, were also despatched in order that the departed monarch may not be deprived of this calibre of servants and consorts as well in the next world. Of the convicts and others who were kept aside for sacrifice, Rattray (1927:106f) reports:





“There was actually a whole village inhabited by such people awaiting the carrying out of their sentence, who went about their various occupations in the ordinary way. The village was called Akyerekuro and was founded by King Kwaku Dua I. *Akyere* is the word used for persons sacrificed, or to be sacrificed, *kuro* is village.”

While Rattray narrates that most of those killed in order to accompany the Ashanti king had their heads chopped off—indeed to the rhythm of drumbeats—he says that some were stunned, or mercifully made to drink themselves senseless, before the actual slaying took place. The practice of stunning court officials and others that were expected to follow their king, is known, from archaeological work, to have gone on in ancient Egypt latest up to the 2nd Dynasty (about 2700 BC). However, evidence from the pictures on the walls such as on those of the tomb of Rameses VI (of New Kingdom 1550-1050 BC)¹ indicates that the custom continued much longer even in Egypt. The custom was also associated with Southern Ethiopia, with the Omotic king going down the grave with at least one man from a designated clan who had to be of sound health. Elsewhere, the designated sections of the courts of the Arabs and the Celtic nation of Sotiani respectively, were known to be ready to die with the king as a matter of absolute necessity (Cf. Petrie, 1924:146, Baldick, 1997:138).

¹ Chronology: OIE 1997.



PICTURE 26: Concrete evidence of human sacrifice for the purpose of accompanying the king, from the tomb of Rameses VI of the 20th Dynasty, around 1000 BC. Although these beheaded “victims” are baptised “enemies” (of Egypt) by Egyptologists, such as Piankoff and Rambova (1954), the fact that their “misfortune” is depicted on such sacred walls as those of a king’s tomb, suggests that they were only sacrificial “victims”. That in number they are always either four or multiples of it, suggests that their role was sacred; number four being the ancient Egyptians’ sacred number as indeed it precisely still is for the Kalenjiin (discussed at length in Appendix 5). These “victims” were, therefore, meant to be honoured—whether or not they were originally prisoners—for their self-sacrifice in order to accompany their Lord. The Nilotic people, as well as many other African nations, honoured the sacrificed person to the extent of virtually worshipping him or her. The key words in hieroglyphics

here   *sht*, “cut off” (Cf. F.Dict. 262—Kalenjiin *swacheet/swageet* “slashing?”), and the less-clear   (as in Kalenjiin *sach/sake*[t] “sacrifice?” i.e. “cutting up” for sacrifice?) suggest sacrifice—and not punitive execution—with little ambiguity. The fact that their hands were bound with ropes (in scenes previous to this) does not necessarily indicate that they were unwilling captives. Since the slaying had to be done ceremonially, they probably had to be bound in the manner of sacrificial animals such as goats or bulls (*Picture from Rambova 1954, # 132*).

This whole thing, which may be considered repugnant indeed by modern standards of morals and ethics, had a religious basing to it as we have seen. It was based on the premise of immediate life-after-death in the next world. Those ancients genuinely believed that the spirit of a human being did not die. And so the king, expecting that his spirit would live on in the next world—and still as a king—needed to make an impressive entry into that world, with a retinue in his wake no less befitting his status. Besides, his committed subjects would not let the king exit alone with a whimper like a pauper. All this was based on the same very strong belief in life after death and the desire for an assured prospect of keeping the same social status thereafter. And rather than lose the privilege of working in court, the enthusiasm and conviction with which these members of the court sought to maintain such privilege is understandable. No doubt all were brought up from youth to believe that this was the greatest thing to do, the most honourable way to die, and it probably earned one the equivalent of martyrdom.

On the negative side, it is conceivable that a king who had held unchecked power became jealous of the continued life for those from his court when his own was about to expire. These were the people with whom he had interacted most intimately and constantly; the men and women he had ordered around, probably even kicked and whipped, and who would otherwise not mind his departure. A malicious “don’t laugh at me, we are going together” attitude on the part of the king, may have given rise to this repugnant custom, therefore. But, as argued elsewhere above, the motive may also have lain in the need to stem assassination of the king by court officials before whom, by virtue of their intimate roles within the court, he was absolutely vulnerable. They were discouraged from assassinating him because their own fate was tied to his. This ingenious mechanism, therefore, if that was its purpose, engendered “genuine”, if obsequious, statements like “long live the king (and, under the breath, ‘so that we may live long as well’)!”

Summary of Chapter 15: The *Oorgoiyoot*

Much evidence was adduced to support the stand that the *Oorgoiyoot* indeed ruled and did so through the chief judge and minister, the *Kiirwogiindet*, and his court and council. The latter institution handled day-to-day administrative and judicial matters while the *Oorgoiyoot* confined himself to authorising military campaigns—as referred to him by the *Kiirwogiindet's* council—and other state matters that came to him either directly or through the same council channel. Granted that he was held to be the physician of the last resort, the *Oorgoiyoot* was not a mere medicine man, the term coined by the colonisers in order to set the *Oorgoiyoot* as far removed from the centre of power, authority and administration as they could. The office was hereditary like all kingships, and, besides, a mere medicine man would have had no *locus standi* that would enable him receive taxes from his fellow citizens as well as from far and wide. Not even the council of *Kiirwogiindet* collected taxes for work done. Only the *Oorgoiyoot* did, often in return for no work. By the threat of withholding rain and the prosperity that came with it, he held sway. This could lead to excesses and it did, especially when they began marrying the most beautiful girls from the non-royal clans forcefully.

Unfortunately, again, the *Oorgoiyoot-in-waiting* was not rigorously trained for the office, often not prepared at all, hence the hopeless weakness of it before the British might. The shortcomings stemmed from the poor sense of own strength and weakness before the new enemy on the part of the *Oorgoiyoot* and his people, especially in Nandi. However, successions were fairly smooth because appointments were attributed to Asii and not forced. They contrasted markedly with such systems as that of the Ba-Nyoro of the Great Lakes area whose princes were required to fight it out until the last man left standing was declared king. The Xhosa had a better system still: the first son by the king's most senior wife by birth, i.e. in genealogical terms, ascended to the throne upon the demise of his father. These kings often had to be careful not to marry women as the second or third wives etc. who were by descent superior to their first wives for that could easily lead to problems come the time of succession.

For each reason that a British administrator, Huntingford, gave in support of his claim that the *Oorgoiyoot* was not a divine, all-powerful ruler, he gave a contradicting one. His self-contradicting explanations, added to the proper accounts of others, and to our own knowledge gathered by means of oral fieldwork, confirm that the *Oorgoiyoot* was but a divine king like the rest of them in West Africa and in the Great Lakes region, these being the ones that Huntingford is willing to call divine kings. Like other divine kings, he was answerable only to Asii, claiming that he descended directly from Asii. He was no absolutist, but he was above the law all the

same, a paradoxical great disadvantage in that he could be executed on the basis of a complaint without being subjected to the due process of the law and thereby being allowed to defend himself before the court of the sagacious *Kiirwogiindet*.

An early western non-British commentator, Peristiany, acknowledged that the indigenous structures that were found in place by the British were indeed centralised, effective and efficient. Huntingford, the British commentator, once again, later said the opposite but, in the process, yet all over again, contradicted himself multiply.

We noted that the pre-colonial Kalenjinland's office nomenclature with regard to the royal and politico-judicial spheres, were similar to those of ancient Egypt. The English word "royal" and its synonyms and derivatives, which are known mostly in their western context, could be traced back to Africa. Frakfort, a notable western scholar, admits this borrowing from Africa although, in the same breath, he calls the same Africans "savages".

The type of divine ruler of any particular nation or sub-nation depended on the nature of the economy. A pastoral economy generated a *laibon* type *Oorgoiyoot* who was preoccupied with organising and sanctioning raids against other nations. A crop-based economy that was situated in an area of scarce rainfall created and elevated the rainmaker type of *Oorgoiyoot*, a typical feature of the dry Nilotic areas of Sudan. Even those areas that were dry but still depended on cattle keeping had a rainmaker running the show as the *Oorgoiyoot*. Little though, is heard of the agricultural *oorgooik* who quietly reigned side-by-side with the pastoral monarch who often enjoyed all the glamour and prestige.

The movement of *oorgooik* between Maasai and the Kalenjin was easy. An economic failure in one area led to the overthrow of the local monarch and the importation of a new one from the more prosperous community. The new dynasty would be installed and, not feeling quite confident, or at ease, would begin instigating for the persecution and physical elimination of the previous rulers and their descendants. Initially they arrived as consultants but with time many became despotic. But the people would still, through the practice of what appears to be democratic monarchy, yet go for another new one or shift loyalty and consultation from one to the other at the local level.

We have seen that although it was fairly easy to kill the leaders following one or more prophetic failures, the unethical murder out of turn by an enemy, of a leader who was acting as a peace-making envoy, could lead to war. This scenario came to pass in respect of the murder of Kipkeles by the Maasai. So the people would protect their leaders and only they could kill them at their own prompting and on their own terms.

We saw that although the lion as a totem was associated with royalty, there were times as well as there are still some ruling houses whose totem is other than lion. We noted the interesting case of Buganda where the ruling family is of leopard totem but everyone there still refers to the lion-totem family as the “royal house”.

One often hears that the kingship institution in Eastern Africa, especially as it applies between the Kalenjin and the Maasai, originated from Maasailand. We have shown that the royal words have been with the Kalenjin for a long time and that there was a well-developed vocabulary, too well established to owe origin to recent borrowing from Maasailand. Besides, the Maasai themselves believe that their own *first* king, *laiboni*, came to their land from elsewhere, and we appropriately notice an obvious Kalenjin ring to his name and to the names of several of his descendants. A group of researchers, led by J.B. Webster, in any case, has restored the theoretical origin of the institution, including that of the Maasai and the Iteso of Kenya and Uganda, back to Kalenjinland. What makes things difficult in this area, is the general reliance for survival on mystification of origin on the part of this institution and the people’s propensity to gravitate towards foreigners to fill the hot seat. A seat that could at some time down the line end up, for the occupant, in an ignominious execution by the sharpened throwing sticks.

So successful were the *oorgooik* and their entire clan in their self-mystification and claim to have control of forces that were beyond them that when one Kimnyolei was executed, and, by sheer coincidence, an eclipse of the sun followed; the people readily associated the two events on a cause-and-effect basis. The long drought that followed was given the same explanation. In fact such belief that the *Oorgoiyoot* controlled the cosmic forces were so strong that their murder could be sparked off by their assumed failure to control these forces, especially when they failed to “make” rain. It is possible that the *Oorgoiyoot* knew that these natural forces lay well outside his control, but then his claim to the throne depended on the people believing that he indeed controlled those cosmic forces. He accepted credit when things went well and had to be prepared to take blame and punishment for it when things did not go right and people suffered. It so happened that the only punishment available for a king was capital. With the benefit of hindsight, it was a collective grand folly.

We noted, however, that the *ease* with which an execution order could be secured, may trace genesis to the old practice of killing off kings before they were too old to start failing in their prophetic duties. This practice is well associated with divine-king systems and, of course, ancient Egypt—what with the Osirian example—and with much of the rest of Nilotic and Great Lakes Africa. Christianity perhaps found in this unfortunate practice an easy entry point, whereupon kings were among the first to adopt Christianity in the Great Lakes region and thus, by such

membership in a movement that disallowed suicide and ritual murder, dispensed with their terminal suicide imperative.

We related the Kalenjiin *Oorgoiyoot's* claimed ability to send his double to the battlefield to watch over his troops, to an identical claim by the Pharaoh, this being one of the shared characteristics that led us to conclude that the *Oorgoiyoot* institution was but an Eastern Africa continuation of the Pharaonic institution. The already-mentioned extensive nomenclatural sharing with regard to the royal and politico-juridical-cum-administrative structures supported this argument.

We noted that the Kalenjiin burial custom that required a body to be bound in an oxhide and buried, dated back to ancient Egyptian times where an Egyptologist, Budge, says that it was intended to effect the deceased's resurrection. So too was the habit of burying the dead with their immediate personal effects. Only reincarnationists and resurrectionists do this. We found out too that the Kalenjiin's continuing habit of interring bodies in an east-west axis, eyes to the north, for males, was common in Denderah, Egypt, at least during the period 2200 to 2000 BC. Denderah is within the general area of Tto and Sebbeny, the legendary Egyptian cradle land of Kalenjiin oral tradition.

We saw several examples over much of Africa, but notably excluding Kalenjiinland, that called for slaughter of great numbers of people to accompany a monarch who was being interred.¹ The most popular companions, who were killed in order to facilitate the accompanying of their deceased master, were those who were physically closest to the king when he was alive. This may have arisen from genuine wish on the part of the king to have this intimate company in the next world. There is also a possibility that this was an anti-assassination measure intended not only to ensure vigilance against any plots to harm the king but also to deter those physically close to the king from either assassinating him or conspiring to have him assassinated, the logic being that they had to mind that their own death would certainly follow as well, guilty or not guilty. There were also those who wanted to die with their king, while yet others thought this was a way to maintain their senior court status in the next world. The pictures of victims sacrificed to accompany the Egyptian Pharaoh are shown on the walls of Rameses VI's (New Kingdom) tomb. Archaeology has revealed evidence of such murders, done by stunning, so that the victims were buried still alive, with regard to 2nd Dynasty (about 2700 BC) interment of Pharaohs. Similar practices reportedly went on in West Africa until a century or two ago.

¹ Although the Omotic distant relatives of the Kalenjiin, and other Nilotic peoples along the Ethiopian/Sudan border, are an exception in that here the king had to be "escorted" in his death journey to the underworld.

We also noted the great Nilotic obsession with virginity; from trying to reflect by association, or by the sprinkling of holy solution, the glory that they believed that virgins of both sexes radiated; to the burying of the king standing on a sacrificed virgin. The sacrifice of virgins for rain belongs here too.

CONCLUSIONS

What have we got to say for a conclusion at the end of this project, after having travelled thousands of kilometres across the hills and valleys of Kalenjinland, across the plains of Maasailand, across the Egyptian and Israeli deserts, on foot, by road and by air? After having spent all the waking hours on it for a whole decade, in a private office; at the Coptic Centre, Nairobi; in the National Archives of Kenya; in the libraries of Kenya and South Africa and at home? And after having poured litres of ink onto acres of paper?

We inquired into the Kalenjin people's oral tradition of origin from ancient Egypt, the land they call *Misiri* and *Tto*, from several independent disciplinary angles and we will accordingly list down our major conclusions using the same format:

Conclusions from the angle of Oral Traditions

The tradition that the ancestors of the Kalenjin originated from ancient Egypt is manifestly old and the first Europeans to comment on the Kalenjin duly noted it. Their informants were completely illiterate in that they could neither read nor write and probably were even ignorant of the population settled in Egypt in modern times, i.e. they had no external knowledge other than what they had heard from their own ancestors. The present elderly informants are not much different either in that they generally have no knowledge of the archive and book-based information on Egyptological topics and their ancestral claim owing to their illiteracy. The coincidence between their oral testimonies with the written sources can only, therefore, serve to strengthen the historicity of their tradition.

The tradition does not remember what a great place Egypt was, so the early informants were not trying to show off to the colonial officers and their compatriot anthropologists. They were merely passing on a flat oral tradition in the form in which they had received it from their parents. All those people could not have lied.

In Kenya, the legend is told reasonably uniformly all the way across the expanse between the northernmost Kalenjin section of Pokoot and the southernmost Kalenjin section of Bomet Kipsigiis; all the way across that swath of territory between the Tugen/Pokoot of Baringo East and the Sabaoth Kalenjin of Mt Elgon to the west. This legend is still being told and can be checked against the oldest archival records and double-checked with the anthropological books.

According to the standards by which oral tradition may be judged, something definite can be said about this traditional claim. The standards were set most notably by Jan Vansina, who says

that if the lines of transmission are independent, then independence has the same value as for written sources or oral history. If not, or if this cannot be shown positively, the source can still be used in a probationary status as grounds for a hypothesis. "Cross-cultural confirmation constitutes the most certain type of evidence" (Vansina 1980:275).

From the foregoing, and taking note of the geographical and socio-cultural spread of the tradition, we can say that there is truth to the legend. Such wide geographical and socio-cultural spread of the tradition suggests that an influential number of the ancestors of the Kalenjiin originated from Pharaonic Egypt. An important critic of oral tradition, Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966)¹ has conceded that legends, such as the one we have dealt with here, are not invented *ex nihilo* but that they are formed by modifying existing information and tales.

Another notable concession comes from Schecter (1980:110) who, as we saw in Chapter 1, says:

"My conclusions suggest that the data in these traditions are not ahistorical simply because they are expressed in stereotyped form, that traditional historical literature may only twist the facts—rather than fabricate them out of the whole cloth—in order to make the past conform more closely to accepted cosmological categories, and that the effort needed to evaluate historically other versions of the tale may also pay off with some reasonable measure of historical truth."

The said universality and uniformity of the Kalenjiin oral tradition of descent from the ancient Egyptians among all the sub ethnic groups meet yet another scientific standard and concession from Allen and Montell. Even though theirs discusses oral history, we need to remember that there is little that differentiates the two and that such a pioneering giant of oral methodology as Jan Vansina, in fact, uses the terms "oral history" and "oral tradition" quite interchangeably:

"The trustworthiness of an oral historical tradition is a sure bet when it is present in the repertoires of more than one group within the community, whether or not disruptive social factors are present that may tend to cause each group to be biased in its opinion of the others" (Allen and Montell, 1981:85).

On the basis of place names, the names mentioned in the tradition in particular, i.e., *Tto* and *Sebben* or *Sabiiny*, and the linear nature of the north-south axis of scattered settlements of the kin groups that are variously called Nilotic, Nilo-Hamitic, or Hamitic, all the way up to the point where we meet the southernmost reach of the Arabs and the Arabised black populations, we can say that we have reasonably defined a cradle and the migratory route. If we can, for the sake of

¹ As noted and supported by Yoder, 1980:82-83.

argument, mentally remove the Arab element, which is known to be relatively recent (arriving only from 641 AD), then we must accept that the Nilotic kin groups had settlements all the way along the Nile Valley right up to and including the Delta.

The additional element of place names, treated further in Appendix 1, only goes to enrich the place-name argument by the process of inference. These are the place names that are not mentioned specifically by the *Misiri* origin tradition but which bear pertinent meaning in the Kalenjiin language, such as “Egypt” which is ultimately from *Kiptaai* as in Kalenjiin, or *Qibtiya/Kiptaios* as recorded by the Arabs/Greeks; and “Asyut” which seems to correspond to *Suiyoot*, Kalenjiin for “wolf” or “jackal”. The correspondence can be inferred from what the Greeks called Asyut: Λύκων Πόλις (*Lycopolis*), “Wolf City”.

Conclusions from the Comparative Linguistics Exercise

Oral tradition may have made phenomenal headway as a fully trusted historiographical tool over the last few decades. However, language still excites people as the most visible and the most powerful revelatory sign of historical, social, cultural and genetic sharing. Physical looks is another powerful revelatory sign but we are denied this one by the fact that the majority of Egyptian population has now been so thoroughly mixed that the element that we would be interested in by way of visible proof can only be inferred as one of the chief ingredients. We are, therefore, left with the dead language to carry out tests on as the most important and readily verifiable revelatory item. On account of the sharing in the basic words of language between ancient Egyptian/Coptic and Kalenjiin, this being easily the most important linguistic litmus paper, we find the 60% full-score sharing, or the 86% total full-score and inferred sharing, absolutely revealing. The other points of cognacy as seen in the semantic domain arrangement of words; in syntactic analysis results vis-a-vis word order; noun-formation; the causative; reduplication; gender markers, and negation etc., only go to drive the point home beyond reasonable doubt.

Linguists assume that patterned similarities, as we can witness in the various approaches to comparative linguistics in the text, are not accidental. They are symptomatic of any of the following: mutual influence, parallel development from a similar base or from a common ancestor language. Once the incidence of chance has been ruled out, we must find for unity at the ancestral level (Cf. Katičić, 1970:7).

So, from the ample evidence of lexical and syntactic affinities, we can positively conclude that the proto-Kalenjiin spoke at least a dialect of ancient Egyptian and is what is surviving as

today's Kalenjiin language. The tradition of *Misiri* origin stands proven emphatically on that score. At the very least, we can say in this connection, which happens to coincide with Huntingford's theory of 1926, that the ancient Egyptians spoke a similar language to the one spoken by the proto-Kalenjiin because they both originated from a common cradle land south of Egypt. But even then we would be left with the tradition of *Tto* and *Sebben* (*Sabiiny*) of northern—and not southern—Egypt to explain away.

Conclusions from Comparing Religions

The area of religious beliefs, myths regarding the Holy, the supernatural etc., is a very interesting one. It has a lingering worry about it though in that, as we know, an unrelated community that speaks a completely different language from another, can, through influence or political subjugation, adopt the other's religious package almost wholly. What can be proven beyond reasonable doubt from such a scenario is only one of an association in times past. The use of the technique of comparative religion for the purpose of investigating traditions of origin suffers from that major flaw. It must, therefore, be read together with language sharing, especially from the important areas of basic words and word order, as well as other signs in order to confirm, beyond the clear historical ties, the genetic relationship—hence our resort partly to the linguistic analysis component in this work.

Religion and language, however, must cross if they are both the expressions of one culture, either presently or historically, which our hypothesis in this case says they are. That we could etymologically relate Ptah to *Ptaa*, *Kiptaai* and *Kiptaiyaat*, the title meaning “Lord”, which was given to God and to Jesus by illiterate Kalenjiin converts of the early 20th century, is revealing and there should be no doubt that they refer to one and the same historical environment and circumstances.

The names Isis and Asiis (or Aset, Asiista) have a phonetic affinity and gender association. The *tertium comparationis* of female-god idea is fulfilled by this. This *tertium comparationis* would be representing a mere typological sharing were it not also to include similarity in names. Asiis also refers to the sun and to the day and so does Ra, the name for the famous solar “god” of ancient Egypt, in both the Kalenjiin and the ancient Egyptian languages. The interchangeability of the Deity names Isis/Asiis and Ra with the word for the sun in either culture, partly led to the charge of sun worship, and this was not helped by the habit of orienting prayers to the east, preferably at sunrise, on the part of both cultures. The fact that during such prayers every key act

was repeated four times¹ in both religions completes the picture of historical unity. Apart from the unifying characteristics of the quaternity principle, the solar orientation and veneration, the interchangeability of nomenclature between the sun and Deity, and the similarity of those names across the two cultures, tell us of a historical unity with little room left for doubt.

Then there are the other names for super human forces and “gods”. Chnum or Chenemu (perhaps *Cheenemei*), “the moulder with clay”, is a name that can be explained etymologically from the standpoint of both languages and cultures; and so could Min, Menes or Monyiis and his “seed”. Others are *Rnnt*, the serpent “goddess” of harvest, which we know could only be what survives in Kalenjiin as *Ereenet* “serpent”; Set and his association with “the dog”, Kalenjiin *Seseet*, Horus and Osiris could be explained too from the standpoint of either culture albeit in a more circumstantial manner.

One of the Kalenjiin names for Asiis, Chepkeelyen Sogool, “The Lady of Nine Legs”, must remind us of the ancient Egyptians’ habit of grouping “gods” in Enneads, i.e. in nines. The other typical ancient Egyptian arrangement of “gods” into triads is also echoed in Kalenjiinland where Asiis is associated with a triad in which two irreconcilable forms of *Iilat* serve as a diametrically opposed pair under Asiis. This is a dualist characteristic within a triadic arrangement that we see in the ancient Egyptians’ Sakhmet who serves as both a positive and an adversarial force in the triad of Ptah-Sakhmet-Nefertum. The other famous triad is that of Isis-Horus-Set¹ where Horus and Set maintain a permanent adversarial relationship. That the Kalenjiin, as did the ancient Egyptians, could step out of their “obsession” with figure four as the sacred number and incorporate three and nine into the sphere of the Holy, is itself confirmatory of a historical unity.

Such multiple meeting points in divine nomenclature and association, prove to us, with little room for doubt, a unity in the past, for these are hardly challengeable pieces of evidence, regarding the veracity of the oral tradition of origin.

There are also the “gods” that are linked to the Semites that the Kalenjiin could only have adopted while still in the north, in the same way that these got into Egyptian vocabulary: *Iilat* and *Baal*. Both are Semitic storm “gods”, and “Lords of the Cloud”, which now refer respectively to the Thunder “god”, or lightning, and the cloud in Kalenjiin.

The Israelite Hill of Circumcision and the River Jordan were curiously reproduced on Kalenjiinland too, complete with their sacredness and relevance to circumcision. The Hill, Tulwaap Mmonyiis, the “Hill of (Mr?) Phallus”, otherwise known as Tulwaap Sigiis, neighbours

¹ Appendix 5 treats this aspect that is called “quaternity principle” in detail.

the River Pchooryaan (Kipchooryaan) whose root *choor* is similar in sound and meaning to the *Jor*, or *Yor* of Jordan, meaning “to roll down” in a mighty way.

The fact that circumcision is traceable to pre-historic Egyptians, that it was associated with the mountains and that the ancient Egyptian word for “river”, may be what survives in both Jordan and Pchooryaan, suggest the unity of source as Egypt. However, that both Jordan and Pchooryaan could be etymologically explained, and identically, in both Hebrew and Kalenjiin, should not be lessened by the suggestion that they both owe origin to the ancient Egyptian word. What is important is that the identical names and concepts, the nearly identical scenarios with regard to the use of such mountain and such river, particularly the related issue of circumcision, betray a common source in antiquity and emphatically prove the tradition of origin.

Then there is this association and obsession with virginity of “goddesses”, the parallel casting of the mythical Isis/Cheemarus as virgins; Isis’ crying of tears of rain that fill up the Nile in the Egyptian tradition and Cheemarus’ crying of tears that bring rain and prosperity in the Eastern African tradition, a tradition echoed from all the way south in Zululand too—where the royalist culture of the place replaces the crying virgin with a crying princess.

The tendency to want to perceive Deity in the feminine form, an attitude that outraged both the Semite prophets and the Romans alike, is another meeting point. That some “wayward” Israelites would on occasion backslide, deserting Yahweh and relapsing to the worship of the Queen of Heaven, i.e., Isis, long after leaving Egypt, tells us that this was what the Kalenjiin did too, but uninhibited by a Yahweh figure in their case. Many still do. It also informs us as to which one among the supposed Egyptian pantheon, was the real Deity. It was most likely Isis, the Asiis of the Kalenjiin context. This view, that the ancient Egyptians were monotheistic as are the Kalenjiin, is supported by non-other than Apuleius (2nd century AD) who said in his *Metamorphoses* that Isis “in One form expressed all Gods and Goddesses.” Some of the more recent Egyptologists have accepted the monotheistic essence of the ancient Egyptians, Champollion-Figeac and Wallis Budge being the prominent ones among them.

In another way we see Asiis in the attributes of the major known “gods” and “goddesses” of Egypt because each of those “gods” and “goddesses” contributed to the bundle that embodied the attributes of one another and of the one Deity that the Egyptians believed in. Whichever member from the supposed pantheon that was, He/She was equal to Asiis. In other words Asiis was brought to East Africa as the equal of all, the way Apuleius says Isis back in Egypt was too. From

¹ The author has argued that if Osiris has to be incorporated in this triad, then he takes the position of Horus and not that of Set.

this the picture should emerge that Isis is but the name written and pronounced ASIIS in the south, and that does a lot for the oral tradition by way of proof right from the ultimate reality.

We may add the common Nilotic viewing of Deity as being of dark pigmentation as another meeting point as well. Isis and Osiris were known for this bodily attribute and so was Asiis in the mythical person of Cheernarus whose name unambiguously carries the meaning.

We see another meeting point in the general name for the “god”, the “Holy”, or the “Exalted”, in ancient Egyptian *Ntr*, which is probably what survives in Kalenjiin either as *Netoroor*, “the Exalted” or *Netiliil*, “the Holy” and Maasai *Naiteru (kop)*, “the Creator (of Earth)”, or the “Beginner (of all things)”.

Conclusions from the discussion on the Ethical and Moral Code of Maat

The concept of *maat* as an embodiment of the ethical and moral code of conduct is one strong area of proof of singularity of origin. The name of the “goddess” of social justice, ethics and morality in ancient Egypt, Maat, is reduced in East Africa to a philosophical reference to the same area of concern under the same name *maat*. It confirms to us that Maat in the ancient Egyptian context was truly conceptual. What the *maat* concept proves as an element of sharing and historical unity between the ancient Egyptians and the proto-Kalenjiin goes to supplement the area that the major belief figures such as Isis, Asiis, Ptah, Amon, Ra, etc. could not prove more conclusively; the governance of social ethics and morality, the interface between religion and culture.

Maat of either culture governed that area of interrelationships between the living and the dead, between the living and between human beings and their Maker. At the word level *maat* in both ancient Egyptian and Kalenjiin, meant “fire”, “path”, “family”, and “kith and kin”. The Kalenjiin extended it to cover moral relationships and obligations between members of military regiments, and between men who were circumcised at the same time and who shared everything, including wives under certain circumstances and conditions. As for this last social aspect we are sure the ancient Egyptians observed it as well, as reported by Herodotus about 2500 years ago. Whether they also called the interrelationship within which framework it was practised, *maat*, we do not know. But we can clearly see that *maat* generally meant the same thing to both communities, as a word and as an instrument of socio-cultural management.

The doctrine of *maat*, whether one is viewing it from the ancient Egyptian standpoint or from the standpoint of the Kalenjiin, hinges upon the belief in reincarnation, what is sometimes called metempsychosis, of the soul and simultaneous continuation of life after death in the

netherworld. Both believed that the quality of that hereafter life would be commensurate with the level of righteousness achieved in the present life.

For effective social management, especially with regard to the need to guard against incestuous relationships and marriages, the society was divided into exogamous totemic clans and sub-clans. The ethical and moral code of *maat* oversaw this one too. It still does in Kalenjiinland and although totemism has unnecessarily been debated by Egyptologists as to whether it was practised by ancient Egyptians, we know it existed under *maat* as it does in Kalenjiinland, one reason being that when the Roman Emperors who banned *maat* in Egypt in order to allow Christianity to take root, they did so labelling it as “zoolatry”, which means, “worship of animals”.

All the foregoing considered, we could say positively that Maat was what was continued in the Kalenjiin *maat* system and that they were one in the past. It is another one up for the oral tradition of *Misiri* origin of the Kalenjiin.

Conclusions from the Discussion on Religious Personnel and Divine Kingship

Priesthood is hereditary and permanent in Kalenjiinland as it was in ancient Egypt. Only now is it being a bit liberalised in Kalenjiinland although this owes more to the refusal of some young sons of priests to take to the profession than it owes to change of culture.


Not only is circumcision a prerequisite to Asiisian priesthood as of ancient Egypt, but it is also one *sine qua non* role of the priests that they supervise circumcision themselves, and it is also a *sine qua non* condition that all Kalenjiin men be circumcised, all women too were so initiated until recently when significant sections of them discontinued the rite. Circumcision is an Osirian baptism complete with the death and resurrection motif as symbolised by the central act of immersion of initiands in water. We see a continuation of certain aspects of this in Christian baptism although in their case, they do not incorporate surgical circumcision. But circumcision of the ritual and surgical kind, as Herodotus said, is a “sign of Egyptianness” (Cf. Harris & Weeks, 1971:126, 127) and our argument as to the tradition of origin is well cut and dried for us in that regard. This is still an identifying trait among the Kalenjiin who are widely reputed—and supported by written accounts by competent non-Kalenjiin Kenyan historians—to have taught most of the other circumcising communities of Kenya. We hardly need further proof than these, of the veracity of the Kalenjiin people’s claim of descent from the ancient Egyptians. Additional aspects regarding the issue of circumcision are discussed in Appendix 4.


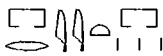
Other meeting points with regard to priesthood and its role follow: the Kalenjiin’s use of the ancient term *Poiyoot* or *Paiyoot*, “father”, “elder”, to refer to the priest of Asiis, suggests the continuation of an institution, although the Copts have since elevated it to refer only to the “Father in Heaven”; the continued (until the early days of colonial government) role of the priest as the anchor and supervisor of bull or ox sacrifice, *sageet aap eito*; the choice of a spotless white bull or ox for this purpose, all resonate ancient Egyptian practice as reported by Herodotus; the use of archaic words in prayer that are traceable to ancient Egyptian; the continuation of the requirement that moral and bodily cleanness (sexual abstinence) be observed before attending collective or temple prayers—also reported by Herodotus—all indicate the continuation of a profession of priesthood with little alteration as to the standards and concepts of what constitute moral discipline.



At the extreme end, moral license to dispense sexual favours at will on the festive night preceding circumcision, as witnessed among the Kalenjiin by Peristiany (1939:9), may be compared to the similarly relaxed morals of the Menu, or Min (and Osirian) fertility festivities as mentioned by Budge (1934:64). Of these festivities, circumcision was certainly the chief one because, as we suggested, *Min*, *Menu*, *Mnw*, or *Menes*, the patron of circumcision, may actually relate to *Mmonyis*, i.e., *Pmonyis* (Kalenjiin meaning, “of Phalli”) and perhaps should be rendered so in transcription. This is also suggested by the hieroglyphic determinative for his

name:  .

If the office and role of the Priest of Asiis represents a continuation of the office of the priests of Isis and Co., then the office and role of the *Oorgoiyoot* is equally a continuation of that of the Pharaoh, complete with the nomenclature and the claim of ability to detach a double of self for the purpose of accompanying troops. We take that important shared element from that kingship institution to support the said tradition of origin on the part of the Kalenjiin people.

The word *Oorgooi*, “royalty” or “kingship”, may either come from *Oor-ko*, a possible archaic way of saying “Great House”, now rendered *Oo-ko/Woo-go*, or *Horr*, an epithet that preceded many of the early Pharaohs’ names, rendered  (*Hr*) *Horr*, for Horus. The kings were thought to be the reincarnation of Horus and if every king was a *Horr* then it is no wonder that those of the Kalenjiin went by the name *Oorgooi*.

“Pharaoh” is well known to derive from “Great House”  *Pr-oo*. A collective of these correspond to the Kalenjiin *pororyeet*,  *pryt* (Cf. Gardiner 1927:565). Why this should read *pororyeet*, i.e. with two /r/ sounds rather than one, as shown by Gardiner, is because

of the presence of the two hieroglyphic characters that contain that sound:  *pr* and  *r*, and Gardiner should have at least transcribed the word as *prryt* and not *pryt* (although his comes nearer to the Kipsigiis *poryeet* = military regiment, also House-based and hereditary). For the etymology of Pharaoh then, the Kalenjiin language suggests either *poror-oo* or *poryo-oo*, “Great House” in the sense of descent from one person, or clan founder.

To explain a little about this concept of “House”, we use the clear example from Nandi. The early Nandi were divided into seven Houses, *Pororyoosiek*, and their eponymous founders are still remembered, e.g. Tapkeendi (founder of the House of Kaapchepkeendi), Tapsiile (Founder of the House of Kaapsiile), Tapyanga (founder of the House of Kaapyaanga) etc. More Houses have since been added.

Poryeet, which is associated more with the Kipsigiis, took a martial significance later as “regiment”, most of whose members traced ancestry to one clan or related clans. Clans trace origin to Houses.

Now, the fact that we could attempt the etymology of “Pharaoh” using the Kalenjiin language and culture is instructive and must go to enrich the tradition of origin from Egypt.

That said, however, we do not intend to rob the German scholar, Henri Frankfort, of his theory which states that the kingship institution began in the general interior parts of Great Lakes and Nilotic Africa and spread out to other parts of the continent including Egypt from where Europe adopted it.

The Kalenjiin in their Eastern African setting may not have kept the habit of ritually disposing of kings or even burying them with conscious, dead or stunned “companions” at all, as reported with regard to the typical divine kingships of the Great Lakes region, the Nile Valley up to Egypt (during some dynasties) and parts of West Africa. But the frequency and ease with which the Kalenjiin despatched failed monarchs suggests the presence of a lingering hangover of at least the ritual regicide aspect which was typical of divine kingship of which the *Oorgoiyoot* institution happens to have been one.

The *Oorgoiyoot* did not rise above the typical claim of a divine king, he claimed that he was a direct descendant of Asiis and this echoes the Pharaoh’s claim to similar position of sonship to Ra.

The habit of burying the dead wrapped up in skins or hides has been documented with respect to certain eras of Egypt. This is only in the process of disappearing now in Kalenjiinland. The habit of interring bodies in an east-west axis lying position, head to the east, which was common, at least during some dynastic reigns that were anchored in Dendera (which was within the general area of the legendary Sebbenite Province and Tto of Kalenjiin oral tradition) was

continued in Kalenjiinland. The Kalenjiin still inter dead bodies in this manner. Up until recently, the body was either disposed of in the bush or buried, either way with the immediate needs, food, drink and utensils just as the ancient Egyptians did. This was an act of believers in the resurrection of the dead. Indeed the Kalenjiin, as were the Egyptians, were believers not only in reincarnation but also in metempsychosis and resurrection as well, as we have demonstrated. These facts help bury any doubts regarding the Kalenjiin tradition of origin from the land they call *Misiri*.

List of the major informants to this project. Initial interviews: 1991-1993. Follow up interviews, 1991 to date

The author is beholden to the following people who participated in this project either as informants or as interviewers and interpreters in the field:

- (01) **Kiplang'at araap Chepkwoony**, Kipsigiis, Nyoongi age-set (110+ years), of Kabaruuso, Kericho. The grand old man left for the Greater World yonder in the middle of this project. His son **Cherongos araap Lang'at** (Chuumo, 76+) expounded on his father's great knowledge and astounding gift of memory.
- (02) **Kipsambu araap Bargokweet** (the author's father), Kipsigiis, Maiina Mesyeewa (eldest Maiina lot at 100+), born in Matobo, Kericho. The author's father did not survive this project and is safely with the older ancestors.
- (03) **Timothy araap Leige**, Kipsigiis, Chuumo (76+), Ainamoi, Kericho, also departed.
- (04) **Barongeen araap Mosoonik**, Kipsigiis, Chuumo (76+), Sigowet, Kericho, also departed.
- (05) **Mary Taputany nebaraap Cheroigin** (author's mother-in-law), Kipsigiis, Chuumo (70), Londiani, Kericho. Although of Christian upbringing, and throughout her life one, she went out of her way to learn and appreciate the indigenous ways of her people, she had several useful debates with the author. She has passed on and is survived by her husband **Mwalimu Joel araap Cheroigin** (74) who debated certain aspects of the project with the author.
- (06) The great lady sage, **Tapsabei nebaraap Mitei** alias **Cheboleet cheepo Terik**, ex-Terik Kipsigiis, Nyoongi (110+), of Matobo, Kericho.
- (07) **Tapkiili nebaraap Bargokweet** (the author's mother), Maiina (90+), Kipsigiis, Matobo, Kericho.
- (08) **Martha nebaraap Boomet**, Nandi, Maiina (90+), of Singorwo, Kapsabet, one of the few living who attended Asiisian (of Asiis, the Deity to the traditional Kalenjiin people) *kaapkoros* mass prayers before they were discontinued early in the 20th century.
- (09) **Petero Kipsaang'**, Nandi, Maiina (90+).
- (10) **Kiboiit araap Ng'eny**, Terik, South Nandi (now lives in Kapsabet) Maiina (90+).
- (11) **Kiplang'at araap Mosiin "Ngala"**, Nandi/Kipsigiis, Maiina (90+).
- (12) The elderly sage of Londiani, **Daniel araap Lang'at**, Kipsigiis, Maiina Mesyeewa (100+).
- (13) **Paulo araap Saekwo**, Saboot, Maiina (90+), Mt Elgon District.
- (14) **Kipkeino araap Sang**, Nandi, Maiina (90+).
- (15) **Kiptaboot araap Tiony**, Nandi, Maiina (90+).
- (16) **Chelimo Chepng'eetich**, Tugen, Chuumo (90-100+), Sacho, Baringo.
- (17) A Talai elder of Kabartonjo, Tugen, Chuumo (90-100+).
- (18) **Paiyoot Tiong'iik araap Leelgo**, Kipsigiis, Chuumo (76+), the Priest of Asiis of Matobo/Cherigaat/Chepkolon Asiisian parish, *kokweet*.
- (19) **Kimaiyo araap Turgoot**, Keiyo, Chuumo (76+).
- (20) **Kimeli araap Busienei**, Kipsigiis, Chuumo (70+), Kericho Municipality. Being a prominent land rights activist for the land-dispossessed ex-*Laibon* Talai clan section of Kericho, he is very knowledgeable in the affairs and history of the ex-*Laibon* Talai clan's section of which he is a respected member.
- (21) **Kipsaang' araap Busienei**, Nandi/Kipsigiis Talai of the famous House of Kapturuugat, Chuumo (76+), Nandi District.
- (22) **Pkirui araap Lewendi**, Saboot, Chuumo (76+), Mt. Elgon District.
- (23) **Paramount Chief Stephen Kiboor araap Kirwa**, Nandi, Chuumo (76+).

- (24) **Clr. John Kipsugut araap Chemalan**, Nandi, Chuumo (76+). At the time of the interview, he was mayor of Kapsabet. A pioneering radio broadcaster, Kalenjiin language.
- (25) **Araap Kariin Kapchepkutwai**, Terik, Chuumo, (76+), Terik Location, Nandi District.
- (26) **John araap Rongoi**, Nandi, Chuumo (76+).
- (27) **Ayub araap Ruuto**, Kipsigiis, Chuumo (76+), Matobo, Kericho.
- (28) **Alfred araap Ndyeema**, Sabaoot, Saawe (57+-).
- (29) **Ex-chief Joseph araap Koske**, Kipsigiis, Saawe (57+), Londiani, Kericho.
- (30) **Christopher araap Mutaai**, Nandi (middle age), formerly of Tanzania. He grew up among the indigenous Tanzanian kin of the Kalenjiin: the Taturu, "Sirikwa", Barabaig etc.
- (31) **Lekakeny ole Koros**, Maasai (57+), Narok District. Ole Koros is vast in the Kalenjiin and Maasai languages, those people's histories, cultures and religious practices.
- (32) **Mrs Konchela**, Maasai (middle age, married to a Maasai elder of Chuumo age equivalent).
- (33) **William Kipruto**, Merkweta, Kimnyiigei (now at middle age in Marakwet), Marakwet District.
- (34) **Isaac wero Siree**, Pokoot (middle age), Chepareeria, West Pokoot District.
- (35) **Stephen Chepkoong'a wero Lomoo**, Merkweta, Kimnyiigei (middle age), Marakwet District.
- (36) **Joyce Chemai**, Sabaoot, Kimnyiigei (middle age), Mt. Elgon District.
- (37) **Josephat Kemboi wero Yego**, Merkweta (middle age), Marakwet District.
- (38) **William araap Saekwo**, Sabaoot, Kapleelach (below 45), Mt. Elgon District.
- (39) **Pkemoi wero Losiang'ura**, Pokoot (an award-winning singer and performer of Pokoot traditional songs, youthful), Kapenguria, West Pokot District.
- The key fieldwork oral research assistants: **Mwalimu David Kiprop arap Kolil**, Headmaster, Kaptildil Secondary School, Kapsabet, Nandi; **Mwalimu Peter Kiplating arap Chebotibin**, Sacho High School, Baringo Central, Baringo District; **Mwalimu Joseph Ririan arap Ronoh** and **Mr Thomas Kimagut araap Sambu** (brother to author), Kipsigiisland.

Bibliography

- Adams, B., 1984, "The Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, University College, London" in *Biblical Archaeologist*/ December 1984 p. 241-244. The American School of Oriental Research, PA, USA.
- Adamson, J., 1967, *The Peoples of Kenya*. Collins & Harvill Press, London.
- Aeschylus, 460 BC. *Prometheus Bound*. Electronically Enhanced Text, © 1991, World Library Inc., Staffordshire, U.K.
- Aeschylus. 450 BC. *Agamemnon*, translated by E.D.A. Morshead. Electronically Enhanced Text, © 1991, World Library Inc., Staffordshire, U.K.
- Alberti, L., 1807. *Alberti's Account of the Tribal Life & Customs of the Xhosa in 1807*. Translated from German by Dr. William Fehr. Original Title: *The Kaffirs of the South Coast of Africa*. A.A. Balkena, Cape Town, 1968.
- Alford, A.F., 1998, *The Phoenix Solution: Secrets of a Lost Civilisation*. Hodder and Stoughton, A Division of Hodder Headline PLC, London.
- Allen, B. & Montell, W.L., 1981, *From Memory to History, Using Oral Sources in Local Historical Research*. The American Association for State and Local History, Nashville, Tennessee.
- Archaeology*, Journal's Website address www.archaeology.org "Hatshepsut" The Archaeological Institute of America, Boston University, MA, USA.
- Aristotle, 350 BC, *Politics*, 1991, Translated by Benjamin Jowett, Electronically Enhanced Text, © 1991, World Library Inc., Staffordshire, U.K.
- Armour, R.A. 1986, *Gods and Myths of Ancient Egypt*, The American University in Cairo Press.
- Asimov, I., 1967, *The Egyptians*. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.
- Avebury, Lord, 1911, *Marriage, Totemism and Religion, An Answer to Critics*. Longmans, Green & Co., London.
- Badian, E., GME 1993, "Alexander the Great, King of Macedonia" in *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Release 6, 1993, Danbury, CT, USA.
- Bailey, G., 1988. *Religions and Comparative Thought* p.x (ed.) Bilimoria and Fenner, La Trobe University.
- Baines, J. & Malek, J., *Atlas of Ancient Egypt*. Phaidone Oxford.
- Baldick, J., 1997, *Black God: Afroasiatic Roots of the Jewish, Christian and Muslim Religions*. I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., New York.
- Baringo District Socio Cultural Profiles*, 1986. Ministry of Planning and National Development and the Institute of African Studies, University of Nairobi. Edt. Were, Prof. G.S.
- Barton, G.A., 1919, *The Religions of the World*, University of Chicago Press, USA.
- Batchelor, H., GME 1993, "Hermetic Literature" in *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Release 6, 1993, Danbury, CT, USA.
- Batravi, A.M. 1945, "The Racial History of Egypt and Nubia," *J. Roy. Anthropol. Inst.* Vols 75 (1945), 76 (1946)—Seligman, 1966 posthumously revised edition of his 1930 publication: *Races of Africa*, Oxford University Press.
- Baur, J. 1990, *The Catholic Church in Kenya, A Centenary History*. St. Paul Publications, Africa.
- Bauval, R., 1999, *Secret Chamber, The Quest for the Hall of Records*. Century, London.
- BBC program: "The Jews of Southern Africa (In Search of Sena)", by Tudor Parfitt of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, UK.
- Beals, R.L. & Hoijer, H. 1971, *An Introduction to Anthropology*, 4th Edition. Macmillan Company, London, UK.
- Beech, M.W., 1911, *The Suk, their Language and Folklore*, Oxford at the Clarendon Press.
- Bender, L., 1975, In *The Ethiopian Nilo-Saharans*. Addis Ababa.
- Bender, M. L. & Verlag, H.B. (Editors) 1989, *Topics in Nilo-Saharan Linguistics* Hamburg.
- Bennett, P.R., 1998, *Comparative Semitic Linguistics: A Manual*. Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, Indiana, USA.
- Benveniste, E., 1966, *Problems de Linguistique Generale*. Paris, Gallimard, 1966 (see Obenga 1992:101).
- Berger, I. 1980, 'Deities, Dynasties, and Oral Tradition: The History and Legend of the Abacwezi' in *The African Past Speaks, Essays on Oral Tradition and History*. Edited by Joseph C. Miller, WM Dawson & Sons Ltd, Kent, England.
- Berg-Schlosser, D., 1984, *Tradition and Change in Kenya*. Ferdinand Schöningh at Paderborn.
- Bernal, M., 1987, *Black Athena*. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, USA.
- Bernhardt, K.H., 1978, "Ugaritic Texts," Editor: Beyerlin, W. 1978, *Near Eastern Religious Texts relating to the Old Testament*. SCM. Press Ltd, London.
- Bianchi, R.S., (curator in the Egyptian Department of the Brooklyn Museum) 1991, "Pyramidots" p. 84, *Archaeology*, November/December, 1991. Archaeological Institute of America.
- Bible Translation and Literacy (E.A., Nairobi), 1990, *Korooyo ku Taay*.
- Biblical Archaeology Review*, March/April 2000. Biblical Archaeology Society, Washington DC, USA.
- Bigalke, E.H. 1969, *The Religious System of the Ndlambe of East London District*. An M.A. Thesis presented to Rhodes University, South Africa.

- Bilimoria, P., 1988 (ed.), *Religions and Comparative Thought, Essays in Honour of Late Dr Ian Kesarcodi-Watson*. Sri Satguru Publications, Delhi, India.
- Bills, R.L. & Hoijer, H. 1971. *An Introduction to Anthropology*. The Macmillan Co.
- Blackburn, R.H., 1976, "Okiek History" in *Kenya Before 1900*. Ed. B.A. Ogot. East African Publishing House, Nairobi.
- Blavatsky, H.P., 1976, *Isis Unveiled: a Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology* (Vol. II). Theosophical University Press, Pasadena, California.
- Boatright, M., 1958, "The family Saga as a Form of Folklore", in *The Family Saga and Other Phases of American Folklore*, Urbana Ill., The University of Illinois Press (Quoted by Allen & Montell, 1981:48).
- Brandon, S.G.F., (Ed.) 1970, *A Dictionary of Comparative Religion*. Weidenfield & Nicolson, London.
- Bratton, F.G., 1961, *The Life and Times of Ikhnaton the King-The First Heretic*, Beacon Press, Boston.
- Breasted, J.H., 1912, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*. First published 1912, Harper Torchbook Edition published 1959, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York.
- Brier, B. 1999, "Napoleon in Egypt: The General's Search for Glory led to the Birth of Egyptology" in *Archaeology*, May/June 1999. The Archaeological Institute of America, Boston University, MA, USA.
- Broster, J.A. 1967, *Red Blanket Valley*. Hugh Keartland Publishers, Johannesburg.
- Budge, E.A. W., 1895, (Dover Publications Inc. New York 1967). *The Book of the Dead, Papyrus of Ani*.
- Budge, E.A.W., 1920, *An Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary*. (First published 1920 by John Murray, London) Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1978.
- Budge, E.A.W., 1934, *From Fetish to God in Ancient Egypt*. Oxford University Press.
- Bulfinch, T., 1855, *Bulfinch's Mythology: The Age of Fable or Stories of Gods and Heroes*. Electronically Enhanced Text, © 1991, World Library Inc., Staffordshire, U.K.
- Burkert, W. 1987, *Ancient Mystery Cults*, Cambridge, MA and London.
- Canney, M.A., 1921, *An Encyclopaedia of Religions*, (Originally published, 1921 by G. Routledge & Sons) Gale Research Company, Book Tower (1970).
- Canonici, N.N., 1995, *Tricksters and Trickery in Zulu Folktales* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Zulu Language and Literature, University of Natal, South Africa.
- Carter, H. 1972, *The Tomb of Tutankhamon*, Barrie & Jenkins, London.
- Catholic Encyclopedia, The New*. 1967, McGrawhill Book Co/Catholic University of America.
- Cerulli, E., 1956, "Peoples of South-west Ethiopia and its Borderland", *Ethnographic Survey of Africa*, ed. By Daryll Forde. International African Institute, London.
- Chadwick, H., 1953, *Origen: Contra Celsum*, Translation with Introductory Notes by Chadwick. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Charing, D., 1982, *Comparative Religions: a Modern Textbook*, Blandford Press, Link House, West Street, Poole, Dorset, UK.
- Chesaina, C., 1991, *Oral Literature of the Kalenjin*. Heinmann Kenya Ltd., Nairobi, Kenya.
- Chesang, L.C., (1973?), dissertation, *An Analysis of the Superstructure of Semi-pastoral Keiyo*.
- Clarke, B.L., 1992, "Identity and the Divinities", in the *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*. Vol. 31 No.1. February 1992. p.133-148. Kluwer Academic Publishers, Boston, USA.
- Clement of Alexandria*, translated from Greek by G.W. Butterworth, William Heineman Ltd. 1919.
- Clerk, C. GME 1993, "Totem" in *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Release 6, 1993, Danbury, CT, USA.
- Coats, G.W., GME 1993, "Book of Isaiah", *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Release 6, 1993, Danbury, CT, USA.
- Cole, O.W. 1982, *Comparative Religions: a Modern Textbook*, Blandford Press, Link House, West Street, Poole, Dorset, UK.
- Colton J., GME 1993, "Oral History" in *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Release 6, 1993, Danbury, CT, USA.
- Coptic Primer (Bohairic)*, 1, 1986. A publication of St. Shenouda the Archimandrite Coptic Society, Language Committee.
- Cordell, D. GME 1993, "Nile" in *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Release 6, 1993, Danbury, CT, USA.
- Cornelius, T.P. 109 AD., *Histories*. Translated by Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodrigg. Electronically Enhanced Text © Copyright 1991, World Library Inc., Staffordshire, U.K.
- Crum, W.E. 1939. *A Coptic Dictionary*. Oxford at the Clarendon Press, U.K.
- Cunningham, A [b], GME 1993, "Gnosticism" in *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Release 6, 1993, Danbury, CT, USA.
- Cunningham, A. [a], GME 1993, "Irenaeus" in *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Release 6, 1993, Danbury, CT, USA.
- D.C ELGM 3/1, National Archives of Kenya, Nairobi.
- D.C. Nandi/3/1, National Archives, Nairobi.
- David, R., 1980, *Cult of the Sun, Myth and Magic in Ancient Egypt*. J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd. London.

- Davidson, B. 1989, The ancient World and Africa, Whose Roots? Contribution to *Egypt Revisited, Journal of African Civilizations*. Edited by Ivan van Sertima, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick (USA) and London (UK) p. 47.
- DC/BAR/3/3, National Archives of Kenya, Nairobi.
- DC/ELGM/1/1, reports of the 1920's. National Archives of Kenya, Nairobi.
- DC/ELGM/4/1, National Archives of Kenya, Nairobi.
- DC/KER/3/1, National Archives of Kenya, Nairobi.
- DC/KER4/1/1/ National Archives of Kenya, Nairobi, Cited by T.L. Edgar (Kericho) in 1955.
- De Heusch, L., 1975, 'What shall we do with the Drunken King' in *Africa* vol. 45 no. 4 (1975)—cited by Schecter 1980:112.
- Dean, J. P. & Whyte, W.F., 1970, in *Elite and Specialized Interviewing* by Dexter, Lewis Anthony, Northwestern University Press, Evanston.
- Dehan, E., 1988, *Our Visit to Israel*. © Dehan, Emmanuel, Jerusalem, Israel.
- Deng, F.M., *Africans of Two Worlds, The Dinka in Afro-Arab Sudan*, New Haven & London, Yale University.
- Dexter, L.A., 1970, *Elite and Specialized Interviewing*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1970.
- Dictionary of the Bible*, 1963. F.C. Grant & H.H. Rowley, J& J Clark, Edinburgh.
- Diop, C.A. 1987, (Translation, 1978, by Harold Salemson, of *Les Fondments Économiques et Culturels d'un État Fédéral d'Afrique Noire*); *Black Africa: The Economic and Cultural Basis for a Federated State*. Lawrence Hill Books Chicago, and Africa World Press, Inc. NJ.
- Diop, C.A., 1955, *The African Origin of Civilization, Myth or Reality*. Lawrence Hill and Co. Westport (1974—the English translation from French).
- Diop, C.A., 1996, (Translation by Prof. Egbuna P. Modum, of *Alerte Sous Les Tropiques* First published 1990 by the Estate of Cheikh Anta Diop), *Towards the African Renaissance, Essays in African Culture & Development: 1946-1960*. The Estate of Cheikh Anta Diop and Karnak House, London.
- Dobbs, C. M. 1916 & 1918, in D.C. KER 3/1, National Archives of Kenya, Nairobi.
- Doresse, J., 1960, *The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics; An introduction to the Gnostic Coptic Manuscripts discovered at Chenoboskion*. Hollis & Carter, London.
- Durkheim, E., 1915, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (translated from the French by Joseph Ward Swain), George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London.
- Edger, T.L. in D.C. KER 4/1, National Archives of Kenya.
- Ehret, C., 1968, "Linguistics as a Tool for Historians", *Hadith 1*, edited by B.A. Ogot, Historical Association of Kenya. East African Publishing House, Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, Kampala.
- Ehret, C., 1971, *Southern Nilotic History, Linguistic Approaches to the Study of the Past*. Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois.
- El Masri, I.H., 1987, *The Story of the Copts, The Coptic Bishopric for African Affairs*, Cairo.
- Eliade M. (Ed) 1987 *The Encyclopedia of Religions*. MacMillan Publishing Co. N.Y.
- Eliade, M., 1967, *Essential Sacred Writings from around the World*—previously published as *From Primitives to Zen: A Thematic Sourcebook of the History of Religions*. HarperCollins Publishers, New York.
- Eliot, Sir Charles, 1905, *The East Africa Protectorate*. Edward Arnold, London.
- Encyclopaedia Americana, International Edition*, 1977.
- Endleman, R., GME 1993, "Passage rites", in *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Release 6, 1993, Danbury, CT, USA.
- EOR 1987, "Cross" in *The Encyclopedia of Religions*, Ed. in-chief, M. Eliade, MacMillan Publishing Co., NY.
- Ericson, S., 1981, *A field Notebook for Oral History*, Idaho Oral History Center, Idaho, USA.
- Euripides, 410 BC, *Bacchantes*, Electronically Enhanced Text © Copyright 1991, World Library Inc., Staffordshire, U.K.
- Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. 1984. Elwel.
- Evans-Pritchard, E.E. 1957, *Nuer Religion*, Oxford University Press (cited by Mircea Eliade 1967:610).
- Ezell, D. [a] GME 1993 "Gospels according to St. Mark" in *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Release 6, 1993, Danbury, CT, USA.
- Ezell, D. [b], GME 1993, "Satan" in *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Release 6, 1993, Danbury, CT, USA.
- Faulkner, R.O., 1962, *Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*. Griffith Institute, Oxford, U.K.
- Fenner, P., 1988 (ed.), *Religions and Comparative Thought, Essays in Honour of Late Dr Ian Kesarcodi-Watson*. Sri Satguru Publications, Delhi, India.
- Fish, B.C. & Fish G.W., 1989, *The Place of Songs, A History of the W.G.M. and Africa Gospel Church in Kenya*. W.G. Mission & Africa Gospel Church, Kenya.
- Fish, B.C. & Fish G.W., 1995, *The Kalenjin Heritage, Traditional Religious and Social Practices*. Africa Gospel Church and World Gospel Mission (Kenya and USA).
- Fox-Genovese, E. GME 1993, "Women in Society" in *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Release 6, 1993, Danbury, CT, USA.
- Frankfort, H., 1948, *Kingship and the Gods*, University of Chicago Press Ltd., Chicago, USA (1978 Phoenix edition).

- Frazer, J.G., 1910, *Totemism and Exogamy, A Treatise on Certain Early Forms of Superstition and Society*. Macmillan & Co. Ltd., London, U.K.
- Fuchs, E., Review of Eilberg-Schwartz's "God's Phallus and Other Problems for Men and Monotheism" in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, p. 199-201. Spring 1997, Vol. LXV, No. 1. USA.
- Fuller, R.H., GME 1993. "Jesus Christ" in *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Release 6, 1993, Danbury, CT, USA.
- Fuller, R.H., GME 1993b. "Nicene Creed" in *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Release 6, 1993, Danbury, CT, USA.
- Fundi, F., 1999 (Compiled), "The Genesis of a Genocide in Rwanda", *Journal of the Rwanda South African Alliance*, special edition, 1999, Pretoria, South Africa.
- Funkenstein, A., 1994, "The Polytheism of William James" in *The Journal of the History of Ideas*, Jan. 1994, Volume 55 No. 1. p. 99-111. The John Hopkins University Press, USA.
- Gamble, E.B., 1927, "Sex, The Foundation of the God Idea" in *The Story of Phallicism*. First published 1927 by P. Covici, Chicago. Reprinted by AMS Press Inc., New York, 1976.
- Gardiner, Sir Alan, 1927, *Egyptian Grammar, Being an Introduction to the Study of Hieroglyphs*. Griffith Institute, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (first published, 1927).
- Garnier, Colonel J., 1904, *The Worship of the Dead or The Origin and Nature of Pagan Idolatry and its Bearing upon the Early History of Egypt and Babylonia*. Chapman & Hall Ltd. London.
- Gehman, Dr R.J., 1989, *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective*, Kesho Publications, Kijabe, Kenya.
- Gilkey, L., GME 1993, "Holy Spirit" in *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Release 6, 1993, Danbury, CT, USA.
- Glover, T.R. 1909 (Tenth Edition, 1923), *The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire*. Methuen & Co. Ltd, 36 Essex St., W.C., London.
- GME 1993: *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopaedia*, 1993. Gloria Electronic Publishing Inc. Danbury, CT, USA.
- Gnuse, R., 1999, "The Emergence of Monotheism in Ancient Israel: A Survey of Recent Scholarship" in *Religion*, No. 29, 1999, p. 315-336. Department of Religious Studies, Lancaster University Academic Press, UK.
- Goldman, P., 1989, "The Nubian Renaissance" in *Egypt Revisited, Journal of African Civilizations*. Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick USA. (edited by Ivan van Setima).
- Goldschmidt, W. 1986. *The Sebei, a Study in Adaptation*, University of California, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, CBS College.
- Goldschmidt, W.R. (Edit.) 1976, *Culture and Behaviour of the Sebei*, University of California Press, USA.
- Good News Bible* 1976, The Bible Societies.
- Gottwald, N.K., 1993, on "Book of Proverbs". GME 1993.
- Granger, F., 1895, *The Worship of the Romans Viewed in Relation to the Roman Temperament*. Methuen & Co., London.
- Greek New Testament, The*. 1983 (Dictionary), 3rd Edition (corrected). Edt. Aland, Kurt & Aland Barbara. United Bible Societies, New York.
- Green, R.L., 1967, *Tales of Ancient Egypt* (Copyright author).
- Greenberg 1963, p. 130 (See Bender L., 1975, Addis Ababa, Intro.).
- Gregg, R.C. 1989, "Original Sin" in *The Perennial Dictionary of World Religions*. Harper & Row, Publishers, San Francisco.
- Grele, R., 1978, "Can Anyone Over Thirty be Trusted: A Friendly Critique of Oral History", *Oral History Review* (1978) p. 38. Cited by Seldon & Pappworth 1983:29.
- Groves, C.P., 1948, *The Planting of Christianity in Africa*, Published under the auspices of the Department of Missions, Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham.
- Guthrie, M., 1967, *Comparative Bantu*. Farnborough, Eng: Gregg. (cited by Bennett, 1998:31).
- Hareven, T., 1996, "The Search for Generational Memory" (from *Daedalus* 106, [fall 1978]) in *Oral History, an Interdisciplinary Anthology*, ed. David K. Dunaway and William K. Baum 2nd Edition, 1996, AltaMira Press, California, USA.
- Harlow, V., & Chilver, E.M. 1965, *History of East Africa*, Volume II. Oxford at The Clarendon Press, U.K.
- Harris, J.E. & Weeks, K.R., 1973, *X-Raying the Pharaohs*, copyright: Charles Scribner's sons, New York.
- Harris, J.R. (Edtd.) 1971, *The Legacy of Egypt*. Oxford at the Clarendon Press, U.K.
- Harwood, R., 1999, "Polytheism, Pantheism, and the Ontological Argument" in *Religious Studies*, Vol. 35 No. 4 December 1999. p. 477-91. Cambridge University Press, UK.
- Hayes, J.H. & Miller, J.M., 1977 (Editors), *Israelite & Judaean History*. SCM Press Ltd., London.
- Heine, B., 1982, *Boni Dialects*, from the series, *Language and Dialect Atlas of Kenya*. Dietrich Reimer Verlag Berlin.
- Henige, D., 1980, "The Disease of Writing": Ganda and Nyoro Kinglists in a Newly Literate World' in *The African Past Speaks, Essays on Oral Tradition and History*. Edited by Joseph C. Miller, WM Dawson & Sons Ltd, Kent, England.
- Henige, D., 1982, *Oral Historiography*. Longman Group Limited, NY USA, Lagos, Nigeria.

- Hennings, R.O. 1951, *African Morning*, Chatto & Windus, London.
- Henry, M. 1996, *Mathew Henry's Commentary* (Old Testament), Cosmi Inc. c/o Focus Multimedia Limited, UK.
- Herodotus, 440 BC, *Histories*, translated by A.D. Godley. Heinemann, U.K.
- Hess, R.A., 1973, *Perspectives of Nigerian Historiography, 1875-1971: The Historians of Modern Nigeria*. Howard University PhD. Thesis.
- Hobley, C.W., 1902, *Eastern Uganda, an Ethnological Survey*. Ethnographical Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, Hanover Square.
- Hobley, C.W., 1929, *From Chartered Company to Crown Colony*, Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., U.K., 1970 (first published, 1929).
- Hoffman, A., 1996, "Reliability and Validity in Oral History" (1974) in *Oral History, an Interdisciplinary Anthology*, ed. David K Dunaway and William K. Baum 2nd Edition, 1996, AltaMira Press, California, USA.
- Hollis, A.C., 1905, *The Maasai, Their Language and Folklore*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, U.K.
- Hollis, A.C., 1909, *The Nandi, their Language and Folklore*. Oxford at the Clarendon Press, Oxford, U.K.
- Hornung, E., 1971 (1982 English translation), *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and the Many*. Translated by John Baines. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York.
- Hotchkiss, W.R. 1938 (?), *Then and Now in Kenya Colony, Forty Adventurous Years in East Africa*. Fleming H. Revell Company, London and Edinburgh.
- Huntingford, G.W.B., 1926, in *Ancient Egypt Journal* (October 1926).
- Huntingford, G.W.B., 1944, *The Nandi*. Ndia Kuu Press, Nairobi, Kenya.
- Huntingford, G.W.B., 1953a, *The Northern Nilo-Hamites, Ethnographic Survey of Africa* Edt. by Daryll Forde, London International Africa Institute.
- Huntingford, G.W.B., 1953b, *The Nandi of Kenya, Tribal Control in a Pastoral Society*. Routledge & Keegan Paul Ltd., London.
- Hurry, J.B., 1926, *Imhotep: The Vizier and Physician of King Zoser and afterwards, The Egyptian God of Medicine*. Oxford University Press, Humphrey, Milford.
- Jacobsen, T., 1976, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion*. Yale University.
- Jairazbhoy, R.A., 1974, *Ancient Egyptians and Chinese in America*. Rowman and Littlefield, Totowa, New Jersey, USA.
- Jairazbhoy, R.A., 1981, *Ancient Egyptians in Middle and South America*. R.A. Publications, London.
- Jewish Standard Encyclopaedia, The*, 1966, Editor-in-chief: Cecil Roth. W.H. Allen, London.
- Jordan, P., 1976, *Egypt, the Black Land*. Phaidon Press Ltd., Oxford, USA.
- Journal for Semitics*, 1995, Southern Africa Society for Semitics, Volume 7, #1.
- Kalenjin Dictionary*, 1979, Ngelechei, C.C. Transafrica, Nairobi.
- Kamalu, C., 1990, *Foundations of African Thought: A Worldview Grounded in the African Heritage of Religion, Philosophy, Science and Art*. Karnak House, London, UK.
- Kasiera, E.M. 1990, The Scope of Comparative Religion. *A Comparative Study of Religions*. Nairobi University Press.
- Katičić, R., 1970, *A Contribution to the General Theory of Comparative Linguistics*. Mouton, The Hague; Paris.
- Kenyatta, J., 1938, *Facing Mount Kenya, The Traditional Life of the Gikuyu* [First published 1938 by Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd.], Kenway Publications, p. 64.
- Kenyatta, J., 1966, *My People of Kikuyu and the Life of Chief Wangombe*. Oxford University Press, Nairobi. First published 1942 by United Society for Christian Literature, Lutterworth Press.
- Kettel, B.M., 1980, Archives-based research paper: *The impact of Colonial Rule on the Tugen of North Baringo, 1900-1960*.
- Kettel, D.W.W., 1975, PhD thesis: "Passing like Flowers", *The Marriage Regulation of the Tugen*. University of Illinois.
- Kibicho, S.G., 1990, "Sikhism after Nanak", *A Comparative Study of Religions*. Nairobi University Press.
- Kipkorir Dr. B.E., 1971, In an article: *Kalenjin Phenomenon and Misri Legends*. Institute of African Studies, Nairobi.
- Kipkorir, B.E. with Welbourn, F.B. 1973, *The Marakwet of Kenya, a Preliminary Study*, East African Literature Bureau, Nairobi, Kampala, Dar es Salaam
- Kipkorir, Dr. B. E., 1978, "People of the Rift Valley, Kalenjin" in *Kenya's People*. Evans Brothers (Nigeria Publishers) Ltd., London.
- Kitagawa, J.M. & Strong, J.S. GME 1993, "Buddha" in *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Release 6, 1993, Danbury, CT, USA.
- Klima, G.J., 1970, *The Barabaig, East African Cattle-Herders*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York.
- Kramer, K.P., 1986, *World Scriptures, An Introduction to Comparative Religions*. Paulist Press, 997 Macarthur Boulevard, Mahwah, New Jersey.
- Kramer, S.N., 1961 (Edt.), *Mythologies of the Ancient World*, Anchor Books, New York.
- Krim, K., 1989 (ed.), *The Perennial Dictionary of World Religions*. Harper & Row, Publishers, San Francisco.

- Krohn, K., 1971 (1st published 1926), *Folklore Methodology, Formulated by Julius Krohn and Expanded by Nordic Researchers* (translated by Roger L. Welsch,) University Of Texas Press, Austin & London.
- Krzyszowski, T.P., 1990, *Contrasting Languages: The Scope of Contrastive Linguistics*. Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin; New York.
- Lambdin, T., 1983, *Introduction to Sahidic Coptic*. Mercer University Press.
- Lance, D., 1996, "Oral History Project Design" (1978) in *Oral History, an Interdisciplinary Anthology*, ed. David K Dunaway and William K. Baum 2nd Edition, 1996, AltaMira Press, California, USA.
- Landau, R., 1958, *Islam and the Arabs*. Ruskin House, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London.
- Lang'at, S.C., 1969, "Some Aspects of Kipsigis History before 1914" in *Ngano, Studies in Traditional and Modern East African History*. Ed. B.G. McIntosh. East African Publishing House, Nairobi.
- Langley, M.S., 1979, *The Nandi of Kenya*. C. Hirst & Co., London.
- Leakey, R.E., 1983, *One Life, Richard E. Leakey, an Autobiography*. Michael Joseph Limited, London.
- Legesse, A., 1973, *Gada, Three Approaches to the Study of African Society*. The Free Press, Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., London.
- Leith, J.H. 1989, "Creeds and Confessions" in *The Perennial Dictionary of World Religions*. Harper & Row, Publishers, San Francisco.
- Lévi-Strauss, C., 1958, *Structural Anthropology* (Translated from the French by Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf and published 1963, 1968 and 1972 © Basic Books Inc., New York.
- Lévi-Strauss, C., 1962, *Totemism*. Translated by Rodney Needham. Merlin Press, London.
- Lévi-Strauss, C., 1966, *The Savage Mind*, Chicago (see Yoder, 1980:82).
- Lew, W., 1880, *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ*. Electronically Enhanced Text © Copyright 1991, World Library Inc., Staffordshire, U.K.
- Library of Christian Classics, 1953- *The Alexandrian Christianity: Selected Translations of Clement and Origen with Introductions and notes by John Ernst Leonard Oulton and Henry Chadwick*. SCM Press Ltd, London.
- Lo Liyong, T., 1972 (ed.), *Popular Culture of East Africa: Oral Literature*, Longman Kenya Ltd., Nairobi.
- Lothead, R., 1975, "Three approaches to Oral History", *COHA Journal* 1975:6 (see Seldon & Pappworth 1983:28).
- Lockwood, L. St. 1989, "Minaret" in *The Perennial Dictionary of World Religions*. Harper & Row, Publishers, San Francisco.
- Loescher, R.J., GME 1993, "Cross" in *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Release 6, 1993, Danbury, CT, USA.
- Long, C.H., GME 1993, "Primitive Religion", in *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Release 6, 1993, Danbury, CT, USA.
- Lowie, R.H., 1948, *Primitive Religion*. Liveright Publishing Corporation, New York (first pub. 1924).
- Lumpkin, B. (see *Egypt Revisited*, ed. Ivan Van Serima).
- MacGaffey, W., 1991, "Who owns Ancient Egypt?" A review article in *Journal of African History*, 32 (1991) pp 515-519. Cambridge, UK.
- MacMullen, R., 1981, *Paganism in the Roman Empire*. Yale University.
- MacQuarrie, J. [a], GME 1993, "Religion" in *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Release 6, 1993, Danbury, CT, USA.
- MacQuarrie, J. [b], GME 1993, "Bultmann Rudolf" in *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Release 6, 1993, Danbury, CT, USA.
- Magut, P.K. arap, 1969, "The Rise and Fall of the Nandi Orkoiyot, c. 1850-1957" in *Ngano, Studies in Traditional and Modern East African History*. Ed. B.G. McIntosh. East African Publishing House, Nairobi.
- Makila, F.E. 1978, *An Outline History of the Babukusu*. Kenya Literature Bureau, Nairobi.
- Malaty, Fr. T.Y., 1987, *Introduction to the Coptic Orthodox Church*, Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria, Preparatory edition.
- Malone, J.L., GME 1993, "Phonology and Morphology" in *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Release 6, 1993, Danbury, CT, USA.
- Maspero, G. (published 1871-1916) in the *Egyptian Army during the 18th Theban Dynasty*, Vol. IV, p. 318.
- Maspero, G., 1892, *Life in Ancient Egypt and Assyria*. Translated by A.P. Morton. London Chapman and Hall, London.
- Maspero, G., 1896, *The Struggle of the Nations: Egypt, Syria, and Assyria*. Translated by M.L. McClure. Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London.
- Maspero, G., 1897, *The Dawn of Civilization, Egypt and Chaldea*. Translated by M.L. McClure. D. Appleton & Company, New York.
- Massam, J.A. 1927, *The Cliff Dwellers of Kenya*. Seeley, Service and Co. Ltd., 196 Shaftesburg Av.
- Mathumba, I., 1993, *A Comparative Study of Selected Phonetic, Phonological and Lexical Aspects of Some Major Dialects of Tsonga in the Republic of South Africa, and their Impact on the Standard Language*. University of South Africa Doctoral Thesis.
- Matson, A.T. 1961, Extensive contribution in the now-defunct Kenyan weekly, *Weekly News*, 15th Dec. 1961.

- Matson, A.T., 1972, *Nandi Resistance to British Rule 1890-1906*. East African Publishing House, Nairobi.
- Mattar, N, 1989, *A Study in Bohairic Coptic*, Hope Publishing House, Pasadena, California, USA.
- Mbiti, J., 1970, *Concepts of God in Africa*, S.P.C.K., Holy Trinity Church, Marylebone Road, London, UK.
- Mbiti, Rev. Prof. J.S., 1969, *African Religions and Philosophy*, East African Educational Publishers, Nairobi.
- McVeigh, M.J., 1974, *God in Africa: Conceptions of God in African Traditional Religion and Christianity*, Claude Stark Inc., Cape Cod, Massachusetts.
- MEE 98/1, 1998, "Prehistory", *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*, 1993-1997, Microsoft Corporation, Redmond WA, USA.
- MEE 98/10, 1998, "Linguistics", *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*, 1993-1997, Microsoft Corporation, Redmond WA, USA.
- MEE 98/11, 1998, "Native American Languages", *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*, 1993-1997, Microsoft Corporation, Redmond WA, USA.
- MEE 98/12, 1998, "Morphology", *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*, 1993-1997, Microsoft Corporation, Redmond WA, USA.
- MEE 98/13, 1998, "Folktales", *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*, 1993-1997, Microsoft Corporation, Redmond WA, USA.
- MEE 98/14, 1998, "Social Anthropology", *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*, 1993-1997, Microsoft Corporation, Redmond WA, USA.
- MEE 98/15, 1998, "Ancient Egypt" *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*, 1993-1997, Microsoft Corporation, Redmond WA, USA.
- MEE 98/16, 1998, "Egyptian Art and Architecture" *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*, 1993-1997, Microsoft Corporation, Redmond WA, USA.
- MEE 98/17, 1998, "Cephalic index" *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*, 1993-1997, Microsoft Corporation, Redmond WA, USA.
- MEE 98/18, 1998, "Thebes (Egypt)" *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*, 1993-1997, Microsoft Corporation, Redmond WA, USA.
- MEE 98/19, 1998, "Christianity" *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*, 1993-1997, Microsoft Corporation, Redmond WA, USA.
- MEE 98/20, 1998, "Origen". *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*, 1993-1997, Microsoft Corporation, Redmond WA, USA.
- MEE 98/21, 1998, "Christmas" *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*, 1993-1997, Microsoft Corporation, Redmond WA, USA.
- MEE 98/22, 1998, "Clement of Alexandria" *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*, 1993-1997, Microsoft Corporation, Redmond WA, USA.
- MEE 98/23, 1998, "Coptic Church" *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*, 1993-1997, Microsoft Corporation, Redmond WA, USA.
- MEE 98/3, 1998, "African Art and Architecture" *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*, 1993-1997, Microsoft Corporation, Redmond WA, USA.
- MEE 98/5 1998, "Durkheim, Émile" *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*, 1993-1997, Microsoft Corporation, Redmond WA, USA.
- MEE 98/6, 1998, "Otto, Rudolf", *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*, 1993-1997, Microsoft Corporation, Redmond WA, USA.
- MEE 98/7, 1998, "Religion", *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*, 1993-1997, Microsoft Corporation, Redmond WA, USA.
- MEE 98/8, 1998, "Grammar", *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*, 1993-1997, Microsoft Corporation, Redmond WA, USA.
- MEE 98/9, 1998, "Language", *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*, 1993-1997, Microsoft Corporation, Redmond WA, USA.
- Meinertzhagen, Colonel R. C.B.E., D.S.O., 1957, *Kenya Diary 1902-1906*, Oliver & Boyd, U.K.
- Meinertzhagen, Colonel R. C.B.E., D.S.O., 1960, *Army Diary 1899-1926*, Oliver And Boyd, U.K.
- Merker, M., 1904, *Die Masai, ethnographische monographie eines ostafrikanischen Semitenvolkes*. Reimer, 1904.
- Miller, J.C., 1980, "Listening for the African Past" in *The African Past Speaks, Essays on Oral Tradition and History*. Edited by Joseph C. Miller, WM Dawson & Sons Ltd, Kent, England.
- M'Imanyara, A.M., 1992, *The Restatement of Bantu Origin and Meru History*. Longman Kenya Ltd.
- Mitchell, L.L. GME 1993, "Sacrament", in *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Release 6, 1993, Danbury, CT, USA.
- Moi, D.T. arap, 1986, *Kenya African Nationalism, Nyayo Philosophy and Principles*. Macmillan Publishers Ltd (© Daniel T. arap Moi).
- Mol, Fr F., 1978, *Maa, a Dictionary of the Maasai Language & Folklore*, Marketing & Publishing Ltd, Nairobi.
- Morenz, S., 1973, *Egyptian Religion*, Mnethuen & Co. Ltd, London.
- Morrissey, C., 1970, in *Elite and Specialized Interviewing* by Dexter, Lewis Anthony, Northwestern University Press, Evanston.

- Moscato, S., 1964 (Editor), *An introduction to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages, Phonology and Morphology*. Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden.
- Mosley, A., 1997, Contributing to : *Research in African Literature*. Indiana University Press, Volume 28 #4 1997.
- Mugambi, J.N.K., 1990 (ed.), *A Comparative Study of Religions*. Nairobi University Press.
- Mugambi, J.N.K., 1990, "The Future of Religion" in *A Comparative Study of Religions*. Nairobi University Press.
- Mugambi, J.N.K., 1990, "The Present State of Religion in the Contemporary World" in *A Comparative Study of Religions*. Nairobi University Press.
- Muriuki, Dr G., 1974, *A History of the Kikuyu, 1500-1900*, Oxford University Press.
- Mwanzi, H.A., 1972, *A Historical Study of some Aspects of Kipsigiis Religion*. Staff seminar paper. Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library, University of Nairobi.
- Mwanzi, H.A., 1977, *A History of the Kipsigiis*. Kenya Literature Bureau.
- Nandi District Development Plan, 1984-88.
- O'Connor, D. (a). GME 1993, "Ancient Egypt", in *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Release 6, 1993, Danbury, CT, USA.
- O'Connor, D. (b), GME 1993, "Hyksos" in *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Release 6, 1993, Danbury, CT, USA.
- Obenga, T., 1992, *Ancient Egypt and Black Africa, a Student's Handbook for the Study of Ancient Egypt in Philosophy, Linguistics, & Gender Relations*—edited by Amon Saba Saakana. Karnak House, U.K.
- Oboler, R.S., 1985, *Women Power & Economic Change, The Nandi of Kenya*. Stanford University Press, California.
- Odell, M. and Schwartzbaum, A.M. 1989, "Ancestor Veneration" in *The Perennial Dictionary of World Religions*. Harper & Row, Publishers, San Francisco.
- Odingo, R.S., 1973, *A study of Agrarian Change in Kenya with Special Reference to Kericho*. University of Nairobi thesis.
- OIE 1997/1, 1997, "Structuralism" in *The Oxford Interactive Encyclopedia*, Developed by: The Learning Company, Inc. Copyright (c) 1997 TLC Properties Inc.
- OIE 1997/2, 1997, "Durga" in *The Oxford Interactive Encyclopedia*, Developed by: The Learning Company, Inc. Copyright (c) 1997 TLC Properties Inc.
- OIE 1997/3, 1997, "Irenaeus", in *The Oxford Interactive Encyclopedia*, Developed by: The Learning Company, Inc. Copyright (c) 1997 TLC Properties Inc.
- OIE 1997/4, 1997, "Tetullian", in *The Oxford Interactive Encyclopedia*, Developed by: The Learning Company, Inc. Copyright (c) 1997 TLC Properties Inc.
- OIE 1997/5, 1997, "Bar mitzvah", in *The Oxford Interactive Encyclopedia*, Developed by: The Learning Company, Inc. Copyright (c) 1997 TLC Properties Inc.
- OIE 1997/6, 1997, "Isaiah" in *The Oxford Interactive Encyclopedia*, Developed by: The Learning Company, Inc. Copyright (c) 1997 TLC Properties Inc.
- OIE 1997: *Oxford Interactive Encyclopedia*, Developed by: The Learning Company, Inc. Copyright (c) 1997 TLC Properties Inc.
- Oliver, P., 1975, "Oral Historian's View", in *Canadian Oral History Association Journal* 1 (1975-6—see Seldon and Pappworth, 1983:16).
- Orchardson, I.Q., 1918, DC/KER/3/1, Kenya National Archives, Nairobi.
- Orchardson, I.Q., 1927, D.C. Ker 3/1, National Archives of Kenya, Nairobi.
- Orchardson, I.Q., 1961, *The Kipsigiis*. East African Literature Bureau, Nairobi, Kampala, Dar es Salaam.
- Orchardson, I.Q., D.C./KER/3/1, National Archives of Kenya, Nairobi.
- Origen, *Contra Celsum* 3rd. century AD. Translated with Introductory Notes by Chadwick, 1953. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Otunga Bishop, 1969 (in *History Society Bulletin*, Nov. 1969), Nairobi.
- Packard, R.M., 1980, "The Study of Historical Process in African Traditions of Genesis: The Bashu Myth of Muhiyi" in *The African Past Speaks, Essays on Oral Tradition and History*. Edited by Joseph C. Miller, WM Dawson & Sons Ltd, Kent, England.
- Paine, T. 1794 AD, *Age of Reason*, Electronically Enhanced Text, © 1991, World Library Inc., Staffordshire, U.K.
- Palmer, Sir Richmond 1970, *The Borno Sahara*, Negro University Press, New York.
- Pancholi, N., 1982, *Comparative Religions: a Modern Textbook*, Blandford Press, Link House, West Street, Poole, Dorset, UK.
- Patrick, J., 1892, *The Apology of Origen in Reply to Celsus, A Chapter in the History of Apologetics*. William Blackwood and Sons, Edinburgh and London.
- PC/NZA1/1, Kenya National Archives, Nairobi.
- PC/NZA1/3. Kenya National Archives, Nairobi.
- Pennick, N., 1992, *The Pagan Source Book*. Rider, London.
- Peristiany, J.G., 1939, *The Social Institutions of the Kipsigiis*. George Routledge & Sons Ltd, U.K.

- Petrie, Sir Flinders, 1924, *Religious Life in Ancient Egypt* (First published 1924 by Houghton Mifflin Company). Published 1972 by Cooper Square Publishers Inc., New York.
- Piankoff, A., 1954, 1955, 1957 (Introduction and Supervision), *Egyptian Religious Texts and Representations: 1954, The Tomb of Ramesses VI; 1955, The Shrines of Tut-Ankh-Amon; 1957, Mythological Papyri*. Bollingen Foundation Inc., Pantheon Books Inc., New York, N.Y.
- Plato, 360 BC, *Laws*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett. Electronically Enhanced Text, © 1991, World Library Inc., Staffordshire, U.K.
- Plutarch, 75 AD, *Alexander*, translated by John Dryden. Electronically Enhanced Text, © 1991, World Library Inc., Staffordshire, U.K.
- Plutarch, 75 AD, *Aristides* (530 – 468 BC). Translated by John Dryden. Electronically Enhanced Text, © 1991, World Library Inc., Staffordshire, U.K.
- Plutarch's Lives*, translated by Bernadotte Perrin, William Heinemann Ltd., London, 1920.
- Pope John Paul, H.H., 1995, *The Church in Africa*, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia In Africa*, Paulines Publications, Africa.
- Population Census Kenya 1989. Government of Kenya.
- Prabhupada, Swami A.C. Bhaktivedanta, 1970. *Krishna, The Supreme Personality of Godhead* (Vol. I). Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, New York.
- Presidential address, February 1992, Kericho Agricultural Show.
- Rambova, N., 1954, 1955, 1957 (ed.), *Egyptian Religious Texts and Representations: 1954, The Tomb of Ramesses VI; 1955, The Shrines of Tut-Ankh-Amon; 1957, Mythological Papyri*. Bollingen Foundation Inc., Pantheon Books Inc., New York, N.Y.
- Rattray, R.S. 1927, *Religion & Art in Ashanti*. Oxford University Press, London.
- Reclus, E., 1882, in *The Earth and its Inhabitants (Africa)* series Vol. 2.
- Reid, D.M., 1985, "Indigenous Egyptology: The Decolonization of a Profession?" in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 105, p. 233-246.
- Roberts, J. M., 1976, *The Hutchinson History of the World*. Century Hutchinson Ltd., London (1987).
- Roberts, J.J.M., GME 1993, "Abraham" in *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Release 6, 1993, Danbury, CT, USA.
- Robertson, J.M., 1910, *Christianity and Mythology*. Watts & Co., Fleet Street E.C.
- Robins, G., 1995, "Mathematics, Astronomy, and Calendars in Pharaonic Egypt" in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* Volume III, Editor-in-chief Sasson J.M. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.
- Sambhi, P.S., 1982, *Comparative Religions: a Modern Textbook*, Blandford Press, Link House, West Street, Poole, Dorset, UK.
- Sambu, K.A., (MS) *Ancient Egyptian and the Kalenjin Language*.
- Sambu, K.A., (MS) *In the Heart of Africa Isis Lives on*.
- Sambu, K.A., (MS) *The Military Clan of Pharaoh*.
- Sang, J.K., 2000, *Ole kibunu Kipsigisiek, Atebenyuan ak Sobenyuan*. © J.K. Sang (printer: Tengecha High School Computer Dept.) Bureti District, Kenya.
- Sankan, S.S. ole 1971, *The Maasai*. Kenya Literature Bureau, Nairobi.
- Sasson, J.M., 1995 (Edt.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, Volume III Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.
- Schechter, R.E., 1980, "A Propos the Drunken King: Cosmology and History" in *The African Past Speaks, Essays on Oral Tradition and History*. Edited by Joseph C. Miller, WM Dawson & Sons Ltd., Kent, England.
- Scheffler, E., 2000, *Fascinating Discoveries from the Biblical World*. Biblia Publishers, Pretoria, South Africa.
- Schmokel, H., 1975, *The Mesopotamian Texts*, Edt. Walter Beyerlin in: *Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, SCM. Press Ltd, London, 1978 Transl. (first pub. 1975 Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht).
- Seldon, A. & Pappworth, J., 1983, *By Word of Mouth, Elite Oral History*, Methuen and Co. NY.
- Seligman, C.G. & Seligman, B.Z., 1932, *The Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.
- Seligman, C.G., 1934, *Egypt and Negro Africa: A Study in Divine Kingship*. George Routledge and Sons Ltd., London.
- Seligman, C.G., 1966 (Pub. 1930), Fourth Edition posthumously revised by "Africanist experts". *Races of Africa*, Oxford University Press, London.
- Shafer, B.E., 1991 (Edt.), *Religion in Ancient Egypt: Gods, Myths, and Personal Practice* (introduction). Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London.
- Sigwalt, R., 1980, "The Kings Left Lwindi; The Clans Divided at Luhunda: How Bushi's Dynastic Origin Myth Behaves" in *The African Past Speaks, Essays on Oral Tradition and History*. Edited by Joseph C. Miller, WM Dawson & Sons Ltd., Kent, England.
- Silverman, D.P., 1991, "Divinity and Deities in Ancient Egypt", *Religion in Ancient Egypt: Gods, Myths, and Personal Practice*. Ed. Shafer, Byron E. Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London.
- Sithebe, Z., 1997, "The Dynamics of Oral and Written Transmission Processes in SiSwati Oral Poetry", *Research in African Literature: The Oral-Written Interface*. Indiana University Press, Volume 28 #1 Spring 1997.
- Sivananda, Sri Swami, 1943 (1961 imprint), *Lord Krishna, His Lilas and Teachings*. Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy, Durban, South Africa.

- Smart, N. 1970, "Metempsychosis" in *A Dictionary of Comparative Religion* (Ed. Brandon). Weidenfield & Nicolson, London.
- Smart, N., 1970, "Hierarchy (Hindu)", in *A Dictionary of Comparative Religion* (Ed. Brandon). Weidenfield & Nicolson, London.
- Smith, E.W., 1950, 'The Idea of God among South African Tribes' in Smith (ed.), *African Ideas of God: A Symposium* 2nd ed.; London—cited by Mircea Eliade (1967:10-11).
- Smith, F. K. & Melliush, T.W., 1968, *Teach Yourself Greek*. The English Universities Press Ltd.
- Smith, H.D., 1970, "Ethics" in *A Dictionary of Comparative Religion* (Ed. Brandon). Weidenfield & Nicolson, London.
- Smith, M., 1973, *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Snell, G.S., 1954, *Nandi Customary Law* (first printed 1954), Kenya Lit. Bureau, Nairobi, 1986 reprint.
- Snowden, F.M., 1970, *Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience*. Cambridge Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Socio-cultural Profile of the Elgeyo Marakwet District* 1985. Edit.: Kipkorir B.E. & Ssenyonga, J.W. for the Ministry of Finance and Planning and the Institute of African Studies.
- Sowayan, S.A., 1992, *The Arabian Oral Historical Narrative: An Ethnographic and Linguistic Analysis*. Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden.
- Spence, L., 1915, *Myths & Legends of Ancient Egypt*. George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd. London, W.C.2.
- Starr, Louis, 1996, "Oral History" (1977) in *Oral History, an Interdisciplinary Anthology*, ed. David K Dunaway and William K. Baum 2nd Edition, 1996, AltaMira Press, California, USA.
- Steindorff, G. & Seele, K.C., 1956, *When Egypt Ruled the East*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Illinois (First published 1941).
- Stone, L.A., 1927, *The Story of Phallicism*. First published 1927 by P. Covici, Chicago. Reprinted by AMS Press Inc., New York, 1976.
- Sunday Life* (supplement of *Sunday Tribune*, South Africa), 14th Sept. 1997.
- Sutton, J.E.G., 1976, "The Kalenjin" in *Kenya Before 1900*. Ed. B.A. Ogot. East African Publishing House, Nairobi.
- Swanepoel, C.F., 1997, "An Exploration of J.J. Moïloa's *Thesele, Ngwana Mmamokgajhane*, the Epic Tradition, and the Oral-Written Interface." *Research in African Literature: The Oral-Written Interface*. Indiana University Press, Volume 28 #1 Spring 1997.
- Tacitus, P. C., 109 AD, *The Annals*, translated by Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodrigg, Electronically Enhanced Text, © 1991, World Library Inc., Staffordshire, U.K.
- Tacitus, P.C., 109 AD, *Histories*. Translated by Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodrigg. Electronically Enhanced Text, © 1991, World Library Inc., Staffordshire, U.K.
- Takács, S.A., 1994, *Isis and Serapis in the Roman World*. E.J. Brill, Leiden, The Netherlands.
- Talley, T.J., 1989, "Epiphany, Christmas Festivities" in *The Perennial Dictionary of World Religions*. Harper & Row, Publishers, San Francisco.
- Te Velde, H., 1995, "Theology, Priests, and Worship in Ancient Egypt", *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, Volume III, Editor In Chief Jack M. Sasson. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.
- The Gospel according to Thomas*, 1959 translation by: A. Guillaumont, H. CH. Puech, G. Quispel, W. Till and Yassah 'Abd Al Masih. Copyright E.J. Brill.
- The Holy Scriptures*, 1992. Koren Publishers Jerusalem Ltd. The English Translation revised and edited by Harold Fisch.
- The Midnight Praise for Sunday Eve*, 1988 translation from Coptic into English by Fr Tadros El-Bakhouri. Sydney.
- The New Book of Knowledge* encyclopaedia series, 1980. Grolier Inc. Danbury, CT. USA.
- Thomas, B., 1937, *The Arabs: The Life-story of a People who have left their deep impress on the World*. Thomson Butterworth Ltd., London.
- Thompson, D.J., 1990, "The High Priests of Memphis under Ptolemaic Rule" in *Pagan Priests: Religion and Power in the Ancient World* (Ed. & © 1990 Mary Beard & John North). Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., London NW1.
- Toweett, T., 1975, *Kalenjin Nouns and their Classification*, M.A. Thesis. University of Nairobi.
- Toweett, T., 1979, *Oral (Traditional) History of the Kipsigiis*. Kenya Lit. Bureau, Nairobi.
- Tuchman, B., 1996, "Distinguishing the Significant from the Insignificant" (1972), in *Oral History, an Interdisciplinary Anthology*, ed. David K Dunaway and William K. Baum 2nd Edition, 1996, AltaMira Press, California, USA.
- Tucker, A.N. & Bryan, M.A., 1966, *Linguistic Analyses, The Non-Bantu Languages of North-Eastern Africa*. Oxford University Press.
- Turcan, R., 1996, *The Cults of the Roman Empire*. Blackwell Publishers Ltd., Oxford, UK. Translated into English by Antonia Nevill from 1989 publication *Les Cultes Orientaux dans le monde Romain*.

- Tylor, E.B., 1871, 1st Edition to 7th Edition, 1924: *Primitive Culture; Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom* (2 Volumes), John Murray, Albemarle St. London.
- Van de Loo, J. (with collaboration of Bilow Kola) 1991, *Guji Oromo Culture in Southern Ethiopia: Religious Capabilities in Rituals and Songs*. Anthropos Institut e. V. Berlin: Reimer.
- Van den Broek, R., 1996, *Studies in Gnosticism and Alexandrian Christianity*. E.J. Brill, Leiden.
- Van der Merwe, W.J., 1957, *The Shona Idea of God*, Fort Victoria: Morgenster Mission Press (see McVeigh, 1974:129).
- Van Dijk, J., 1995, "Myth and Mythmaking in Ancient Egypt" in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, Voll III (ed. Jack Sasson). Charles Scribner's Sons, USA.
- Van Harvey, A., GME 1993, "Heresy", in *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Release 6, 1993, Danbury, CT, USA.
- Van Sertima, L., 1989, Editor: *Egypt Revisited, Journal of African Civilizations*. Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick USA.
- Van Wing, 1921, *Etudes Bakongo* (Brussels, 1921:170ff.)—as translated by Edwin Smith in Smith (ed.) *African Ideas of God: A Symposium* (2nd ed. London 1910:159).
- Vansina, J., "Comment: Tradition of Genesis", *Journal of African History*, Vol. 15, no. 2 (1974)—cited Yoder, 1980:83.
- Vansina, J., 1965, *Oral Tradition; A Study in Historical Methodology*. London.
- Vansina, J., 1980, "Memory and Oral Tradition" in *The African Past Speaks, Essays on Oral Tradition and History*. Edited by Joseph C. Miller, WM Dawson & Sons Ltd., Kent, England.
- Vermaak, P.S., 1995a, "Ancient Near Eastern Culture: The Conceptual Basis of a New Distance Education Course", *Progressio* 17(2): 1995 pp 156-170.
- Vermaak, P.S., 1995b, "The Mother Goddess and Her Games/Gaming Board Connection: an Iconographic Study", *Journal for Semitics* Vol. 7 No. 1 1995.
- Versluis, A., 1988, *The Egyptian Mysteries*, Routledge in association with Routledge, Chapman & Hall Inc., New York.
- Virgil, 19 BC, *The Aeneid*. Electronically Enhanced Text, © 1991, World Library Inc., Staffordshire, U.K.
- Wach, J., 1958 (posthumous), "The Comparative Study of Religions", *Lectures on the History of Religions* Sponsored by The American Council of Learned Societies, *New Series Number Four*.
- Walker, B., 1983, *Gnosticism, Its History and Influence*. The Aquarian Press, Northamptonshire.
- Walker, B., GME 1993, "Divination" in *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Release 6, 1993, Danbury, CT, USA.
- Watterson, B., 1984, *The Gods of Ancient Egypt*, Facts On File Publications, Bicester England.
- Webster, 1934. G&C Merriam Company Publishers, Springfield, Mass. USA.
- Webster, J.B., 1973, In *The Iteso During the Asonya*, co-written by D.H. Okalany, C.P. Emudong and N. Egimu Okuda, East African Publishing House.
- Were, G.S., 1967, *Western Kenya Historical Texts: Abaluyia, Teso and Elgon Kalenjin*. East African Literature Bureau, Nairobi, Kampala, Dar es Salaam.
- Williams, C. G., 1992, *Basic Themes in the Comparative Study of Religion*, The Edwin Mellen Press, Queenston, Ontario, Canada.
- Wycliffe Bible Translations Inc., 1984, *The Ethnologue, Languages of the World*, 10th Edition, California, USA.
- Yoder, J.C., 1980, "The Historical Study of a Kanyok Genesis Myth: The Tale of Citend a Mfumu" in *The African Past Speaks, Essays on Oral Tradition and History*. Edited by Joseph C. Miller, WM Dawson & Sons Ltd., Kent, England.
- Zabkar, L.V., 1988, *Hymns to Isis in Her Temple at Philae*. (Brandeis University Press)University Press of New England, Hanover and London.