

Iing'wesi Maasai

Livelihoods and Moral Identity in Northern Laikipia, Kenya

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This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy



Declarations

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

Abstract

Title: *Ilng'wesi Maasai: Livelihoods and Moral Identity in Northern Laikipia, Kenya*

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Recent literature on pastoralism tends to either portray it as a largely maladaptive practice on the brink of collapse, or as a highly adaptive set of practices that enable resilience in the face of change and uncertainty. This dissertation seeks to find a solution to this impasse and contribute to debates about pastoral communities through a historical and ethnographic study of the Ilng'wesi Maasai. Ilng'wesi today self-identify as pastoralists. They once formed part of the Ilaikipiak alliance in the mid-nineteenth century, before being defeated by another Maasai section and fleeing to the forests of Mt Kenya, where they spent half a century dependent on foraging, ivory trading and livestock herding labour. Today, they live in more or less the same location, where they practice pastoralism, as well as engaging in paid labour and sand harvesting. Their history offers an excellent opportunity to study the extent to which pastoralism's role as a socio-moral practice and a focal point of identity endures through material, political and economic change.

In giving an account of their history, the dissertation attempts to balance the conventional focus in pastoralist studies on material and technical practices and livelihoods with a close examination of emic processes of meaning-making, moral understanding and identity formation. In particular, it explores how Ilng'wesi themselves link their identities with livelihood practices, and how a close identification with pastoralism – often expressed in both moral and ethnic terms – has shaped pastoral livelihoods and is likely to shape them in the future. It does so through the concept of 'moral identity', which builds on and adapts John Lonsdale's account of moral ethnicity. The dissertation uses historical and ethnographic insights to substantiate this concept in relation to Iln'gvesi livelihoods and identity. This is carried out through four empirical chapters: one on Ilng'wesi livelihood transitions between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and possible explanations for these transitions; one on the impact of colonial rule on Ilng'wesi moral identity; one on use of the vernacular of moral identity in evaluating political candidates during the 2017 general election; and one on the changing cattle rustling practices of Ilng'wesi youth.

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List of abbreviations

ALMO - African Livestock Marketing Organisation

BP - Before Present

CF - Conservator of Forests

DC - District Commissioner

DFO - District Forest Officer

DO - District Officer

KLC - Kenya Land Commission

KMC - Kenya Meat Commission

KNA - Kenya National Archives, Nairobi

NAUK - National Archives United Kingdom, Kew

PC - Provincial Commissioner

WLO - Weston Library Oxford

Glossary

Boma - Swahili word for livestock enclosure or homestead.

Dorobo - Anglicisation of the Maa word *iltorrobo*

Empurore - Maa word for theft.

Esoit - Maa word for a stone (usually a smaller one).

Iltorrobo - Maa word; derogatory term for those who rely on hunting for their subsistence.

Inchorin - Maa word for cattle raids.

Moran(s) - Anglicisation of *olmurrani* (plural: *ilmurran*); Maa word for a man of the most junior age grade following circumcision.

Nkauwo - Maa word for shield.

Nkishu - Maa word for cows (plural).

Oltasat - Maa word, singular, for elder men.

Olgilata - Maa word for clan; a non-territorial descent group in Maa-speaking society.

Olosho - Maa word for section; a socio-territorial group. Also used for 'community' and various other forms of social grouping.

Repeta - Maa word, referring to an act of praise towards an individual, group or place, often through song.

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Introduction – Livelihoods, identity and morality

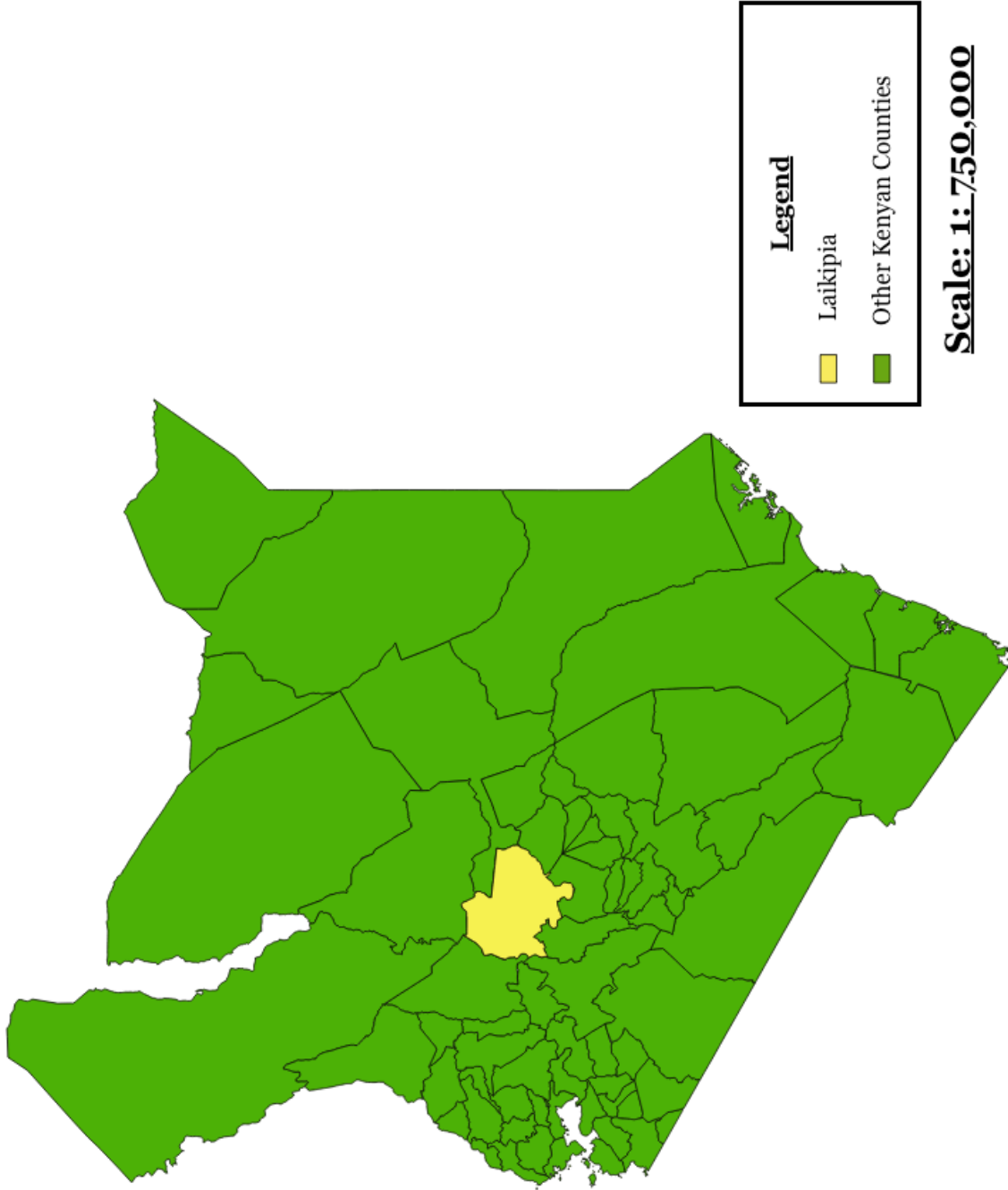
Alexis, you despise me. You do not even ask what sort of man I am, what flocks I may possess, how rich I am in snowy milk. Yet a thousand lambs of mine range the Sicilian hills; summer and winter I have fresh milk in plenty.

(Virgil, *Eclogue II: The Passionate Shepherd to His Love*)

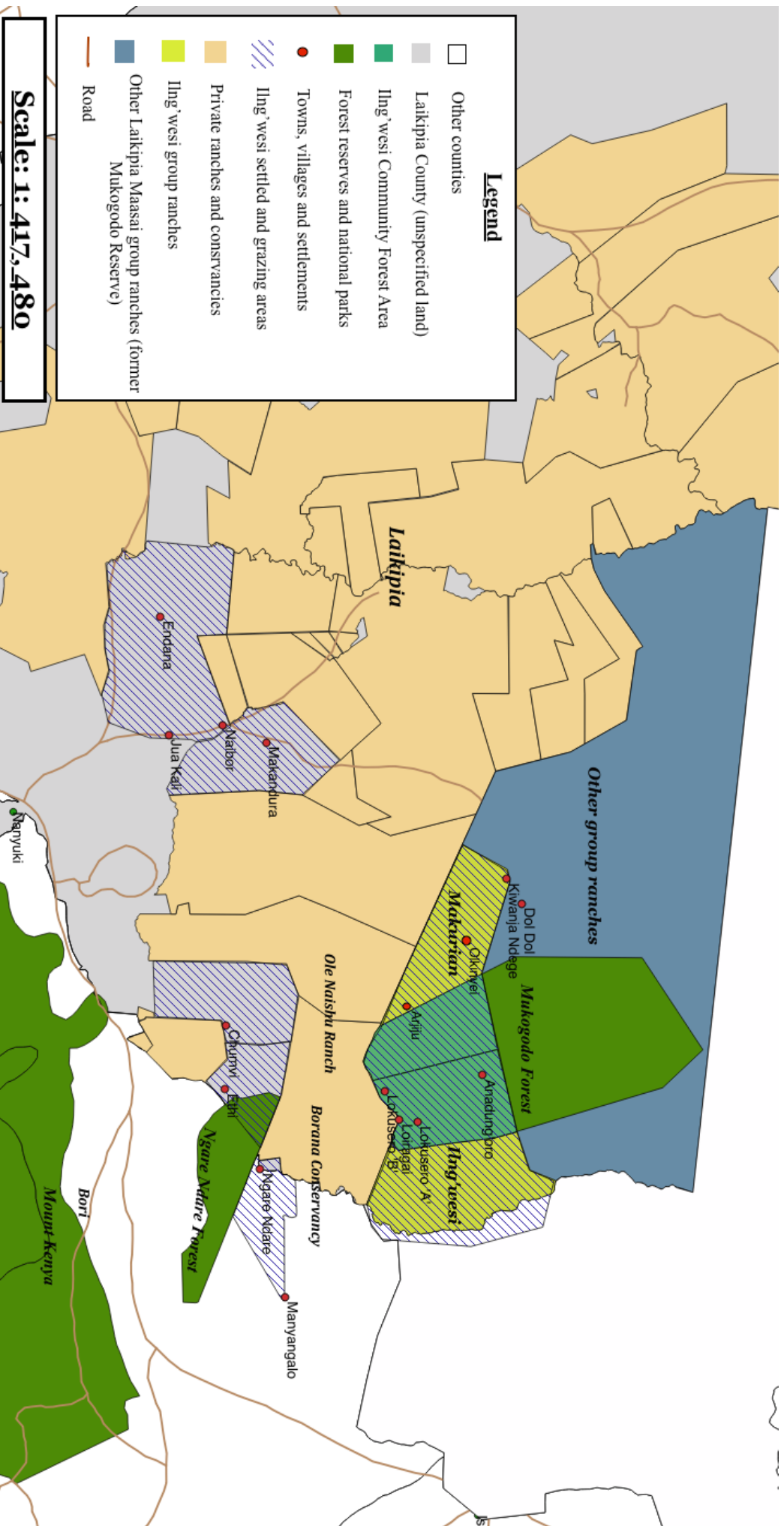
This dissertation is, first and foremost, an account of change and continuity in the livelihoods and identity of IIng'wesi Maasai. It is also an exploration of the processes by which IIng'wesi identity is produced and contested, and the relevance it bears for understanding aspects of their politics, economy and history. In particular, the dissertation looks at emic processes of meaning-making to derive concepts that might help us to understand why IIng'wesi livelihoods and identification practices have changed, or remained the same, over time. As shall become apparent in this introduction, a key concept that I arrive at is that of moral identity, which describes the way in which individuals construct and *identify* with particular frameworks for moral evaluation and practice, by virtue of their inclusion in a particular group. In the case of IIng'wesi, I argue, the values and significance attached to pastoral livelihoods provide a particularly compelling locus for the discourses that produce such moral frameworks. In turn, the emic moral understanding of pastoral livelihoods, and the importance this has for IIng'wesi identity, has significant implications for scholarly analysis regarding the trajectories of pastoral livelihoods.

The IIng'wesi are, today, a section of Maa-speaking pastoralists, the majority of whom reside in northern Laikipia, Kenya (See Map 1 and 2).¹ At the turn of the twentieth century, the IIng'wesi were regarded as (for the most part) hunter-gatherers by their Samburu, Meru and Maasai neighbours, and by the British

¹ I use the term 'section' in place of the Maa word '*olosh*', used to describe, among other things, socio-territorial units within the Maasai ethnic group.



Map 1: Laikipia County within a map of Kenyan County boundaries. GIS data acquired from Fauna and Flora International.



Map 2: Ingg'westi settled and grazing areas in northern Laikipia, Kenya. GIS data acquired by courtesy of Fauna and Flora International and self-collection using Gaia GPS.

colonial administration in Kenya. Because of this, they were referred to by other Maa speakers as *iltorobo*, a pejorative term for hunter-gatherers and stockless pastoralists. The colonial administration rendered the term in Swahili as '*wandorobo*' (although this term was probably already in use more widely), and in English as 'Dorobo'. Because of its negative connotations, most IIng'wesi today reject the term, preferring to identify as Maasai, or Laikipia Maasai, on the basis that almost all of them practise pastoralism to some extent, and very few (if any) hunt for their subsistence. As I discuss in Chapter Three, oral accounts suggest that the reason that they came to be understood as *iltorobo* is that, for around half a century, the IIng'wesi relied heavily on foraging and hunting while living in the foothills of Mt Kenya. Here, IIng'wesi had sought refuge following a military defeat by another Maasai section. They stayed on Mt Kenya during subsequent decades of political and ecological turmoil in the late nineteenth century, during which they were joined by further waves of refugees. In the early twentieth century, they returned to a largely pastoral livelihood, rebuilding their herds through the sale of ivory, as well as cattle rustling, and they returned to the Laikipia plateau following the removal of the Maasai by the British administration between 1911 and 1914 (Hughes 2005).

From this brief outline, we can already identify reasons as to why the themes of change and continuity, and livelihoods and identity, are worthy of attention in the case of IIng'wesi. First, as I outline in more detail in Chapter Three and Four, IIng'wesi spent much of the early twentieth century both rebuilding their livestock herds and renegotiating their position as *iltorobo*. In Chapter Four in particular, I outline how IIng'wesi elites affirmed a 'Dorobo' identity to the colonial administration in the early twentieth century. According to interviewees, they did so in order to be permitted to remain in Laikipia, rather than face relocation to the Maasai reserve in the south. This aspect of IIng'wesi history raises the question of why, during the same period, they aspired to pastoral livelihoods, particularly during a time when it was strategically advantageous to be perceived as *iltorobo*. Although IIng'wesi livelihood practices have been in a continual state of flux since their period as hunter-gatherers, never quite settling to a degree of specialisation identified for pastoralists elsewhere (e.g. Krätli and Schareika 2010), there is

evidence to suggest that they were in some way committed to livestock ownership since at least the early twentieth century (as I outline in Chapter Three). As I suggest below and elaborate in Chapter Three, a major factor was that livestock ownership might have been perceived as a moral imperative, as it is to a large extent today. Their history therefore presents an opportunity to examine the extent to which there is an emic idealisation of pastoralism and livestock ownership that, while fundamentally connected to the material practice of livestock herding, also endures and extends beyond specific material practices. In other words, IIng'wesi history offers a unique case study for exploring changes and continuities in the significance and value attached to particular livelihoods during a period when such livelihoods were in flux. In this dissertation, I focus particularly on the the extent to which the signification of pastoral livelihoods is connected to IIng'wesi identity. I do so by exploring, in various ways, how IIng'wesi identity was and is articulated, with a particular focus on how its articulation indexes moral categories. I also examine the ways in which pastoral livelihoods feature in these articulations, and whether thinking about pastoralism's role in identity has any analytical value for understanding pastoralism as a set of economic and material practices. These questions about pastoral livelihoods in particular were not the starting point for my doctoral research but arose during the course of my fieldwork in Laikipia.

My first encounter with IIng'wesi was largely incidental. In October 2016, I set off to Laikipia from Nairobi, where I had been conducting archival research, to make arrangements for fieldwork among the Mukogodo Maasai, or Yaaku, as many of them prefer to be known today. The Mukogodo were once a hunter-gatherer ethnic group that spoke a Cushitic language and lived primarily in the northern stretches of Mukogodo Forest (see Map 2). They were notable for having decided, in a rather public fashion, to adopt the Maasai language and culture and to live as pastoralists around the 1930s. Cronk (2004) offers an extensive account of this transition in livelihood and cultural identity. My own interest in the Mukogodo concerned more recent developments in the group's political and cultural identity. Since the 1990s, Mukogodo activists had begun an attempt to reclaim their former Yaaku identity, as well as their former language, Yaakunte. This was accompanied

by an assertion of their status as indigenous hunter-gatherers. Indeed, much of their pronouncements were made through fora for indigenous activism such as the United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) (Sena 2012, Carrier 2011). As I came to learn while in Laikipia, the revival of Yaaku identity was also bound up with territorial claims to Mukogodo Forest, in which they co-resided with the Ilng'wesi. It was the link between Yaaku identity and Mukogodo Forest, and particularly how understandings of one informed understandings of the other, as well as how the two emerged as discrete, reified entities, that I wanted to explore more fully through my doctoral research. My interests in pastoralism and Ilng'wesi history were therefore only tangential to these research plans.

Upon arrival in Laikipia, my first step was to try and make arrangements for fieldwork through Mukogodo Forest's 'Community Forest Association' (CFA), called ILMAMUSI.² ILMAMUSI consists of representatives from both Mukogodo and Ilng'wesi group ranches (see footnote 2). As I had planned to conduct the bulk of my research in the forest itself, it seemed necessary to seek the approval and support of the CFA. After discussing my plans, the CFA approved and offered to help me get started, as well as stressing the need to stay abreast of security concerns in the forest and to seek the protection of a forest guard where necessary.³ In order to make the process of organising my research easier, I decided to begin my fieldwork by staying in the same quarters as the CFA manager and project co-ordinator, on premises next to the police post at Loiragai, at the southerly point of Mukogodo Forest where the forest reserve borders Borana Conservancy (see Map 2). I moved to Loiragai in January, 2017, following the completion of my archival research in Nairobi. As it turned out, the ILMAMUSI offices were still under construction, and so I stayed in a spare room in the police post itself. As it took some time to make the necessary preparations for fieldwork,

² This is an acronym for the four group ranches to which residents and user groups of Mukogodo Forest belonged. The IL, stood for 'Ilng'wesi', the 'MA' for 'Makurian', the MU for 'Mukogodo' and the SI for 'Sieku'. The first two are names of Ilng'wesi group ranches, the latter two are names of Mukogodo group ranches. For more on group ranches see Galaty (1994).

³ The forest is regarded as a convenient refuge for bandits and stock thieves, as well as being home to a large elephant population.

such as finding a research assistant and a means of transport, I stayed in Loiragai for almost a month before I felt sufficiently informed and organised to start interviews.

I used this period to get to know people in the area, and to establish a network of friends and contacts. I learned early on that Loiragai was situated firmly in the part of the forest inhabited by IIng'wesi. The IIng'wesi section of the forest extends southwards from about midway across the glade at Anadungoro (see Map 2). Because conducting research on the Yaaku side would have required further consultation with Yaaku community representatives, I thought about ways that I might incorporate some research on IIng'wesi while I waited to organise further meetings with Yaaku leaders. After all, both IIng'wesi and the Yaaku appeared to have claims on Mukogodo Forest, and very little research had been conducted on IIng'wesi perspectives on the forest. Because I was living on the IIng'wesi side of the forest, and had quickly made friends there, this seemed to be an efficient use of time. By the time I was ready to continue, however, the security situation in Mukogodo Forest deteriorated rapidly. In February 2017, a conflict broke out over grazing access in the forest and on the IIng'wesi Conservancy between IIng'wesi and Samburu from Isiolo County. Pretty soon, there were several sightings of armed Samburu morans ⁴ in the forest, followed by attacks on IIng'wesi settlements in Anadungoro and Lukosero. The situation escalated, until an IIng'wesi elder was shot and killed by Samburu morans while collecting honey from his beehives in the forest.

It was becoming clear that conducting any kind of research in the forest would have been dangerous, not to mention counter-productive at a time of heightened fear and stress. I decided to see if I could interview users and former residents of the forest that were living in areas outside of the forest itself. Because I had established a network of contacts among IIng'wesi, these initial interviews took place on the IIng'wesi group ranch of Makurian. I spent around two weeks living on Makurian group ranch, conducting interviews, building further contacts and

⁴ Young men of the warrior age group.

getting to know people. Following these two weeks, I returned to Loiragai to get a better idea of the situation in Mukogodo Forest. The security crisis had worsened. Owing to the invasion of private ranches by Samburu and Pokot morans throughout Laikipia, the government had announced a major police operation in the area, aimed at flushing out 'bandits.' Loiragai Police Post, once home to only three permanent officers, was suddenly a major paramilitary camp. Forest residents had evacuated the area in droves, fearful of any impending violence. My research plans had become untenable for the foreseeable future.

Fortunately, my archival research, my preliminary interviews on Makurian group ranch, and my many discussions with IIng'wesi friends and contacts indicated that I could conduct research on many of the same themes among IIng'wesi as I might have done with the Yaaku in Mukogodo Forest. For instance, accounts of the Yaaku tend to portray them as having succumbed to a regionally dominant pastoralist Maasai culture, including that of IIng'wesi. Through my preliminary research with IIng'wesi, I learned that this latter pastoralist identity was itself highly fraught and contested, both among IIng'wesi themselves and in its portrayal by scholars and outsiders of all kinds. As I have already outlined, IIng'wesi have themselves been through major livelihood transitions over the past two centuries, and their recent practice of pastoralism has largely taken place in conditions of political and economic upheaval. Meanwhile, the unfolding conflict in Laikipia during my fieldwork, and the long period of drought within which it was set, had triggered debates about the viability and sustainability of pastoral livelihoods in Kenyan media. As I explore in Chapter Five, the issue became politicised in the context of the Kenyan General Elections that year, with some regional politicians defining their campaigns according to whether they supported pastoralist claims for land against white ranchers in Laikipia, or supported law, order and property rights regardless of the visibly deleterious effects of the drought, and a lack of available pasture, on pastoral livelihoods. The value and meaning of pastoralism, and what it meant to be a pastoralist in Kenya today, was therefore a fraught concern and a cause of considerable debate in Laikipia during my fieldwork.

Indeed, to me it appeared that to speak of pastoralism in Laikipia was itself a way of indexing a range of political claims that concerned, in a number of ways, their historic marginalisation in the region, even if, as I discuss shortly, it simultaneously implied a particular (often superior) moral status. Much as with Yaaku identity, these claims were frequently territorial or concerned with the reclamation of landscapes. This is aptly demonstrated by a conversation I had with one Ilng'wesi forest guard, who said of the importance of the forest to his livelihood:

I am a pastoralist, and if I do not have this forest then I will not be able to support my livestock. Without my livestock, I will have to go and dig, like the Kikuyu. (I2)⁵

This particular quote is astonishing in how much it conveys regarding the character of identity in the region, its ties to an emically-defined normative idea of pastoralism, and to land and landscape. It indicates the ways in which livelihoods are normatively interwoven with ethnicity, and fears of marginalisation and dispossession. Without his livestock, the forest guard suggested that he would lose a crucial aspect of his identity, to the extent that he would become like someone from another ethnic group (the Kikuyu – of whom, it should be added, he spoke with some disdain). What appears to have concerned him most about this was that this would force him to partake in a kind of labour – digging, by which he meant agricultural labour – which he saw as shameful. The only thing that stood between him and such a fate were his livestock, and the pasture provided by Mukogodo Forest, of which he seemed to fear he could be dispossessed (this particular exchange took place in the context of a conversation about why he had become a forest guard). What makes this exchange even more interesting is the fact that, in addition to rearing livestock, he grew maize within his *boma* in Lukosero (see Map 2). In fact, we had this conversation over a bowl of home-grown *githeri* (a meal of maize and beans strongly associated with agricultural communities in Central Kenya) in his house. It is possible, then, that

⁵ 'I2' refers to Interview 2, details of which can be found in Appendix I. I explain my interview referencing system in Chapter Two.

his assertion was about more than engaging in certain forms of labour, but rather about the social and economic context in which he would be required to do so – whether through active livelihood diversification in which his pastoral identity remained intact, or through a process of dispossession, or even proletarianisation, in which he would have to ‘dig’ by necessity.

My early fieldwork with IIng’wesi therefore raised several questions about the link between livelihoods and identity, a theme that I had intended to explore through research with the Yaaku. I was curious to learn more about the process by which IIng’wesi had restored their pastoral livelihoods at the turn of the twentieth century. I was interested to know if it was possible to discern if they had sustained an aspiration to own livestock, and a Maasai cultural identity, through their years living as hunters and gatherers in the forests of Mt Kenya. My preliminary investigations suggested that the strength of pastoralist identity could accommodate a degree of livelihood diversification and change, and I wanted to find out more about what pastoralist identities meant, and how and between whom they were negotiated. Through my growing friendship with several IIng’wesi contacts, I had become increasingly interested in where they saw their role in the modern Kenyan state and the extent to which they understood this from the vantage point of a pastoralist identity. Further, whereas several authors had already covered the question of identity among the Yaaku, very little in-depth research on the history of IIng’wesi exists to date. The insecurity in Mukogodo Forest, while worrying on a personal level, presented an opportunity to take my research in a slightly different direction empirically, whilst still remaining on target thematically.

This dissertation therefore attempts to address several key questions about the nature of identity and its link to livelihood practices that were being discussed by people on the ground during my fieldwork. Further, these questions happen to be relevant to debates about the future of pastoralism and whether pastoralist adaptability might eventually give way to a collapse in pastoral livelihoods. These debates regarding the resilience and vulnerability of pastoral livelihoods, which have been ongoing for decades, have implications for policies designed for dryland

regions. This dissertation aims to contribute to such debates. I turn to this literature now, before formalising the research questions that drive and inform the rest of the dissertation.

1.1 Trajectories of pastoralism in East Africa

In the last few decades, there has been a transformation in academic understandings of the role of pastoralism in African range ecosystems. Ellis and Swift (1988), among others, challenged the assumption that African pastoral ecosystems are, by default, stable systems that are destabilised through overstocking and overgrazing by pastoralists and their livestock. Instead, they argued, pastoral ecosystems are driven primarily by the stochastic distribution of abiotic controls, rather than biotic homeostatic feedback mechanisms. In other words, the uneven distribution of rainfall, soil types and, consequently, quality pasture, make the achievement of equilibrium impossible in pastoral ecosystems. The main implication of this insight is that development interventions that seek to restore equilibrium conditions, which have tended to be dominant, are futile, if not dangerous. Pastoralists are adept at exploiting environmental heterogeneity, 'rather than attempting to manipulate the environment to maximise stability and uniformity' (Behnke and Scoones 1993: 14-15; see also Krätli and Schareika 2011). The 'new pastoral paradigm' (Turner 2011) that has emerged in academic and development literature argues for the recognition and accommodation of these herd management strategies, which tend to promote pastoral mobility, herd diversification, residential flexibility, as well as indigenous institutions for the management of common pasture (e.g. Scoones 1994, Sullivan and Rohde 2002, Turner 2011). In addition, the new paradigm advocates for supporting and building on the customary institutions that facilitate and preserve these strategies (Fratkin and Mearns 2003).

In addition to pursuing livelihoods well suited to dryland environments, several authors have commented on the capacity of pastoralists to adapt to ecological, political, economic and societal changes. Catley, Lind and Scoones (2013) highlight the adaptive and innovative capacities of pastoralists in the face of uncertainty generally, as demonstrated by the dynamic and successful trade networks

established by pastoralists across international borders imposed under colonial rule (ibid.: 7-9). Bollig and Lesorogol (2016) outline the various ways in which pastoralists across Kenya have managed to pursue a 'new commons' in spite of increasing land fragmentation and privatisation, enabling them to practise forms of herd mobility by utilising social networks for access to private land. In these cases, they argue, a strong moral pressure towards sharing resources during times of hardship has meant that commons principles often appear to supersede other property rights. In these examples, it appears that both moral obligations and the idealisation of pastoral mobility, often 'wrapped up in constructions of identity' (Catley, Lind and Scoones 2013: 16) serve as focal points around which pastoralists have adapted their livelihood practices.

Running alongside this narrative of adaptability and innovation is one of crisis and imminent collapse. Markakis (2004), for instance, commented that: 'Pastoralism as a mode of production and a way of life has entered a phase of decline that may well prove terminal.' Anderson and Bollig (2016), regarding the various pastoralist assemblages that emerged in the Baringo-Bogoria basin over the last two centuries, likewise argue that pastoralism, as a social-ecological encounter, is on the verge of collapse in the region. Drawing on Holling and Gunderson's (2002) model of resilience in social-ecological systems, Anderson and Bollig's account of 'collapse' here signals more of a reconfiguration of pastoralists' livelihoods and modes of engagement with their ecosystem (which may itself be changing), to the extent that it takes on a new identity, rather than the disappearance of pastoralists altogether. For Anderson and Bollig, then, collapse is as much an opportunity for better adaptation to changing circumstances (albeit through a tumultuous process) as it is an existential threat to pastoralism as we know it in the region. However, both sets of authors echo the claim by Dyson-Hudson (1985: 173) that 'pastoral production systems are a highly efficient response to an environment which began to disappear in the early twentieth century and has been disappearing at an accelerating rate every since'. In essence, many of those predicting the collapse of pastoralism appear focused on the retention of material practices, in particular herding techniques and strategies, that no longer live up to prevailing ecological and social conditions.

In addition to those concerned with a collapse or disappearance of pastoralism, some authors see a crisis in or significant threats to the existing structure, harmony and dynamics of pastoralist societies and their customary institutions. Several, for instance, are concerned about the higher levels of inequality, poverty and social exclusion that have resulted from livelihood diversification, reliance on markets and increased sedentism (Little et al 2008, Catley and Akilu 2013). Others point to the erosion of community cohesion and traditional authority structures and values that once guided pastoralist practices. For some, this is the result of land privatisation and exclusion leading to unequal access to crucial resources (Hesse and MacGregor 2006, Butt 2011). For others, the expansion of illicit markets in livestock and light firearms throughout East Africa has facilitated the growing role of external 'entrepreneurs' in organising livestock raids, which are more violent and 'predatory' than in the past (Hendrickson et al 1996). These entrepreneurs, they argue, take advantage of the erosion of pastoralist authority structures, particular the power relations between elders and male youth, the former of which are said to have served as a check on the impulses of the latter (ibid., Anonymous 2017; see also Spencer 1965).

We therefore have a contradiction in the literature on pastoralist societies. On the one hand, pastoralists appear to be adaptive, innovative, resilient, and on the other, they appear locked into a spiral of 'terminal decline', or at the very least face significant internal and external challenges. There are some pitfalls in both sets of arguments that might help us to plot a route out of this impasse. The literature which sees pastoralism as an adaptive, innovative and ever-changing livelihood and mode of production does not go far enough in answering the question of how much adaptation and change pastoral livelihoods, whether at a collective level or on an individual basis, can undergo before they become something else entirely. A notable exception is Caravani (2018: 3), who defines 'de-pastoralisation' as the dispossession of the 'major means of [pastoralist] social reproduction, such as livestock, mobility and communal grazing land'. Caravani's account is relatively novel in that it brings perspectives from 'peasant studies', with its emphasis on the centrality of agrarian means of production, but fails to take account of real

incidences of dispossession in which the desire to recover pastoral means of social reproduction endures. In the case of IIng'wesi, as I argue in Chapter Three, an aspiration to (re)build livestock herds resulted in a return to pastoral livelihoods, despite IIng'wesi having been dispossessed of livestock and pasture. What this suggests is that material dispossession and a change in material subsistence practices was not enough to cause the disappearance of pastoral livelihoods for IIng'wesi altogether. Understanding how IIng'wesi value and attach significance to pastoralism may therefore offer clues as to precisely what needs to change in order for pastoral livelihoods to collapse or disappear in a meaningful, long-term sense. In other words, it is possible that the turning point between adaptation and collapse lies in the emic signification of pastoralism.

As I outline in the following section, anthropologists and other researchers of pastoralist societies have long explored the value of livestock and pastoral mobility for pastoralists. However, these emic categories and meaning-making processes have yet to be brought fully to bear on discussions of pastoralist resilience, let alone used to define priorities for pastoralists' adaptive behaviours. Instead, the literature on pastoralist vulnerability and resilience tends to overemphasise the suitability of pastoralist herding strategies to certain environments, as if this in itself is the *raison d'être* for pastoral livelihoods. This in turn implies that a change in these environments, to an extent that forces significant change in material practices, is enough to signal transformation or collapse. As I note below, these materialist perspectives are important and bring us excellent insights into the problems faced by pastoralists committed to livestock herding today. However, they need to be integrated with an understanding of the ways in which livelihoods satisfy not only material needs, but also 'moral (normative) needs in the face of major stresses and shocks' (Crane 2010: 2).

Meanwhile, the literature emphasising existential threats to pastoralism has a tendency to be insufficiently historical in its approach. While some accounts draw comparisons between ecological and political conditions during the time of pastoralist livelihoods' emergence in East Africa and the present day (Dyson-

Hudson 1985, Markakis 2004), and others offer a broad overview of the processes that have intruded upon or undermined pastoral livelihoods in the intermitting period (Bollig 2016), what is often missing from such arguments is the fact that pastoralists have been through crises, and collapse, before, while maintaining certain continuities in their livelihood strategies. It is difficult to imagine a greater challenge to the viability of pastoralist communities than the series of epizootics and droughts that almost led to the decimation of livestock herds throughout East Africa during the 1890s – a period known to Maa speakers as *emutai* (the disaster) (see Sobania 1980). While this period greatly transformed the pastoralist socio-territorial landscape and the distribution of livestock wealth across ethnic groups and households (due to livestock raiding and the differential impact of the epizootic), as a whole, pastoralist herds recovered (Sunseri 2018). This period of recovery took longer for some than for others – as we shall see, many pastoralists were forced to survive on hunting and foraging for decades before herd recovery reached viable levels. However, particularly in the case of IIng’wesi, who fell out of pastoralism for at least several decades, an aspiration to own livestock seems to have endured and to have survived this disaster, and with it an identification with livestock production.

Accounts of pastoralism in a state of crisis are also nothing new, and echo crisis narratives that characterise much Western development literature on Africa generally. Typically, these narratives do more than present data on the state of development on the African continent – they position such data within a chronology consisting of a neat beginning, middle and end, after ‘which something is said to happen or from which something is said to follow’, often entailing a course of action on the part of development practitioners (Roe 1999: 13). In the case of crises in pastoralism, the logical end-point of such narratives often seems to be interventions which lead people away from pastoral livelihoods, which are deemed unfit for purpose. Beyond development narratives, writing about Africa often assumes ‘crisis’ as a condition of life on the continent, rather than a particular moment or event, in ways that appear paradoxical. Africa ‘is designated and conjured under the sign of crisis’, partly because ‘crisis is taken to be an instance when the contingency of truth claims are made bare, it presumably

grants access to a social world' (Roitman 2016: 31, 35). The conjuring of Africa-as-crisis goes beyond the self-positioning of academic scholars as those with access to fundamental truths which crises lay bare (see also Derrida 1984 on the truth-rendering effects of apocalyptic writing), it also has a long history in relations of power between Africa and the wider world, and particularly projects of colonialism (Mudimbe 1988). This is not to suggest that those who see crisis in contemporary pastoralism are interested in reinitiating colonial projects, but rather that crisis narratives are not the inevitable consequence of available data, but rather a style of writing and perceiving Africa rooted in the colonial past (see Leach and Mearns 1996).

Equally, however, overemphasising the resilience, egalitarianism or innovative capacity of pastoralists may also be harmful, by ignoring the genuine legal, political and social constraints to innovation and adaptability faced by the poor (see Anderson and Broch-Due 1999, Karnani 2008). One might argue that the valorisation of pastoralist ingenuity belongs equally to a long-running tendency in Western writing on Africa that romanticises African resilience in the face of crises that are themselves the product of Western narrativisation. While narrative writing is impossible to avoid altogether, there is clearly a need to discern from these narratives about pastoralism what is useful, or indeed veracious, and what is not. Indeed, it may be possible that both accounts are representative of events on the ground in some way or another, and that both crisis and adaptive innovation need to be held in dynamic tension. To capture this effectively, and to discard that which is patently of no value, greater attention to the priorities of pastoralists themselves, and emic conceptions of the value of pastoral livelihoods and livestock ownership, is needed.

1.2 Pastoralism as a social and moral category

As I wrote in the previous section, many of the above accounts, when considering the trajectories of pastoral livelihoods, tend to focus primarily on pastoralism as a set of material practices, such as mobile livestock herding, or as a primarily economic activity, side-lining the important social and moral dimensions of

pastoral livelihoods. Throughout the literature, pastoralism is presented as a means of exploiting stochastically distributed resources in dryland environments characterised by uncertainty, primarily through mobile herding strategies (Ellis and Swift 1988, Roe et al 1998, McCabe 2004, Krätli and Schareika 2010, Davies and Nori 2015). The social-ecological dimension of pastoralism is undoubtedly important. As I iterate below, pastoralism in East Africa appears to have emerged through the co-evolution of particular livelihood practices and grassland ecosystems through social-ecological experimentation over the course of several millennia (Taylor et al 2005). There may be other reasons for the dominance of economic and materialist paradigms. As Galaty (1984) notes, scholars of pastoralism have tended to reject the essentialism embodied in so-called 'cultural perspectives' on pastoralists, exemplified most strongly by Herskovitz's (1926: 649) notion of the 'cattle complex'. However, that there is a strongly moral and social component to livestock keeping in pastoralist communities is well established. The use of livestock in maintaining social relationships through gift exchanges, such as bridewealth, was famously explored by Evans-Pritchard (1940, 1951) with regards to the Nuer in Sudan. More recently, Ferguson (1985) proposed the concept of a 'bovine mystique' to explain why, for the Basotho, the conversion of cattle into cash poses a degree of moral and social jeopardy that applies far less to other assets.

Like Evans-Pritchard, Ferguson gives an account of how, during his fieldwork, cattle in particular were used to mediate social relations. He argues that livestock performed several key functions in maintaining the category interests and power of Basotho men. Aside from their importance in bridewealth payments, they established the legitimacy of a husband's claims to be legal 'head' of a household by providing tangible support to his dependants. They symbolically asserted a man's presence in his village, even during his absence. They also involved the man in relations of patronage and reciprocity with other villagers, which in turn provided him with prestige and a valuable social network (ibid.: 661). Ferguson also argues that livestock performed an important economic function, which other objects of wealth, including cash, could not. Because of the cultural status afforded to cattle, meaning that they could not, unless in times of hardship, be sold off, they

were protected from the demands of household dependants (ibid.: 663-664). Moreover, in ideal circumstances, cattle herds expand over time. As such, livestock served as a more durable store of wealth, which became particularly useful in a man's later years, when he was no longer able to earn cash through physical labour. This is part of the reason why, Ferguson argues, cattle were so highly coveted by older, bridewealth-receiving generations, resulting in inter-generational tensions between youth and elders, who tried to sequester cattle brought in by young men's labour during bridewealth negotiations (ibid.: 667). For Ferguson then, the value of cattle for pastoralists derives from the power and status afforded to their owners, rather than stemming from a cultural obsession with livestock.

Regarding East Africa, much scholarship has highlighted how the moral value of pastoralism as a mode of production is coupled with the perceived character of particular ethnic groups. Galaty (1982: 4) argues that, regarding Maasai ethnicity: 'The core image Maasai hold with respect to themselves is that of *iltung'ana loo ngishu* (people-of-cattle) or *en-talapu* (those-who-are-under-cattle; or, those-who-are-suckled, in analogy with calves sucking the teats of the mother cow).' Maasai strongly associate this image of a 'people-of-cattle' with the qualities of 'bravery, fortitude and arrogance', said to be signified by the term 'Maasai' itself. Maasai resembles the verb '*maa-sai*', which translates to 'I will not beg.' The association of these values with pastoralism has been described with regard to pastoralists elsewhere (Goldschmidt 1971; Edgerton 1971; cited in Galaty 1982: 4). The values indexed by Maasai identity are strongly reminiscent of the quotation I included in the preface to this dissertation by an Ilng'wesi forest guard, who essentially argued that his livestock were the only thing that separated him from the Kikuyu, whose primary mode of production – 'digging' – offered no clear standard for virtuous achievement. The term *iltorrobo* is similarly an implicit statement about the inability of someone without livestock to build moral standing. According to one translation offered to me in Laikipia, it means 'he who goes one by one', referring to the solitude of the hunter, borne of the fact that without livestock one is unable to build the kinds of bonds that make pastoralists accountable to others via their social obligations.

Both the term *iltorrobo* and the quote about Kikuyu ‘digging’ demonstrate the fact that ‘Maasai’ identity is frequently invoked in contrast to non-pastoralists. As Galaty (ibid.: 8) argues, ‘Maasai-ness’ derives a lot of its meaning from within a network of oppositions, within which agriculturalists and hunters are seen to be diametrically opposed to Maasai. However, while Galaty sees these oppositions as primarily economic, due to the fact that non-Maasai may even speak the same language or practise the same cultural rites as the Maasai, the mere adoption of livestock appears to also be insufficient for inclusion as Maasai. The significance of the term ‘Maasai’, Galaty argues, ‘shifts with the particular context of use’, and is subject to various ambiguities (ibid.). Particularly relevant for this dissertation is the example of Maasai who become *iltorrobo*. Many Maasai hunters, as in the case of IIng’wesi, return to pastoral livelihoods, and have close kinship, trading and gift exchange ties with fully pastoral Maasai. Despite this, as I highlight in Chapter Three, the stigma of being *iltorrobo* never seems to fully disappear (ibid., Cronk 2002).

To sum up briefly, in addition to pastoralism serving as a suitable strategy for managing and exploiting uncertainty in variable environments, it also serves as a focal point for identity and a point of reference for moral evaluation. We have seen this from the brief history of IIng’wesi I described above, in the discussions of pastoralism I cited earlier in this introduction, and in ethnographic literature on the livestock economy in pastoral societies. However, the moral and identity component of pastoralism is generally sidelined when scholars consider the trajectories of pastoral livelihoods. In this dissertation, I want to explore the role that this dimension of pastoralism plays in the histories and present-day dynamics of pastoral communities. However, it is worth first unpacking further my theoretical framework for understanding pastoralism’s relationship to identity and morality in Laikipia. In particular, I elaborate on the concept of moral identity.

From Moral Ethnicity to Moral Identity

In the contexts described above, livestock keeping plays an important role in maintaining social relations and is accorded a virtuous status within the moral frameworks of some pastoral communities. In other words, there appears to be an important link between pastoralism and social identity. Further, from the discussion above, it becomes apparent that there is a link between the emic moral frameworks (or morality), identity based on livelihood (or economy), and identity – as, for example, being Maasai seems to be associated with being pastoralist, and vice versa. The extent to which this is true of Ilng’wesi is explored through this dissertation. Here, however, I want to consider how to formulate the connection between morality, economy and identity. One possible way forward is to draw on Lonsdale’s (1992, 1994) notion of moral ethnicity. Lonsdale’s theories are not entirely straightforward, as his writings on the topic are found dispersed throughout his work, particularly on Mau Mau and Kikuyu political thought, and never dealt with systematically in a way that provides a satisfactory framework for use in other contexts. In this section, I piece together Lonsdale’s ideas on moral ethnicity and derive from them a more substantial and adapted framework, which I term ‘moral identity’. The components of the proposed framework are more closely aligned with my empirical material. I will indicate throughout this section how these various components of moral identity link to individual empirical chapters.

Lonsdale (1994) traces the origins of his version of moral ethnicity to precolonial Africa, when, he argues, social groups were more likely to be distinguished according to their skills and modes of production than linguistic or cultural differences. Groups defined by the latter, he argues, were more fluid in their boundaries, and less accentuated, than the former. These livelihood-based groups existed before the foregrounding of ‘tribal’ identities during the colonial period. These ‘imagined communities’ were the main arenas within which people shared a moral vocabulary, one that emerged out of ‘the daily habits of social intercourse and material labour’ (ibid.: 132), and in which people could meaningfully engage in moral debate (1992: 317). Out of these debates, social groups produced ‘a

system of moral meaning and ethical reputation' (1994: 132), wherein each group extolled the virtues of the group's mode of production or livelihood, and set standards for ethical and reputable behaviour. These standards were typically based in some way on normative understandings of the agricultural economy.

Moral meaning and standards for ethical reputation are two separate components of moral ethnicity. Lonsdale, on the one hand, describes how Kikuyu ascribed virtue to hard agricultural labour, which they saw as an opportunity for fashioning self-identity through the demonstration of self-discipline, and from which they could acquire property rights over the land they had toiled. Agricultural labour, particularly forest clearing, also 'civilised' wild landscapes. As a collective endeavour, it also brought people together, to the extent that it was thought that they became *Agikuyu* through forest clearing (1992: 334-335). They contrasted their own labour with that of other groups, such as their Maasai pastoralist neighbours (1992: 336), whom they respected for their livestock and the quality of their land, but also regarded to belong to 'a wilderness of rubbish and disorder', owing to their unwillingness to 'put a hoe to the ground' (*ibid.*). The imagining of particular livelihoods as a collective, identity-forming endeavour, coupled with negative evaluations of those pursuing other modes of production, gave rise to the appraisal of one's own group, and its economy, as particularly virtuous.⁶

Moral meaning is distinct from the second component of moral ethnicity, which is the emergence of standards for ethical reputation. Ethical reputation appears in Lonsdale's writing as a measure of individuals within an imagined community employing the same moral vocabulary and engaging in internal moral debate. It concerns, in other words, how these vocabularies and debates are brought to bear on the measure of individual worth, and concomitantly, how individuals might achieve standing within their community by meeting the standards and

⁶ There is an extent to which Lonsdale's account is informed by his reading of certain texts, rather than a full engagement with Kikuyu livelihoods. Kitching (1980), for instance, gives an account of Kikuyu as herders, and particularly of goat herding as masculine labour (see also Muriuki 1974). Historical accuracy aside, however, my point here is to follow Lonsdale's line of thought regarding moral ethnicity, and I will stick with his account for heuristic purposes.

demonstrating the virtues that emerge in moral ethnicity. It appears that, particularly in the colonial period, there was often sharp division over what exactly the standards for ethical reputation were, particularly in relation to the Kikuyu moral economy (which I discuss shortly), which many Kikuyu thought to be undermined, if not eroded, by the extractive force of colonial capitalism (ibid.: 352). However, what features prominently in these debates is the notion that meeting the standards of ethical reputation involves the fulfilling of certain social obligations, however defined, as well as living up to certain normative expectations.⁷ The emphasis on obligation also suggests that moral ethnicity as much describes a collection of people who perceive themselves to have obligations to one another, as it does an imagined community tied by a common, virtuous mode of production.

Running throughout these discussions of moral ethnicity is the concept of moral economy. To a large extent, Lonsdale's account of moral economy appears as a projection of moral ethnicity onto the economic sphere of social life. Indeed, production, exchange and distribution are deeply interwoven in his account of Kikuyu life, such that separating 'economy' from other objects of moral ethnicity debate would be futile. However, the concept of moral economy has had much purchase in other scholarly work, and is often contrasted with rational, 'disembedded', and essentially capitalist, economies. Indeed, in Lonsdale's own analysis of the period preceding and during the Mau Mau insurgency, moral economy appears in Kikuyu debate primarily as a foil for the extractive and oppressive force of colonial capitalism, with little actual unanimity over the precise obligations the moral economy entailed (ibid.: 352).

While this dichotomy between a moral or socially-embedded economy and the capitalist economy has a prominent place in twentieth century social theory, it was not always thus. Writing specifically of (relatively) free markets, Adam Smith,

⁷ In Lonsdale's (1992) account, these obligations appear to concern primarily the obligation of older Kikuyu elites to provide economic opportunity for younger men. Moral ethnicity therefore brings together two concepts, obligation and virtue. Their failure to do so was problematic to earlier Kikuyu nationalists, who drew on notions of obligation to conjure a sense of ethnicity.

in *The Wealth of Nations*, famously argues that the aggregate effect of commercial exchanges, enacted in the pursuit of individual self-interest, produced maximum well-being and harmony (Smith 2000). His argument was not merely a defence of free enterprise for its own sake, but one rooted in a utilitarian understanding of the good. The free market, for Smith among others (one could make a similar point regarding Hayek's (1944) positive evaluation of human freedom as an outcome of free markets), was in essence a moral economy, insofar as it delivered maximum public utility. Writing more specifically of production and the imperative towards accumulation of capital, Weber (2002), noted the distinctively Christian (and more specifically Protestant) ethic that informed the tendency in early capitalist economies for people to accumulate more than was needed for subsistence. To produce, to make use of the instruments and resources bestowed upon humanity by God, was to do God's work, which was understood as inherently good. This normative veneration of production is not too dissimilar from Lonsdale's discussion of Kikuyu ideas regarding the positive value of agricultural production and labour. More recently, Ferguson (2015: 35-62) has noted the widespread adulation of labour and the patriarchal figure of the worker, including by critics of capitalism such as Marx, as a means of producing oneself as a morally reputable subject.

In accounts that do distinguish moral, or 'embedded', economies from those of market capitalism, the main point of distinction is often the impersonal nature of commercial transaction that results from the use of money (Simmel 1978), and systems of accounting made necessary by the replacement of reciprocity with debt (Graeber 2011). Such developments served to 'rationalise' exchange, the argument goes, by enabling transacting parties to adequately settle their debts through the exchange of money of precise value, and thus terminate their relationship at the point of transaction (Bloch and Parry 1989). By contrast, in non-capitalist economies, exchanges produced reciprocal ties between individuals, in such a way that strengthened the bonds between them rather than severing them (Mauss 2016). Money also alienated objects from the people that produce, own or exchange them, by enabling a spatial separation between people and their property (Simmel 1978: 333). In non-capitalist economies, however,

objects are seen to embody the essence of their producers and owners, such that when objects are exchanged they continue to embody the essence, and sometimes even the spirit, of the giver (Mauss 2016). For Polanyi (2001), conversely, the rationalisation of the economic sphere created the impression that the economy could be, and was in the case of modern capitalist states, disembodied from society (contrast this with the socially embedded Kikuyu moral economy in Lonsdale's account above).

If we think of markets as disembodied from social life, then we can understand why they might be thought of as, at the very least, amoral. However, much work in economic anthropology has sought to demonstrate the falsehood of disembodied economies. For Bloch and Parry (1985: 26), the perceived 'embeddedness' of an economy ultimately depends on the register in which its operations are articulated:

... all these systems make - indeed *have* to make - some ideological space within which individual acquisition is a legitimate and even laudable goal; but that such activities are consigned to a separate sphere which is ideologically articulated with, and subordinated to, a sphere of activity concerned with the cycle of long-term reproduction.

The relationship between the short-term cycle of 'individual acquisition' and the long-term cycle of social reproduction is inevitably fraught and articulated in historically contingent ways (ibid.). However, their main conclusion is that the discursive work of embedding and disembodiment economies is instantaneous in all contexts. This, we have already seen, is evident in arguments favouring individual accumulation in free markets – the short term pursuit of individual benefit is generally argued to produce maximum public good in the longer term and on a wider social scale. For Polanyi (2001), articulating the primacy and importance of one 'sphere' in such way that came too heavily at the expense of the other led inevitably to either economic crisis or social upheaval.

I follow this line of argument here, and suggest that no economy is either totally embedded or disembedded from the fabric of social life, even if relations of production and exchange coalesce with kinship and political relations more readily in some contexts than in others (Godelier 1985: 21). If we accept this, that leaves us with the question of whether capitalist economies are more 'rational' than moral economies, and further, whether 'rationality' implies amorality. Scott (1975) has argued that the moral economy of peasants is no less rational than economies defined by accumulative individualism. Ties of reciprocal obligation, gift economies, and common resource managements in peasant moral economies are instead informed by a different imperative, which he terms the subsistence ethic. The subsistence ethic, he argues, consists of an imperative to mitigate the risk of losing one's source of subsistence, rather than of accumulating beyond the level needed for subsistence. Such measures can therefore be regarded as a rational form of risk pooling. In much of the literature on East African pastoralism, pastoral mobility, facilitated by common land tenure (or, more recently, the 'new pastoral commons'), is argued to be the most efficient, and therefore rational, way of exploiting stochastically distributed resources (Ellis and Swift 1988, Krätli and Schareika 2010). The moral, or embedded, economies of peasants and pastoralists are thus thought to follow a distinct imperative from that of capitalist economies, rather than a less rational *modus operandi*.⁸

What is perhaps distinct about liberal capitalist economies is the reification and normative veneration of rationality itself, in such a way that it takes on a moral character. The link between reason and morality has long featured in Western thought.⁹ For Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, the link was initially posed as a question: how could an ethical life be made to appear necessary to a rational mind (Williams 1985: 36)? For Kant, the link had become more a statement of affairs. Morality could have no motivation, other than that it was a rational necessity (ibid.: 60-62). Without taking too many liberties with Kant's framework, the

⁸ There is a separate discussion to be had about whether any economy is truly rational. My point here, however, is merely to point out that so-called moral economies are no less rational than capitalist or market economies.

⁹ Rationality is a disposition towards behaving in accordance with reason.

implication of this is that to be rational is to be moral, at least in the sense of accepting morality as a categorical imperative, even if this does not translate into a practical morality. More recently, Foucault (1967) has noted the normative force of rationality discourse in supporting projects and institutions of power in modern society. Foucault argues that the genesis of the modern era drew a schism between reason and non-reason. The power of reason was then valorised through the equation of non-reason with madness and immorality (see also Townley 2008: 27-45). To some extent, we see this in contemporary admonishments of the irrational behaviour of the poor, for whom poverty is argued to be just desserts. Equally, as I outline in Chapter Four, colonial criticisms of East African pastoralist livestock accumulation often simultaneously took aim at the perceived irrationality of pastoralist practices and the moral character of pastoralists.

What I am arguing then, is that we need not draw too sharp a distinction between 'moral economies' and 'capitalist economies', for the latter is merely a distinctive articulation of a moral economy. More crucially, I am keen to stress that 'moral economy' should not be thought of as a by-word for 'pre-capitalist' or 'traditional' economies, in contradistinction to modernity or capitalism. When East African rural economies were confronted with the extractive and impersonal force of colonial capitalism, it was not so much that moral economies found their networks of affective obligation overrun by the rational machinery of amoral capital, but that they found themselves competing with an alternative moral economy, one enforced by the weight of British military and bureaucratic power and underpinned by white supremacy. Indeed, the moral encounter of colonialism is well demonstrated by how colonisers expressed so much moral anxiety over the practices of the colonised (Anderson 1986, Stoler 1989, Comaroff 1989, Hunt 1991, Waller 2006), and how the 'civilizing mission' was often cast in moral terms (Cain 2012, Boisen 2013).

Moral economy, I suggest, should therefore describe the ways in which normative moral ideals inform economic practices, rather than a particular kind of economy. In Lonsdale's (1992) account above, it is possibly because of the close manner in which economic and social relations were imbricated that moral economy, rather

than ethical virtue independently of economic life, became the primary object of debate in Kikuyu moral ethnicity. In the case of pastoralists, recent literature on the 'new pastoral commons' offers an insight into the ways in which pastoralists negotiate a moral economy in land access within an increasingly privatised and market-based landscape. According to Bollig and Lesorogol (2016: 668) Maasai and Samburu pastoralists have historically tended to emphasise the importance of shared access to pasture, an emphasis that lauds shared access as 'moral and virtuous'. This moral endorsement of a 'commons' approach to resource access has enabled commons principles to 'seemingly supersede other property rights' in privatised, enclosed and fragmented landscapes. During severe drought in particular, the shared moral imperative among certain pastoralist communities to provide access to scarce pasture on private land appears insurmountable (Galaty 2016, Lesorogol and Boone 2016).

It is important to note however that this moral economy in grazing access is not merely a holdover of pre-capitalist economic practices, but has undergone significant change. Increasingly, the task of negotiating access to resources appears to fall on the individual and the social networks that they cultivate, whereas in the past such access may have been provided through membership of a particular community. In particular, the social networks of pastoralist women in a household have become increasingly important (Archambault 2016). In some cases, the mutualist principle of allowing reciprocal access to pasture between pastoralist individuals and communities is giving way to conditional access based on membership of more formal, territory-based institutions, such as the 'community conservancies' established throughout northern Kenya in the last two decades (Pas 2018). The erosion of reciprocal relations in favour of the territorialisation of access has meant that Samburu pastoralists now have to negotiate access beyond their social networks, with a variety of state, private and membership-based institutions. This has inhibited mobility to the extent that, in the face of strict restrictions and difficult negotiating terms, herders are instead turning to trespass and even violent conflict (ibid.).

The close relationship between moral ethnicity and moral economy in Lonsdale's account is therefore useful, and relevant, for thinking about pastoralism in Laikipia today. However, a missing link in Lonsdale's account is the question of why moral concerns should be a matter of concern or debate for any social group. For Lonsdale, it is these moral debates that gave constitution to ethnicity, but why exactly should communities converge around moral questions in the first place, and what exactly makes them ethnic? Before I move onto formulating a framework suitable for this dissertation, I would like to briefly consider this question, as well as alternative ways of understanding identities that emerge out of perceived moral commonality or community.

Recent debates in social anthropology have sought to re-consider the role of morality and ethics social life and human behaviour. Much of this literature has consisted of debates around the nature of compulsion and obligation in ethical behaviour and conceptions of morality, as well as the extent to which people make decisions in relation to moral or ethical concerns, such as Socrates' question of 'how one should live' (see Williams 1985). For Laidlaw (2002), drawing on MacIntyre (1981), moral questions are considered by individual subjects primarily in relation to personal virtue. Laidlaw writes explicitly against what they perceive to be a Durkheimian tendency in social anthropology to equate the moral with the social, such that morality consists primarily of sets of rules and norms which are, whether consciously or not, directed at preserving social order. Rather than reducing morality to socially imposed norms and analyzing the emergence of moral questions via collective units such as that of 'society', these authors have experimented with a refashioned Aristotelian virtue ethics to emphasise the importance of individual moral reflexivity in governing ethical behaviour.

However, several authors have commented on the difficulty of moving away from socially generated values in exploring the genesis of ethical consideration and moral discourse (Robbins 2007, Fassin 2014). As Englund (2008) remarks, by dismissing the anthropological treatment of morality as being indistinguishable from conceptions of rule-bound social order, such authors have abandoned the notion of social or interpersonal obligation. They therefore preclude a relational

understanding of morality in favour of a virtue ethics in which autonomous subjects formulate notions of ethical behaviour and 'the good' without considering their obligations to one another. Regarding the basis for such 'obligations', Englund sees no reason to resort to 'rule' or 'norm'-based analysis, but argues that obligations are constitutive of ethical subjects in the first place. In other words, one cannot claim to be either 'good' or 'bad' without social recognition within a network of people, formed through a variety of material and affective practices, who are in some way obliged to one another. By tying morality to relations and social visibility, we rescue the notion of obligation without appealing to norms or rules, thus providing space for conflict, negotiation and emergence in ideas of what it is that constitutes moral behaviour. We also create conceptual space for moral community. Indeed, Laidlaw (2014) later acknowledged the extent to which ethical selfhood is formed in the context of social relationships.

Although I have simplified them to a large extent, the common denominator in these debates is an understanding that many aspects of human behavior and decision-making emerge when people ask themselves ethical questions, whether 'how one should live', 'what obligations do I have to others', or 'how may I be perceived as good'. However, there is less unanimity as to why people should or do ask themselves such questions in the first place. Although I do not claim to possess the answer, I do suggest that a large part of this has to do with processes of identification. 'How I should live' depends in large part on what kind of person I understand myself to be. Much of moral philosophy is unhelpful in answering this question, insofar as it reflects on ethical questions from the standpoint of someone who understands themselves to be merely rational (which, I suspect, very few people actually do). The development of self-understanding is an inherently social process, even if one's self-understanding is not determined entirely one's social milieu. As development psychologists Damon and Hart (1988: vii-viii) note:

The complementarity of social understanding and self-understanding is an interpenetrating one in which the two constantly inform one another. Social relations by definition include the self, and one's view of any social transaction is colored by how it affects one's self-interest. Likewise, self-

understanding is to some extent based on one's observations of the self in relations to others, and it also owes a large debt to one's perceptions of others' attitudes toward oneself. But the overlap between social and self is by no means complete. There are many social realities external to the self that one must grasp in order to function socially. Conversely, one's sense of self-identity always retains a privileged core of personal experience and belief that no social influence can fully determine.

This process of developing self-understanding through socialisation involves acquiring an understanding of the ethical qualities of one's relationships to others, the precise nature of which depends on one's social context. As Williams (1985: 54) writes: 'We wish... to bring up children to share [our] ethical, as of other cultural, conceptions, and we see the process as good not just for us but for our children, both because it is part of our conception of their well-being and also because ... we have little reason to believe they will be happier outside of the ethical institutions of society.'

In essence, then, my argument is that the answers to what many have argued to be the most fundamental ethical or moral questions are intimately intertwined with one's self-understanding. Because self-understanding is acquired through a process of socialisation, it is inseparable from an understanding of how one ought to relate to others, which is an inherently ethical matter.¹⁰ Because social contexts are always historically contingent, we can say the same of the ways in which our relationships with others are given ethical treatment. In Lonsdale's (1992) account, moral debates concerning social obligation emerged in a particular historical context. In the years leading to the Mau Mau insurgency, younger and low status Kikuyu came to realise that their elders and elites, many of whom either controlled the means of production or had acquired power through the colonial state, were not inclined to provide them with economic opportunity. This raised the question of to what extent obligations were necessary between people who were becoming cognisant of themselves as an ethnic group.¹¹

¹⁰ How one ought to live with others has been the source of considerable division in moral philosophy, particularly between contractualists and utilitarians (see Scanlon 1982).

¹¹ I discuss the reification of ethnicity under colonial rule in Chapter Four.

Waller (1999: 39) gives us a sense of how specific configurations of social obligation in the Maasai context are often the outcome of a particular intergenerational balance of power, rather than a fixed societal structure. When the British colonial government banned cattle raids in the early twentieth century, Maasai morans found themselves less able to contribute cattle to their elders' herds, which gave them less leverage in demanding access to livestock for marriage. The ban on raiding undermined a common understanding of mutual obligations that rested upon elders and morans each having sufficient (exclusive) power to meet their respective obligations. The erosion of morans' power resulted in a more or less proportionate withdrawal of elders' obligations to them. This, I think, demonstrates the way in which the content of moral understanding can change over time, while still remaining present. In addition, it illustrates how one's obligations depend on self-understanding and identity: the duties of a Maasai moran, obviously enough, depend on their being Maasai and a moran, engaged in contingent relations with other Maasai, such as elders.

To return to moral ethnicity, if we accept Lonsdale's (1994) account of communities converging around particular livelihoods, and the meaning that they invest in those livelihoods, we now have good reason to assume that people raised in such communities came to acquire self-understanding that rested, in part, on their belonging to such communities, and that this inevitably raises ethical and moral questions which could be debated collectively. In addition, as we have already seen in my earlier discussion of the moral veneration of pastoral livelihoods by Maasai, the convergence of groups around particular livelihoods may have introduced a self-other distinction in which one's own group's mode of production is regarded as more virtuous than that of other groups. However, it is here that I depart with moral ethnicity. Ethnicity, I argue, is merely one register in which collective morality and ethics, and their relation to identity, are articulated. One can perceive moral commonality along a number of axes. E. P. Thompson (1971), for instance, discerns a common moral economy among the English working class in the eighteenth century. In Chapter Five, I discuss how IIng'wesi deployed the vocabulary of obligation and community to mobilise political

constituencies that stretched beyond the confines of ethnicity, appealing in particular to the notion of a pastoralist political community. As well as being alternative or external to ethnicity, moral communities can be discerned within ethnic groups themselves. In Chapter Six, for instance, I analyse historical changes in the moral attributes of the ideal IIng'wesi moran. Indeed, as I argue in Chapter Five, it is impossible for moral debate to encompass all of the people within an ethnic group, whether due to geophysical distance between members or power differentials regarding who is permitted to speak openly.

Lonsdale (1994) discusses moral ethnicity in order to contextualise the development of what he calls 'political tribalism', and so it is understandable that he would seek to foreground the emergence of 'ethnicity' out of these livelihood-based social groups. However, as should emerge from my empirical chapters, IIng'wesi articulate their identities, the obligations that come with them and the standards for virtuous recognition that they aspire to or seek in others, in a number of ways. For this reason, and because I think it better captures the fundamental human tendencies involved in the phenomena I am describing, I prefer to use the term 'moral identity' when referring to the ways in which people index moral considerations that accompany their claims to belonging in a particular group or category of person, or their self-understanding as members of that group or category.

I acknowledge, however, that 'identity' is a notoriously vague concept that is prone to slippage between its analytical and vernacular usage (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). Few people in my fieldwork would describe their practices in relation to 'identity', preferring instead to explain particular practices through reified accounts of Maasai or Maa 'culture'. I am therefore, as best as I can, using it analytically. However, identity has been used in social analysis to refer to a variety of different phenomena. Brubaker and Cooper (*ibid.*: 6-8) list what they regard to be identity's multiple meanings as: (a) a particular self-understanding, whether collective or individual, (b) fundamental sameness among members of a group or category, (c) a core aspect of selfhood or fundamental condition of social being, (d) a contingent product of social action and basis for further action and (e) 'the

unstable, multiple, fluctuating, and fragmented nature of the contemporary “self”. Regarding this multiplicity as unsatisfactory and unhelpful, they propose a series of alternatives, such as: ‘identification and categorization’ (implying a process of identity creation by particular agents); self-understanding and social location (describing the ways in which people understand their position within society or a community); and commonality, connectedness and groupness (the ‘emotionally laden sense of belonging to a distinctive, bounded group’).

The problem with their argument, however, is that if we take particular terms that are commonly perceived to describe a particular identity, such as ‘Maasai’ or ‘pastoralist’, they might be argued to apply to any number of these meanings and alternatives for identity simultaneously. To some extent then, terms like ‘Maasai’ appear to be coterminous and interchangeable with ‘an identity’, which begs the question as to whether it might be useful to retain some sort of shorthand in the firstplace for the meanings that Brubaker and Cooper elaborate. Perhaps a better way to think about the multiple meanings of ‘identity’ is to compare them to Wittgenstein’s (2009) ‘family resemblances’, in which the multiple applications of a term have no single common feature between them, but instead share overlapping similarities – much like the facial features of a nuclear family. However, Brubaker and Cooper’s point that the term identity is prone to misuse is a valid one, and I have endeavoured to be specific in my use of the term throughout this dissertation.

1.3 Overview of chapters

In my empirical chapters, I aim to provide a more thorough justification for my use of moral identity as a framework for understanding livelihood changes and the emic value of pastoralism. Each chapter examines a different aspect of moral identity within specific historical contexts, in order to highlight a particular aspect of Ilng’wesi moral identity’s development over time, to assess the concept’s robustness or to underline its analytical value for understanding particular questions about pastoral livelihoods in Laikipia. In Chapter Three, I begin by presenting an historical overview of Ilng’wesi’s transition from (as far as we

know) subsistence pastoralism and agropastoralism, to hunting in the forests of Mt Kenya, and back to pastoralism during their return to the Laikipia Plateau. I present this account to demonstrate how the questions of why people value pastoralism, and what meaning they ascribe to pastoral livelihoods, emerge from the history of IIng'wesi itself. In a sense, the first half of Chapter Three does the work of posing my main research question in a more grounded fashion: is there an aspect of pastoral livelihoods and pastoral identity that endures beyond the economic practice of livestock keeping? In the second half of the chapter, I draw on interviews with IIng'wesi of various generations to get a sense of what the answer to this might be. While it is almost impossible, due to a paucity of sources, to get direct answers regarding what motivated IIng'wesi living in Mt Kenya to recover their livestock herds, these accounts of the IIng'wesi moral economy do give us, at the very least, a sense that the emic value of pastoralism concerns not only its suitability in a particular environment, but also its role in facilitating 'ethical reputation' and social recognition more broadly. Together, both parts of the chapter respectively pose the question of how pastoralism is and has been valued over time, and concludes that part of the answer lies in the link between pastoral livelihoods, identity and moral understanding.

Having set up the question and a line of enquiry using my empirical material, I then explore the precise nature of these three interlinked components of moral identity (as I understand it to operate in the IIng'wesi context) – livelihood, identity and moral understanding – in further detail in the next three chapters. I also use these chapters to assess the usefulness of moral identity as a framework for analysing different questions regarding IIng'wesi history, livelihoods and politics. In Chapter Four, I focus on the journey of IIng'wesi identity through the colonial period, and particularly the shift in colonial understanding from regarding IIng'wesi as 'Dorobo' to targeting them for intervention as pastoralists. In doing so, I address the often-examined role of the colonial government in reconfiguring identities in Laikipia. Although the idea that colonial governments 'invented' ethnic identities in Africa has been somewhat debunked (Ranger 1993, Spear 2003), their role in reshaping and crystallising what were previously more fluid identities is still acknowledged (Ndegwa 1997, Spear 2003, Watson 2010).

Studying this period is therefore a useful testing ground for examining how resilient or amenable particular conceptions of one's group identity are, to what extent moral identities are truly endogenous, and what processes contribute to their genesis and reformation over time. Throughout the chapter, I note that the interventions of the provincial administration were largely reactive, responding primarily to local crises and dynamics, and thus gave considerable agency to Iling'wesi elites in shaping government perceptions of their livelihoods, their identity and, subsequently, the policies that the administration enacted that shaped their livelihoods. Provincial administrators did come with their own moral and epistemological assumptions, and found themselves in the position of mediating between their own moral identities, those of white settlers in the region, and those of the Africans under their authority. However, the outcome of this contradiction was not determined so much by moral argument and reflection, but by compromise, and ultimately, power. This serves as a reminder that arena of competing moral identities is not so much a debating chamber as it is a battlefield.

In Chapter Five, I trace some of the themes I identify in earlier chapters in recent political events in Laikipia. Having explored some of the key developments and moments in the history of Iling'wesi moral identity, I consider whether these are useful for understanding the contemporary politics of Laikipia North constituency. I do so by exploring the ways in which Iling'wesi evaluated and debated the merits of political candidates and representatives in the run-up to the 2017 General Elections. I argue that the language of moral identity, expressed most notably in terms of 'community', was employed frequently in discussions about the elections. Often, this vocabulary was used to construct imagined political constituencies that extended beyond the ethnic group. Further, the language of moral identity could be used to project Iling'wesi ambitions outwards, toward the state, and to address non-parochial concerns such as the role of the state and political leadership in regional development. This chapter therefore provides my strongest argument for decoupling moral identity from exclusionary categories such as ethnicity. Moral identity, while rooted in a sense of community and local interpersonal obligation, provides a vernacular for discussing and imagining wider political ambitions. Its articulation is not limited to the register

of 'political tribalism' (Lonsdale 1994). This is exemplified, for instance, when IIng'wesi argue that some white settlers are 'part of the community', because they are viewed to engage in reciprocal ties with IIng'wesi through grazing concessions and the provision of health services. Just as easily, however, moral identity arguments were used during the election to preclude or refuse political alliance with others, and on occasion undermine already imagined political communities, such as the wider community of pastoralists in Laikipia and northern Kenya that mobilised against police brutality during a government crackdown on illegal grazing and squatting on private land.

In Chapter Six, I bring together the insights on moral identity developed in previous chapters in order to assess the framework's analytical value in understanding more specific aspects of IIng'wesi livelihood change. I do so through a (relatively) *longue durée* study of cattle rustling among IIng'wesi in Laikipia. Cattle rustling is carried out primarily by morans, and I argue that as a practice it is intended to be performative of moran moral identity. The chapter therefore looks at a distinct moral identity discernable within IIng'wesi moral identity. Drawing on archival sources, interviews with several former rustlers, and the lyrics of 'praise songs' depicting cattle raids, I outline the ways in which the practice of cattle rustling was morally valued and contested in different ways by different members of IIng'wesi society. I also track the ways in which the practice has changed, and remained the same, over time. Most of the IIng'wesi I interviewed reported that the practice had declined greatly in recent years, owing to more widespread school attendance and increased opportunities for salaried labour and entrepreneurial engagements with the market. As part of this change, the substance of IIng'wesi moran moral identity has changed, now reflecting more closely an idealised version of the modern, technologically-adept and entrepreneurial millennial. Simultaneously, the practice of cattle rustling itself has been socially criminalised – there is little space for it in the IIng'wesi moral economy and those who take part are more likely to be condemned as 'thugs'. This chapter contrasts accounts of cattle rustling which attribute the causes of change largely to political economic factors. Many of those same factors identified by, for instance, Hendrickson et al (1996), were also historically present in Laikipia, but

did not produce the kind of predatory raiding that they identify in Turkana. While I have by no means controlled for all variables in comparing the two cases, it does suggest that there are other factors at play in motivating morans to carry out particular kind of raids (or not). The factors I foreground, namely those relating to moral identity, are those suggested by Ilng'wesi rustlers themselves. Of all the chapters, this one perhaps most demonstrates the analytical value of a moral identity perspective, rather challenging or interrogating some of its assumptions and implicit claims as I do in other chapters.

It should be noted here, that in my empirical chapters I often examine different aspects of moral identity separately to one another. I maintain that the different components of moral identity – identity, moral understanding, standards for ethical reputation, and livelihoods invested with virtuous meaning – are fundamentally interlinked. However, I argue that the nature of their interconnectedness is best captured by assemblage theory. According to DeLanda (2006), assemblages can be described as any whole made of heterogenous parts, and as such can include social groups, individual persons, organisms and nation-states. Derived from post-Deleuzian metaphysics, assemblage theory aims to describe such 'wholes' whilst relying neither on a notion of essences nor by seeking to explain complex phenomena via reductionism. It does so by acknowledging the autonomy and agency of the emergent properties of an assemblage's parts in synthesis, without reducing the analysis of such emergent properties to the operation of the assemblage's component parts. However, this does not preclude analysis of those component parts. A component part of an assemblage can still be 'detached', and it will still contain its own properties. The difference is that, in assemblage theory, the interaction of multiple assemblages – which together constitute a larger assemblage – activates certain properties in each assemblage, which, without such an interaction, would otherwise remain latent (DeLanda 2006: 10). Moral identity, as a complex whole, relies on the interconnectedness of its constituent parts. However, it is possible to study those parts, and their historical development, separately, as I do at various points in this dissertation.

Finally, in seeking to trace 'moral identity' through various moments in IIng'wesi history, in arguing that a distinctively pastoralist moral identity might endure beyond the practice of pastoralism itself, I do not wish to assume that it is something structural or essential in IIng'wesi society. Rather, I follow Mbembe (2016: 221) in taking seriously 'the long-term sedimentation of experience' in 'institutions, practices, and cultural repertoires'. Moral identity is a register that I think absorbs 'sedimented experience'. Recognising this enables us to use it as an analytical category whilst still leaving room for historical change. This is a point that Lonsdale (1992: 138) makes for moral ethnicity. Its criteria are 'historically negotiated, but appear to be immemorially given'. The exact extent to which moral identity is 'negotiable' or mutable, or indeed expendable altogether, is a question that I leave open for discussion throughout my empirical chapters, which follow an account of my field sites and research methods.

Chapter Two – Field site and research methods

2.1. Geographical overview of field site

Fieldwork for this dissertation was conducted primarily in the north of Laikipia County. I stayed in three different locations throughout my fieldwork: Loiragai in Mukogodo Forest, Kiwanja Ndege village in Makurian group ranch, and in a *boma* in an area called Makandura, located on an abandoned ranch between the village of Naibor and Enasoit ranch. From these locations, I travelled by motorbike, along with a research assistant, Shadrack Noah Kuraru, to conduct interviews, attend meetings and take part in various activities as a participant-observer in the following areas: Dol Dol town, Ethi, Chumvi, Arjiju, Olkinyei, Makandura, Endana, the settlements of Anadungoro, Lukosero and Loiragai within Mukogodo Forest, Ngare Ndare, Nanyuki town, Naibor, Jua Kali, as well as Manyangalo and Emboori in Meru County. The above locations encompass most of the area settled by Iln'gvesi Maasai, both today and historically (as illustrated in Map 2). However, I was unable to spend much time in Iln'gvesi Group Ranch, nor in the parts of Isiolo County settled by Iln'gvesi, such as Lepurua. This was partly due to time constraints, and partly due to insecurity in those areas at the time of fieldwork.

The research area, as detailed above, is located mostly within Laikipia County, and particularly on the north-eastern part of the Laikipia plateau. The plateau covers an area of 9800km² and is situated on the equator, in north central Kenya, between Mount Kenya to the east, the Aberdare Mountains to the west, and the Rift Valley to the north (Evans & Adams 2016). Rainfall is bimodal and ranges from 800mm per annum in the south of Laikipia to 300mm in the north (where the majority of the County's pastoralists reside) (Berger 1989). However, rainfall patterns are varied even within northern and southern parts. The long rains are traditionally said to arrive in March or April, and short rains begin around the end of October or early November. Some rain also falls in June and July. However, throughout the study, informants complained that the rainy seasons no longer followed historical patterns and that it was becoming increasingly difficult to

predict the onset of rainy seasons. Soil types and qualities also vary across the plateau, ranging from deep vertisols ('black cotton' soil) to clay and gravelly clay loams (Ahn and Geiger 1987). Vegetation in the study area consists of acacia savannah and open grassland (Herren 1989). There are also two forest reserves. Mukogodo Forest Reserve is a hilly, forested area covering around 28000 hectares in the eastern part of Mukogodo Division (ibid.), while Ngare Ndare forest is located to the south-east of Mukogodo forest, covering an area of 5554.3 hectares (Musyoki et al. 2013).

There are small urban settlements scattered throughout the study area, consisting mostly of small businesses, residences and administrative buildings that provide goods and services to the surrounding rural areas. The largest and most important urban centre servicing the area is Nanyuki, located south of the study area and around 195km from Nairobi (see Map 2). At the time of fieldwork, there was no tarmac road leading all the way from Nanyuki to the rural settlements in the study area. The tarmac road leading out of Nanyuki towards Dol Dol, for instance, gave way to a heavily eroded and potholed gravel road at the junction near to Naibor village. The poor road quality compounds the remoteness of the study area, with the journey from Nanyuki to Dol Dol (a distance of roughly 60km), taking up to two hours by motorbike. Transport between Nanyuki and these rural areas, as well as within the rural areas themselves, for those without a vehicle, is provided by a combination of *matatu* (privately owned minibuses used for public transport), 'proboxes' (a similar service provided using smaller Toyota Probox vehicles) and *boda boda* (motorbike taxis). These services have been instrumental in allowing those without vehicles to acquire essential goods and services, and to participate in livestock markets in various urban centres, including Nanyuki as well as smaller towns like Dol Dol and Naibor.

Of Laikipia County's total land area, 382400 hectares (or 39%) consists of large commercial ranches (Laikipia Wildlife Forum 2012: 14) many of which are owned by Europeans and white Kenyans (some being descendants of colonial-era settlers) and most of which now operate to some degree as private conservancies and destinations for high-end safari tourism (Laikipia has the second highest

wildlife density in Kenya, second only to the Maasai Mara (Evans and Adams 2016)). In northern Laikipia, these large ranches dominate the landscape, where they neighbour most of the pastoralist communities included in the study. 334,700 hectares (34%) consist of former ranches that were bought by government schemes and land buying syndicates and subdivided for smallholder settlement since independence. Some of these plots have been abandoned by their owners for various reasons, such as their unsuitability for cultivation, and are occupied by squatters from various ethnic groups, many of whom are pastoralists. Many of these so-called 'abandoned lands' (Laikipia Unity and Land Initiative 2013) are also used for dry season grazing by migrant pastoralists from Laikipia as well as Baringo and Samburu Counties. Absentee landlords and recent buyers are currently in the process of reclaiming much of this land. This has resulted in the eviction of resident squatters, some of which have turned violent.¹² 71,200 hectares (7%) in the County's Mukogodo Division have been divided into eleven group ranches, which are plots of land owned communally by pastoralist communities. These group ranches are located in the former Mukogodo Native Reserve, which is described in further detail below.

Of the pastoralist communities in Laikipia, the majority identify as Maasai, although there are also significant Samburu, Pokot and Turkana communities. The presence of Samburu is significant when we consider the history of ethnic exclusion in the region, as well as electoral politics. These themes are explored in Chapters Four and Five respectively. The Laikipia Maasai consist of former residents of the Mukogodo 'Dorobo' reserve and their descendants. Although the majority prefer to identify as Laikipia Maasai, or even *Laikipiak* today, during the colonial period the residents of Mukogodo were thought to be Maa-speaking hunter-gatherers known as 'Dorobo' (an Anglicisation of the Maasai word *iltorrobo*). Many Samburu and southern Maasai continue to use the term when referring to Laikipia Maasai today, but it is generally regarded as pejorative. The Laikipia Maasai are divided into five sub-groups: *Ilng'wesi*, *Ildigirri*, *Ilmumonyot* (often known as Mumonyot), *Ilmoogodo* (more commonly known as Mukogodo)

¹² Smallholdings, abandoned ranches and other unspecified plots of land are coloured in grey in Map 2.

and *Iluaso*. Although these groups are closely linked by intermarriage and a shared history, their origins differ significantly. This will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

2.2 Research methods

The research I conducted for this dissertation can be broadly divided into two phases. The first phase consisted of archival research, conducted mostly between August and December 2016. From August until October, I visited the National Archives (NA) in Kew, as well as the manuscripts room of the University Library in Cambridge. From October until November, I spent time at the Kenya National Archives (KNA) in Nairobi. In December, I returned to the UK and paid further visits to the NA. I also conducted further archival research in the Weston Library, Oxford, after my return from fieldwork, in late May 2017. As well as archival research, I conducted fieldwork in Laikipia between November 2016 and June 2017, as well as a follow-up trip between November and December 2017. In this section, I will discuss my methodology for both of these phases separately.

2.2.1. Archives

The archival documents that I examined consisted mostly of correspondences, reports and other documents drafted by the Kenyan colonial administration, dating from 1929 to 1963. In addition, I was able to look at memoirs written by colonial administrators, reports written by anthropologists for the administration, as well as, in one case, the memoirs of a white settler living close to Laikipia, at Beale Farm in Timau. I also accessed a guestbook at the police post in Loiragai (see Map 2), which had been in use since 1957. Most of the official colonial documents are found at the NA and KNA, while the memoirs are from the Commonwealth and African Collections held at the Weston Library in Oxford. Historical documents available in Cambridge from Kenya during the colonial period are mostly maps and periodicals.

My time at the archives consisted mostly of looking through geographically and thematically relevant files and taking photographs of documents that were likely

to be useful for my research. When a document appeared immediately to be interesting or useful, I also took notes so that I could use the information contained within as a starting point for further enquiry. In particular, I tried to take note of names of individuals, policies and organisations mentioned in archival documents, so that I could ask about them when I later went to do fieldwork. When I was finished with archival visits, I then set about transcribing the documents which I thought would be especially useful, and labelling the other documents with key words, so that I would have a means of analysing them more systematically, and so that I could find back documents that became useful later in my research – particularly following fieldwork.

In conducting archival research, I was particularly interested in building a picture of the different personalities involved in governance of the Mukogodo Native Reserve during the colonial period, as well as the interpersonal interactions, relations and tensions that underscored the enactment of particular policies and state interventions. In addition, I wanted to explore how local dynamics and demands interacted with wider imperial trends. I had these priorities in mind for several reasons. Firstly, I wanted to avoid portraying colonialism as an ‘agentless abstraction’ (Cooper 2005: 17), but rather as the product of a network of individuals and institutions responding to the ambivalences and contradictions of governance in the context of plural demands and priorities, whether at the local, regional, national or imperial level. In other words, I wanted to understand the colonial period in Laikipia as a particular ‘colonial situation’, rather than an encounter between precolonial, ‘traditional’ society and the totalising force of colonialism. Secondly, previous historical accounts of Ilng’wesi and Laikipia Maasai have tended to describe change at the level of ethnic groups, sections and populations, with some focus on the tensions within these collective units, but little attention given to the force or agency of particular individuals (e.g. Herren 1987, Brenzinger 1992, Cronk 2002). Indeed, individual Maasai are rarely, if ever, named in these accounts. Aside from epistemic objections to this manner of accounting for social change, as if social units act and make decisions in unison, this struck me as an unfair double standard, as accounts of Western history and African political history tend to take greater care in texturing their accounts with

the voices, personalities and relationships of individual historical actors. While I acknowledged the methodological difficulties in doing so, I was inspired by the work of Lotte Hughes (2005) in producing an account of IIng'wesi history that centred interpersonal relations, particularly between colonial administrators and those that they governed.

However, there are significant methodological difficulties in attempting such an approach. The colonial archives are characterised as much by silences and the absence of certain voices (Trouillot 1995) as they are by sheer abundance of administrative files (Hodder 2017). The colonial archives were assembled primarily for the 'collection, storage, ordering, retrieval and exchange of knowledge as an instrument of colonial governance' (Basu and De Jong 2016). Indeed, most of the documents I encountered had been written by white colonial administrators. As such, the documents, and the individuals named and described within them, reflect, first and foremost, the experiences and priorities of their authors. To the extent that the documents mention Africans or the Mukogodo Native Reserve, they do so largely in an attempt to render them legible to state institutions, and to both enable and legitimise interventions aimed at control (Cohn 1996, Stoler 2009). On a more practical level, there is also the issue of neglect of archives by postcolonial states (see Basu and De Jong 2016), which in my research manifested itself in missing or damaged documents, leaving me with a patchy collection of documents with which to work. Of course, missing documents is not only an issue in postcolonial nations. Notoriously, the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) is known to have destroyed thousands of archival documents, in the wake of Empire and more recently, particularly those detailing crimes and abuses committed by colonial states (Sato 2017).¹³

There has been considerable debate regarding how to rescue 'subaltern' perspectives from the colonial archive, as well as how to read 'against the grain' of colonial administrative documents (Basu and De Jong 2016). Stoler (2009) advocates that, rather than combing the archives for historical information, we

¹³ Fenton, S. 2017. Why do archive files on Britain's colonial past keep going missing? *The Guardian*, December 27.

extract from archival texts the affective and epistemological anxieties and tensions among and between administrators as they attempted to circumscribe the messiness of governance through the production of official documents. This, she argues, would enable us to study the archives as records of the processes of colonial knowledge production and attempts to render colonial situations legible to 'rational' bureaucracy. In my research, there were indeed documents where tensions between administrators were palpable in their correspondences. As I outline in Chapter Four, these tensions and conflicts did lead to policy outcomes, such as the Mukogodo Betterment Scheme. However, these tensions mostly reflected the conflicting priorities of different administrative departments than the relationships between administrators themselves. Indeed, it was rarely easy to glean from official correspondences what relations between the correspondents were like, or what the private hesitations of administrators were. My ability to do so was largely a product of fortune, with certain documents containing useful clues. However, I could find no obvious systematic method for this kind interpretive work.

Including African perspectives and accounting for the agency of local inhabitants was arguably more difficult. The African individuals mentioned in archival documents tended to be those with whom administrators had interaction, or else those who were arrested or relocated by the administration from the Mukogodo Reserve. These accounts do offer some insight into the extent of certain criminalised activities, especially cattle rustling, as well as the refusal of many Africans in the region to comply with the strict territorialisation of ethnic groups by the administration (see Chapter Four). They also describe instances of what administrators perceived to be compliance and collaboration by Mukogodo inhabitants. However, the documents offer no access to the private thoughts of African actors, and only sometimes convey the more subtle acts of 'resistance' that subjugated people carry out in daily practices – even when they appear to be compliant (Scott 1985). Missing almost entirely are direct accounts of regular daily life in the reserve.

Exceptions include documents that describe particular disturbances and crises, such as droughts and disease outbreaks, documents that call for interventions into particular cultural or economic practices, and accounts of interactions with state institutions, such as livestock yard sales organised by the administration. Reports into conditions in the reserve tend to focus on population studies, particularly of different ethnic groups and Maasai sections residing in the reserve, as well as livestock counts. There are also some more detailed ethnological reports which attempt to classify and trace the origins of particular African groups, some more carefully assembled than others, which perhaps better reflect the administration's obsession with the classification of ethnic difference than any meaningful relations between people on the ground (Cavanagh 2017a). There are some documents that provide testimonies from Africans living in or near Mukogodo. Most of these, however, are second hand and are likely to contain that which the original speaker thought their administrative interlocutor wanted to hear. The evidence and memoranda given to the Kenya Land Commission (1932-1934) include first-hand testimonies by Iling'wesi and other Laikipia Maasai chiefs regarding their origins and territorial claims in Laikipia.¹⁴ These were produced in order to convince the administration to allow Iling'wesi to remain in Laikipia, and are therefore not entirely useful for their accuracy, although they do offer an insight into how Iling'wesi instrumentalised 'Dorobo' identity for political ends.

The archival documents therefore offered both a patchy account of what happened in the Mukogodo reserve during the colonial period, as well as a collection of perspectives that mostly came from within the administration, or that were tailored in order to extract certain outcomes from colonial governance. In putting together my historical accounts of Iling'wesi, I sometimes tried to work with these biases, particularly by looking at how they may have produced certain outcomes or what they indicated about the shifting priorities of the colonial administration. In other instances, I tried to retrieve, as best as possible, reliable information about particular moments, trends and people during the colonial

¹⁴ Kenya Land Commission. *Kenya Land Commission: Evidence and Memoranda, Vol. III*. September 1933, London p. 1571.

period. Throughout the dissertation, I try to be transparent about these procedures and how I arrive at certain conclusions using the archival material, so that any failings in my interpretation can be discerned from the inherent biases in the archival texts. In addition to drawing on archival sources, I was fortunate in that many of those who lived during the colonial period are still alive today. I was therefore able to supplement and corroborate the archival material, and even centre the perspectives of former Mukogodo reserve residents, by conducting oral history interviews during my fieldwork, which I describe in the following section.

2.2.2. Fieldwork

I conducted fieldwork in Laikipia between November 2016 and late May 2017, with a follow-up visit in November and December 2017. I initially began by making weekend visits in November 2016, while I was staying in Nairobi in order to do archival research. In the first of these visits, I met with contacts that I had made through other researchers working in the area, in order to prepare for full-time fieldwork later. Through these contacts, I was able to arrange visits to Mukogodo Forest, where I had originally intended to conduct my fieldwork. I stayed at Loiragai Police Post at the southern boundary of the forest reserve, where it borders Borana Conservancy (see Map 2). During these initial visits, I conducted a few preliminary interviews, in order to get a feel for the place and establish which lines of enquiry might be worth taking further. I also spent time getting to know people living in the area, as well as familiarising myself with the forest and its surrounding areas by taking guided walks with residents of Loiragai and the forest settlements of Lukosero and Anadungoro. I also arranged to move to Loiragai on a more permanent basis, which I did in January, following a trip home for Christmas. In addition, I spent the period between October and December 2016 taking Maa language lessons at the Anglican Church of Kenya Language School in Nairobi.

In January 2017, I moved to Laikipia. I initially rented a small house in Nanyuki town, so that I would have a base from which to access Wi-Fi and other amenities not available in Mukogodo, and to give me a space in which I could do work on my

laptop, such as organising and updating my field notes and transcribing interviews. I also rented an empty room in Loiragai Police Post, which I furnished with a camp bed and gas cooker. For the month of January, I spent weekdays in Loiragai and weekends in Nanyuki. Staying in Nanyuki during weekends allowed me to more easily meet with people not based near Loiragai, as many Laikipia Maasai visit Nanyuki on a regular basis, while some live there or nearby. From my base in Loiragai, I travelled by motorbike to the homes of those I wanted to interview, or to alternative locations where I was able to conduct interviews.

In January, I also hired a research assistant, Shadrack Noah Kuraru, to help me with orientation, organising interviews and translation from English to Maa and vice versa¹⁵. Shadrack is an IIng'wesi, of the *ilmerishari* age set, as well as a father, husband, experienced research worker, and active pastoralist. We got to know each other during the early stage of my fieldwork, and I learned that he had previously worked on other research projects in the region. We agreed to work together, and I paid him a salary out of my research budget. Far from being a passive agent in the translation process, Shadrack's position in the community as an IIng'wesi *moran*, with many relatives both among IIng'wesi and among his Mumonyot in-laws, undoubtedly shaped the nature of my fieldwork. It was often Shadrack who negotiated our access to particular interview respondents. Setting aside my obvious status as an outsider, through my close affiliation with Shadrack, I was often treated by others as someone of the same social position as Shadrack, which determined my degree of access and relationship to other members of the community, particularly women and elders, with whom I had less ease of access than other men of Shadrack's age set and that immediately above (*ilmeoli*). It is inescapable that Shadrack's own positionality, educational background and perspectives are reflected in the data and translations used in this dissertation (see Edwards 1998). Indeed, Shadrack took an active interest in the research, and influenced my opinion regarding research directions on several occasions. In this sense, Shadrack is better regarded as a co-researcher than an assistant (Branch 2018: 88).

¹⁵ Although I speak some Maa, I felt I was not proficient enough to comfortably conduct interviews in the language without assistance.

By February, I decided that it would be cheaper to move to Loiragai completely, and to stay in hotels in Nanyuki whenever I needed to return to town. As I describe in the introductory chapter, my plans to conduct research and live in Mukogodo Forest were interrupted by the insecurity crisis that was concentrated in that area by mid-February. From that point on, I stopped staying in Loiragai and my living situation became more nomadic. I mostly stayed in homesteads and budget lodges situated close to where I needed to be to conduct interviews. For the most part, this tended to be in various parts of Makurian group ranch and in Makandura, as well as Dol Dol and Nanyuki town. As I explain below, my choice of these locations was largely due to my use of snowball sampling methods, as well as security problems in IIng'wesi group ranch.

During my fieldwork, I employed four primary research methods: semi-structured interviews, song recording, household surveys and participant-observation. Firstly, I conducted semi-structured interviews with IIng'wesi of all ages and genders. I conducted a large number of these interviews with older IIng'wesi, particularly those who could remember the colonial period, so that I could enquire about themes, individuals and events that I had come across in the archives. This enabled me to compare and contrast the accounts I had encountered in the archives with those of IIng'wesi who had been alive at the time. It also allowed me to fill in details regarding different individuals mentioned in the archives – such as particular chiefs and District Officers (to the extent that anyone remembered much about them). I also interviewed these older IIng'wesi, along with those of younger generations, about developments in northern Laikipia since independence, as this information was more difficult to come by in the archives. These questions covered topics like the foundation of Laikipia's group ranches, changes in cattle rustling practices, the expansion of livestock markets and opportunities for wage labour, conflicts between IIng'wesi and Samburu and Ilmoogodo/Yaaku, and national and regional politics. Finally, I also enquired about more general cultural topics and contemporary issues, such as the meaning of different age set names, important cultural and ritual sites in Laikipia, the 2017 general elections, challenges facing the youth and contemporary youth culture.

During oral history interviews, I mostly enquired about periods, events and personalities that were within living memory of my interviewees. On occasion, I enquired about what interviewees had been told by their parents and grandparents. For the most part however, the challenges I faced had more to do with memory, articulation and intent than the issues identified with oral tradition on a more long-term scale. Some authors have commented on the importance of allowing interviewees to speak in a 'genre' in which they are more accustomed to reconstructing narratives about the past. Monson (2008) reports that she had difficulty getting people in rural southern Tanzania to speak about *historia* (history in Swahili), because this was imagined to be the specialised domain of officials and academics. She found more success when she asked her interlocutors to speak of their own lives. Tonkin (1992) has argued that the reconstruction of memory necessary takes place within particular narrative genres, in which the teller of a story and their audience share an understanding of particular codes and assumptions. She stresses that researchers need to familiarise themselves with these genres in order to enable the articulacy of their interlocutors. This includes establishing an interview format and setting that closely matches the context in which historical narratives are conventionally told.

In my own fieldwork, I found that how interviewees responded to particular questions depended entirely on the person in question. Some were happy to speak about Kenyan, Maasai or Iling'wesi history, and particularly happy to express opinions about the various actors involved but were less comfortable with speaking of their own lives. Indeed, one interviewee was outright suspicious of my desire to know about his life, particularly when I enquired about his father, who was thought locally to have been 'cursed'. Others spoke at length about their childhood and early lives with little prompting but were less interested in commenting on colonial policy or matters of the state. To generalise about which kinds of my questions proved most productive would be dishonest, at least in my case. Regarding the setting of interviews, most of them took place in the homes of my interviewees. This served as a pretty ideal setting for interviews, as it is common for people to call upon one another and enjoy long conversations in their

homes in northern Laikipia. As I describe below, I initially encountered some difficulty by rushing into interviews and following too formal an interview format. However, I found greater success when I took more time to get to know my interviewees and when I approached interviews more as guided conversations.

Aside from challenges in prompting people to recount their memories of the past, scholars have noted the potential distortions that emerge as people recall the past from the vantage point of the present (see Abrams 2016). These may emerge due to the fallibility of human memory, the retrospective interpretation of past events or the manner in which oral history is articulated. In some instances, I rely on oral sources to give an account of events for which I could not find written sources. I acknowledge that there are problems with this form of 'recovery history' (ibid.: 5), because of the challenges listed above, and do my best to present it as educated speculation where I attempt it. For the most part, however, the oral accounts I present in this dissertation might be described as phenomenological, insofar as they describe historical periods and events as they were (or are) perceived by the interviewee (Kirby 2008). It is typical of oral history interviews that 'facts and events are reported in a way that gives them social meaning' (Thompson 1978: 100). As I outlined in the Introduction, the ways in which livelihoods and histories of livelihood changes are imbued with social meaning is one of the primary foci of this dissertation. Although these attempts to ascribe meaning to the past might be a source of distortion in the process of recovering historical 'fact', this is only of secondary concern – the biases themselves are useful in seeking answers to my research questions.

My selection of interview candidates was largely based on the snowball sampling method, as this made it easier to target individuals who had particular knowledge specialisms (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981, Crouse and Lowe 2018). I took suggestions from each of my interviewees regarding whom else to interview, and then enquired about their availability. Of course, the drawback to this was that I did not comprehensively interview those who might have had the knowledge or experience that would have been useful for this study. In some cases, I also interviewed individuals who were known by my acquaintances to have specialist

knowledge on a particular topic, or who had been involved in particular historic events in some way or another (known as purposive sampling; see Morse 2004).

My semi-structured interviews were generally conducted in either Maa (using Shadrack as a translator) or English. While I often used Kiswahili to communicate while in the field, it is neither my own first language, nor the first language of those that I interviewed (which is Maa). It therefore seemed problematic to conduct interviews in a language that would have required a process of double translation. I conducted interviews in English with those whom I knew could speak the language comfortably enough to avoid much confusion, although this meant that certain subtleties, particularly regarding aspects of Ilng'wesi or Maasai culture, would inevitably have been lost (Leavitt 2014). Some of these interviews, particularly those I was able to conduct in English, were relatively informal, and thus I felt that recording them would have been inappropriate (which, as I note above, was often difficult to guarantee). In such cases, I took shorthand notes that I later elaborated in my fieldnotes. With the help of Shadrack, I conducted interviews in Maa with older Ilng'wesi and those who were not as adept in English. I made sure to record these interviews, and Shadrack and I then translated them into English during the transcription process. Again, this translation process means that certain nuances may have been lost, although we took great care in finding as close translations as possible for more tricky expressions and words (I discuss some of these in the footnotes of quoted interviews and song lyrics in the dissertation). In addition, the process of translation from Maa into English takes place along a power gradient, in which the latter language is posed as that of authoritative knowledge and theory, while the former serves merely as empirical source material (Sturge 1997). I have been unable to find a way of writing that subverts this power dynamic but wish to draw attention to this imbalance so that the reader might bear it in mind when encountering translations in later chapters. Without stating the obvious, authoritative knowledge on Maasai culture, history and perspectives can only be fully conveyed in Maa, but this dissertation hopefully achieves a reasonable approximation.

For many of these interviews, particularly those conducted with Iling'wesi elders, the labour time that went into the interviews extended well beyond the length of the interviews themselves. In my first few interviews with elders, I noticed that the answers I received to questions tended to be quite short and vague, and felt a sense of disinterest on the part of my interviewees. I asked other Iling'wesi acquaintances of mine why this might be the case, and they explained that I was unlikely to get a positive response from elders if I did not first take the time to get acquainted with them through prior visits, making sure to bring gifts of tea, sugar and tobacco. At first, I worried that this might constitute a 'payment' in exchange for the interviews, and that this would compromise the interviews and breach research ethics. However, upon accompanying Shadrack on his visits to elder relatives, I noticed that this was common practice, particularly on visits by younger people to elders' homesteads. I therefore followed suit and did my best to get acquainted with elders as much as possible before running interviews. I found that doing so often led to richer and more enthusiastic replies to interview questions, although it did also mean that considerably more time had to be invested in each interview. In addition, the transcription of interviews that had to be translated from Maa into English took a considerable amount of time – three to four hours of translation for every hour of recorded dialogue. In total, I conducted roughly 52 interviews in six months of fieldwork (including the return visit in November and December of 2017), reflecting the fact that some of these took much longer to prepare and process than others. I have listed these in Appendix I, alongside reference codes that I use to cite particular interviews throughout the dissertation (e.g. I1, I2, I3, and so on). These do not include the countless number of informal conversations that I had with Iling'wesi friends and acquaintances in my time living between Loiragai, Makurian, Dol Dol and Makandura. Because of the sensitive nature of some of these interviews, particularly those concerning contemporary politics, I have anonymised my research participants.

Secondly, upon being informed that many Maasai and Samburu take part in cattle raids and stock theft in order to have their praises sung by women and their peers (I9), I thought it might be interesting to try and record some of these 'praise songs' and analyse their lyrics, in order to understand some of the motives behind cattle

rustling practices, and to see whether these lyrics served as recordings of past raids. I discuss this method in far greater detail in Chapter Six, where I present these song lyrics and discuss their content and performance in the context of a larger discussion regarding the history of IIng'wesi cattle rustling in Laikipia. A list of six songs and their full transcriptions can be found in Appendix IV.

Finally, throughout my time in the field, I observed and participated in daily life in IIng'wesi settlements and households. My entire time on fieldwork was spent living, interacting and engaging with IIng'wesi and other pastoralists, and I became close friends with many of them. To a large extent, my fieldwork became and very much felt like my life, rather than the execution of a research project. This is not to suggest that I overcame my positionality as a white, relatively affluent foreign researcher. Naturally, I encountered various problems during my fieldwork, which limited the scope of my research in several ways. This should not be surprising, given my position as a white researcher, based at a British university, conducting research in income-poor communities in rural, post-colonial Africa. I tried to navigate this by emphasising what I perceived to be my own postcolonial heritage as a rural Irish Catholic. To the chagrin of my imagined Fenian ancestors, this naïve effort generally fell on deaf ears. Ultimately, my whiteness and relatively high purchasing power rightly negated any pretence towards subaltern status. Given the power imbalance that these factors imply, I tried to remain conscious of any feelings of entitlement that I might have had towards access to individuals and information, and to remain respectful of my interlocutors' boundaries and real-life priorities. In particular, I avoided giving the impression that my research would necessarily lead to development interventions or positive outcomes, lest this expectation would effectively coerce those in a position of marginalisation into participating.

In some cases, my presence provoked outright suspicion, particularly among law enforcement personnel. On one occasion, for instance, I was forced to leave Loiragai Police Post after I heard that police reinforcements sent to conduct the operation against Samburu herders in Mukogodo Forest had been rumouring that I was a spy for Laikipia's white settler community. In other cases, as mentioned

above, I had to manage the expectation that my research was intended to lead to some sort of development intervention. Indeed, the question of what ‘the community’ was going to get out of my research came up frequently. This is a common consequence of so-called ‘research fatigue’ (Clark 2008). International researchers frequently visit northern Laikipia, which appears to have led to the perception that researchers take or even steal knowledge from local inhabitants without giving anything back. In order to circumvent this, I affiliated myself with Mukogodo Forest’s community forest association, known as ILMAMUSI, to whom I paid a research fee. I did this as a vague means of offsetting the value that some reportedly would have felt I was extracting from the community through my research, although a degree of suspicion regarding my motives still endured in some cases. It would also have been a requirement, set by ILMAMUSI, had I continued conducting research in Mukogodo Forest throughout my time in the field. My affiliation with ILMAMUSI helped me to negotiate access to research participants and to gain the approval of administrative officials in the locations in which I worked.

Further problems were posed throughout my fieldwork by a severe drought, the insecurity crisis in Laikipia, and the 2017 general elections. Kenya was beset by a severe drought from the end of 2016 through to the completion of my main round of fieldwork in May 2017. Naturally, being in a primarily pastoralist area, this caused great concern to many of those whom I had targeted for interviews, as well as to my friends and acquaintances in Laikipia North. This often meant that those with whom I worked had to respond to problems triggered by the drought, which at times made organising interviews, and research more generally, quite difficult. It also meant that I frequently felt I was intruding and distracting people from issues that affected their livelihoods. Many pastoralists in Laikipia were also forced to relocate to grazing camps far from their permanent homesteads, which sometimes made it difficult to find those whom I intended to interview.

Equally, both the insecurity crisis and the elections, interrelated as they were, preoccupied many people in northern Laikipia, and, naturally, put my research plans at a relatively low level of priority. For much of April, in particular, it seemed

as if most of the people whom I was relying upon were engaged in campaigning for the Jubilee party primaries, which made it difficult to follow a research timetable that was of my own design. In the end, I decided it would be better to accept this distraction, and to try and learn something from it. I shadowed some of the political campaigns in which friends of mine were involved, and tried to understand the electoral process in the constituency of Laikipia North. I present my findings on this in Chapter Five. However, while I was able to make something of these unusual circumstances, it ought to be borne in mind that, due to the combination of the above factors, the period of time in which I conducted my fieldwork was in many ways exceptional. This may have influenced the nature of my data and field notes in ways that might not have been the case at other times. Whether or not this is the case should hopefully become apparent in the following empirical chapters.

Chapter Three – IIng’wesi identity and moral economy

According to Waller (1979), the name IIng’wesi appears to have been used to refer to a Maa-speaking section or sub-section since at least the early nineteenth century. However, it is not entirely clear whether this means that the name has always referred to a consistent line of descendants or socio-territorial group since then, or whether it has migrated over time between groups that are only tangentially related. Indeed, as we shall see below, those referred to as IIng’wesi over the course of the last two centuries have undergone mass dispersion, received several waves of ‘immigrants’ from other groups, transitioned drastically between different livelihoods and migrated between different locations. Further, the name is not always consistently applied to the same *type* of social grouping. While in Laikipia, IIng’wesi is today used to refer to a socio-territorial unit, or a Maasai ‘sub-section’, there is also a Samburu clan (*olgilata* – a non-territorial descent group) bearing the same name. Tracing the name IIng’wesi over time therefore raises interesting questions regarding the purpose of the name IIng’wesi, and what it means to identify as IIng’wesi, as well as how this may have changed historically.

For this reason, the first half of this chapter is better described as an historical account of ‘IIng’wesi’ as a signifier of identity, rather than the many disparate origins of those who identify as IIng’wesi today (some of which are examined below). In essence, I follow the social history of the term ‘IIng’wesi’ in Laikipia.¹⁶ I not only explore how ‘IIng’wesi’ referred to different groups of people relying on different livelihood practices at various points in time, but also how IIng’wesi identity was encapsulated by and nested within different wider identities over the course of the last two centuries. The account that I offer here is derived from a variety of sources, including oral accounts from Purko Maasai and other pastoralist groups provided by earlier researchers, namely Waller (1979) and

¹⁶ One might compare my approach in some ways to a genealogical method (Foucault 1978) or a ‘social life of things’ applied to nomenclature (Appadurai 1986).

Sobania (1980), accounts given by my own interviewees, nineteenth century travel literature (principally A. H. Neumann's *Elephant Hunting in Equatorial Africa*), testimonies given by IIng'wesi to the Kenya Land Commission between 1932 and 1934, and other documents from the colonial archive. Some of the account is necessarily speculative, due to gaps in the available source material. However, I try to make it clear where this is the case and have tried to avoid straying too far from the evidence as much as possible.

As noted by Lynch (2016), the act of naming or identifying oneself with a particular ethnic identity is as much a form of political claim-making as it is a statement regarding one's culture or ancestry (see also Li 2000). Equally, however, names that are chosen or designated by others can trap certain groups within a state of disempowerment, marginalisation or stigmatisation (Peteet 2005). This can lead to attempts to dispel, reclaim or instrumentalise particular ethnic labels, as in the case of 'Dorobo', which I explore below. In this sense, group identity labels such as Maasai or 'Dorobo' do not merely represent the social order, but actively generate it (Galaty 1982). Tracing the history of IIng'wesi as an identity marker therefore offers a lens into the interplay of broader historical and political processes in northern Laikipia, such as internecine warfare, colonisation, post-colonial land claims, and recent claims to 'indigenous' status. Further, I argue that doing so helps to avoid the impression that IIng'wesi refers to a self-evident social category, rather than a term and set of referents that are historically produced. The tendency to take for granted the suitability of ethnic groups or 'tribes' as units of social scientific analysis is one that I wish to avoid, owing to its roots in colonial science (Mafeje 1971).

Crucially for my thesis, the chapter aims to highlight how IIng'wesi identity has consistently *indexed* broader identity categories, such as that of 'pastoralist', 'dorobo' or 'Maasai'. In this sense, I draw heavily on the concept of *indexicality*, a concept in linguistic anthropology derived from the pragmatic semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce. Without burdening this section with too much technical jargon, in pragmatic linguistics, meaning is produced by signs, which exist as triadic structures, consisting of a sign (that which signifies something else), its

object (that which is signified) and the 'interpretant' (the outcome of a sign's interpretation) (Peirce 1955). Crucially, terms in this structure are exchangeable, such that an interpretant can also be a sign or an object in another instance, and so on. Studying 'Ilng'wesi' as a sign, in the above sense, is useful in three ways. First, it allows us to study multiple interpretations of Ilng'wesi identity, within a field of power relations (including those configured by colonialism), without losing sight of its objective referents and thus without assuming Ilng'wesi identity to be an entirely 'invented tradition' (Spear 2003). Second, the model allows us to explore different ways in which signs convey meaning, and the role of context in the production of meaning. As mentioned above, one key form of signification is that of *indexing*, which is where the relationship between a sign and its object is brought into sharper focus, such that meaning is less the outcome of interpretation but a recognised relationship between sign and object, both of which are necessarily distinct from one another¹⁷. An understanding of this relationship is acquired socially, and it is often determined through context (Kockelman 2005).

Recognising the role of indexical meaning therefore allows us to examine how Ilng'wesi identity indexes a range of other identities, practices, values and concepts, which may vary and change as its social context changes. One obvious identity indexed by the term 'Ilng'wesi' today is that of Maasai identity, to which Ilng'wesi regard themselves as belonging, owing to their use of the Maa language, their Laikipiak heritage and their practice of pastoralism. While differences between Ilng'wesi and the other Maasai sub-sections in Laikipia might be expressed when these groups interact within Laikipia, they become less accentuated when Ilng'wesi and others are presented with issues that implicate their common identity as Maasai. Classical anthropology (most famously, Evans-Pritchard 1940) tended to describe this nesting of identities in terms of 'segmentary opposition', a system of alliances in which the emergence of shared interests or threats between groups cause them to unite and perceive themselves as part of a greater whole, while divisional interests and inter-divisional conflicts

¹⁷ According to Peirce's formulation (1955), should a sign and object be similar to one another, the sign is referred to as an *icon*.

cause composite identities to fragment and divisional identities to become accentuated. Understanding this through the framework of indexicality, however, helps us to avoid the determinism of structural-functionalist analysis because the indexical relationship between smaller and larger identities is historically contingent rather than fixed or immutable.

While 'Iling'wesi' and 'Maasai' are both ethnic labels applied at different scales, other referents indexed by 'Iling'wesi' are less obviously related. As we shall see below, another identity often indexed by the 'Iling'wesi' moniker is that of *iltorrobo* or 'Dorobo'. While it is a pejorative term in Maa for hunter-gatherers, the colonial administration labelled Iling'wesi as 'Dorobo' and contained them within a 'Dorobo' reserve in Mukogodo. In their testimony to the Kenya Land Commission, Iling'wesi chiefs stressed that they were indeed, genuine 'Dorobo'. In my interviews, some claimed that this was done as a means of retaining access to land in Laikipia (135). I examine this claim further below. Either way, it is curious to note that Iling'wesi representatives claimed a genuine 'Dorobo' identity to the colonial administration, at a time when most Iling'wesi were trying to build livestock herds. In the next chapter, I look at some accounts by colonial administrators in Mukogodo of what they thought 'genuine Dorobo' to be – namely, bona fide hunter gatherers and beekeepers – which highlights just how strong a contradiction this was. It is also during the colonial period that I argue 'Iling'wesi' came to index a particular territory within the Mukogodo Reserve, which it still does today.

These are indexical meanings with which 'Iling'wesi' is associated as a result of their historical journey over the course of the last two centuries. Running alongside this semantic journey is one of successive livelihood changes. As we see below, those who called themselves 'Iling'wesi' seem to have practised either pastoralism or agropastoralism in the mid-nineteenth century, before moving into the hills of Mt Kenya and subsisting through hunting and foraging. By the late nineteenth century, they were engaging in the ivory trade in order to acquire livestock, before then attempting subsistence pastoralism during the period of colonial rule, when their grazing area was reduced significantly by white

settlement. Today, most IIng'wesi continue to practise pastoralism, but also engage with livestock markets, salaried labour and other areas of commerce to such an extent that few are strictly subsistence pastoralists, and it is unlikely that many households follow the same pattern in securing their livelihoods. The key questions that emerge from this history, then, are why IIng'wesi returned to pastoralism, after a long period 'outside' it, and why most IIng'wesi continue to prioritise livestock ownership in spite of opportunities and incentives away from pastoralism.

The second half of this chapter attempts to provide possible answers to these questions, by exploring what IIng'wesi interviewees said about the value of pastoralism. What emerges is that part of the reason has to do with their identification with Maasai ethnicity, and also that livestock enable IIng'wesi to acquire social recognition and to pursue relationships with others through reciprocal exchanges. These exchanges are invested with considerable moral meaning, and failure to comply with certain stipulations results in moral peril – manifested through 'curses'. In addition to exploring interview responses, I also examine some of the observations I made in my field notes regarding the IIng'wesi livestock economy. Both sources of information indicate a strong relationship between identity, morality – conceived both in terms of obligations and the imperative to achieve ethical reputation – and livestock ownership. In other words, the second half of this chapter tries to demonstrate how moral identity emerges from my IIng'wesi respondents' testimonies and practices. It therefore serves as an empirical foundation for moral identity, the analytical value and potential drawbacks of which I test further in my later chapters.

3.1. The origins of Laikipia's Maasai subsections

Archaeological findings suggest that some form of pastoralism has been practised in the lowlands bordering Lake Turkana in northern Kenya since ca. 4000-4500 BP, and in the highlands of central and southern Kenya since c. 3400 – 3000 BP (Gifford-Gonzalez 1998, Taylor et al 2005). By c. 2300 BP, the Laikipia Plateau had become a site of food production, involving the herding of domesticated animals accompanied by the burning of forest and bushland in order to expand the area of

available grazing (Taylor et al 2005). These burning activities resulted in two main stages of vegetative change on the plateau. Between c. 6600 BP and 2300 BP, it appears that the Laikipia Plateau was more heavily forested than in later periods, with fires occurring at a lesser rate (ibid.). By 2300 BP, *Afromontane* forest had mostly been replaced by fire-modified vegetation such as *Acacia* bushland and grassland (ibid.). Forest burning may have been carried out in order to increase and improve pasture, as well as to reduce disease-prone forest habitats (ibid.). In 700 BP, further changes in vegetation cover took place, with *Acacia* bushland being replaced by fire-adapted grassland, possibly associated with an increase in human and domestic populations (ibid.). The Laikipia Plateau's characteristic grassland landscape thus appears to have been heavily influenced by the practice of pastoralism for some time, as elsewhere in East Africa (Marchant et al 2017, Boles et al 2018).

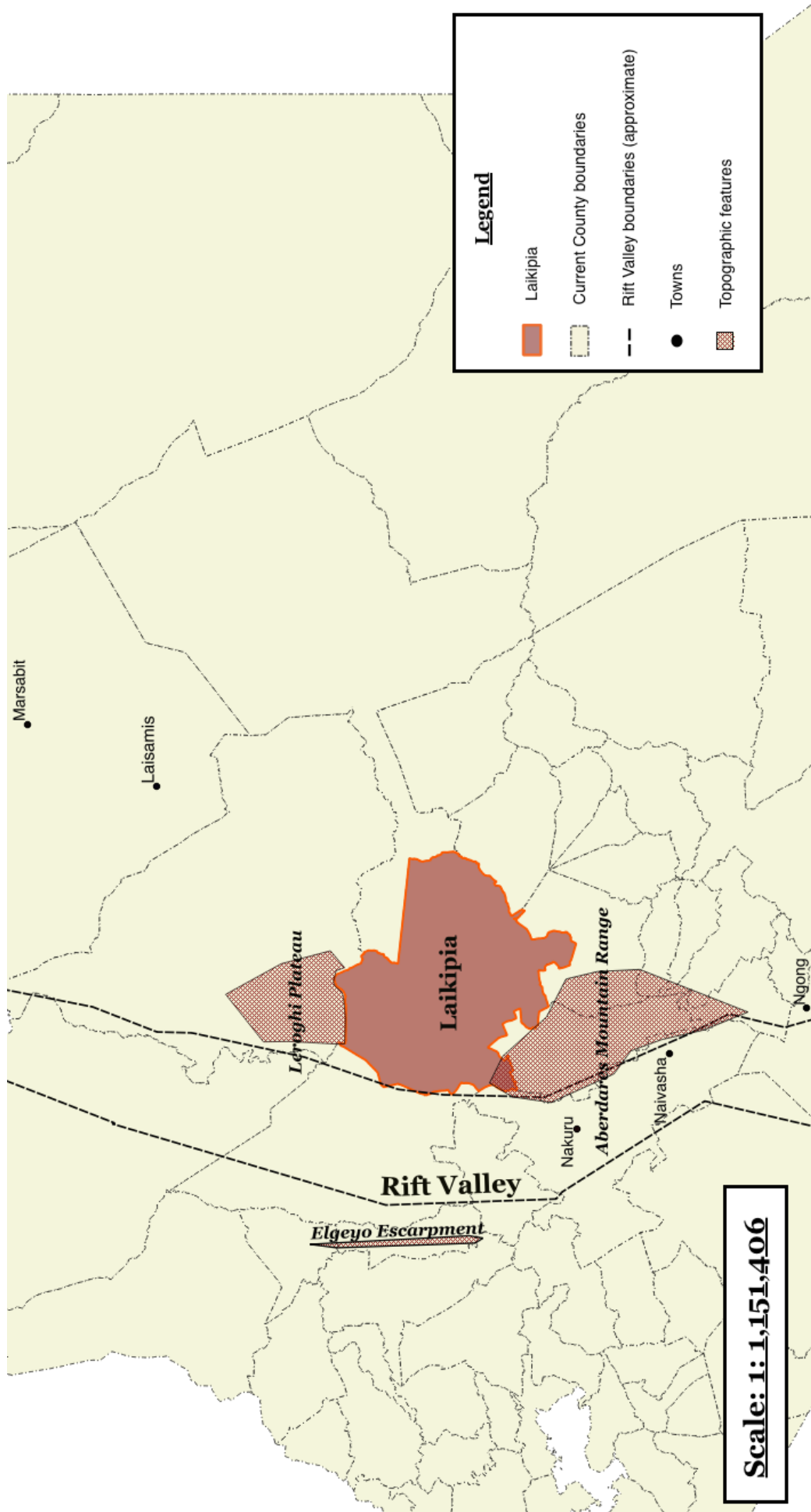
The first wave of Eastern Nilotes probably arrived in the Rift Valley, including neighbouring escarpments such as Laikipia, before 1600 CE (Waller 1979), where they likely migrated from the Lake Turkana Basin to the north west (Lynch & Robbins 1979). By ca. 1800 CE, Maa-speaking pastoralists had established themselves in the region as a self-conscious identity group and divided into a number of politically autonomous, socio-territorial units, known as *iloshon* (commonly translated as 'sections') (Waller 1979, Galaty 1993). As most of the evidence for this period is derived from oral traditions, it is difficult to work out exactly what all of these sections were called and what happened to them. Waller (1979), however, holds that by this point there was at least one major coalition of sections whom he refers to as Maasai proper, or *Ilmaasai*, and a collection of geographically more peripheral Maa-speaking groups referred to by *Ilmaasai* as *Iloikop*.¹⁸ It is unclear whether *Iloikop* would have referred to themselves as such, with evidence suggesting that it was used as a somewhat pejorative term by *Ilmaasai* for Maa-speaking 'outsiders', or even Maa-speaking agro-pastoralists (Waller 1979, Galaty 1993). As such, whether a common, distinct identity formed

¹⁸ The precise meaning of *Iloikop* is not certain, and it is possible that these Maa groups did not identify as one homogenous group with such a name. At times, the word appears to be used to refer to any other Maa-speaking group that isn't one's own (Waller 1979). However, the Samburu (a northern Maa group) often refer to themselves as *Iloikop* today.

among groups identified by *Ilmaasai* as *Iloikop* at this time is uncertain. The latter were also referred to throughout the region in Swahili as *wakwavi* (Waller 1979)¹⁹. While *Ilmaasai* controlled the strategically advantageous central Rift Valley region, *Iloikop* occupied various peripheral regions to the North and South, including the Laikipia and Leroghi plateaux (see Map 3), as well as territory as far north as Mount Marsabit (Waller 1979, Sobania 1980).

Among the *Iloikop* was a section remembered as *Ilaikipiak* (also known as the Laikipiak). It is not entirely clear to what the term Laikipiak refers. While it may refer to a section in its own right, it is also argued that the Laikipiak may have emerged as a coalition of sections under the prophetic leadership of the Tunai family (Sobania 1980: 137; Bernsten 1979: 254-255). Today, as I discuss later, Laikipia Maasai frequently assert Laikipiak identity as a means of claiming autochthony in the region. According to Waller (1979: 383-392), although shifting constantly throughout the first half of the nineteenth century due to conflicts with neighbouring groups, the Laikipiak occupied a territory that included, at various times, the plains from (and inclusive of) Laisamis and Marsabit to the Laikipia plateau, as well as the Leroghi Plateau (Map 3). Beginning in around 1860, a series of sectional movements and conflicts brought the Laikipiak on to a collision course with a Maasai section called *Ilpurko* (the Purko). At this point, the Purko occupied the area around Nakuru, located close to a strategic lowland corridor between the Elgeyo and western Laikipia escarpments. Having already fought and defeated a section called *Loosekelai* between 1859 and 1864, their numbers were significantly swollen, as they had managed to absorb a large number of *Loosekelai* prisoners, along with their livestock. With the *Loosekelai* gone, the Laikipiak controlled an area from Isiolo to the Laikipia escarpment and as far south as the Aberdares. Possibly due to pressure from the north in the form of disease and drought, the Laikipiak attacked *Ilpurko* together with their allies, the *Keekonyukie*, *Dsmat*, and

¹⁹ Neumann (1898) also refers to *Wakwavi* near Mt Kenya.



Map 3: A section of the Rift Valley in Kenya with significant topographic features and key sites mentioned in the text, as well as the current boundaries of Laikipia County. GIS data from Fauna and Flora International and World Resources Institute.

Ildalalekutuk (a cluster collectively known as *Ilkinopop*). Initially, they managed to drive the *Ilpurko*, out of Nakuru to an area south of Ngong. However, *Ilkinopop* regrouped here with the backing of a powerful *oloiboni* (a sort of spiritual leader) called Mbatiany. Mbatiany brokered a coalition with other sections, including the Kisongo. This coalition, sometimes referred to today as the Purko-Kisongo alliance, defeated the Laikipiak in a series of battles during the 1870s, effectively ending their power in the Rift Valley and driving them northwards towards the Laikipia Plateau.

Once pushed back into their former northern territories, the Laikipiak continued fighting the Purko Maasai, despite being greatly diminished, as well as launching raids against the Samburu, Boran and Rendille further north (Waller 1979: 392; Sobania 1980). In ca. 1892-1893, a Laikipiak party under the leadership of a man called Loldapash launched what seems to have been their last major raid, attacking the Samburu on both Ol Doinyo Nyiro and Mt Kulal. While fierce and ambitious, the raid ultimately resulted in the death of Loldapash and the end of the Laikipiak as a military threat (Sobania 1980: 161). Although pockets of Laikipiak survived until the early twentieth century, the majority had dispersed and assimilated into other groups, including those of their former enemies, such as the Samburu and Purko, as well as neighbouring agricultural communities such as the Kikuyu and Meru, and hunter-gathering communities scattered in various hilly forests throughout the region (*ibid.*).

In many accounts, the dispersal of the Laikipiak is argued to signal their ultimate demise. However, such accounts do not square with the conception of the Laikipiak as a coalition. As mentioned previously, the Laikipiak likely consisted of a collection of pre-existing sections, the names of which may very well survive today. While little is known of the composition of the Laikipiak, Waller (1979: 147) offers a list of certain sections associated with them in Purko oral tradition. These are '*Il Nguesi*', '*Il Dikirri*', '*Tetea*', '*Il Taaramodoni*' and '*Momonyot*'. Of these, '*Il Nguesi*' (hereby *Ilng'wesi*), '*Il Dikirri*' (*Ildigirri*) and *Momonyot* (*Mumonyot*) continue to reside in northern Laikipia, alongside a former Eastern Cushitic hunter-gathering community called the Yaaku (also known as the Mukogodo or,

in Maa, *Ilmoogodo*), and another Maasai sub-section called *Lewaso*. Many Laikipiak members assimilated into other groups in the wake of the Laikipiak Wars (Waller 1979) and a series of epizootics and natural disasters during the 1890s which decimated livestock herds, known by Maa-speakers as *emutai* (Sobania 1980). However, those who remained from the above sections occupied various parts of Laikipia and further afield until the early twentieth century, when the settlement and eventual alienation of land by British settlers and the colonial administration pushed them into an area on the northeast of the Laikipia Plateau known as Mukogodo. It was during this period that the indexical relationship between sectional or sub-sectional identities such as that of IIng'wesi and the encapsulating identity of *Ilaikipiak* (if, indeed, this was ever the case) is likely to have given way to one between the former identities and that of *iltorrobo*, or 'Dorobo'. I examine the process behind this identity shift later in the next section.

3.2. *From Ilaikipiak to Iltorrobo*

As I have mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, at some point between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, IIng'wesi, along with other Laikipia Maasai sub-sections, came to be known by others as *iltorrobo* (in Maa), *wandorobo* (in Swahili) or 'Dorobo' (anglicised). *Iltorrobo* refers to a range of pastoralist or pastoralist-affiliated people who, for various reasons, do not own cattle and acquire their subsistence through non-pastoralist activities. This can include *bona fide* hunter-gatherers, with a separate cultural or ethnic identity (and often, but not always, language) but who might interact closely with the Maasai, such as the Okiek. It also includes impoverished pastoralists who are forced to hunt and gather to survive, often by joining and integrating with more permanent hunter-gatherers (Galaty 1982: 8). The term is regarded as pejorative; it translates to something along the lines of 'those who move as one', highlighting the anti-socialness and solitude of the hunter in contrast with the deeply communal lifestyle and expansive social network (often mediated by the exchange of cattle) of the pastoralist. *Iltorrobo* are often treated with disdain and suspicion by their pastoralist counterparts, who regard them as lazy, feckless and inattentive to Maa traditions. The term is therefore a combination of an economic with a moral category, defining both of a mode of subsistence and a series of negative moral

qualities. However, it also bears some of the qualities of an ethnic category, insofar as once a particular section, clan or family has been stigmatised as *iltorobo*, it is hard to shake off the association even once the afflicted individual or group acquires sizeable herds of livestock and lives an entirely pastoral lifestyle.

In the early stages of colonial rule, colonial ethnologists and the administration were confused by the term, postulating initially that the 'Dorobo' were one, geographically scattered tribe, or even a separate biological race (Cavanagh 2017a: 249-251). Eventually figuring out that the term referred to groups of various ethnic origins, they set about devising a common set of policies that targeted the 'Dorobo' as a sympathetic economic class caught somewhere between African pastoralist societies (*ibid.*), even considering the possibility of settling all 'Dorobo' in one reserve.²⁰ While this pan-Dorobo reserve never took shape, native reserves for 'Dorobo' were established throughout Kenya, for the disparate groups that the administration had identified as 'Dorobo' (Cavanagh 2017a: 260). This included a reserve formally established for the 'Dorobo' groups in Laikipia, following the recommendations of the Kenya Land Commission report in 1933, in an area known as Mukogodo, situated on the north-eastern edge of the Laikipia Plateau.²¹ This reserve became known as the Mukogodo Reserve.

There are various reasons why the colonial apparatus may have identified Iing'wesi, Ildigirri, Mumonyot, Mukogodo and Lewaso as 'Dorobo' at that time, despite most of them owning significant numbers of livestock.²² The first and most obvious of these is that at least one of these groups was known to have consisted of hunter-gatherers and beekeepers – the litmus test for true 'Dorobo' according to the administration.²³ The Mukogodo (alternatively known as Yaaku), a small group of hunter-gatherers who, prior to the 1930s, spoke an Eastern Cushitic language which they called Yiakunte, occupied the hills in Mukogodo Forest,

²⁰ DC Eldama Ravine to PC, Rift Valley Province, October 24, 1931. KNA PC/RVP/6A/1/1/1.

²¹ Kenya Land Commission. *Report of the Kenya Land Commission*. London, September 1933. Pp. 222-223.

²² Forest Officer, Nyeri to Acting Conservator of Forests, Nairobi, Jan 7, 1946. VQ/9/6/.

²³ Divisional Forest Officer, Nyeri to Conservator of Forests, Nairobi, March 27, 1946. KNA VQ/9/6; DC, Nyeri to PC, Central Province, Nyeri, Jan 2, 1946. KNA VQ/9/6.

where they kept beehives, lived in caves and hunted wild animals, such as the tree hyrax. At the turn of the twentieth century, they began to intermarry with Mumonyot Maasai pastoralists, who had moved near to the northwestern fringe of Mukogodo Forest, as well as IIng'wesi, who had begun grazing in the southern half of the forest (I38; Cronk 2004). The Mukogodo subsequently began acquiring livestock, practising Maasai customs and using the Maa language as a *lingua franca*, until it eventually became their first language (Cronk 2004). Although 'Mukogodo' is not what they called themselves²⁴, preferring Yaaku, the area and 'Dorobo Reserve' was eventually named after them, with all residents of the area later calling themselves 'Mukogodo Maasai' (Herren 1987, Cronk 2004). It is likely that the other groups, by associating themselves with the Mukogodo, came to be known by the administration as fellow 'Dorobo'.²⁵ Indeed, visible distinctions between these groups may have been difficult for the British to apprehend. Of my small number of IIng'wesi interviewees who were alive in the 1920s, all of them stressed that they lived in close quarters with other sub-sections, particularly Ildigirri (I11, I12, I13, I18). It was primarily the colonial administration, they argued, that insisted on maintaining sharp distinctions between them, and eventually separating them into discrete territories, as I explore in the next chapter (I12, I18).²⁶

Another important factor is the condition in which the British administration would first have encountered these groups and their area of residence. Laikipia, at the turn of the twentieth century, was sparsely populated. Following the decimation of the Laikipiak, other groups such as the Purko and Samburu appeared reluctant to move permanently onto the plateau, although they did occupy it from time to time (Sobania 1980:137). As well as the military defeat of the 1870s, the 1890s saw a decade of environmental disasters, including major

²⁴ Cronk (2002) suggests that it is derived from the Meru language.

²⁵ For instance, the Mumonyot, who had continued practising pastoralism into the twentieth century, had by this point occupied an area right next to Mukogodo Forest, where they intermarried to quite a large extent with the Mukogodo (I38; see also Cronk 2004)

²⁶ The tendency by British colonial governments to reify ethnic distinctions and solidify the boundaries between them has been widely noted (e.g. Mamdani 1996, Ndegwa 1997, Watson 2010).

epizootics (of rinderpest among other diseases), drought and further conflict. The extent of these disasters is such that the period is still remembered today by Maa speakers as *emutai* (the disasters) (ibid.). As a result, the remaining pockets of Laikipiak likely experienced the near annihilation of their remaining herds, forcing them to integrate with other groups, including those of various forest-inhabiting 'Dorobo' in both Mukogodo and the forests of Mt Kenya (ibid.). For a time, this may have left a relatively empty expanse from north of Naivasha as far as the Samburu-inhabited Leroghi Plateau (Map 3), which contributed to the sense that there was no significant pastoralist population on Laikipia's grasslands (ibid.). Between 1904-1905, the British moved certain Maasai sections out of the central Rift Valley to two reserves, one in the south along the border with German East Africa, and the other on the Laikipia Plateau (Hughes 2006). It is likely that, while in Laikipia, the Maasai would have referred to their stockless and hunter-gatherer neighbours as *iltorobo*, which may have influenced British perceptions of these populations.

However, of those Laikipiak that sought refuge in the forests of Mt Kenya and Mukogodo, among others, many refused to abandon the 'pastoral ideal' (Galaty 1993: 175) entirely. Many sought to use their new positions as members of 'Dorobo' hunting bands to acquire stock. One such strategy was to serve as herders (*ilchakut*) for neighbouring pastoralist households in exchange for animals of their own (Sobania 1980, Waller 1999). This is a common approach for poor pastoralist households even today, with herders and their families becoming dependents of wealthier pastoralists, exchanging their labour in exchange for the periodic payment of smallstock (and sometimes livestock) in the hope of eventually accumulating a herd large enough to facilitate an independent household (Waller 1999:29). Former 'wakwavi' (the Swahili word for Iloikop, whom we might assume in this case to mean Laikipiak) communities are also reported to have served as spies and watchmen for Meru villages living on the northern slopes of Mt Kenya (Fadiman 1980: 34, 36).

Perhaps most significantly for European arrivals during this period, many 'Dorobo' took part in the burgeoning ivory trade and acted as guides and trackers

for elephant hunting ‘tourists’. According to interviewees, many IIng’wesi men in the *IIterito*, *IInyangusi* and *Ilsieuri* age sets had acquired animals as morans by selling ivory to Somali, Kamba and Swahili trading caravans (I35, I37, GI4). In fact, two of my interviewees (I11, I13) from these age sets wore ivory jewellery and carried tobacco containers crafted from ivory that they themselves had acquired during this period. One interviewee suggested that this was the primary means by which IIng’wesi recovered their livestock herds: ‘There’s no other cow that has been acquired from anywhere else apart from selling of ivory in these communities, all people acquired animals through that business – no where else’ (GI3).²⁷ As I discuss below, Neumann’s (1898) account of elephant hunting north of Mt Kenya likely featured IIng’wesi. Indeed, IIng’wesi representatives claimed before the Kenya Land Commission (hereby KLC) that the ‘Dorobo’ featured in Neumann’s book were IIng’wesi.²⁸ The role played by IIng’wesi and other Mukogodo groups in elephant hunting and the ivory trade likely contributed further to their reputation as ‘Dorobo’.²⁹

Finally, it appears that those representing the above groups to the administration themselves insisted upon a ‘Dorobo’ identity, particularly following the second Maasai ‘moves’ from Laikipia to the southern Maasai reserve between 1911 and 1913 (Hughes 2006), and during the enquiries of the 1932-1934 KLC. As mentioned above, between 1904 and 1905, the British administration had sought to move the Maasai living in the Rift Valley to two reserves, one in the southern area of Kajiado and one in Laikipia, to make way for European settlement. The move took place following the Anglo-Maasai treaty of 1904, in which the Purko *oloiboni*, Olonana, among other leaders, agreed to the move, provided that Maasai rights in the new reserves would be unalienable. By 1911, however, and under pressure from the settler community, the administration negotiated a new treaty with the Maasai that forced those living in the northern reserve in Laikipia to join

²⁷ Others argued that cattle raiding further aided IIng’wesi herd recovery (I11, I35, I40).

²⁸ Kenya Land Commission. *Kenya Land Commission: Evidence and Memoranda*. Vol. III. September 1933, London. p. 1571.

²⁹ One of my interviewees, an elder of the *IInyangusi* age set, cited the killing of wild animals as one of the reasons why the IIng’wesi were moved from the Mt Kenya foothills to Mukogodo (I13).

those living in the southern reserve. Between 1911 and 1914, the majority of Maasai in Laikipia moved southwards (Hughes 2006: 23-86). However, many Maa-speaking pastoralists also remained. According to interviewees, many IIng'wesi today believe that these remaining pastoralists emphasised to the administration that they were 'Dorobo', in order to be able to remain in Laikipia, as they wanted to avoid living with their former Purko enemies (I3, I35). It is also possible that some Purko claimed 'Dorobo' identity in order to avoid moving to a reserve that was rumoured to have poor grazing and abundant disease (Hughes 2006: 39).

Some twenty years later, representatives of these same groups insisted on a 'Dorobo' identity once more, in order to maintain their access to the Mukogodo Native Reserve, which was officially set aside for the 'Dorobo' groups in Laikipia in 1933. In his testimony to the KLC, an IIng'wesi chief, ole Theorori, reportedly stated: 'We are of pure Dorobo extraction. We are not Masai [sic] or Meru'.³⁰ Ole Theorori's testimony is, of course, a translation offered by an unknown intermediary. It is, moreover, a rough one at that, featuring turns of phrase that would make little sense if translated directly back into Maa. As such, it might not be worth analysing too closely. However, ole Theorori's insistence that IIng'wesi are 'pure Dorobo' is an interesting one for several reasons. Even if IIng'wesi had originated as 'pure Dorobo', they are likely to have absorbed significant numbers of members of other ethnic groups by this point. If Waller's (1979) oral histories are accurate, then it is likely that the name IIng'wesi itself is of Laikipiak origin. Indeed, *IIng'wesi* is a Maa word, meaning 'wild animals.' Moreover, according to my own interviews with IIng'wesi elders who had been morans during the 1920s, IIng'wesi at the time spoke Maa and maintained an age-set system and practised ceremonies that were recognisably Maasai. It is likely then, that ole Theorori and the other IIng'wesi chiefs testifying before the KLC were performing a sort of 'strategic essentialism' (Spivak 1987) in order to be allowed to remain in Laikipia and retain land in the 'Dorobo' reserve in Mukogodo.

³⁰ Kenya Land Commission. *Kenya Land Commission: Evidence and Memoranda*. Vol. III. September 1933, London. p. 1571.

However, this is not to suggest that IIng'wesi's 'Dorobo-ness' was entirely spurious. The idea that IIn'gwesi are a 'Dorobo' group, closely linked to the Meru, has been given serious attention both by academics and in local oral histories. For instance, Heine (1974), drawing on testimony from Yaaku elders, argues that the IIng'wesi originated in the 'higher regions' of Mt Kenya, and that when they first arrived in the Mukogodo area they spoke Meru as a mother tongue. Jacobs (1970), meanwhile, argues that the IIng'wesi were former Meru who had, by the turn of the twentieth century, become hunter-gatherers. Spencer (1973) also appears to have considered the IIng'wesi as a sort of Meru Dorobo. It is therefore worth considering this theory against the account of IIng'wesi as a former Laikipiak subsection.

According to my interviews, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the IIng'wesi had been living in the northern foothills of Mt Kenya, primarily in an area today known as Emboori, or *Bori* in Maa, in Meru county (I11, I12, I13, I18, I26) (See Map 4). Many IIng'wesi, even today, carry government-issued identity cards with Emboori as their place of birth. According to these same interviews, during the time in which the *Ilterito* age set were morans³¹, they had expanded their grazing area and their homesteads beyond Mt Kenya and as far as the Lolldaiga Hills, where several IIng'wesi were circumcised and where several IIng'wesi graves from both the late nineteenth and early twentieth century are reportedly located (Map 4). This is confirmed by evidence given to the Kenya Land Commission by IIng'wesi representatives, Mungai ole Theorori and Parkelo ole Morijo, who placed the original IIng'wesi camps in Katheri and Lewa (both in Meru). They further claimed that IIng'wesi left these camps and moved down to the Lewa plains and onwards to Sugota, Sanga and the Lolldaigas once they had acquired cattle from traders.³² Their accounts match those given to me in several interviews with IIng'wesi elders alive during or shortly after that period (I11, I12, I13).

³¹ See Appendix II for a list of age sets, and the dates during which they were circumcised.

³² Kenya Land Commission. *Kenya Land Commission: Evidence and Memoranda*. Vol. III. September 1933, London. p. 1571.

There is certainly evidence to suggest a close relationship between the Meru and IIng'wesi at the turn of the twentieth century. Neumann (1898), for instance, writes about his encounters with 'Ndorobos' in Katheri and on the east and northeast slopes of Mt Kenya, many of whom he enlisted on his elephant hunting safaris between Mt Kenya and Lake Turkana, and whom he describes living in close quarters with Meru and 'Wakwavi' (128). Further, Neumann later gives an account, reportedly given to him, of 'cattle-owning tribes... akin to the Wakwavi'³³ joining the 'original Ndorobos' (ibid.: 246). Similarly, Fadiman (1980:36), describes how his Meru informants told him of a combination of 'Okiek' (likely to be a confusion between the Okiek, who are a specific ethnic group, and 'Dorobo', which is how the Okiek are often characterised) and 'agricultural Maasai (Ukwavi) who had fled their own areas during periods of warfare or famine', living in 'Northern Imenti and Mwimbe'. These 'Okiek', in particular, had formed ritual alliances with the Meru living in the same areas and often warned them of attack by raiding parties (ibid.). Further, many IIng'wesi family names today, such as Kitonga, Kamoiro and Karmushu, either closely resemble Meru names or in some way reflect Meru connections, including intermarriage. However, while there are some reports of the IIng'wesi speaking Meru (or something resembling Meru) in Mukogodo at the beginning of the twentieth century, I could find no evidence of this myself, including among those in the *ilterito* and *ilnyangusi* age sets, who were among the first to arrive in Mukogodo and would have been circumcised between the 1910s and 1930s (I11, I13). Considering the close relationships between Meru and IIng'wesi at the turn of the twentieth century, it is very likely that IIng'wesi did speak Meru, perhaps alongside Maa, while living in Mt Kenya. However, this does not strike me as enough evidence to support the theory that they are of Meru origin. Indeed, many IIng'wesi strongly deny any such link (I3, I6, I13), although this could be because Meru origins would undermine any claims to autochthony in Laikipia. At best, the above reflects the close proximity between IIng'wesi and Meru between the mid-nineteenth century and the 1920s.

³³ This may be a reference to the Laikipiak.

Relatedness to the Meru aside, IIn'gesi traditions do lend further weight to the Mt Kenya origin theory. Certain IIn'gesi families are regarded as 'original IIn'gesi' – in particular the Legei, Piroris and Kinyaga families. In one interview with an elderly woman from the Kinyaga family, I enquired as to what it meant to be an 'original' Ng'gesi. She replied: 'The Kinyaga family didn't come from any other place. Kinyaga people are born IIn'gesi – very few joined the family from elsewhere. And that's why Mt Kenya has that *esoit olesaine*' (I17). Her answer appears to be twofold. On one hand, she suggests that to be an original Ng'gesi' is to come from a family that did not migrate into the sub-section from elsewhere. On the other, there is a geographical component to her answer. The Kinyaga are 'original' IIn'gesi because they originated in Mt Kenya, where there are ritual sites associated with them. One of these is *Esoit Olesaine* (the stone of Seine), a stone with a white mark located on Mt Kenya (Map 4). According to a younger interviewee, the stone is traditionally used for a sheep slaughtering ritual performed during periods of drought to try and trigger rainfall (I5). The ritual is widely viewed as the prerogative of the Kinyaga family. Indeed, although the tradition had died out somewhat, recent droughts have prompted IIn'gesi elders to seek the help of the Kinyaga family in trying to improve the rains. Moreover, some IIn'gesi members of the *ilmeoli* age set remember how, as morans, they had had problems with cattle dying whilst grazing on Mt Kenya, which the elders attributed to their having grazed in the area without the blessing of the Kinyagas (I5, 130, 135).

While IIn'gesi do have strong historical links to Mt Kenya, as manifested in their ritual traditions, I wish to first briefly comment on the available evidence that IIn'gesi were bona fide '*iltorrobo* hunters', rather than impoverished pastoralists reliant, for a time, on hunting for subsistence and herd recovery – a distinction made by Galaty (1982: 6-8). While a group of people bearing the name IIn'gesi clearly lived for a significant period of time on Mt Kenya, there are some important qualifications to be made regarding their status as *iltorrobo*. Firstly, while Neumann (1989) describes both 'Ndorobos' and 'Wakwavi' living together in Katheri on the northeast slopes of Mt Kenya, there is much in his account to suggest that his 'Ndorobos' were not long-standing hunter-gatherers, and that

they were not noticeably 'Meru'. He describes the 'Ndorobos' as being 'a kind of degraded Maasai' (ibid.: 13), which suggests that, even if they had been a separate 'Meru Dorobo' group, a cultural relationship with the Maasai had already been established by the 1890s. Further, although he describes them as living on honey and game 'in the bush', he later complains that: 'I wanted to see something shot with a bow and arrow.... My own opinion is that he [a 'Ndorobo' hunting companion] knew he couldn't hit anything, and I doubt if many of the Ndorobos are much good with that weapon' (ibid.: 24). He reflects that: 'I had been told by Von Hohnel that Ndorobos were not good at spurring; but could hardly believe but that he must have been mistaken' (ibid.: 16). He later continues:

Before I went among these people I had always supposed, from what I had heard and read about them, that they were all skillful hunters, living solely on game. I have found, however, that this is by no means the case, at least in the region of which I am writing. The majority of them depend almost solely on honey and wild fruit, roots, berries, etc., for their existence; and, as may be supposed in a country to which nature has been by no means bountiful in edible products, they are usually in a state of semi-starvation; indeed it is a puzzle to me how they manage to live at all (ibid.: 79).

There are three crucial observations to be made here. Firstly, if his account is to be believed, Neumann's 'Ndorobos' were not particularly good at hunting, which would be surprising in the case of bona fide hunter-gatherers and suggests that they were relatively new to the enterprise. Secondly, they appear uncomfortable with the eating of game meat. While many of them were happy to eat the meat provided by Neumann during hunting expeditions, they themselves supposedly avoided hunting it for themselves, and outright refused to eat bird meat (ibid.: 25). This aversion to wild game more closely resembles Maasai revulsion towards game meat than it does the traditional dietary preferences of other hunter-gathering groups in historical Maasailand, such as the Okiek (Blackburn 1982: 290). Finally, the wild products most coveted by Neumann's 'Ndorobos' – namely, honey and elephants – are all known to have been traded in exchange for smallstock or livestock. In the case of honey, these were (and are) frequently used

in trade with Maasai (Berntsen 1976), for whom honey is important in various rituals and the brewing of *muratina*.³⁴ Meanwhile, as outlined above, selling ivory was a strategy used by many stockless pastoralists to rebuild their herds during this time. In short, then, the behavior described by Neumann, frequently attributed to the IIng'wesi, is more consistent with that of impoverished pastoralists struggling to rebuild their herds than it is with that of other known hunter-gathering societies in the region. Indeed, as Neumann was visiting in 1895, during the period of *emutai*, he was likely to have encountered scores of stockless pastoralists.

We therefore have two separate origin stories for IIng'wesi: one that traces their origins and original families to the forest of Mt Kenya, where they practised hunting and gathering; another that regards them as surviving remnants of a Laikipiak sub-section. While I have largely derived the latter from Waller's (1979) oral histories with Purko Maasai, it is also an account I have heard repeated by IIng'wesi in Laikipia (I33). The Laikipiak claim is sometimes difficult to take seriously, particularly when expressed by younger generations, as they are often accompanied by claims to ownership of Laikipia as a territory, directed against the migration of Kikuyu and other settlers to the region or given as a retort to the suggestion that IIng'wesi are *iltorrobo*. However, rather than comparing the veracity of both narratives, what is perhaps more interesting here is the ambiguity itself, and how it represents a potential indexical shift in the referents of 'IIng'wesi' as a term during the period in which surviving Laikipiak and other pastoralists dispersed into the Mt Kenya forests.

Before I do so, I will integrate these two narratives to derive an approximate account of IIng'wesi's journey since the nineteenth century. I would suggest that IIng'wesi were, once, an 'Iloikop' or 'Wakwavi' section, practicing either pastoralist or agro-pastoralist livelihoods, that over the course of the nineteenth century came under the influence of, and may have joined, the Laikipiak coalition

³⁴ An alcoholic drink. It shares its name with a beer commonly brewed in Central Province using fruit from the *Kigelia* tree. In northern Laikipia, however, *muratina* is typically made with honey (or sugar) and *Aloe secundiflora*, among other local plants.

(Waller 1979, Sobania 1980). In the early 1800s, prior to the Laikipiak Wars of the 1870s and during the time of the *Il Diegi* age set, Iln'gvesi were defeated by a Maasai section (as per Waller 1979: 148). Following this defeat, remaining Iln'gvesi assimilated into other sections and communities, including the Maasai, Samburu (among whom there is an Iln'gvesi clan to this day), Kikuyu and Meru. Those who did not assimilate into other groups continued to live as Iln'gvesi and found refuge by hunting and gathering in the forests of Mt Kenya. This may have consisted of as little as three families initially – Kinyaga, Legei and Piroris. There, they were able to form ritual alliances and intermarry with Meru communities, with whom they traded and acquired some animals. Following the Laikipiak Wars during the 1870s, they were joined by refugees from other Maasai and Laikipiak sections, such as Laringon (I33). Their numbers were increased yet again during the period of *emutai* in the 1890s, when refugees of raids, drought and disease from as far as Samburu stayed and eventually assimilated into Iln'gvesi.³⁵ With the arrival of ivory trading caravans at the turn of the century, many Iln'gvesi were able to build sizeable herds by participating in the trade. During this whole period, it is likely that they would have been referred to as *iltorobo* by the many different ethnic groups with whom they interacted, although whether they self-identified as such is uncertain.

The removal of the Purko threat following their relocation by the British to the southern Maasai reserves between 1911 and 1914 may have enabled them to graze their recovered herds more openly on the Laikipia plateau, where they moved between Bori and the Lolldaiga hills (Map 4). With the settlement, and eventual alienation, of Laikipia by British and European settlers, Iln'gvesi and other 'Dorobo' grazing in Laikipia were gradually squeezed onto a smaller and smaller parcel of land (I describe this process more fully in the next chapter). Having been squeezed into the area around Makurian, Sanga and the south of Mukogodo Forest, they continued moving around and grazing on some of the

³⁵ This would explain why a) Neumann describes seeing some 'wakwavi' with stock in Katheri during his visit and b) why many 'Ndorobos' in the area appeared uncomfortable with openly eating wild meat, as they may either have been relatively recent migrants, or feared the displeasure of their more recently 'dorobo-ised' counterparts.

farms nearby, with their morans earning notoriety for cattle and sheep rustling (I elaborate on this in Chapter Six). In order to put an end to ‘trespassing’, and to ‘protect’ them from potential abuse in the Maasai reserve or by the Samburu in the Northern Frontier District³⁶, the Kenya Land Commission established the Mukogodo Native Reserve, where IIng’wesi were confined along with the Ildigirri and the Mukogodo (and, for the most part, the Mumonyot).³⁷ The British referred to all those within the reserve as ‘Dorobo’, further consolidating their identity shift.

In essence, I am suggesting that *IIng’wesi* originated as a term for a Laikipiak subsection, some of the remnants of which either joined a group of hunter-gatherers in the forests of Mt Kenya or turned to hunting and gathering by themselves. In the former case, they may have transferred their collective name to their new composite group, perhaps out of deference to the former Laikipiaks’ higher status as pastoralists (albeit without livestock). In the latter case, those who moved to Mt Kenya may have been the only IIng’wesi remnants that retained the name, apart from IIng’wesi that moved to Samburu, who today form a separate clan bearing the same name (GI1). This is speculation, but more certain is that during the period that elapsed between this move to Mt Kenya and the IIng’wesi’s expansion onto the Laikipia Plateau in the early twentieth century, two key shifts appear to have occurred. First, the core referents of the term ‘IIng’wesi’ became a combination of three ‘original’ families and a rootedness, even autochthony, in Mt Kenya. Their post-Laikipiak identity may have re-forged around their control of important ritual sites used in rainmaking, such as *esoit ole Seine*. Subsequently, those who later joined this particular group of IIng’wesi, whether Laikipiak or not, were considered migrants to the group. Second, the broader, external identity to which IIng’wesi were said to belong shifted from the Laikipiak to *iltorrobo* or ‘Dorobo’. This was partly due to the disappearance of *Ilaikipiak* as a significant presence on the Laikipia Plateau and the Rift Valley (Sobania 1980). Another factor was the livelihood strategy opted for by those identifying as IIng’wesi and

³⁶ See Cronk 2002 for an account of the British colonial administration’s paternalism towards the Dorobo.

³⁷ I describe the creation of this reserve in more detail in Chapter Four.

their possible assimilation of hunter-gatherers. Although it seems unlikely that the group as a whole relied entirely on hunting and gathering, also trading in ivory and offering labour to their Meru and pastoralist neighbours in exchange for stock, this was enough to be stigmatized by others as *iltorrobo*. It is possible that, when pastoralist refugees joined with IIng'wesi, this would not have been enough to change their identity as *iltorrobo*, owing to the fact that the 'core of IIng'wesi identity consisted of the group's original families. While IIng'wesi may not have regarded themselves as *iltorrobo* initially, with the arrival of the British to the region it soon became expedient to reclaim and emphasise their 'Dorobo' identity, which they did in order to remain in Laikipia while the colonial administration removed the Maasai, and in order to secure rights to land on the plateau during the enquiries of the Kenya Land Commission.

What this account demonstrates, firstly, is that to speak of 'IIng'wesi' over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is to refer to multiple generations of people, many of whom are only tangentially related in descent terms. Second, the referents of the term 'IIng'wesi' seem to have shifted, both in terms of the internal composition and core of the group that the term signifies, and in terms of the wider identities indexed by the term – in the latter case, from *Ilaikipiak* to *Iltorrobo*. This involved both an endogenous rethinking of what it means to be IIng'wesi, and a process of contestation over the group's identity between those included within the group and those interacting with it in a field of political and economic power. Finally, it suggests that identity labels such as 'IIng'wesi' are capable of withstanding and absorbing considerable social, economic and political change.

These conclusions have several implications for the account of IIng'wesi identity that follows in the rest of this dissertation. First, it means that when I take IIng'wesi as my unit of analysis, I am not implying that they constitute a naturally occurring or immutable entity. Instead, I take IIng'wesi identity to be a site of continuous negotiation and reimagining. These processes, however, are not limited to the question of who is or is not included, or that of to which wider category of identity IIng'wesi belong (*iltorrobo*, *Ilaikipiak*, Maasai, etc.). There is

also the question of what is expected of those who do belong to IIng'wesi, or indeed these wider categories, in terms of obligations, as well that of what the shared interests of the group might be. I explore how IIng'wesi navigate these questions in Chapter Five, with respect to engagements with state politics and institutions. Before I can do so, however, I first examine more closely the impact of the colonial period on IIng'wesi identity, territoriality and livelihoods in the following chapter.

Before I move on to the next section, I would like to conclude this one by briefly bringing the above account as far as the twenty-first century. IIng'wesi remained in Mukogodo until independence, after which they expanded onto some of the abandoned ranches that surrounded the former reserve. These include areas in Chumvi, Ethi, Ngare Ndare and Makandura (Map 2). These areas, together with their territory in the former Mukogodo Reserve, which have now been converted into communally-owned 'group ranches' (see Galaty 1994), now encompass the area in which the majority of IIng'wesi reside. In the 1970s and 1980s, researchers report that that IIng'wesi, along with members of other sub-sections in Laikipia, identified themselves to others as 'Mukogodo Maasai' (Herren 1987, Cronk 2004). According to Herren (1987: viii), all 'Mukogodo Maasai' rejected the 'Dorobo' label during his fieldwork. During my own fieldwork, I never encountered anybody that self-identified as 'Mukogodo Maasai', and never heard the term used. Instead, the IIng'wesi with whom I interacted, along with other Maasai in Laikipia, preferred to identify as 'Laikipia Maasai'. In the context of various land disputes, particularly on the abandoned ranches squatted by many Laikipia Maasai, this pan-sectional identity is perhaps reflective of a desire to be regarded as indigenous to the Laikipia Plateau, as well as a Maasai 'section' in their own right, of equal standing to Maasai sections in Kajiado and Narok in southern Kenya. Some have taken this even further, and insist on a revived Laikipiak identity. For instance, as noted by Hughes (2006: 14 – 15), the Organization for Survival of Il-Laikipiak Indigenous Maasai Group Initiatives (Osiligi) was an activist group during the early 2000s that agitated for land reparations, and consisted primarily of members of Laikipia's Maasai sub-sections. Even during my own fieldwork, some of my interlocutors spoke of their heritage and identity as *Ilaikipiak*, rather than IIng'wesi or Laikipia

Maasai. While it would be naïve to ignore the political expediency of claiming such an identity today, when considered alongside the more widespread shift from ‘Dorobo’ to ‘Mukogodo Maasai’ to ‘Laikipia Maasai’, it does appear that the IIng’wesi identity is very much still under negotiation.

3.3 Why pastoralism?

What is more certain is that the majority, if not all, IIng’wesi today regard themselves to varying degrees to be pastoralists. Indeed, this collective identification (Brubaker and Cooper 2000; see Introduction) with livestock ownership and pastoralism may well have driven IIng’wesi’s various efforts to recover their livestock herds following the successive defeats and ecological disasters described above. While it would be impossible to verify fully what the motivations of those taking part in historic ivory trades were, it is worth discussing the value which livestock and pastoral livelihoods have for IIng’wesi today. It is my hope that doing so will offer some suggestions as to why livestock acquisition would have been, and continues to be, of local importance. Most of the insights that I present in this regard are derived from my interviews, although some are also the product of observations recorded in my field notes.

First and foremost, and perhaps most obviously, my IIng’wesi interviewees (of varying ages) noted that their animals have immediate use value through their consumption (I40, I42, I46, I47). Both livestock and smallstock are used to meet subsistence needs by providing animal products such as milk, blood and meat, but also by offering a means of acquiring cash through sales. Animals are also slaughtered and consumed during ceremonies such as circumcisions and marriages. There also exist a variety of reasons why it is necessary to accumulate animals beyond the numbers needed to sustain basic subsistence. The first of these is obvious in that, owing to variability in rainfall and vegetative cover in Laikipia, as well as the periodic outbreaks of diseases, animal herds are susceptible to death due to drought and illness. A higher number of animals helps to ensure the resilience of the herd by increasing the likelihood that enough animals will survive to enable herd recovery (Dahl and Hjort 1976, Fratkin and Roth 1990). Subsistence value alone, however, does not explain why IIng’wesi

were reluctant to eat various kinds of game meat during the period of *emutai*, as discussed above.

A second reason is that owning livestock is regarded as a sensible way of accumulating and storing wealth. In ideal circumstances, livestock and smallstock reproduce at a regular rate, thus expanding the wealth which one stores in livestock and smallstock herds. In this sense, they are frequently compared with other assets, such as vehicles, which do not reproduce and which impose regular maintenance costs. In one instance during my fieldwork, an IIng'wesi teacher was admonished for having sold a private plot of land and used the money to buy a Toyota Land Cruiser. As my assistant, Shadrack, commented at the time: 'He would have been better off buying goats! At least they will multiply – that vehicle will break eventually and he will lose everything'. For similar reasons, owning animals is in many ways a preferable option to storing one's wealth in cash. As in Ferguson's (1985) account of the Basotho cash economy, for the IIng'wesi cash is frequently subject to demands from the owner's dependants, friends and relatives. During my fieldwork, whenever I could not contact one of the young men with whom I had been acquainted, it was often joked by others that he must have gone into hiding because it was payday – meaning that he wanted to avoid his friends who would pressure him into buying rounds of drinks, or bundles of *mira* (khat). This anxiety regarding the fluidity of cash was not restricted to young men. One IIng'wesi woman explained her preference for animal over cash wealth:

I am telling you again that we also have a saying about money that says *meeta e nshilinki ormuate* [money has no homestead]. In this case, it means that money moves and moves very fast from one hand to another. So that whenever you receive money today you cannot keep it with you because you will either use them in business transactions or by purchasing some items.

Therefore, I prefer keeping animals over money, because it is easy to keep and maintain animals, when you compare money with animals. It's easier to give away money than animals and by just looking after the animals and taking care of them they can produce and increase value. But there will be no value if you just keep money with you. By far, better to have animals than money. (I47)

In contrast to the ephemerality of cash wealth, animals are not subject to the same easy demands by others. IIng'wesi certainly make requests for animal gifts from one another. However, as I outline shortly, these requests are carried out in a relatively formal and prescribed manner, and the resulting exchanges are valued for their ability to bind individuals together in meaningful relationships. Such requests are therefore not made as casually as in the case of cash. Putting one's wealth in animals, rather than cash, thus helps IIng'wesi individuals not only in holding on to their wealth for longer periods, but also ensuring that any resulting transactions are productive in helping to build relations with others. Of course, it is not that IIng'wesi do not recognise the importance and value of money. Indeed, a local proverb says that '*keuru eropiya oldoinyo*' (money can make the mountain fall down) – meaning that with money one can achieve the impossible. However, as the above proverb suggests, money is valued for what one can *do* with it, rather than as an object of accumulation in its own right. Although a comparison between the value of livestock and cash may not be relevant to the period in which IIng'wesi rebuilt their herds, cash has been in circulation in northern Laikipia since at least the 1930s (126), and IIng'wesi seem to have contested its utility during the colonial administration's stock sales (as I outline in Chapter Four).

The third reason for owning livestock numbers above the level needed for subsistence is both the obligation and opportunity to participate in exchanges of animals with others. These exchanges take many forms and vary in the length of time over which they take place and the degree of obligation involved. Bridewealth payments, for instance, might be regarded as long-term exchanges, insofar as they often remain as debts paid over several years. These outstanding debts are almost the point of bridewealth payments, in that they bond affines together well beyond the marriage proceedings (16, 135). Another exchange system is referred to as *paran*. *Paran* is essentially a formalised means by which poor people can seek help from friends and family members in order to acquire goods that they need to meet certain needs. As one IIng'wesi man of the *ilmerishari* age set put it:

Paran basically means seeking something from a friend, a relative that you as a person cannot afford. Anything can be sought from *paran*. It can be a cow, goat or a sheep or even money. In Maasai culture, *paran* brings unity and support to the community because that's how people help those who are not able. For example, today I have cows and goats and maybe unfortunately I end up losing all that I have in a certain drought and go back to zero. When the rains come back and I want to start livestock rearing, I will just need to visit a relative or a family friend and just *paran* him one cow. And from there you start owning cows again and life continues. So therefore "*paran*" was meant to help those who were fully disadvantaged or the poor. (I40)

As this person noted, today *paran* can be used to acquire anything including cash, although my older interviewees stressed its importance in allowing poorer households to acquire the animals needed for rites of passage and ceremonies:

I know you also understand in our communities that there are those poor people and others that are very poor. Those poor people also have families and have children that will need to undergo all the rites of passage, such as circumcision, naming and even marriage. Then let's say for example someone very poor wants to conduct a circumcision ceremony and he/she cannot afford to cater for the celebrations. That person will need to plan for a *paran*, to go and borrow something from friends, relatives and especially family members so that he or she can be able to cater for the celebration. (I42)

Paran is distinct from borrowing, in that it never incurs debt, and from begging, in that it is regarded as having a sort of 'official status' within the community (I40). In this sense, it overlaps to some degree with another exchange system explored by Akitpis et al (2011), known as *osotua*. Although the authors analyse *osotua* as an exchange system, the term itself is used far more broadly to refer to close bonds between particular individuals and families, often initiated by gift exchanges. According to them, *Osotua* (which translates as 'umbilical chord') refers to a close bond of friendship that follows from a particular kind of exchange of animals, favours, cash or other gifts. The gift or favour is usually based on a genuine need, and its value is limited to that need alone. Once *osotua* is initiated, then an obligation to one day reciprocate (if able) or help the other party when they are in need is established for eternity, and there is no way of escaping it. However, the

gifts given or received are distinguished from 'debts' (which also exist), as the exchange is based on a sense of deep friendship and mutual respect. For this reason, the verb 'payment' is never used in relation to *osotua*, owing to its associations with debt and commercial transaction (Aktipis et al 2011).

Aktipis et al argue that mechanisms like *paran* and *osotua* enhance herd resilience by pooling risk. Indeed, my interviewees seemed to agree that the point of *paran* was to act as an economic safety net. Essentially, by being able to draw on a wide network of reciprocal 'giving' relationships, pastoralists insure their herds by ensuring that they will be able to acquire new animals should they experience unforeseen catastrophe. For these reasons, the accumulation of livestock beyond the numbers required for subsistence is entirely necessary for livestock rearing to be possible in the uncertain environment of the Laikipia rangelands. The higher a number of livestock one owns, not only is it less likely that one's herd might be decimated, but one is also capable of building a wider network of deep relationships in which the parties are obligated to one another, particularly in times of stress.

What I find most interesting about *osotua* relationships and bridewealth payments, in particular, is the emphasis on exchanging animals for the sake of building close relationships. As one IIng'wesi elder put it: '*osotua* is an important family to an individual. You have to support, live together and also participate in many traditional functions together. So we give gifts in *osotua* because it's considered as one family and those gifts show a lot of love to each other and bring people of *osotua* very close together...' It is this principle, the configuration of relationships through livestock, which underscores the importance that IIng'wesi, and indeed other Maa pastoralists, attach to livestock ownership. This is also why hunter-gatherers (*iltorrobo*) and agriculturalists are regarded with such suspicion and disrespect. As I outlined earlier, the word *iltorrobo* itself is a reference to the solitary existence of the hunter - translating as 'those who go one by one'. Without animals, stockless *iltorrobo* are unable to engage in traditional relations of exchange and debt. As such, they are largely free of the ties of obligation that render individuals accountable to others. Without such accountability, there is

more reason to suspect that *iltorrobo* are willing to engage amorally with others. This principle applies to the exchanges of gifts and favours that I mentioned above, but also to what might appear at first glance as direct transactions, such as bridewealth payments.³⁸

Finally, IIng'wesi value livestock for the very reason that they regard themselves, as Maasai, to be pastoralists. This may seem like circular reasoning, but it is an explanation that I heard repeatedly in interviews. As one IIng'wesi elder explained: 'We own cattle because it's natural for a Maasai man, since the time God created a Maasai man he gave him a blessing to own the cattle, and I would say that God knows that we as the Maasai people are the only people who can survive with the problems related to a cow' (I46). A critical aspect of livestock ownership, is that it enables IIng'wesi to build their visibility and standing within their community:

In any Maasai homestead with livestock, it portrays a very good picture within the community... The Maasai people value ownership of a cow and more so in good number, because the bigger the number of animals you own the richer you are, and that on its own earns you a lot of respect in the community and makes you have a say in that fraternity. (I40)

What this interviewee suggests is not merely that IIng'wesi accumulate livestock because they are Maasai, but because there is a collective recognition that, as Maasai, livestock ownership offers a route to recognition and good standing within their community. In other words, there is nothing *essential* about being Maasai that demands livestock ownership. Rather, the link between Maasai ethnic identity, livestock accumulation and social recognition is inextricable. There is no meaning in identifying as Maasai in and of itself. It must take place within an arena of mutual recognition. Further, this quote suggests that individuals (primarily men) *qua* Maasai can achieve higher esteem, as part of their social recognition as Maasai, with bigger herds. This is likely to have been the case during the period when IIng'wesi sought to recover their livestock herds as well. As one of my IIng'wesi interviewees explained above, IIng'wesi give *paran* in order to enable

³⁸ As we know from Mauss (2016), even 'free' gifts are always laden with reciprocal obligations on the part of the recipient.

poorer families to undergo rites of passage. Livestock are therefore crucial to sustaining a commitment to Maasai identity. Further, as I mentioned already, IIng'wesi undertook distinctly Maasai circumcision rituals, a necessary stage in the process of becoming a Maasai moran, during the period at which they recovered their herds (I11, I12, I13). This gives us good ground for supposing that livestock were necessary in order to sustain a commitment to Maasai identity in the early twentieth century, and that this commitment had either been attained or had endured during their years on Mt Kenya.

However, one does not simply own livestock, and achieve social recognition and esteem by virtue of that ownership alone. As we have seen, one achieves recognition, and even intimate social bonds, through livestock exchanges. To not participate is to remove oneself from the available vernacular of social interaction, and it is also regarded as shameful. As another interviewee put it: 'You can find some who might refuse [*osotua* relationships], though rarely and in those cases they are considered an outcast. It's very bad to divert from *osotua* relationships and anybody who does that is cursed' (I47). Livestock ownership is therefore important in fulfilling particular moral obligations, and avoiding shame and even curses. This tells us that there is also a distinctly moral component to the social recognition afforded by accumulating livestock. Putting all these pieces together, I argue that we can discern the building blocks of moral identity. Livestock accumulation enables IIng'wesi to pursue Lonsdale's (1994) 'ethical reputation' by fulfilling particular moral obligations through exchange. However, this process only makes sense if the actors involved mutually recognise each other as sharing a common moral understanding. In some of the discussions above, this common moral understanding is articulated in the register of ethnicity, and specifically Maasai identity. However, as I explore in Chapter Five, it can also be extended beyond ethnicity, or, as I explore in Chapter Six with regards to IIng'wesi morans, circumscribed within social configurations within ethnic groups.

To put it shortly, then, I am arguing that IIng'wesi explanations for the value of livestock, and their practices in relation to livestock, fit within the framework of moral identity, as I outlined it in the Introduction. To a large extent, my

justification for this claim rests on a description of the IIng'wesi moral economy, which has thus far been limited to reciprocal exchanges outside of the market. As I argued with regards to moral economy in the Introduction, I do not wish to suggest a fundamental opposition between the moral economy of pastoralists and livelihood strategies that perhaps follow a different logic or imperative – such as the logic of the market. IIng'wesi frequently partake in salaried labour, and many are adept at predicting fluctuations of livestock prices and seizing market opportunities. This is not particularly recent. As I describe in the following chapter, IIng'wesi also took this calculative approach to livestock markets during the colonial period, often frustrating colonial administrators when they refused to sell livestock at a lower price than they could get from informal Kikuyu brokers. Oral historical evidence suggests that barter exchange, both between pastoralists and between pastoralists and non-pastoralists, produced long-standing trade and friendship relations, which were often augmented by inter-marriage (see Waller 1979: 339). 'Commercial' transactions of a kind therefore took place well before the advent of the cash economy.

The point of explicating the IIng'wesi moral economy and demonstrating its link to moral identity here is, as I have mentioned, to find a plausible explanation for why IIng'wesi may have returned to pastoralism after being largely dispossessed of their herds and living as *iltorrobo* for several decades. Ultimately, of course, it is impossible to get direct answers to this question. Most of the people I interviewed about the livestock economy were not alive at the time when IIng'wesi were in the process of recovering their herds. The answers above reflect the attitudes of those I interviewed and those with whom I interacted during my fieldwork. It is not unreasonable, however, to suggest that the value of pastoral livelihoods may have been expressed in similarly socio-moral terms in the past, even if the precise content of those terms may have changed over time. We know from Cronk (2004), for instance, that livestock exchanges were carried out in a similar fashion in Laikipia, and specifically Mukogodo, in the early twentieth century. Indeed, in his work, Cronk seeks to explain why the Mukogodo, or Yaaku, transitioned from hunting and gathering to pastoralism at a roughly similar time. In his account, Mukogodo women began marrying into Laikipia Maasai sections,

including IIng'wesi. This left a shortage of marriageable women within the Mukogodo community, which meant that Mukogodo men had to adopt livestock in order to be able to pay bridewealth and marry Maasai women (see Cronk 2002 for this particular explanation). This may also have played a role in IIng'wesi's return to pastoralism. However, bridewealth payments need to be situated within moral identity. Cronk does not go far enough, in my view, in explaining the moral underpinnings of bridewealth, which consist primarily in the idea that livestock exchanges establish *osotua* and other social bonds. These, as I have described above, are heavily imbued with moral meaning within a network of people who mutually acknowledge each other as sharing a particular identity.

I am therefore proposing moral identity as a possible explanation for why pastoralists value pastoral livelihoods. I am also suggesting that a livelihood-based moral identity may have endured even when IIng'wesi lost the ability to practise pastoralism. This argument emerges out of the testimonies given by IIng'wesi themselves regarding how they value pastoral livelihoods. It also appears to make sense when applied to research on similar processes in Laikipia. When I argue that moral identity of pastoralists is something that endures beyond the actual practice of pastoralism, however, I am not arguing that moral identity is something essential or structural in pastoralist communities. Rather, moral identity attains a certain 'stickiness' through the 'long-term sedimentation of experience' (Mbembe 2016: 221). Indeed, when it comes to moral categories, and the fact of their link to some form of identity, I follow Lonsdale (1992: 138) in arguing that they are 'historically negotiated but appear to be immemorially given.' In the chapters that follow, I hope to demonstrate the ways in which IIng'wesi moral identity has been produced, contested and negotiated at various points in time. Indeed, while I have presented moral identity as an answer to the question posed by IIng'wesi livelihood transitions, the task of the next few chapters will be to test its robustness as a general framework, as well as to illustrate its operation as a historical process.

Conclusion

Defining IIng'wesi as a social group over time is no easy task. The name 'IIng'wesi' appears to have endured, but the composition of those bearing the name have changed considerably, and their precise livelihood practices have rarely reached a point of stasis and have undergone dramatic transformations. Despite this, there appears to have been a more or less continuous imperative to acquire and accumulate livestock herds through various means, most notably ivory trading. While in Mt Kenya, IIng'wesi seem to have practised pastoralism to some extent on the margins or outside of Maasai society. Their ability to graze openly on the Laikipia plateau was limited by the dominance of other Maasai sections until their removal by the British between 1911 and 1914. The Maasai moves freed up the Laikipia plateau and coincided with the coming of age of the *ilterito* age set, who along with the subsequent *ilnyangusi* and *ilsieuri* age sets, are widely noted to have recovered IIng'wesi herds through engagement in the ivory trading and extensive cattle rustling. Throughout this process, it seems likely that there was a strongly moral component to the motivations that IIng'wesi had to acquire stock, as there continues to be across generations today. In the next chapter, there will be some chronological overlap with this period, as I explore the colonial context within which some of these transitions occurred. To conclude this chapter, however, I hope to at the very least have established three observations: a) that IIng'wesi livelihood practices underwent significant change during the past century and a half, b) that moral identity, as a concept, emerges from the way in which IIng'wesi themselves evaluate pastoral livelihoods, particularly in relation to their collective identity and standards for belonging in the community, and c) that aspects of moral identity run throughout this history, and may have provided the basis for IIng'wesi evaluation of pastoralist livelihoods, to which they sought to return in the early twentieth century. In the remaining chapters, I aim to flesh out the concept of moral identity further and to examine its usefulness in analysing other aspects of IIng'wesi history, livelihoods and politics.

Chapter Four – The administration of the Mukogodo Reserve, 1930 – 1963.

In Laikipia, and in rural Kenya and Africa more widely, the provincial administration was the main face of colonial rule, and the primary point of contact between the colonial state and those that they governed. As Branch and Cheeseman (2006) describe, the administration was, in principle, an extension of the central executive, and served as the means by which the executive exerted power in Kenya's rural provinces and districts. It both enacted laws and ordinances passed by the central executive in these areas and fed information from the provinces back to Nairobi. For the most part, and to summarise the structure of what was an expansive bureaucracy, it consisted of provincial commissioners, who headed Kenya's eight provinces and oversaw district commissioners tasked with administering the various districts in each province, who in turn were assisted by district officers. These district officers were often posted to administrative centres in native reserves and other rural areas. Depending on the district in question, district commissioners and officers had the largest degree of interaction with their district's population, who were usually represented by locally elected headmen, and by 'chiefs' appointed by the administration from the local population (see Tignor 1971, Mamdani 1996, Spear 2003: 8-16).

From the outset, the colonial administration throughout Kenya appeared to be constrained by competing pressures and interests. Berman and Lonsdale (1992: 2) describe inherent tensions in the Kenyan colonial state between 'the competing and sometimes conflicting demands of metropolitan and [European] settlers' interests and by the material and political needs of effective control over the African population'. Moreover, they argue that the contradictions between European settlers' demand for capital and the need to exercise effective control over Kenya's African population resulted in measures which ultimately undermined their control, particularly by creating novel class interests among the

African population which further challenged the legitimacy of colonial governance (ibid.). The role of chiefs and other administrative positions reserved for Africans, such as those of headmen and tribunal elders, was crucial in maintaining the administration's tentative balance between effective control of the African population and legitimate rule. As noted by Fields (1985: 30) regarding administrations in Malawi and Zambia, the role of chiefs was to make 'black men with legitimate authority appendages of white men without it'. This provided chiefs and other African intermediaries with a considerable degree of agency in setting limits to colonial ambitions and directing the course of administrative interventions:

Chiefs [...] often sought to attenuate the demands of the state, and colonial officials often had to accede lest they precipitate violent opposition, the colonial nightmare.

To the extent that colonial authorities depended on local authorities to effect and legitimate their rule, then, their power was limited, and they became subject to local discourses of power that they neither fully understood nor controlled. (Spear 2003: 9)

Indeed, it is not so much that chiefs were co-opted or captured by the colonial state, but that colonial administrators were able to strike an uneasy alliance with rural patriarchs (Fields 1982, Ekeh 1990, Berman 1990, Ranger 1993). For the former, this served to expedite the task of governance, while for the latter, it offered new avenues for autocratic rule, although the legitimacy of chiefly rule was frequently contested by those they governed and undermined by internal struggle within colonised communities (Berman 1990).

In this chapter, I discuss key aspects of how the colonial administration, as a complex and slowly expanding matrix of competing interests and power relations, developed and operated in the Mukogodo reserve in northern Laikipia. The Mukogodo reserve, as I discuss below, was a plot of land set aside by the colonial government for 'Dorobo' on the northeast edge of the Laikipia plateau (see Map 4). Several 'Dorobo' and Maasai groups, namely IIng'wesi, Mukogodo/Yaaku, Ildigirri and Mumonyot, were largely restricted to the reserve in order to

accommodate white settlement in the region. I discuss the nature of colonial administration in the reserve for several reasons. As I describe in Chapter Two, the vast majority of archival documents available on northern Laikipia and Iling'wesi were composed by and for the colonial administration in Kenya, and occasionally the Colonial Office in London. These documents include the initial ethnological, ethnographic and historical reports (often authored by colonial District Officers) written about the Maa-speaking groups of Laikipia, upon which later scholars have relied considerably (e.g. Herren 1987, 1989; Brenzinger 1992; Cronk 2002, 2004). Aside from anything else then, it is worth examining the priorities, legacies and challenges of the colonial administration in Mukogodo in order to better contextualise the knowledge that it, and subsequently others, produced.

As I argue below, the administration's most crucial legacy in this regard is the reification of ethnicity, with administrative divisions and the delineation of 'reserves' organised around conceptions of fixed ethnic units. During this period, the colonial administration also shifted its approach to Iling'wesi and the other Laikipia Maasai groups. In the earlier stages of colonial involvement in Mukogodo (ca. 1930 – 1944), the administration governed Mukogodo residents as *iltorrobo*, in need of paternal protection against larger pastoralist ethnic groups, as well as restrictions against their movement on to white settled land. By the time of the 'second colonial occupation' (ca. 1945 – 1963), colonial directives had begun targeting Mukogodo residents in their capacity as pastoralists. In the archival sources I examined, this later period signals a turning point in administrative attitudes to the Mukogodo reserve, marked particularly by anxieties over what they perceived to be the ecologically destructive nature of pastoral livelihoods. While I am disinclined to suggest that this alone crystallised a sense of pastoralist identity in the region, it did help to assemble 'pastoralism' as a 'matter of concern' (Latour 2004) in the political sphere. This meant that when Mukogodo residents engaged the provincial administration, they now did so while being perceived as pastoralists, which meant navigating a different set of assumptions and adopting a different vantage point than when they had operated under a more strictly 'Dorobo' identity. As noted by Catley, Lind and Scoones (2013: 3), the official

attitudes towards pastoralists that developed during colonialism continued in the policies of post-independence governments and are still evident today.

As well as addressing epistemological concerns, this chapter will explore key interventions introduced by the colonial administration in order to historicise the themes that I explore in later chapters. Through its strategy of indirect rule, the administration in Mukogodo helped to create a new focal point for the imagining and negotiation of moral identity, namely, Iling'wesi's state-sanctioned political representatives. In this chapter, I explore this development by looking at how regular Iling'wesi evaluated the legitimacy and performance of their chiefs, headmen and tribunal elders. In Chapter Five, I examine the role of moral identity in the creation of political communities and the evaluation of political candidates in the 2017 General Election. In doing all of this, I do not mean to draw direct lines of causation between the actions of the colonial administration and the phenomena of the present, but rather to highlight and assess the significance of the linkages between these periods.

In exploring these themes, I also aim to address questions of location and agency. Although more recent scholarship has come to emphasise the limits to colonialism's capacity to totally reinvent or transform the power relations, categories of social difference and inclusion, and epistemological frameworks of colonised populations (see Ranger 1993, Spear 2003), there is still an acknowledgement that colonial policies brought about changes in these areas that have enduring legacies. As I outline below, my Iling'wesi interviewees recognise and discussed these legacies themselves. However, what I hope to stress with regards to Mukogodo is the difficulty in locating those changes as either strictly exogenous or endogenous. Indeed, we know already that colonial policy in Kenya could be both reactive, responding to local crises and trends rather than following a grand design (Berman 1990), and, especially when it came to environmental anxieties, informed by concerns and ideas that circulated along intellectual networks at an imperial level (Anderson 1986, Grove and Damodaran 2009). Meanwhile, it is well established that those living under colonial rule used colonial institutions, logics and vernaculars both to advance their own interests (Peterson

2006) and to defend or win rights, advantages and freedoms for colonised populations more broadly (e.g. Rathbone 2000), in such a way that often influenced the course of colonisation itself (James 2001). This capacity to subvert colonial institutions is, of course, additional to the many ways in which subjugated peoples actively resist their hegemony (Scott 1985).

By examining the epistemological and political legacies of colonialism in Mukogodo, and locating these in multiple sites of agency and sources of causality and influence, I hope to examine key moments in the production of IIng'wesi moral identity, which undoubtedly created significant upheaval, but without presenting it as a fundamental aberration, imposed by external forces (c.f. Vansina 1990). In my account, IIng'wesi moral identity, negotiated and mutable as it was, was brought to bear upon the new institutions and social configurations instigated by the colonial administration. IIng'wesi were also not beholden to their own moral identity, but could draw upon the moral vernaculars and codes of the colonial administration to pursue their own interests. This account therefore argues that moral identity is not a totalising worldview, but that there is always the possibility of stepping outside of it or borrowing ideas and vernaculars from elsewhere. The plurality of thought and political or moral registers has been emphasised by Feierman (1990) in relation to peasants in Tanzania, and it is important to highlight this point if moral identity is to avoid becoming another form of essentialism.

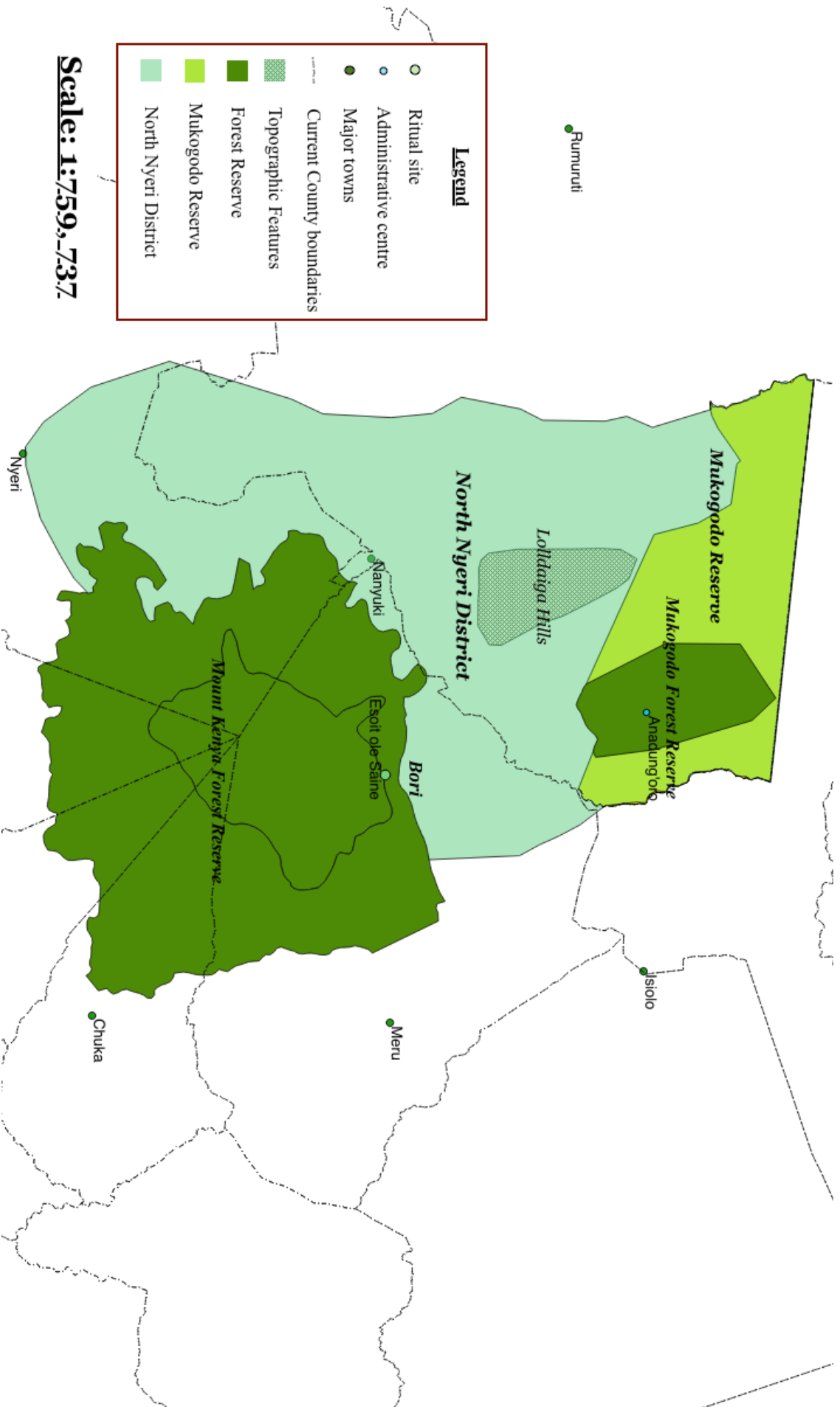
Key to the discussion is an account of how the provincial colonial administration in Mukogodo operated and exercised their power, what their priorities were, where their priorities and assumptions came from, as well as the changes that they succeeded in implementing (or failed to implement). Throughout this chapter, I explore how key policy outcomes emerged out of competing interests within the administration, between administrators and white settlers, and interactions between administrators, namely District Officers, and residents of the Mukogodo reserve. I begin by looking at the processes that led to the creation of the Mukogodo reserve itself, before taking a closer look at the key individuals tasked with governing it over the course of its existence, and the relations between them.

I then look at administrative efforts to maintain the internal and external boundaries of the reserve, and Iling'wesi reactions to these efforts. Following this, I explore the administration's shift in emphasis towards economic and infrastructure 'development' in the reserve. Throughout these different sections, I attempt to discern the role of moral identity, and its constituent parts, in these processes. I also examine the impact of colonial interventions and policies on Iling'wesi moral identity.

The task of doing so is largely one of identifying invocations of moral identity in the textual and oral sources from which I have pieced these accounts together, and the account is therefore limited by what these sources offer as well as my own limitations and biases in interpreting them. The majority of archival sources that I draw upon here are administrative correspondences, located at the Kenyan National Archives in Nairobi and the UK's National Archives in Kew, the problems of which I discuss in Chapter Two. To a lesser extent I also utilise the memoirs of a District Commissioner, R. E. Wainwright, found at the Weston Library in Oxford, as well as a guestbook used since 1957 (and still in use today) located at Loiragai Police Post, at the southern boundary of the former Mukogodo reserve. In addition to these textual sources, I rely heavily upon my interviewees with the Iling'wesi men and women who were alive during much of the period discussed.

4.1. The relocation of Iling'wesi and creation of the Mukogodo 'Dorobo' Reserve

As I outlined in the previous chapter, by the time that the Maasai were relocated to the southern Maasai reserve between 1911 and 1914, Iling'wesi were living primarily in the foothills of Mt Kenya, in an area known to them as Bori. With the removal of the Maasai, they expanded their grazing area onto the Laikipia plateau, as far as the hills of Lolldaiga and the southern half of Mukogodo Forest (see Map 4). Indeed, some of my older interviewees recalled migratory routes between Bori and Lolldaiga that passed through Sukota and Timau, which they claimed had even been used by the earliest Iling'wesi families before the Maasai



Scale: 1:759,737.

Map 4: North Nyeri district, the Mukogodo Reserve and former Iny'wezi settlements and grazing areas (as mentioned in text). GIS data from Fauna and Flora International, Gaia GPS and Carpenter, L. 1925. 'The Colony and Protectorate of Kenya'. London: Standford's Geographical Establishment. Available at Cambridge University Library: 4.92.2.

were moved to Laikipia in 1904 (I12, I15). During the removal of the Maasai from Laikipia, it appears that there were some attempts by the British to move IIng'wesi, either south with the Maasai or further into Meru country (I12).³⁹ However, IIng'wesi managed to resist these attempts and were instead moved to the area around Makurian and the Lolldaiga hills:⁴⁰

We were all pushed from that side of Meru and we came to this side, a very big group from Bori. And then we mixed with the Ildigirri in this area. The Ildigirri used to be our people, and we used to divide this Lolldaiga. The Ildigirri people took the Lolldaiga down there, and we took the 'black' Lolldaiga [a southerly section of the Lolldaiga hills]. (I12)

As mentioned in the quote above, while in Makurian and Lolldaiga, IIng'wesi lived in close quarters with Ildigirri. My oldest interviewee, a IIng'wesi man from the *ilterito* age set (thought by his family to be between 110 and 120 years old, although he holds no birth certificate)⁴¹, described their relationship:

We were separate but on good terms. When we were morans, we used to stay together with the Ildigirri morans, and we were also circumcised at the same time and we stayed together during circumcision. Even when we were *laiberta* [circumcised but still healing], we used to stay with the guys from Ildigirri who were also *laiberta*. We used to sing together and go to each other's homes. Those are the people we used to live with. (I11)

³⁹ Some were indeed moved to Meru District, but most returned to Laikipia (I12; Kenya Land Commission. *Kenya Land Commission: Evidence and Memoranda*. Vol. III. September 1933, London. Pp. 1463-1588).

⁴⁰ This may be because Bori was annexed for European settlement as part of the White Highlands at around this time. I have been unable to find specific reference to Bori in the archives. However, all land north of Mt Kenya, outside of the Mt Kenya forest reserve and as far as the Mukogodo Reserve, was set aside for white settlement (see Map 3). My own GPS co-ordinates for Bori show it to be outside of the Mt Kenya forest reserves, including the IIng'wesi ritual site, *Esoit ole Seine*.

⁴¹ Men of the *ilterito* age set were circumcised between roughly 1912 and 1925, and young Maasai men in Laikipia are typically circumcised between the ages of 15 and 25. This particular interviewee was one of the junior members of this age set (having been circumcised towards the end of this period), and recalls being circumcised around the time that Europeans began settling in Laikipia. He is the only known surviving member of *ilterito* in Laikipia.

Indeed, the area around Lolldaiga appears to have been a commonly used seasonal grazing area for some time, bringing together various Maa-speaking sub-sections, including Maasai from the Aberdares:

The Maasai used to come here when we sometimes came to look for pasture. Because we used to depend on grass, because the cows depend on grass and even the goats depend on grass. When those times came that we stayed here, we were always joined by different communities. For example, Ildigirri, Lewuaso, Mumonyot, you found all of them gathered here. (115)

In addition, IIng'wesi interacted with Mukogodo/Yaaku in Mukogodo Forest. Although relations with Mukogodo seem to have been largely positive, they did not join the other groups on the plains around Lolldaiga, preferring instead to remain in the forest. As the *ilterito* elder put it: "We also had the Mukogodo. They occupied the forest, pretending to own the forest." This somewhat scornful comment possibly speaks to IIng'wesi perceptions that the Mukogodo employed a stricter notion of territoriality, as they seem to have relied on patrilineal territories in organising their beekeeping and hunting activities (Brenzinger 1992, Cronk 2002). The region's pastoralists, by contrast, appeared to have a more laissez-faire approach to grazing access, as illustrated in the quote above.

The colonial government, under pressure from speculative European settlers in the Rift Valley who hoped to acquire land in Laikipia, orchestrated the relocation of the Maasai from Laikipia to the southern Maasai reserve between 1911 and 1914 (Hughes 2006). Following this, both existing settlers and ex-soldiers that had been offered land through the Ex-Soldier Settlement Scheme, following the end of the First World War, began to acquire tracts of land on the Laikipia plateau (Morgan 1963, Vaughan 2005). The European settlement of Laikipia picked up speed in the early 1920s. However, the quality of land on offer varied significantly. As a result, by 1922, two hundred alienated farms remained unsettled towards the north of the plateau. Meanwhile, smaller farms soon appeared unviable. As a result of these challenges, settler organisations began to pressure the government to allow ranchers to amalgamate their farms with unsettled tracts of land, and to expand the area for white settlement northwards (Vaughan 2005: 14-15). This

began a gradual process during the 1920s by which settlers in Laikipia expanded their farms and increased the number of farms in a northerly direction, towards the district's border with the Northern Frontier District (NFD).

The concerns of Laikipia's pastoralist population were left out of these discussions. The IIng'wesi whom I interviewed were ignorant of the fact that further land had been granted by the colonial government to European settlers. As well as not being included in discussions around the expansion of the so-called White Highlands, these expansions in Laikipia appear not to have been enforced by government or security personnel. Instead, the settlers were left to negotiate with Laikipia's pastoralists and, subsequently, to build fences in order to mark new ranch boundaries. In one interview, an IIng'wesi elder described his own father's experiences with white settlers in Lolldaiga:

I found the white settlers fencing their land, and my father lived here [Lolldaiga] and because he had a big herd of cattle he stayed not far from the settlers' farms. The white farmers started fencing using stone, but our animals used to graze everywhere and sometimes our animals mixed with those of the whites and then in the evening we would go home with either two or three of them and it was not easy for him to know because we also had a lot of cows that time. Then at some point a white man told my father that because I am always losing my cows everyday and I can't trace them anywhere, I think you need to move a bit further from my cows so that we can have enough space for grazing. Then my father was pushed some miles again.

One time, Lasitii Kuraru and other morans went to steal from a white man and brought the goats to eat around our place, and the goats were found next to our homes and so the white man came and moved us a little bit further again. Therefore we were moved slowly up to where we are now and they extended the boundary day by day, just to make sure that they have enough land. And as for the boundary, it was marked using stones - because I know it as very easy to move the stones in case they wanted to extend the boundary again. And that was how people got moved from Urungai up to Makurian. (I26)

This account of settlers slowly expanding their territory by moving their fence posts is one I heard repeatedly in interviews:

We were chased by the white people – brothers to this guy you are staying with [directed at Shadrack, referring to me]. First, that *Mouo olenkine* [in the Lolldaiga hills] – that was where the boundary passed. Then it went across the ‘brown hills’ [a small section of hills next to Lolldaiga] down to *Naya Nkainito* [a big stone at the border between Lolldaiga and Makurian], it came up again and crossed over Purunkai, [a hill in Ole Naishu ranch] and Sugota. The whites took all that other part. Before we took a break, they again pushed the border from there to that other hill [*she pointed using a stick*], next to *Naya Nkainito*, Then it went over those hills, and then we had to move again. (I15)

They didn’t used to force people to move out of the place that much. You could just be told, ‘just squeeze a little bit next to that fence because I want to fence here’. So and therefore we’d just squeeze out of the way but we were not moved by force. And they continued that way. (I17)

The fencing wasn’t even straight. They used to fence the line going this side, but after some time they would bring the fence further to this side... Therefore, they were just behaving like thugs. At some point, they used to make the line straight, but when they reached up to Sang’a they came back with another different line. You see even in these hills, the line is not straight! It goes this way, then the other side - the line is never straight. So they started to take the land slowly, but very fearfully. And therefore we were finally moved to this area that you see. (I12)

It is unclear whether these gradual expansions were officially sanctioned by the colonial administration. As I discuss in the next section, administrative oversight in northern Laikipia was light at the time, with the District Commissioner (hereby DC) based in Nyeri town. At least in hindsight, to my IIng’wesi interviewees it was morally duplicitous – ‘thuggish’ – behaviour, although they appear to have done little to resist relocation. By the early 1930s, administrators began expressing their own frustration with the lack of clarity regarding ‘Dorobo’ territory. By this time, the so-called ‘Dorobo question’ (Cavanagh 2017b) was twofold. First, administrators were keen to find out to which ‘tribe’ the Laikipia Dorobo belonged, so that they might be able to move them to an existing native reserve.⁴² Second, failing the possibility of absorbing the Dorobo into another ‘tribe’, the

⁴² Stock Inspector to DC Rumuruti, March 27, 1931. KNA PC/RVP/6A/1/1/1

administration sought to find a suitable reserve in which to place the 'Dorobo', separate to other ethnic groups.⁴³ It should be noted that these questions arose, not in response to 'Dorobo' grievances, but concerns that their livestock risked spreading disease to those of white settlers, as well as settler complaints regarding 'encroachment' on their farms.⁴⁴

Concerns about disease may have been partly informed by the colonial experience in southern Africa, where the rinderpest epizootic of the 1890s had raised fears among the white population and administrators alike of mass unrest among the African population (Phoofolo 1993). Settlers' concerns about 'encroachment', meanwhile, signal a dissonance between settlers and IIng'wesi during the earlier moments of encounter regarding the moral and legal obligations inherent in notions of territory, property and reciprocity. The IIng'wesi quoted above felt that they had done white settlers a favour by moving their herds, but shortly found themselves increasingly locked out of their former grazing areas. Although I struggled to find direct testimonies from white settlers in Laikipia, the colonial administrators cited above acknowledged settlers' frustration with 'Dorobo' unwillingness to respect their government-sanctioned property rights. Meanwhile, the Forest Department, who found themselves dealing with substantial 'Dorobo' populations within the forests which they were tasked with managing, expressed their concern that the retreat of 'Dorobo' from Crown Land⁴⁵, 'under pressure from European grazing', would prove detrimental to forest conservation efforts.⁴⁶ As we see below, the Forest Department's perception of pristine forest landscapes threatened by overpopulation contrasts the widespread construction of East African landscapes as largely empty wilderness (Adams 2010: 74), and later became a cause of friction between the Forest Department and the administration in Mukogodo.

⁴³ DC Eldama Ravine to PC, Rift Valley Province, October 23, 1931. KNA PC/RVP/6A/1/1/1

⁴⁴ Stock Inspector to DC Rumuruti, March 27, 1931. KNA PC/RVP/6A/1/1/1; Notes: Meeting of Laikipia Farmers' Association (LFA) committee with Acting PC, Rift Valley Province, February 17, 1931. KNA PC/RVP/6A/1/1/1.

⁴⁵ Land alienated by the colonial government but not yet settled by Europeans.

⁴⁶ Acting Commissioner of Forests to PC, RVP, December 7, 1931. KNA PC/RVP/6A/1/1/1

Various efforts followed on the part of the provincial administration to try and ascertain 'how many of the alleged Dorobo were in fact Masai [sic], [and] who should be sent to the Masai Reserve'.⁴⁷ These efforts included sending 'four Masai elders' from Narok to 'inspect the Dorobo in question' in April 1931.⁴⁸ In addition, the Acting Provincial Commissioner (hereby PC) of Rift Valley Province, H. E. Welby, 'personally interviewed' representatives of the various 'Dorobo' groups in order to discuss their removal to the Maasai reserve.⁴⁹ The Maasai, as a result of their enquiries, concluded that some of the 'Wandorobo'⁵⁰ were, in fact, pure Maasai, while the rest were 'Wandorobo Masai' whom they were happy to accommodate in the Maasai reserve. The 'Dorobo' interviewed by Welby, however, rejected any connected with the Maasai, and opposed the suggested move to the Maasai reserve, arguing that the Maasai would deprive them of their livestock. Instead, they outlined their preference for a reserve of their own, or else to be allowed to move to the Samburu area of the Northern Frontier District.⁵¹

In considerations regarding which of these two options was most viable, the main factor was not so much ensuring that the 'Dorobo' were absorbed into the appropriate ethnic group, but rather that the eventual solution to the 'Dorobo question' would not threaten the viability and exclusivity of future European settlement in Laikipia.⁵² The Laikipia Farmers' Association, for example, was adamantly opposed to the creation of a new reserve for the 'Dorobo in the 'Mugugudu area', ostensibly on the grounds that it was unsuitable for settlement and would result in encroachment on alienated farms.⁵³ The Acting PC of Rift Valley Province, meanwhile, opposed their relocation to the Maasai reserve on the assumption that, as this was undesirable to the Dorobo, they would be inclined to

⁴⁷ Notes: Meeting of Laikipia Farmers' Association (LFA) committee with Acting PC, Rift Valley Province, February 17, 1931. KNA PC/RVP/6A/1/1/1.

⁴⁸ Acting PC, RVP to Colonial Secretary, Nairobi, May 30, 1931. KNA PC/RVP/6A/1/1/1

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ A corrupted Swahili version of *iltorrobo* in plural form.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid; Acting PC, RVP to Colonial Secretary, Nairobi, February 26, 1931. KNA PC/RVP/6A/1/1/1

⁵³ Notes: Meeting of Laikipia Farmers' Association (LFA) committee with Acting PC, Rift Valley Province, February 17, 1931. KNA PC/RVP/6A/1/1/1.

move back to Laikipia.⁵⁴ This is an important point, as accounts of the ‘Dorobo question’ sometimes overemphasise the administration’s obsession with constructing a coherent but threatened Dorobo identity (Cronk 2002: 32-35; Cavanagh 2017b). However, contrary to the suggestion that the colonial administration insisted on crystallising ‘Dorobo-ness’ as a fixed tribal identity (Cronk 2002: 32), there is evidence to suggest that, in the case of Mukogodo, many administrators understood some of the Laikipia Dorobo to have once been Laikipiak pastoralists that had recently been subjugated and stigmatised by their Maasai neighbours.⁵⁵ As we see above, the question of what to do with the ‘Dorobo’ became a thorny issue because the complexity of their social makeup and history meant, as far as the administration were concerned, that they were unlikely to remain in a reserve with other ethnic groups, which posed the risk of future encroachment on white farms or forest land. Rather than labouring under the genuine assumption that the ‘Dorobo’ were a singular tribe, constructing them as such served as a politically expedient means of vacating land and protecting settler and government interests (Lynch 2007: 54).

In the end, the matter of where to locate the ‘Dorobo’ was deferred by the Colonial Secretary to the Kenya Land Commission (KLC).⁵⁶ The KLC took evidence regarding the history and tribal status of these groups from a range of actors purported to be familiar with them. These included provincial and district commissioners from the Northern Frontier Province and Rift Valley, veterinary and forest officers, European settlers with farms in Laikipia, and representatives (namely chiefs) from IIng’wesi, Mukogodo, Mumonyot and Ildigirri.⁵⁷ The testimonies of the latter are particularly interesting, as I highlighted in the previous chapter, because all of the Laikipia Maasai representatives (apart from

⁵⁴ Acting PC, RVP to Colonial Secretary, Nairobi, May 30, 1931. KNA PC/RVP/6A/1/1/1

⁵⁵ Acting PC, RVP to Colonial Secretary, Nairobi, February 26, 1931. KNA PC/RVP/6A/1/1/1;

Acting PC, RVP to PC, Northern Frontier Province, April 28, 1931. KNA PC/RVP/6A/1/1/1;

Acting PC, RVP to Colonial Secretary, Nairobi, May 30, 1931. KNA PC/RVP/6A/1/1/1;

⁵⁶ Colonial Secretary to PC, RVP, November 16, 1931. KNA PC/RVP/6A/1/1/1

⁵⁷ Kenya Land Commission. *Kenya Land Commission: Evidence and Memoranda*. Vol. III. London, September 1933. Pp. 1463-1588.

the Mumonyot) claimed to represent 'true Dorobo' communities. While some of the European contributors also gave accounts of the histories of these groups, others commented on the unsuitability of different tracts of land for pastoralist settlement, highlighting particularly the shortage of water sources within the Mukogodo area, and the risk of diseases from 'Dorobo' cattle, such as East Coast Fever. In their final report, the KLC designated the 'Mukogodo area', on the north-eastern edge of the Laikipia plateau, as a reserve for the Mukogodo, Ildigirri and Iing'wesi, with its precise boundaries to be determined by the colonial government and district administration.⁵⁸ The full recommendation was something of a compromise between settler interests and the desires expressed by the 'Dorobo' groups. While giving the 'Dorobo' their own reserve in Laikipia, they recommended that the territory be ceded by North Nyeri District and come under the administration of the Northern Frontier Province, thereby removing it from what was largely a settler district. Meanwhile, the legal status of the reserve was such that 'natives' had 'prior, but not exclusive, rights', leaving open the possibility that it be alienated by the colonial government in the future⁵⁹. The Mukogodo Reserve, although effectively administered as such, therefore never acquired the same legal status as that of a 'native reserve'.

4.2. The administrators and officials of Mukogodo

Following the publication of the KLC report in 1933, it took some time for the precise boundaries of the Mukogodo reserve to be demarcated and for the relevant administrative institutions to be set in place. This may have been because administrative presence in northern Laikipia was patchy until 1948, when the reserve was appointed its own District Officer (as I discuss in the next section). Mukogodo was initially administered by the DC of North Nyeri, who was based in Nyeri town and, during much of the 1930s, was responsible for administering both North Nyeri and Nanyuki districts. The DC had no permanent office in the reserve, although when making visits he stayed at a camp in Anadunguro glade in Mukogodo Forest, which also contained a Kenya Police and Tribal Police post, as

⁵⁸Kenya Land Commission. *Report of the Kenya Land Commission*. London, September 1933. Pp. 222-223.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

well as a trading centre (I15, I18).⁶⁰ During this period, the District Commissioner and District Officer in Nyeri would visit the reserve 'very occasionally' in order to hold court and carry out administrative duties.⁶¹ Robin Wainwright, a District Officer in Nyeri during the late 1930s and early 1940s, felt that being put in charge of 'Nanyuki district'⁶² was a bit of a stretch, and he complained that he 'disliked our trips to Nanyuki, as we never had time to get to know the district and its people and problems'.⁶³

The task of administering both white settled areas and the Mukogodo reserve, as well as a dearth of communications infrastructure in the region, caused frustration among administrators. In the words of a Provincial Commissioner for Central Province in 1949 (after Nanyuki District was given its own DC):

There are various disadvantages apparent in trying to administer Mukogodo from the settled area District Headquarters, Nanyuki, as, apart from difficult communication, the Mukogodo problems are completely different to the settled area work and require a different type of staff and handling. The result is that Mukogodo has tended to be a neglected Cinderella and I feel that the present set-up may continue to be unsatisfactory.^{64 65}

Because of the lack of a permanent administrative presence, the DCs relied heavily upon the co-operation of locally appointed chiefs, headmen and tribunal elders. As discussed above, chiefs were administrative functionaries, overseeing administrative sub-divisions on behalf of district administrators, and winning substantial authority for themselves in the meantime. They served as 'the essential linkage between the colonial state and African societies', and whereas European administrators spent most of their time in their district headquarters

⁶⁰ Assistant Conservator of Forests, Nyeri to Acting Conservator of Forests, Nairobi, July 29, 1944. KNA VQ/9/6

⁶¹ Wainwright, R. E. Date unknown. *Memoirs*. WLO, Manuscript Collections no. 629: p. 84.

⁶² Which, at the time, included the Mukogodo Reserve.

⁶³ *Ibid.*: 88

⁶⁴ PC, Central Province to Chief Secretary, Nairobi, December 23 1949. KNA BV/14/113.

⁶⁵ The term 'neglected Cinderella' is an interesting one here, implying as it does that Mukogodo could amount to something regal under appropriate management (if only the glass slipper fit).

(with the exception of some District Officers), chiefs 'supplied the day-to-day presence and muscle of colonial domination' (Berman 1998: 316). Fields (1982) has suggested that, to some extent, chiefs entered into a moral community with their colonial rulers. As we shall see below, if this was the case in Mukogodo, those that the chiefs governed did not see this as a severing of ties with their original moral communities. Instead, their position as both the external face of 'Dorobo' communities and as those with privileged access to administrative operations created unique moral obligations for which they could be held accountable by those that they governed, and with whom they ultimately still shared an identity.

Herren (1987: 37) suggests that in 1936, the Mukogodo reserve was divided into three locations, based on the perceived territories of the Ildigirri, Mukogodo⁶⁶ and IIng'wesi, and that each location was appointed a chief in the same year. While I could not find evidence for this myself, and Herren's references are unclear, the earliest mention of chiefs in the archival documents I surveyed is contained in a letter from 1939.⁶⁷ Prior to this, there are mentions of 'headmen' as early as 1933, but it is unclear whether these represented particular locations or simply the sub-section to which they belonged.⁶⁸ Equally, in my interviews, nobody could give precise dates as to when chiefs were first appointed in Mukogodo. Nonetheless, it is probably safe to assume that between 1936 and 1939, the three Dorobo sub-sections were appointed their own chiefs, who were given authority over jurisdictions that were instantaneously social (i.e. a chief had authority over his sub-section) and territorial. Interestingly, among IIng'wesi, chiefs were rarely selected from the lineages that provide more 'traditional' political figures, such as age-set leaders (*ilainguanak*) (I6). It therefore seems that the role of chief provided new avenues for men to pursue power that were previously unavailable, through mastery of the codes and performance of colonial officialdom (Ranger 1983).

⁶⁶ When they were not being deported, the Mumonyot were sometimes included within the Mukogodo location (I12).

⁶⁷ DC Nyeri to DO Maralal, October 2, 1939. KNA FLI/1/11

⁶⁸ DC Nyeri to DC Isiolo, August 3, 1933. KNA FLI/1/11

From the archival sources alone, it is difficult to work out which chiefs were appointed when, and in what order. This reflects the lack of prominence given to individual chiefs in administrative correspondences. From my interviews, I have a broad sense of the IIng'wesi chiefs appointed during the colonial period, and have been able to more or less triangulate the order in which they were appointed using both sets of sources. The first chief, Katori ole Moreiyani, did not last long in his role and was replaced by Sapuro Piroris. Piroris was already an elder by this stage (I18), and he must not have served as chief for very long, as by 1939, colonial administration correspondences begin referring to Chief 'Lemoricho'.⁶⁹ This was their way of spelling the name of the third IIng'wesi chief, Parkiolo ole Moriyo. By 1948, when the administration began constructing the dam near Dol Dol, the IIng'wesi chief was Noonkunono ole Kimirri, who followed ole Moriyo. Finally, the last colonial chief from IIng'wesi may have been Tugendei Lemonto, who is mentioned in archival sources as early as 1953 and as late as 1957.⁷⁰ There may well have been another chief before independence, but my interviewees mostly suggested Lemonto to be the last colonial chief, and I came across no other names in archival documents.

In discussions about chiefs during the colonial period, interview respondents would frequently evaluate individual chiefs according to what 'good' they had done for the community. Among my interviewees, Chief Kimirri (active from roughly 1948 to 1953) is particularly remembered for the strength of his personality and convictions. Many of my interviewees remember Kimirri as a rebel: 'nobody could open his mouth, it was only Kimirri who could reject some strict rules from the whites and say no' (I18). He is also remembered as having been 'good to the community' (I31) and 'the most superior of them all' (I49). Frequently, Kimirri is contrasted with the perceived silent complicity of other chiefs:

⁶⁹ DC Laikipia-Samburu to DC Nyeri, October 20, 1939. KNA FLI/1/11.

⁷⁰ DO Mukogodo to DC Nanyuki, March 11, 1953. KNA FLI/4/18; Assistant Superintendent of Police, guestbook entry, Loiragai Police Post Guestbook, March 4, 1957.

The chiefs were the people employed as I told you and for them they were waiting to see if their salary can be increased, therefore they did not break any rules, but for one chief called Kimirri he tried a lot because he was the only one who could oppose anything from the whites, no one else - all the other chiefs followed the rules (I23).

As well as Kimirri's willingness to confront the administration and refuse to enforce certain rules, he also warned his community of police raids and arrests (I13). Although most praised by my IIng'wesi interlocutors, Kimirri was not the only one among Mukogodo reserve chiefs who defied the administration. Another, Langabu ole Matunge of the Mukogodo proper, was also notorious among administrators for being uncooperative.⁷¹ Archival documents indicate that even those chiefs that were perceived by my interviewees as having been mostly complicit with the administration did in fact frustrate and object to the directions they were given – albeit within limits (in a manner not dissimilar from the 'everyday' forms of resistance described by Scott 1985). On one such occasion, for instance, a group of elders, headmen and chiefs, including Chief Parkiolo ole Morijo, ordered the tribal police to release a group of wanted 'trespassers' and their animals – an order which only the DC had authority to make at the time. A similar fondness for rule bending could also be found among the 'Tribal Police', the administration's own police force (after independence, they became 'the administration police'), several of whom were found or suspected by the administration of abetting stock thieves in the reserve.⁷² The difference between these latter examples and Kimirri, as far as the above accounts go, is that Kimirri seems to have been more willing to acknowledge his accountability to his community.

In my interviews, stories about Chief Kimirri sometimes contrasted with those of Chief Tugendei, who is remembered for his brutality and compliance with administrative directives. One interviewee recalled how:

⁷¹ District Commissioner, Nyeri to Assistant Inspector of Police, Samburu Police Detachment, Maralal, March 5, 1947. KNA FLI/1/11

⁷² DC Rumuruti to DC Nyeri, March 1, 1941. KNA FLI/1/11

I knew the chief who was called Kimiri 'Noonkunono', and afterwards, a bad one came in called Tugendei and he was actually a very bad man. Tugendei used to make people vomit anything they have consumed so that they can see if anyone had eaten meat from the white settlers' cows, then after you vomit he would say oh! You are a thief! And then you get arrested... Tugendei was very rich, he had a lot of livestock but up to date he doesn't have any sons because one of his sons who went to raid in Borana, he was killed and he just died there miserably. He used to tie people's hands and legs then he takes them to his house (I26).

While I am not suggesting that we take these accounts at face value, what is interesting to note here is that the position of chief created new standards for the evaluation of political leaders and representatives, that drew on a prior moral understanding, but that were ultimately novel insofar as they could be directed so singularly towards one individual, who stood as an intermediary and gatekeeper between 'the community' and the resources of the state. The language used in the quote above is particularly interesting. In pointing out that Tugendei had no remaining sons, the speaker was echoing a claim that I had often heard about those who were 'cursed'. Being 'cursed' is often said to result in infertility, whether literally so in the biological sense, or socially insofar as one's children will be stigmatised and unable to attain standing in the community. While this was an opinion expressed retrospectively, it is certainly interesting to note the association between moral shame and an inability to partake in the reproduction of one's social group (which, as I outlined in the Introduction, is intertwined with one's identity).

Both Kimirri and Tugendei are judged in these accounts for the differing ways in which they either channelled or subverted the energies of the state towards 'the community' (*olosh* in Maa). Their role as singular intermediaries between Mukogodo residents and the colonial administration differed vastly to earlier modes of collective leadership, and a new vernacular of political evaluation accompanied their emergence – one that evaluated political leadership in terms of 'good' achieved for 'the community'. This kind of vernacular, I suggest, is new insofar as it was (and is) applied to a political institution – that of the chief – that was relatively novel at the onset of colonialism. However, its appeal to notions of

belonging and commonality, and the moral obligations and accountability that accompany such notions, as well as the vocabulary through which these notions are articulated, are firmly rooted in moral identity. Although to draw direct links here would be somewhat reductive, in Chapter Five I explore the operation of this political vernacular further in the context of the 2017 General Elections.

It would be wrong to assume that those chiefs that were perceived as having fully enforced the rules of the administration did so out of sheer obedience or deference to the colonial state. As some of my interviewees suggested, many of these chiefs and other local recruits had their own agendas, and appear to have regarded positions of officialdom as new avenues to pursue them – whether this meant enforcing or breaking the rules that came with them. An excellent example is that of Toika Ole Mongai. Mongai was a member of the Piroris family and made a name for himself as a *laibon* of limited powers who could help women to give birth (I12). He was also installed as president of the reserve's Native Tribunal. Native Tribunals were local courts set up by the administration to hear (primarily) civil cases in African areas. They were informally recognised from the early days of colonial rule as one of the lowest courts in a national judicial hierarchy headed by the Supreme Court, before being separated from the judicial system entirely under the Native Tribunals Ordinance of 1930 (Shadle 1999: 417).

Mongai used not only the powers afforded to him as a tribunal elder, but also the influence that came with the position, as well as his reputation as a *laibon*, to accrue wealth and power and to undermine those who he saw as enemies. Impressively, he used all of these sources of power and influence to maintain an expansive cattle-rustling syndicate throughout his time as president of the Native Tribunal. Although too old at this time to carry out stock thefts himself, Mongai accumulated a herd of stolen livestock by blessing morans, who carried out the majority of stock thefts⁷³, in exchange for one of the beasts stolen during each raid (I13). According to administrative correspondences, he then kept these stolen animals in the bomas of relatives and client herdsmen, including a young

⁷³ See Chapter Nine.

Mumonyot called ‘Loiseku Lemuyeri’ in the more inaccessible parts of Mukogodo Forest near to Ol Doinyo Lossos.⁷⁴ Mongai’s sons, in particular, were notorious among both IIng’wesi and the colonial administration as cattle rustlers (I13).⁷⁵ Although no evidence remains of his decisions as a tribunal elder, and whether or not he had a habit of exonerating client stock thieves, Mongai’s reputation as a *laibon* (he was known to be ill-tempered and cruel – a common rumour even claims that he practiced witchcraft) ensured that nobody denounced him, his sons, or his client morans. One of Mongai’s sons was a tribal policeman, and through him Mongai’s client stock thieves enjoyed further protection from law enforcement.⁷⁶

Eventually, Mongai’s abuse of power appeared to have become intolerable to both IIng’wesi and colonial administrators. He was accused of and subsequently charged with witchcraft (a charge which continues to stigmatise the Mongai family today), his medicines were destroyed and he was discharged from the Native Tribunal.⁷⁷ Stories abound among IIng’wesi regarding how Mongai came to be cursed, which usually describe the breaking of unforgivable taboos or the acts of needless cruelty. However, regardless of which factors account for Mongai’s fall from grace, his story exemplifies how local elites were able to not only co-opt colonial institutions for their own ends, but also merge bureaucratic forms of power with that emanating from indigenous institutions.

As I describe later, it was only in 1948 that the Mukogodo reserve received its own permanent resident European administrators in the form of District Officers (DOs). It is worth briefly going through their role and how their own personalities influenced the dynamics of governance in the reserve. The DOs reported to the DCs in Nyeri and (later) Nanyuki, but had a great deal of discretionary power and autonomy in dispensing administrative policy. The first DO, of whom I could only

⁷⁴ DO Maralal to DC Nyeri, March 8, 1941. KNA FLI/1/11.

⁷⁵ Ibid; I interviewed one son, who, presumably suspicious of my motives, was reluctant to comment on these allegations. He claimed rather that his family simply owned the best breeds of livestock and that the British thus assumed that they must have been stolen.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ DC Nyeri to DO Maralal, April 7, 1941. KNA FLI/1/11.

find limited information, is referred to as Mr P. Brown in archival documents. My Iling'wesi interviewees refer to the first DO as 'Sero', a word which in Maa means 'brown' – ostensibly a reference to his dark-skinned complexion (I17, I18, I26, I29, I38), although the correspondence with his actual surname seems too direct to be coincidence.⁷⁸ It is unclear whether these are actually the same person, and I have been unable to verify who exactly Sero might have been. Mr Brown had previously been a DO in North Nyeri district before his appointment in Mukogodo.⁷⁹ He did not last long in the role – perhaps because his was a temporary appointment until a permanent DO could be recruited – and had already been replaced by another temporary DO (whose name I could not make out) by January 1949. In December 1949, the administration appointed Major W. H. Ritchie as DO for Mukogodo, who served in the role until 1953, making him the first long-serving DO in the reserve.⁸⁰ Ritchie was followed by Charles Lynmore Ryland, a law graduate of Queen's College, Cambridge, who served as DO from ca. 1954 to 1958.⁸¹ Ryland's term was followed by a brief stint by David Graham Worthy, whose ethnographic and ethnological reports on the Mukogodo groups have been used to inform more recent research (e.g. Herren 1987, Cronk 2002). Following Worthy, the DO in Mukogodo was J. S. S. Rowlands, from 1959 to 1960, who also wrote several ethnographic and historical articles on the histories of various ethnic groups, most prominently the Turkana, and comparing customary law with English common law. The final DO in Mukogodo was R. A. Homan, from 1960 to 1963. Of these DOs, only three are commonly remembered by former Mukogodo reserve residents: 'Sero', 'Raila' (the local nickname for Charles Lynmore Ryland) and *Lodung'o Ooriong* (I am unsure who this name refers to, but it translates roughly as the 'hunchback'. He apparently had a bad back, and is thought to have been disabled) (I15, 18, I37).

⁷⁸ Sero could also be a Maa translation of his surname. It is also possible that my interviewees confused a later DO with Mr Brown, as most could only remember between one and three DOs, when there were at least eight between 1948 and 1963. It may also be sheer coincidence that Mr Brown was perceived, locally, to be dark-skinned. One of my interviewees (I38) describes Sero as 'not a real white man'.

⁷⁹ DC Nyeri to Divisional Forest Officer, Nyeri. February 2, 1946. KNA VQ/9/6

⁸⁰ PC, Central Province to Commissioner for African Land Utilization and Settlement Board, December 23, 1949. KNA BV/14/113.

⁸¹ Biographical office, Queens' College, Cambridge, *personal communication*, 2016.

The arrival of DOs and expansion in the number of technical administrative roles and departments introduced a new dynamic to administration and governance in the reserve. First, the permanent presence of a DO meant that it was now easier for chiefs, and other African officials, to lobby for the provision of certain services and improvements. The arrival of the first DOs in Mukogodo seems to coincide roughly with the tenure of Chief Kimirri as IIng'wesi chief. As I have discussed, Kimirri is well-remembered for a number of reasons, and one of these is that he lobbied for the construction of a dam near to Dol Dol town (I33). According to 'Memorandum for the Development of the Mukogodo Area', written in August 1950, the dam was under construction by this time, overseen by Major Ritchie. Not everyone was happy with these developments, however, as they were partly funded through the imposition of stock taxes.⁸² As one interviewee put it to me:

[The chiefs] enforced colonialism, colonialism, colonialism! Do you know what colonialism means? It means no peace. A dangerous authority. That dam in Dol Dol was constructed using our bulls. Even our goats. We used to take them to Dol Dol for calculation. Those people took our land, so we were fully cheated. (I18)

Although all of them certainly took to their roles in enforcing law and order within the reserve, there is evidence to suggest that certain DOs also regarded themselves as advocates for Mukogodo reserve residents. In this respect, the role of the DO, as the lead administrative figure, appears to have enabled the personalities and backgrounds of individual DOs to influence the style of governance and administration in the reserve. Charles Lynmore Ryland, DO from 1954 to 1958, stands out in this regard. On two occasions, Ryland demanded that action be taken against European settlers whose animals trespassed on the reserve. On one of these occasions, Ryland took aim at prominent settler Raymond Hook (known for bringing cheetahs to England in order to race them against greyhounds, see Pinfold 2009):

⁸² Ibid.

A herd of 27 wild Horses belonging to Mr Raymond Hook are laying waste the only good grass bulking area on the Il Polei – Tura road. They have completely destroyed about 20 acres of seeding grass. All attempts to chase them off have failed ...

As the herd is uncatchable, the only solution is to shoot them. May I have your permission to do this please? Mr. Hook should of course, be prosecuted in the same way as the Nderobo certainly would be in similar circumstances.⁸³

On the other occasion, in response to the trespass of '87 head European cattle', Ryland argued:

It would appear that an offence has been committed. I should be glad if enquiries could be made with a view to instituting proceedings. ...

You will appreciate that I am anxious for this to be done otherwise the Ndorobo will feel that there is one law for them and another for the European Farmer.

Ryland's arguments suggest that his primary concern was the equal application of the law to Africans and Europeans in his jurisdiction. This makes sense, as he read law at Queen's College, Cambridge before joining the Colonial Service.⁸⁴ It is his insistence upon doing so that marks him out from the other DOs, whose personalities are more difficult to glean from archival sources. I do not mean to suggest here that Ryland was necessarily a sympathetic person – he was later implicated in scandals at the Lokitaung prison camp for Mau Mau suspects (Elkins 2005: 394, Lewis and Murphy 2006: 59) – but merely wish to highlight the extent to which personal quirks and biases could influence governance in the Mukogodo reserve, even through the literal application of bureaucratic ideals.

It was namely through the interactions of DCs, DOs and the chiefs that the work of administration, and thus the implementation of colonial rule, was carried out in the Mukogodo Reserve. This matrix of administrative power must have introduced a great deal of variability in both the styles of governance that could

⁸³ DO Mukogodo to DC Nanyuki, received May 10, 1957. KNA FLI/4/18.

⁸⁴ Biographical Office, Queens' College Cambridge, *personal communication*, 2016.

be brought to bear upon administrative tasks, and the degrees of harmony between administrators and chiefs. While these interpersonal dynamics are often difficult to pry out of the sources available, I mention this as a way of highlighting the likely prominence of localised factors in shaping the enactment of policy in the Mukogodo reserve during the colonial period. In the next two sections, I hope to demonstrate this more strongly, by looking out how, in the first instance, local settler pressure and the need for expedient control of the African population drove the administration's obsessive maintenance of ethnic boundaries and distinctions, and in the second, how interdepartmental tensions within the administration and the constraints of local geography produced the flagship development scheme of the later colonial period, the Mukogodo Betterment Scheme.

4.3. Maintaining internal and external boundaries: the early colonial administration in Mukogodo, 1933 – 1948

Following the publication of the KLC report, the first task for the district administration was to demarcate the boundaries of the reserve and to remove those who were not perceived to belong. The process of demarcation was undertaken by a special sub-committee appointed by the Nanyuki and Timau district committees, who begin deliberating on the subject in 1934.⁸⁵ The sub-committee reported to these two district committees as well as the Commissioner for Lands and Settlement. While I could not find information as to who sat on this sub-committee, similar committees for issues in Mukogodo tended to consist of a combination of local European settlers and district commissioners.⁸⁶ Initially, it appears that the sub-committee could not agree upon whether IIng'wesi and the Mumonyot should be permitted to remain in the reserve, or whether they should be moved to Meru, where some IIng'wesi still remained (in spite of the KLC's conclusions on the matter) (I12).⁸⁷ In April 1935, it was finally resolved that

⁸⁵ PC, Central Province to Commissioner of Lands and Settlement, Nairobi. December 31, 1941. KNA VQ/9/6.

⁸⁶ E.g. The Mukogodo Betterment Scheme committee of 1947 (District Commissioner, Nyeri, September 10, 1947. *Report – Mukogodo Betterment Scheme*. KNA VQ/9/6).

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Iling'wesi should remain and be joined by 'their clansmen in Meru'.⁸⁸ In July 1935, the sub-committee agreed upon the eastern boundary of the reserve, which was to be the Ngare Ndare river (although not without some controversy, as it would mean giving up land that had been alienated for white settlement). By January 1936, the sub-committee hit a stumbling block regarding the reserve's western boundary, as it was felt that without access to the Ewaso Ng'iro, the 'Dorobo' would trespass on surveyed farms along the river's right bank in Endana.⁸⁹ In July 1936, the sub-committee resolved to demarcate a temporary corridor through these farms to enable the 'Dorobo' to access water supplies until the construction of boreholes and dams within the reserve.⁹⁰ With the assistance of a District Surveyor, Mr Fannin, the sub-committee finally sent a report detailing the boundaries of the new reserve, including a corridor to the Ewaso Ng'iro, to the relevant committees and government departments in August 1936.⁹¹ Initially, the North Nyeri District Committee argued that any space ceded from alienated land for the purposes of a corridor would have to be replaced with land from the reserve.⁹² Following further discussion and amendment, the boundaries were more or less approved by the Commissioner of Lands by September 1937, although disputes regarding whether the reserve provided enough space or access to water continued until 1947.⁹³ The approved boundaries can be viewed in Map 4.

The long process of delineating the Mukogodo reserve reflects the tension faced by the colonial administration between catering to the interests of European settlers and ensuring order and stable living conditions among Kenya's African population. The end product, a reserve of roughly '550 square miles' on the northeast edge of the Laikipia Plateau, represented a compromise between the two, although one that leaned very much in favour of the former.⁹⁴ Herren (1990)

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Livestock Officer, Nyeri to Provincial Veterinary Officer, Central Province, September 6, 1949. KNA BV/14/113.

estimates that those residing in Mukogodo reserve lost two-thirds of the land that they had utilised in 1920. In the immediate years following the establishment of the reserve, the district administration focused most of its energy in the reserve on trying to enforce its boundaries, by removing those who were perceived not to belong within them, and by regulating the movement of 'Dorobo' in and out of the reserve. Much of the latter involved dealing with stock thefts on European farms, as well as implementing the notorious *kipande* pass system, through which the administration controlled the movement of labour from the reserve to European farms (I13) (see Anderson 2000). However, as I explore cattle rustling in detail in Chapter Six, and because I am mostly interested here in the production and reconfiguration of group identities during this period, I will focus instead on administration's removal of 'foreign' elements from the reserve and their maintenance of ethnic and sub-sectional distinctions within it.

Having more or less agreed upon who should be permitted to reside within the reserve by 1937,⁹⁵ the administration set about removing those who they felt were not supposed to be there, as well as confining its designated residents within the reserve's boundaries. Some 'outsiders' were permitted to reside in the reserve, usually for the purpose of setting up trading posts or as part of the Tribal Police.⁹⁶ The rest, particularly Samburu and Mumonyot pastoralists, were frequently deported from the reserve. While the reserve boundaries were sometimes patrolled, it would have been difficult to maintain constant surveillance of them, and so the district and provincial commissioners seem to have instead organised periodic patrols and inspections of the reserve, during which they arrested any outsiders that they found within, whom they would then deport. On occasion, 'Dorobo' headmen and other informants, including administrators from other districts, would notify district and provincial commissioners of 'outsiders' residing within the reserve, which would then lead to such a patrol taking place. For example, in May 1939, the PC of Central Province, C. Tomkinson, expressed his

⁹⁵ The issue appears never to have been fully settled. In 1948, attempts were made to remove Ildigirri to the Maasai reserve (Provincial Veterinary Officer to Director, Veterinary Services, Kebete, November 9 1948. KNA BV/14/113

⁹⁶ Assistant Conservator of Forests, Nyeri to Acting Conservator of Forests, Nairobi, July 29, 1944. KNA VQ/9/6;

alarm to the Colonial Secretary in Nairobi regarding the ‘influx of natives from that area [Samburu] into Mukogodo’, intelligence of which he had received from the DC in Nyeri.⁹⁷ Subsequently, he arranged:

... with the Assistant Superintendent of Police, Nyeri, that he or the European inspector at Nanyuki should with 10 African ranks and 5 Tribal Police, proceed to the Mukogodo area on or about 26th instant [sic], and remove all Samburu and Mumonyot found in Mukogodo and hand them over at a place to be arranged with Mr. Ridgway [Superintendent of Police, Nyeri].⁹⁸

On this occasion, the Samburu and Mumonyot were to be removed to Samburu district by lorry. However, when I gave an account of one of these deportations to one of my Mumonyot interviewees, he recalled his grandmother telling him of more brutal methods. On one occasion, she would say, the police arrested members of her family and tied the men by their wrists to the back of their car. They then proceeded to drive to Samburu, forcing the men to run in tow (150). Such spectacles of public humiliation seem to have been a particularly colonial innovation, even if rooted in a more widespread racist denial of black sensory experience (see also Pierce 2001), having ostensibly been morally repugnant in the metropolises of Europe long before (ibid., Foucault 1977).

The administration seems to have devoted considerable energy to keeping Samburu and Mumonyot, among other ‘outsiders’, out of Mukogodo. In the Kenya National Archives, a whole file labelled ‘Mukogodo Boundary’, filed by the District Office in Nanyuki, contains hundreds of correspondences primarily concerning the removal of outsiders and the policing of the reserve boundary between 1933 and 1947.⁹⁹ Of course, this may be because the removal of outsiders required more co-ordination across districts, and therefore more correspondences, than administrative tasks limited within the confines of the reserve. Various reasons have been offered as to why the colonial administration was so adamant in

⁹⁷ PC, Central Province to Colonial Secretary, Nairobi, May 22, 1939. KNA FLI/1/11.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ KNA FLI/1/11.

separating ethnic groups in this fashion. For some, it was a matter of maintaining the political geography that facilitated indirect rule and protected the exclusivity of white access to agricultural land (Berry 1992, Lynch 2007). In the archival documents I examined, administrators often used other arguments to justify the separation of ethnic groups in Mukogodo. One such argument was based on the idea that residents of other districts brought the risk of disease – particularly concerning given the reserve’s proximity to European farms. As one DC of North Nyeri put it:

The Samburu cattle area in all probability [sic] infected with East Coast Fever and as Mukogodo is so far as known clean from this disease and as it abbutts [sic] the Farm Area, I must strongly recommend their immediate removal at any rate to the other side of the Olomarade Escaprment (i.e. Isiolo Quarantine Area).¹⁰⁰

To this end, certain administrators were concerned that even the presence of a handful of Samburu would lead to a ‘swarm of immigrants into [the] district’.¹⁰¹ Another argument commonly put forward was that the removal of ‘aliens’ was requested by ‘Dorobo’ headmen and chiefs themselves, or that the presence of a surplus population put pressure on resources within the reserve and was therefore detrimental to the welfare of its population.¹⁰² To the extent that this was all true, both reasons arguably better reflect the inadequacy of the reserve than any animosity on the part of the ‘Dorobo’ towards other ethnic groups. Indeed, on other occasions, administrators expressed annoyance that the ‘Dorobo native authorities... encourage trespass’ and complained of the ‘dangers of connivance in Samburu trespass by the Mukogodo authorities’.¹⁰³ Where it was

¹⁰⁰ DC North Nyeri to PC, Central Province, June 15, 1933. KNA FLI/1/11.

¹⁰¹ DC Laikipia-Samburu to DC Nyeri, October 30, 1939. KNA FLI/1/11

¹⁰² E.g. District Police Headquarters, Nyeri to Acting PC, Central Province, Nyeri, June 5, 1939. KNA FLI/1/11 (Local headmen informed the police of Samburu and Mumonyot living in the Mukogodo Reserve);

Director of Veterinary Services to Hon. Member for Agriculture, Nairobi, October 17, 1946. KNA VQ/9/6. (Claimed that removing Maasai and Kikuyu from Mukogodo reserve would ‘ameliorate the position in regards to overstocking’);

PC, Central Province to Chief Native Commissioner, Nairobi, July 27, 1949. BV/14/113. (Claimed that the Mukogodo were ‘anxious for us to take action to remove aliens’).

¹⁰³ DC Nyeri to DO Maralal, September 6, 1943. KNA FLI/1/11;

suspected that Mukogodo residents were open to receiving outsiders, administrators sometimes tried to sow discord between Mukogodo residents and migrants. One on occasion, on April 3, 1941, the DO Maralal notified the DC Nyeri that he had been informed by two 'recently repatriated' Samburu of stock thefts carried out by Mukogodo residents. He suggested to the DC Nyeri that:

If, after investigation and prosecution (if any), you let it be generally known in Mukogodo that these [Samburu] men were responsible for denouncing the thieves, I think it likely that the Dorobo will be eager to denounce any Samburu illegally residing in their midst, and will not be inclined to welcome further refugees from Samburu.¹⁰⁴

Much has been written about how colonial understandings of ethnicity imposed hard boundaries on what were in fact flexible and overlapping identities, invoked selectively and to different outcomes depending on their relevance in different contexts (Southall 1970, Iliffe 1979: 318-341, Vail 1989, Spear 1993, Berman 1998, Watson 2010). For example, Spear (1993), argues that invoking Maasai ethnicity could both exclude others from cattle ownership and include them in cultural practices, social institutions and exchange. Colonial administrative practices, on the other hand, separated ethnic groups as if they were distinguished by hard and fast boundaries in all contexts. However, administrators were often in fact aware of the blurred lines between ethnic groups, if not the ambiguities of ethnic identity, and the consequent difficulties involved in separating them geographically (Iliffe 1979, Berry 1992). On some occasions, administrators in Mukogodo suspected that the Samburu and 'Dorobo' in their jurisdictions had been deceiving them regarding their true identities. In October 1939, for instance, the DC Laikipia-Samburu reminded the DC Nyeri: 'As you are no doubt aware many of the people of this type managed to prove that they were Samburu and not Masai when the latter were moved. They are now equally energetic in proving that they are not Samburu but should belong to you.' As I outlined in the previous chapter, the self-identification as 'Dorobo' by Laikipia Maasai at this time seems

'Note' on Statement "B" made by Nyeri Tribal Policeman T. P. Nwenda to DO Maralal, February 2, 1941. KNA FLI/1/11.

¹⁰⁴ DO Maralal to DC Nyeri, April 3, 1941. KNA FLI/1/11.

to have been done for instrumental reasons, namely to enable them to remain in Laikipia. However, there were also instances in which administrators were genuinely unable to determine to which group particular individuals 'belonged'.

In April 1941, the DC Nyeri and DO Maralal (in Samburu) corresponded regarding eight individuals of whom they were uncertain whether they ought to be sent to Samburu or permitted to remain in Mukogodo.¹⁰⁵ One of these was a man identified as 'Segeni Lekore' (I am informed this is a misspelling of Lekorere – today an Ildigirri family that includes the current MP for Laikipia North, Sarah Lekorere). Lekore had been born as a Turkana, but due to poverty, went to live with a Samburu family of the 'Pisingishu section'. After getting a job on a European farm, and living there as a squatter, he acquired stock, which he kept in the Mukogodo Reserve, and married a 'Dorobo' wife. Owing to Lekore's old age by the time the administration came to adjudicate his presence on the reserve, they decided that the 'humane thing' would be to leave him alone and issue him with a residence permit. Others, such as Lenduria Leketado, however, were not so lucky. Leketado was judged by the DO Maralal to have been a 'true Samburu of the Legumai section'. According to the DO, Leketado was impoverished as a young boy, and had migrated to Mukogodo to work as the 'slavey' of an IIngwesi man called 'Sangei Leperolis' (a likely misspelling of Sankei ole Piroris). Having married one of Leperolis' daughters, by 1941 he had lived in Mukogodo for four years. Despite this, however, the DO Maralal decided to have him returned to Samburu.¹⁰⁶

Evidently, even if they were not initially aware, colonial administrators seemed to gradually recognise that the matter of ethnic affiliation was not wholly straightforward. While colonial administrators are sometimes portrayed as if they were ideologically committed to the principle of ethnic segregation through some blinkered reification of 'tribal' categories, I find it more interesting to note, in the case of Mukogodo, that they ploughed on with the task of separating ethnic groups even when the ambiguities of ethnic belonging were brought to the fore. I would

¹⁰⁵ DO Maralal to DC Nyeri, April 3, 1941. KNA FLI/1/11.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

suggest then, that this practice had less to do with a blind commitment to a flawed epistemology than it had to do with finding a convenient means of instituting control. Indeed, I think that we can take administrators' own justifications for rigidly separating ethnic groups, as outline above, at face value. To separate ethnic groups and confine them to a particular area helped to make control more efficient, not only of persons placed under the authority of particular chiefs and headmen (Lynch 2007), but also control of disease, grazing and possibly also tax collection.¹⁰⁷

As well as removing non-'Dorobo' from the Mukogodo reserve, and confining 'Dorobo' within it, the administration at this time also exacerbated divisions between the 'Dorobo' sub-sections permitted to remain within the reserve – IIng'wesi, Ildigirri (for the most part) and Mukogodo. There is little archival evidence to suggest that the administration contained members of each sub-section in a defined geographical area within the reserve. This may be because it would have been a largely internal matter for that district's administration and may therefore have been less likely to come up in correspondences. However, as mentioned above, there does seem to have been some sense that each sub-section had its own territory, defined primarily by the jurisdiction of each sub-section's chief. In two letters from the later colonial period, for example, the sub-sectional territories are actually referred to as 'chiefdoms.'¹⁰⁸ Below the rank of chief were headmen, who usually represented particular villages and settlements (Berman 1998: 316), although these did not appear to present any strict boundaries.

¹⁰⁷ In one letter from the DC Laikipia-Samburu to the DC Nyeri, the former DC commented that he had heard rumours of Mumonyot, Leuso and Samburu paying tax in Mukogodo (November 15, 1939. KNA FLI/1/11). This may have been a source of annoyance, as local taxes appear to have been used to fund local development programmes (Memorandum – Development of the Mukogodo Area. No date. KNA BV/14/113).

¹⁰⁸ Veterinary Officer, Nanyuki to Director of Veterinary Services, Kabete, October 26, 1953. KNA BV/14/113. Veterinary Department, Nanyuki to Director of Veterinary Services, Kabete, October 16, 1953. KNA BV/14/113.

In my interviewees, I was given several accounts of the British separating the Dorobo sub-sections and restricting them to certain territories, although when exactly this happened is unclear. One IIng'wesi man of the *ilkishili* age set, claimed:

The whites had a meeting and said what do we do with this people? We have to make a plan, let us divide and rule this people, let us distract them. So the whites started in this way and said: we want these people called the original IIng'wesi. They asked, who is original? Then they put him aside. They said, yes – are you the original? Yes. Know this land of yours is always dry, and that's because of congestion. You don't have a place to graze – you are always migrating because you have allowed all the other communities to live together with you people. The Kikuyu, Meru, Ildigirri, Samburu, all these tribes. So now we need IIng'wesi to stay only in their own place, then we will chase away any other person. We also need Ildigirri off this land and any other person who has joined them should get out. Other originals like the Lewaso, the original *iltorobo*, Lemarti original, Mukogodo original all to stay on their own...

The whites started fencing then and they kept us according to groups. These are IIng'wesi, Ildigirri, Mumonyot and Ilmoogodo, Lewaso, Lemarti, Samburu. And this is where our fence would go through, and it kept Meru outside. And it was said that when a person from the other community crosses over to your side, just run to us... Come to us and we will take serious action. (I18)

As one might glean from the language of the transcript excerpt, this was a particularly animated interview. The above story was given to me in the context of a wider conspiracy theory regarding an *olarinkoi* (a sort of witch-like figure who is in control of everything) sowing disagreements among the Laikipia Maasai community. However, the above interviewee iterated many of the points I made above regarding the separation of ethnic groups in Mukogodo. More importantly for the current discussion, he suggested that the British did keep the 'Dorobo' sub-sections separate. This was confirmed in other interviews (I12).

However, although the colonial administration may have maintained stricter-than-usual boundaries between them, the sub-sections appear to have initially settled in separate locations voluntarily when they moved to the Mukogodo area (I11, I21, I23). In this sense, the administration hardened distinctions that were

already operational. Additionally, it is possible that chiefs had some discretion regarding where the precise territorial boundaries between the sub-sections lay. One elderly interviewee (I23) told a story of an Ildigirri chief, Kaskas ole Kaparo, and an IIng'wesi chief, Tugendei ole Liarka. Kaskas and Tugendei were chiefs of their respective locations in the early 1950s.¹⁰⁹ According to this interviewee, Kaskas conspired with the paramount chief (representing the entire reserve), a Digirri man named Koisigiri, to gain territory from IIng'wesi location for Ildigirri, by offering Chief Tugendei a woman to marry from Ildigirri. In exchange, Koisigiri and Kaskas convinced Tugendei to push the boundary 'all the way from Ilpolei up to Naya Nyainito, and then down to Lesuudan'. Unfortunately, I was unable to ascertain where these places are located, although I am informed that they are situated along the current boundary between IIng'wesi and Ildigirri group ranches. Whether or not the story is true, as a popular myth it suggests a general perception among Mukogodo residents that their sub-divisions represented both the product and limits of chiefly power, as much as an imposition by the colonial administration. It also suggests that these boundaries were perceived as meaningful by those who had to live with them.

To finish this section, I will discuss what the legacies of these boundary-making interventions may have been, particularly on the group identities of living in Mukogodo at the time. Commentators on similar processes in Kenya and Africa have suggested that colonial processes of ethnic segregation contributed to the 'hardening' of ethnic identities (Watson 2010), or the reconfiguration of prior collective identities into new forms of 'political tribalism' or 'ethnic citizenship' (Lonsdale 1992, Ndegwa 1997)¹¹⁰. They did so, it is argued, firstly by containing ethnic groups within strictly maintained boundaries and preventing cross-ethnic interaction in rural areas, but also by channelling resources to ethnic district and reserves through nodes of state-community patronage, represented most strongly

¹⁰⁹ Chief Tugendei is mentioned in a letter from the DO Mukogodo to the DC Nanyuki, April 3, 1953. KNA FLI/4/18.

¹¹⁰ Other processes have also been argued to contribute to these outcomes, including competition in new unskilled labour markets (Lonsdale 1992) and missionisation standardizing languages and introducing narratives of peoplehood (Peel 2000, Watson 2010).

by district and sub-divisional chiefs (Berman 1998). As a result, the ethnic group, clan or section (depending on which collective unit is relevant) became the primary means through which political claims could be imagined and mobilised. To a large extent then, the above arguments pertain to the emergence of new political identities, and I explore these more fully in Chapter Five.

For Watson (2010), however, it is not merely that differences of language and ethnic affiliation were reconfigured into imagined political communities, but that the conceptions of territory to which they relate have hardened, such that colonial processes restricted mobility across once fluid boundaries. The legacies of colonial boundary making are therefore as much inscribed in the physical landscape as they are imagined. This certainly appears true for Mukogodo. The former sub-divisions of the 'Dorobo' reserve now form most of the region's group ranches, and while there is no longer a practice of repatriating non-Maasai from the area (although they are still excluded from group ranch membership), the former reserve itself is a site of frequent conflict between the Laikipia Maasai and Samburu from Isiolo and Samburu counties. Aside from some abandoned former white ranches, the majority of Laikipia Maasai, IIng'wesi included, still reside on the former reserve.

I do not wish to dwell too much on the theory of this, as it is well-trodden ground. What is more interesting is the degree to which the IIng'wesi I interviewed are consciously critical of these legacies. Rather than trying to infer these legacies, I will echo the critiques that I encountered in the field. The IIng'wesi man from the *ilkishili* age set, whom I quoted at length above regarding the separation of 'Dorobo' sub-sections, continued the story:

Everybody now has to take care of his own land. Do you hear? So you all forget that big land and you start now to fight amongst yourselves, because you only concentrate on your own small territory. You start saying to your relatives, 'you see where the boundary is? Please don't let your cows cross over.' 'So, you see now where the boundary is and yet you are still crossing over. Please go back!' When you see your friend grazing, you ask him 'where are you taking the cows?' And he tells you 'Oh! We are just grazing

and we will go back.’ And you simply say to them, so you are grazing and yet you can see where our boundary is... Is that fighting or not? ...

Right, have you seen the plan now? That’s why sometimes I look at some things [in politics], and I just stay away. And I ask people ‘what have the whites done to you, they have made you fight and yet they themselves stay away from you.’ (I18)

Here, the elder essentially argued that the processes that produced these more stringent forms of territoriality and inter-ethnic animosity had their roots in measures enacted by the early colonial administration. While I think it would be impossible to trace the impact of these measures entirely up to the present day, I hope to at least have given a sense of how, and especially why, these processes began, through the reasons, justifications and critiques given by both administrators in their correspondences and by the IIng’wesi alive at the time. To summarise, administrators were often conscious that their attempts to separate and confine ethnic groups and sub-sections were difficult, messy and blind to the ambiguous of identity and ethnic affiliation. That they continued to do so regardless was largely to simplify and expedite control, largely in the interests of the nearby European settler population, who worried about disease and crime, whilst still retaining legitimate authority on the reserve. It was in the later colonial period, however, that the administration appears to have ramped up efforts to achieve the latter, through extensive development efforts within the reserve.

4.4. The Mukogodo Betterment Scheme: environment and development during the ‘second colonial occupation’ in Mukogodo, 1944 – 1963

Towards the end of the Second World War, and in the years afterwards, Britain’s African colonies found themselves the target of the empire’s new commitment to ‘development’. Having lost control of much of Asia during and in the aftermath of the war, Britain looked towards Africa for markets to help rejuvenate its flagging industries and as a source of primary materials for the post-war rebuilding effort (Cooper 2011). Economic development, it was decided, would help in this effort by boosting demand in colonial markets (White 2011: 212). Increasing the output of colonial commodities would also enable Britain to capitalise on growing US

demand (Holland 1984: 167). Meanwhile, officials realised that that by 'tribalizing' Africans they had 'deprived themselves of the means to think about and act on social issues in labour and in urban life that were slowly emerging as empire-wide issues' (Cooper 2011: 198). In part, economic and social reform was also envisaged by Britain as steps on the route to decolonisation (Flint 2007). In Kenya, as elsewhere in British colonial Africa, the interwar emphasis on separate development and indirect rule shifted towards a more universal developmentalism, which, while influenced by the post-war politics of the British welfare, also presumed the backwardness of African traditional modes of production (Pearce 1982, Lewis 2000, Cooper 2011:198).

In response to these imperatives, Britain helped to finance the expansion of social infrastructure in its colonies. Colonial administrations thus became 'fleshed out with a proliferating array of technical services, greatly enlarging the rosters of expatriate agents of the colonial state' (Young 2004: 28). Among this influx of technical experts were those trained in ecology, whose insights were thought to offer models for development planning in rural and agrarian societies (Adams 1995). Indeed, as we shall see below, the colonial administration's approach to development in Mukogodo fundamentally linked the economic development of 'Dorobo' with questions of ecological recovery in what was thought to be a landscape denuded by livestock overgrazing. This view was informed in part by official observations of local conditions, but also by stereotypes of African herding practices that had considerable currency among settlers and administrators for some time (Anderson 2010).

The total number of European state officials in Kenya grew markedly between 1945 and 1955, from 1659 to 5590, and the budget for development grew from £0.984 million in 1945 to £8.51 million in 1955-56 (Berman 1990: 290). The rapid expansion of colonial states in Africa following the Second World War has led to this period being dubbed the 'second colonial occupation' (Low and Lonsdale 1976, Hargreaves 1979: 41). However, despite the shift in emphasis towards developmentalism, Berman (*ibid.*) notes that economic policy in Kenya remained firmly committed to the success of settler agriculture, with Africans remaining

unrepresented on boards and committees until the period of decolonisation. This included Kenyan policy towards the livestock economy, which reacted to settler pressure towards creating access to export markets for settler livestock farmers (Anderson 2010). Further, Berman argues, there was no high-level blueprint coordinating state activity in this area:

Despite the increasing scale of state intervention, the 'development' policies of the state and the related changes in the state apparatus (notably its rapid growth and internal differentiation) were more the outcome of largely piecemeal and uncoordinated reactions to underlying social forces than the result of any programmatic design. (ibid.: 289)

In this section, I will argue that this was very much the case in the Mukogodo reserve – that the interventions of the developmental state, and their successes and failures, were shaped primarily by local dynamics, including the economic and political agency of Mukogodo's pastoralists, as well as competing priorities between the expanded colonial administration's different departments. As I outline below, the Mukogodo administration's 'Mukogodo Betterment Scheme' was essentially the outcome of a compromise between provincial and district commissioners and the Forest Department. Its implementation was largely frustrated, meanwhile, by the Veterinary Department's attempts to control livestock disease, which it regarded as a means towards development in its own right (Anderson 2010: 250). In addition to these localised compromises and solutions, however, the administration's responses to these dynamics were informed by received wisdoms that were endemic across colonial Kenya, such as a perceived link between pastoralist economic irrationality and environmental degradation (Anderson 1984: 336). The end result of late colonial rule in Mukogodo therefore represents of a confluence of local, colonial and imperial trends, the long-term ramifications of which appear to shape the pastoral economy, and attempts to reform it, today.

The arrival of the 'second colonial occupation' in Mukogodo was marked by the appointment of a series of 'settlement officers' in the reserve from 1947, followed

by a permanent District Officer (DO) in charge of the reserve in 1948.¹¹¹ What this means is that, unlike in previous years, the reserve now had its own dedicated European administrator, rather than one whose primary purpose was to administer the settled areas of North Nyeri and Nanyuki districts. Whereas before visiting DCs would stay at a camp in the small administrative and trading centre in Anadungoro, the administration built a permanent office and residence for the DO in Dol Dol, at the site of today's National Cereals and Produce Board compound (I17, I18, I26, I33).¹¹² In addition, the administration set up a permanent police presence in the reserve, including police posts and camps at Dol Dol, Arjiju and Loiragai (the latter two bordering European farms), as well as sending veterinary scouts.¹¹³

In spite of the discretionary power of DOs and DCs in Mukogodo, their power was circumscribed by the web of administrative roles and networks in which they were situated. From 1946 onwards, the Forest Department and veterinary officers also took a greater interest in Mukogodo, often bringing competing, if not contradictory, priorities. In addition, as I have mentioned, DOs in Mukogodo had to rely upon the co-operation of their African subordinates; namely chiefs, but also headmen and tribunal elders (who adjudicated disputes and crimes deemed too petty for the DO), whose role and individual personalities are discussed above. The success of many of the administration's interventions also depended on the compliance of Mukogodo's ordinary residents, which, as we shall see shortly, was not always reliable. It was the aggregate effects of these competing, overlapping and sometimes contradictory roles and interests, as well as the physical environment of Mukogodo itself, that led the administration produce its flagship development project in Mukogodo, the Mukogodo Betterment Scheme.

In 1936, while the administration were still in the process of properly demarcating the Mukogodo reserve, Kenya's Conservator of Forests (CF), H. M.

¹¹¹ PC, Central Province to Chief Secretary, Nairobi. December 23, 1949. KNA BV/14/113.

¹¹² PC, Central Province to Chief Native Commissioner, Nairobi. July 27, 1949. KNA BV/14/113

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

Gardner, visited the area in order to assess whether there were any forests worth preserving as 'Forest Reserves'.¹¹⁴ As well as being concerned with 'climate and water conservation' and ensuring 'a maintenance of the timber supply for any future developments of the native reserve', the Forest Department also saw in the region's highland forests an opportunity to create a physical barrier or 'Green Belt' between the White Highlands and the arid lowlands to the north (namely Samburu District and the NFD).¹¹⁵ After this initial expression of interest in Mukogodo by the Forest Department, following which a forest reserve was demarcated in what is now known as Mukogodo Forest, the issue appears to have been largely forgotten until 1944, when a visit was made by the Assistant Conservator of Forests (ACF) for Nyeri District (and later a divisional forest officer), Douglas Leakey (younger brother to the famous palaeontologist and archaeologist, Louis Leakey).^{116 117}

Leakey's visit seemed to trigger a sense of urgency within the Forest Department regarding the forest's conservation, owing to what he perceived as severe overgrazing both within and outside of the forest reserve.¹¹⁸ In response, Leakey and the CF proposed a series of measures to prevent further degradation. Most prominently, they suggested that all pastoralists should be evicted from the forest, leaving behind only 'true Dorobo', who were to be identified by their use of honey barrels.¹¹⁹ Leakey, in particular, believed that these could be convinced to 'revert mainly to their old jungle habits', and that they would come under the control of the Forest Department, who would be 'to all intents & purposes their guide, philosopher & friend', rather than under a 'pastoralist Chief'.¹²⁰ By 'true Dorobo', Leakey was referring to the Mukogodo, whom he believed the Forest Department

¹¹⁴ CF, Nairobi to PC, Central Province. October 21, 1936. KNA VQ/9/6.

¹¹⁵ This was ostensibly for climatic reasons, to prevent the expansion of semi-arid conditions onto the fertile highlands, although the northerly lowlands also contained the majority of pastoralists in northern Kenya; CF to Colonial Secretary, November 20, 1937. KNA VQ/9/6; Assistant Conservator of Forests (ACF), Nyeri to Ag. CF, Nairobi, October 26, 1944. KNA VQ/9/6.

¹¹⁶ CF, Nairobi to Colonial Secretary, November 20, 1937. KNA VQ/9/6; ACF Nyeri to Ag. CF, Nairobi, July 29, 1944. KNA VQ/9/6.

¹¹⁷ Biographical Librarian, St John's College, Cambridge, 2016, *personal communication*.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ District Forest Officer (DFO), Nyeri to DC Nyeri, April 5, 1946. KNA VQ/9/6.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

could 'imbue' with 'a true forest sense & make them value the forest & help us & even work for us', in contrast to the 'Il Mwesi' (Iling'wesi), whom he thought to be 'purely pastoral' with 'no interest in the forest except as a dry weather grazing ground'.¹²¹

Leakey's suggestion, endorsed by the Conservator of Forests, betrays a possible distinction in his mind between 'noble savage' hunter-gatherers and destructive pastoralists. Neumann (1998) has argued that this distinction was integral to colonial conceptions of African 'wilderness', which reflected a yearning for primordial Edenic landscapes no longer available in metropolitan Europe. While most Africans were excluded from this idyllic vision, resulting in their removal from conservation areas, this imagined pristine wilderness could accommodate some African presence. "The noble savage," Neumann (*ibid.*: 18) writes, "being closer to nature than civilization, could, hypothetically, be protected as a vital part of the natural landscape." In Neumann's account of the creation of national parks in Tanzania, however, pastoralists were never styled and protected as noble savages, but instead found themselves consistently excluded from access to essential natural resources within protected areas. Similarly, in the case of Mukogodo Forest, those perceived to be too 'pastoral' were excluded from those families whom Leakey considered might be imbued with 'true forest sense', having only an interest in exploiting the forest as a dry season resource.

According to Anderson (1984), this anxiety regarding pastoralist land degradation in Kenya had its roots in several factors that influenced the colonial administration to begin intervening in African agricultural practices in the 1930s. Of the most important were: a desire to boost agricultural production to meet some of the difficulties of the Depression in the early 1930s, international alarm generated by the Dust Bowl in the United States, concerns that an increase in human and livestock populations would create land pressure, and alarm at the increase in drought periods between 1926 and 1935. These droughts hit pastoral areas of the Rift Valley and the North-East particularly badly, but did little to relieve grazing

¹²¹ DFO Nyeri to CF, Nairobi. March 27, 1946. KNA VQ/9/6.

pressure due to the recovery of African livestock herds, resulting in pressure from settlers for the government to directly control African stock numbers in order to prevent the advance of degradation (ibid.: 332). Further, global climatic events, exacerbated by laissez-faire attitudes towards government intervention into agricultural practices and market dynamics, had produced human catastrophes, and political backlash, in Britain's other colonies only decades prior (Davis 2000).¹²² These earlier anxieties may have carried themselves into the Forest Department's intervention in Mukogodo, as betrayed in particular by their insistence that Mukogodo Forest could form part of a 'Green Belt' protecting the fertile White Highlands from the arid, and largely pastoralist, north. Meanwhile, the misconception that pastoralists were irrationally attached to their livestock¹²³, and therefore responsible for overgrazing was also widespread in official circles throughout colonial Africa (see Brown 1971 for such an account written by Kenya's former Director of Agriculture; Scoones 1996, Anderson 2010, Waller 2012). As I shall highlight below, however, there was little consensus in Mukogodo regarding who counted as pastoralist in a 'Dorobo' reserve, as well what the solutions to pastoralist overgrazing should be.

In order to sustain Leakey's characterisation of pastoralists as destructive and 'true Dorobo' as ecologically benign, the Forest Department would have had to have been ignorant (perhaps wilfully so) of recent events in the Mukogodo reserve. Leakey's inspection of the forest took place during a period of extraordinary grazing pressure. For example, in response to Leakey's concerns, the DC Nyeri pointed out to the PC, Central Province that the reserve had experienced locust infestations several years in a row, which had put unusual grazing pressure on the forest at that time.¹²⁴ As the forest is used as a dry season grazing zone by the region's pastoralists even today (I15, I16), it would make sense that a detrimental natural event would result in an abnormally high

¹²² Although in some cases, such as Ireland's Great Famine, British governments regarded non-intervention as a means of population clearing and agricultural reform (Nally 2008).

¹²³ An idea propagated in part by the shallow reading of Herskovitz's essays on the pastoralist 'cattle complex' (Anderson 2010).

¹²⁴ DC Nyeri to PC, Central Province, November 12, 1945. KNA VQ/9/6.

concentration of livestock in the forest. Moreover, many of the bore holes built by the administration had been placed in the forest, before they were aware of the Forest Department's interest, increasing pressure on the forest during periods of drought even further.¹²⁵ As the discussions around how best to protect the Forest Reserve continued, the climatic situation worsened, with a further year of failed rains in 1946 contributing further to grazing pressures.¹²⁶ The question of a need to destock the reserve, prompted by Forest Department concerns about pastoralist degradation of Mukogodo Forest, thus arose at a time of unusual ecological difficulty that almost certainly exacerbated the visibility of the overgrazing problem.

As I outlined in the previous section, the creation of the Mukogodo reserve represented a loss of up to two-thirds of grazing for the pastoralists living there. To the extent that there was a consistent overgrazing problem in Mukogodo Forest, and in the reserve more widely, this was almost certainly due to the fact that the grazing resources in the reserve were insufficient, as a direct result of colonial policy. It is particularly telling that neighbouring settler, Raymond Hook (mentioned above), is reported to have said that 'in 1932 [Mukogodo] was a beautiful pastoral area while now it is a semi desert'.¹²⁷ At the time of Hook's comment in 1947, the livestock population of the Mukogodo native reserve was estimated to be 18,500 with a higher estimate of 35,000 for sheep and goats (although it is possible that Mukogodo residents concealed true stock numbers). The human population was thought to be approximately 2,500.¹²⁸ If accurate, this means the number of livestock per capita at the time was 7.4 head of livestock and 14 head of smallstock per capita. Using Jahnke et al.'s (1988) Tropical Livestock Unit (TLU) conversion rates (0.7 for cattle, 0.1 for sheep and goats), this corresponds to 6.58 TLUs per capita. Although calculations for the minimum number of TLUs needed for subsistence vary (Sachedina and Chevenix Trench 2009:274), Dahl and Hjort (1976) estimate this to be 9.1 TLUs for those engaged

¹²⁵ Ag. PC, Central Province to CF, July 2, 1947. KNA VQ/9/6.

¹²⁶ DC Nyeri to PC, Central Province, June 15, 1946. KNA VQ/9/6.

¹²⁷ DC Nyeri, September 10, 1947. *Mukogodo Betterment Scheme*. KNA VQ/9/6

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

in milk-based pastoralism, while Kjaerby (1979) suggests a minimum of 4.3 for those who traded with agriculturalists or practice agro-pastoralism. Although based on rough estimates, an average of 6.58 TLUs is well below the minimum for subsistence for milk-based pastoralists and not far off the minimum for trading or agro-pastoralists (bearing in mind that even owning the minimum TLUs required offers little security during drought and disease outbreaks). In short, the problem of overgrazing in the reserve may have had less to do with overstocking on the part of Mukogodo's pastoralists inhabitants, and much to do with the native reserve itself not being adequately sized.

By this time, the district administration were aware of the reserve's inadequate size, even seeking to expand the reserve by acquiring land from the Northern Frontier Province at Crocodile's Jaws.¹²⁹ This became one of the factors in their objection to the Forest Department's demands that all but 'true Dorobo' should be evicted from the forest, although their main concern was that this would result in increased trespass on white farms.¹³⁰ In addition, they were annoyed that the Forest Department had developed their interest in Mukogodo *after* they had already started building boreholes and other water points within the forest. Their response was therefore to delay the eviction of pastoralists from the forest until suitable water supplies could be found. As the Acting PC of Central Province pointed out to the CF:

I think perhaps you may agree that if you had shown so keen an interest in a protected forest at Mukogodo that the Administration would have constructed their camp and water supplies outside your forest and there would in consequence not have been this delay.¹³¹

As one might imagine from the embittered tone of the above excerpt, the series of correspondences that followed Leakey's initial proposals indicate a standoff between the Forest Department and the district and provincial administration regarding the evacuation of Mukogodo Forest. It was in the context of this 'clash

¹²⁹ DC Nyeri to PC, Central Province, November 13, 1945. KNA VQ/9/6.

¹³⁰ DC Nyeri to PC, Central Province, June 15, 1946. KNA VQ/90/6.

¹³¹ Ag. PC, Central Province to CF, July 2, 1947.

of interests' – in the words of the DC Nyeri – that the administration began to consider various measures for relieving grazing pressure in the forest, without necessarily evicting those living within it.¹³² In 1947, the administration appointed an Agricultural Investigation Officer, Mr. F. M. Allen, to help prepare for the implementation of these measures, which were packaged together as the Mukogodo Betterment Scheme.¹³³

The Mukogodo Betterment Scheme set out to achieve three primary aims. The first was the destocking of Mukogodo native reserve as a whole. Initial proposals suggested that the stock population be reduced to twenty head of cattle per family, in order to bring it in line with the estimated carrying capacity of '30 acres per beast'.¹³⁴ In order to achieve this, the administration planned mass stock sales, which would then be repeated on a quarterly basis. The second of these aims was to develop the general infrastructure of the reserve, including the creation of water access points and salt licks, the construction of roads, flood irrigation systems for agriculture in certain parts of the reserve, and an administrative and trading centre in Dol Dol, complete with working communications infrastructure.¹³⁵ The third was to reduce population pressure more generally, by expanding the reserve itself by either leasing land from the White Highlands or acquiring land from the Northern Frontier Province, and by evicting unauthorised residents of the reserve.¹³⁶ Finally, aspects of the proposed scheme were supposed to entice Mukogodo residents away from subsistence pastoralism by developing alternative home industries, such as spinning and weaving, encouraging the growth of crops through flood irrigation, and promoting trade and salaried labour among reserve residents.¹³⁷

All of these measures, it should be noted, were ultimately intended to relieve grazing pressure in Mukogodo Forest, and the reserve more widely, in one way or

¹³² DC Nyeri, September 10, 1947. *Mukogodo Betterment Scheme*. KNA VQ/9/6

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

another. It is the earliest instance I could find in which the question of dryland restoration in Laikipia was tied to that of pastoralist economic development – a tendency that continues today in the form of cattle-to-market schemes promoted by the region’s private wildlife conservancies.¹³⁸ It also marks a turning point in the administration’s attitudes towards IIng’wesi. Whereas they had been a Dorobo population in need of protection from their pastoralist neighbours, they were now being treated as a problem pastoralist group, whose destructive grazing needed ‘betterment’, in contrast to the ‘true Dorobo’ Mukogodo.

This shift in administrative attitudes, and the interventions that followed, have some implications for our understanding of the development of IIng’wesi moral identity. Stuart Hall (2000) argues that ‘Identities are points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us’. However, this is not a passive process. As Li (2000: 151) argues regarding ‘indigenous’ identities:

... a group's self-identification as tribal or indigenous is not natural or inevitable, but neither is it simply invented, adopted, or imposed. It is, rather, a positioning which draws upon historically sedimented practices, landscapes, and repertoires of meaning, and emerges through particular patterns of engagement and struggle.

In other words, as people engage with the repertoires of meaning that emerge out of others’ perceptions of them, they inevitably position themselves as the subjects of an identity that is at least partly derived from those perceptions. They may subsequently seek to engage others from that mutually recognised vantage point, and even contest the perceptions that gave rise to it. Whereas IIng’wesi representatives had previously articulated a ‘Dorobo’ identity, they were now being targeted for particular kinds of interventions that were based on the administration’s construction of them as destructive and irrational pastoralists. This shift was facilitated to a large extent by the Forest Department’s ideal of authentic ‘Dorobo’ with ‘forest sense’, which left no room for IIng’wesi and their livestock herds. It is not that IIng’wesi had not seen themselves as pastoralists

¹³⁸ See <http://nrt-kenya.squarespace.com/livestock/>.

before. As I argued in Chapter Three, they had clearly gone to great lengths to acquire livestock herds and practise pastoral livelihoods in the early twentieth century. However, they were now confronted with the colonial signification of such livelihoods, which both reified pastoralism as a particular set of problems, and applied to it a particular moral condemnation as something irrational and destructive.¹³⁹ I could not find any useful sources on how this period affected IIng'wesi identity discourse. However, I merely wish to highlight this as a turning point in the way in which IIng'wesi were perceived by the state and other dominant forces. The tone set by the colonial government with regards to pastoralists was carried into official policy decades after independence (Waller 2012). In Chapter Five, I discuss the ways in which the construction of IIng'wesi, along with other Laikipia Maasai, as destructive pastoralists formed the basis of political struggle and electoral campaigning during the 2017 General Election and that year's security crisis in Laikipia.

While the discourses that provided the impetus for the Mukogodo Betterment Scheme may have had their roots in anxieties endemic to colonial Kenya since at least the 1930s, and while the scheme may have been informed by the experiences of administrators in other parts of the country (the DC Nyeri had, apparently, carried out destocking measures previously in neighbouring Tanganyika) neither the timing of the scheme nor its precise form were the outcome of grand design, but rather of a hurried compromise intended to diffuse an inter-departmental standoff within the colonial administration.¹⁴⁰ It should be no surprise, then, that the scheme ran into difficulty from the very outset of its implementation. Certain aspects of the Mukogodo Betterment Scheme were implemented successfully. Even today, Dol Dol town is the main trading and administrative centre for those living in Mukogodo division, as evidenced by the many state and non-governmental organisation offices, shops, bars and hotels and the office of the local District Commissioner. Many of the trader buildings built in 1948 are still

¹³⁹ See Introduction for a discussion of irrationality and morality.

¹⁴⁰ Veterinary Officer, Nanyuki to Director of Veterinary Services, Kabete, October 16, 1953. KNA BV/114/113; Commissioner for African Land Utilisation and Settlement to PC, Central Province, December 12, 1947. KNA VQ/9/6.

standing today, and the town is considered something of a 'capital' for the Laikipia Maasai.¹⁴¹ Similarly, many of the dams and boreholes built during this period are still in use today (I6).

However, the administration's destocking efforts proved unsuccessful for a number of reasons. To begin with, rinderpest and foot and mouth outbreaks in 1949 and 1952 resulted in the Veterinary Services imposing veterinary quarantines on the reserve, preventing livestock from leaving the area (including those of outsiders) and causing the administration to delay stock sales.¹⁴² Anderson (2010) argues that the Veterinary Services saw their role in curtailing livestock disease as a means to developing the pastoral economy, which suggests that, again, administrative intervention in Mukogodo was frustrated by competing interests within the administration itself. Further, efforts to organise successful stock sales were frustrated by the refusal of Mukogodo livestock owners to sell their animals at what the administration regarded as a 'reasonable price'. At these stock sales, a representative from the Kenya Meat Commission, as well as licensed African livestock traders, were invited to attend and buy animals from Mukogodo inhabitants.¹⁴³ However, as one Veterinary Officer complained in 1953:

Both [stock sales] were a failure due to the refusal of the owner to sell his beasts at a reasonable price. Impervious to the [Mau Mau] emergency, large numbers of competing traders in Nyeri, Meru and Embu bought cattle at inflated prices, and the N'derobo¹⁴⁴ has been spoilt. I doubt if those conditions will now return...

The Veterinary Officer's choice of words here suggests that he perceived a lack of moral rectitude on the part of the 'N'derobo'. In his view, they had been 'spoilt' by high livestock prices. This suggests a degree of moral dissonance between the

¹⁴¹ One such building is called 'Sailor's' and is decorated with a painted imprint of a ship's anchor and the date of its construction in 1948. Why its owner decided upon a maritime theme is sadly unknown to me.

¹⁴² Provincial Veterinary Officer, Central Province to Director of Veterinary Service, Kabete, December 15, 1949. KNA BV/14/113; PC, Central Province to Chief Native Commissioner, Nairobi. July 27, 1949. KNA BV/14/113.

¹⁴³ *Memorandum for the Development of Mukogodo Area*. 1950. KNA BV/14/113.

¹⁴⁴ A 'Swahilised' rendering of *iltorrobo*, which was often used to refer to the population of the Mukogodo reserve.

administration and Mukogodo residents regarding the value of livestock, the presence of which some administrators felt to be destructive, while the 'Dorobo' clearly felt little urgency in getting rid of them. However, there are other reasons why livestock owners in Mukogodo may have been unwilling to sell their livestock. As we have already seen, compulsory government stock purchases and stock taxes appear to have created considerable resentment among livestock owners (I18), which may have made cooperation less likely.

Meanwhile, when compared to livestock, it seems that cash had relatively little utility on the reserve. One livestock officer for instance, commented that 'another reason why the people are averse to selling cattle is the problem of banking their money, I would like to suggest that [...] the Principal of Post office saving be explained to them'.¹⁴⁵ His assumption seems to have been that the Mukogodo residents were, in principle, willing commercialists, but that they lacked the necessary infrastructure to realise their ambitions. He continued: 'At present there is a definite lack of consumer goods in the reserve, and people who want things like beads, wire for Bangles, shukas and various other goods have to go to Nanyuki to get them, a matter of 45 miles each way...'¹⁴⁶ This particular claim was echoed by one of my interviewees:

... At that time one would even save some money because there was nothing much to use the money for, nowhere to get things like soap, no sugar, no sickness. You didn't see anybody going to the hospital, only when you are beaten up and when you get some injuries, and that time people would use the herbs to treat the injuries. For alcohol, there was only *muratina* that was used by the old people. They used to make *muratina*, using honey and aloe vera and once this *muratina* is ready, then the elders would enjoy it at home, no going to town – not like today where people go to town just to get drinks. For the snuff and tobacco, they used to get it from Meru people in exchange for goats, that's a goat per bag. At that time there were no clothes, people like women used to dress in skins, that's the goat and sheep skins, and men used the cows because it was hard and heavy. (I26)

¹⁴⁵ Livestock Officer, Nyeri to Provincial Veterinary Officer, Central Province. September 26, 1949. KNA BV/14/113.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

Cash incomes were not necessarily new by the time of the Mukogodo Betterment Scheme stock sales. Mukogodo residents had already found opportunities to earn salaries by working on neighbouring European farms and on public works, such as the new public road to Dol Dol, or by joining the Kenya Police Reserves and Tribal Police (I26, I29). Nor, clearly, was the principle of trading animals for consumer goods, such as tobacco. The root of the problem, instead, seems to be that the administration was offering something to Mukogodo residents for which they simply had no use or desire – namely, relatively poor prices for livestock, the proceeds of which served little purpose in the internal economy of the reserve. The administration's stock sales did continue, however, and I explore their development further in Chapter Six, in relation to the commercialisation of stock theft.

To sum up this section, however, I hope to have highlighted that the so-called 'second colonial occupation' in Mukogodo resulted primarily in the increased complexity of the administration's bureaucratic machinery. Consequent interventions into the livestock management practices of the reserve's pastoralist population were almost entirely the product of compromises between the competing interests and priorities of different administrative departments, informed as they were by the dominant ideas and assumptions of the time, rather than any particular need expressed by the reserve's residents. In some cases, these interventions were themselves complicated and even thwarted by contradictions within the administration – such as the need to both control disease among stock populations and move stock out of the reserve. Meanwhile, the agency of the reserve's residents played a significant role in frustrating administrative efforts, particularly through their capacity for refusal – where this was possible. In some ways, the 'Dorobo's' unwillingness to sell their livestock reflects the fact that they valued livestock more highly than members of the administration, who were willing to dispense with 'Dorobo' herds with little thought given to their value, nor to the comparatively low utility of cash on the reserve. The administration's attitude in this regard was informed by a more widespread coupling of pastoralist irrationality with environmental destructiveness. Although the 'Dorobo' clearly

did not agree with this assessment, the developmental state had now identified them as destructive pastoralists, setting the stage for pastoralist engagement with the state and other development actors to the present day. This in turn became the backdrop against which pastoralists in Laikipia came to articulate their moral identity, as I explore further in Chapter Five.

Conclusion

In this chapter, my primary aim was to assess the impact of colonialism on moral identity in northern Laikipia, and to locate the agency in changes brought about during this period. In doing so, I hoped to avoid treating colonialism as an abstraction (Cooper 2005), and particularly one imagined as a set of sweeping exogenous changes, or one coterminous with 'modernity' or 'capitalism'. To achieve this, I have tried, as much as possible, to give a sense of the human interactions, personalities and geographies that constituted the practice and experience of colonial rule in Mukogodo. Doing so, I believe, challenges the view of provincial and district administrations as a mere extension of the executive branch of colonial government (cf. Branch and Cheeseman 2006). While the creation of the Mukogodo reserve and the strict policing of its boundaries chimed with similar segregationist efforts across colonial Africa, administrators in Mukogodo applied these policies with a great degree of discretion. The individual personalities of DOs and chiefs later brought their own idiosyncracies and conflicts to the project of governance in the reserve. Meanwhile, later development schemes emerged to a significant extent out of localised problems and conflicts. Examining the correspondences of administrators and the testimonies of Mukogodo residents alive during this period also highlights the difficulty of reading into colonial practices the direct imposition of metropolitan ideology. Administrators responsible for Mukogodo, by their own admission, acknowledged the difficulty of creating a reserve strictly for 'Dorobo', but pressed on in order to simplify their control of Africans in the interest of the growing white settler population. While there is no doubt that the administration implemented policies that were rooted in racialised constructions of African tribalism, administrators never admit to an epistemological commitment to these ideas in their correspondences with one another, preferring instead to explicitly justify

their actions as instruments of control and order. As we have seen, this is also how such policies were interpreted by some of my IIng'wesi interviewees.

If much of the earlier phase of colonialism in Mukogodo consisted of a stretched administration simply 'making do' and simplifying processes of control, and if the later phase was characterised primarily by compromise and bungled development interventions, to what extent does it make sense to speak of a colonial legacy? Indeed, there is an inherent danger in attempting to discern evidence of the long-term impacts of colonial past in the present day, as it becomes tempting to 'read history backwards' (Cooper 2005: 104-107). Much of the colonial project in Mukogodo, ultimately, failed. Administrators constantly found themselves trying to remove 'outsiders', which indicates that no round of evictions ever proved fully successful. Intermarriage between ethnic groups continued, and allegedly even spiked during the Mau Mau emergency, when dozens of Kikuyu women and men married into 'Dorobo' families in order to escape eviction from the region to the Kikuyu Reserve (GI2, I17).¹⁴⁷ Likewise, the attempt to divert Mukogodo residents away from pastoral livelihoods was an abject failure, and the Mukogodo Betterment Scheme struggled to achieve even the basic objective of destocking.

On the other hand, however, former residents themselves note that, since colonialism, divisions between ethnic groups and Laikipia Maasai sub-sections are more stark (I15, I18). This indicates a 'hardening of lines' between the communities that constituted the locus of moral identities (although, as I explore in Chapter Five, possibilities for alliance and the building of broader political communities remain open). This reification and crystallisation of group boundaries seems to have been facilitated by a colonial language that tied group identities to notions of territory or jurisdiction (or in the case of white settlers, property), as well as colonial attitudes regarding the moral quality of certain livelihoods, which may have given these identities renewed political and moral significance.

¹⁴⁷ *Nanyuki District Intelligence Committee summary for the week ending 24.12.53. NA FCO 141/5750*

Throughout the chapter, I have also tried to highlight certain developments as the earliest examples of trends that still apply in the present day. The introduction of official roles for Africans in the reserve offered an alternative means for men to pursue power, one that sat alongside prior leadership institutions. This in turn generated a new vernacular for the expression of moral identity in relation to the performance of leaders in their intermediary role between ‘the community’ and an externalised state. As I outline in Chapter Five, this is echoed by the way in which IIng’wesi evaluated political candidates during the 2017 General Election during my fieldwork. Similarly, the discussions preceding the Mukogodo Betterment Scheme mark the first instance in which IIng’wesi were targeted for interventions on the basis of a pastoral identity. These interventions tied questions of pastoral economic development are linked with concerns around environmental degradation – a tendency which, as I noted, is very much mainstream in Laikipia’s conservation sector – and which meant that IIng’wesi moral identity had to be articulated in a new, more hostile political context.

The most obvious legacy of the colonial period, however, is best summed up through a brief excerpt from one of my interviews with an IIng’wesi elder (whom I will call *oltasat*) of the *ilterito* age set:¹⁴⁸

Sipke: What are the biggest changes that you have noticed since independence?

Oltasat: Not that much, there was no big change from that time. There was no big change because even after independence, *the whites still owned the land*.

My question was a general one, intended to provoke discussion. Although *oltasat* gave a short response, it points to the fact that the most durable legacy of colonialism has been geographical. Today, aside from some abandoned ranches (see Map 2), most Laikipia Maasai still live on land that used to form the Mukogodo reserve, now sub-divided into plots owned collectively by group ranches (see Galaty 1994), membership of which is determined by ethnicity and the sub-

¹⁴⁸ *Oltasat* means elder man in Maa.

section to which one belongs (Makurian and IIng'wesi group ranch membership, for instance, is exclusive to IIng'wesi Maasai). The former reserve is still encompassed by private ranches owned mostly by the descendants of colonial settlers, effectively cutting it off from nearby urban centres, aside from roads first built by the colonial administration. The geographical legacies of colonialism deeply influence both the politics and economics of the region today, in a manner more readily demonstrable than other legacies.

This political geography was and continues to be underscored by the colonial language of identity I discussed above, which designates a moral and political status to groups of people and ties them to particular kinds of space and notions of territory. Even today, white settlers are widely referred to as 'ranchers', and associated with narratives of historical land injustice as well as economic and political dominance. IIng'wesi, meanwhile, are predominantly associated with their former location in the Mukogodo reserve, which today is divided into two group ranches that are often referred to as IIng'wesi 1 and IIng'wesi 2 (respectively, IIng'wesi and Makurian group ranches). As with the link between pastoralism and environmental destruction, this political and moral geography continues to inform the way in which IIng'wesi articulate their moral identity, as I explore in the remaining chapters.

In the next two chapters, I dedicate considerable space to exploring the wider implications of this period in more detail. In Chapter Five, I examine some of the colonial legacies identified in this chapter, particularly the emergence of an embattled pastoralist moral identity, and explore their role in the campaigns of the 2017 General Elections in northern Laikipia. In Chapter Six, I step away from IIng'wesi moral identity in order to track historical changes in the moral identity of IIng'wesi morans. In particular, I look at the history of stock theft in Laikipia over the course of the last century, the practice and moral understanding of which is deeply rooted in the history of colonisation described above. I use moral identity as a lens for understanding why the practice of stock theft in Laikipia appears to have changed independently of the climatic, material and economic variables identified as casual factors by other scholars (e.g. Hendrickson et al 1996).

Chapter Five – ‘Maa Cows Matter!’: Iling’wesi moral identity in the 2017 Kenyan General Elections

In this chapter, I look at how Iling’wesi moral identity was brought to bear upon the 2017 Kenyan General Elections. In particular, I analyse political discussions and campaigns that I observed during fieldwork in the run up to the 2017 General Elections in Laikipia, as well as on social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp. In doing so, I aim to examine the extent to which themes identified in the previous chapter, such as the application of a moral identity vernacular to new political institutions (namely chiefs) during the colonial period, are relevant to more recent events. I begin by stressing that, contrary to the view of pastoralists as antagonistic towards the state, Iling’wesi and other Laikipia Maasai engage fully with state politics and express various ambitions for their political leadership and relationship with the state. I then discuss how these ambitions are articulated through the language of ‘community’ (*olosh* in Maa), which, I argue, forms part of a political vernacular, rooted in moral identity, intended to render state processes and representatives familiar and accountable.

The idea that political leaders have obligations to their ‘community’ indicates that this vernacular is coloured by the principles suggested in Lonsdale’s (1992) moral ethnicity and Ndegwa’s (1997) ethnic citizenship. However, as I later demonstrate, the possibility for what might constitute ‘community’ are often either broader or more fragmented than that implied by ‘ethnicity’. This chapter therefore serves as my main argument in favour of moving from moral ethnicity to moral identity, which I believe allows space for a wider range of collective mobilisations and imaginations of political constituency, which vary in the strength of their legitimacy but become possible in specific political contexts. These mobilisations rely upon conjuring the sense of belonging and ‘groupness’ (Brubaker and Cooper 2000), across ethnic lines, that I discussed in the Introduction. Throughout the chapter, I discuss how this work of mobilisation, as well as the evaluation of political candidates, is carried out through political

narrative and rumour. Moreover, I highlight that among these imagined political identities is that of 'pastoralists', which suggests that the role of pastoralism as a focal point of moral identity is a factor in deciding pastoralist futures, by informing engagements between pastoralist groups, such as IIng'wesi, and the state.

5.1. Pastoralists and the state

There is a traditional view that sees pastoralist societies and states as opposed to one another (Fratkin and Meir 2005). Historically, pastoralist societies in East Africa have tended to be acephalous, with stock-partnerships and age-grade associations used to maintain social ties wider than a household's immediate patrilineal kinship organisation, and large-scale decisions made through the consensus of elder men (Evans-Pritchard 1940, Spencer 1965, Galaty 1993, McCabe 2004). In addition to their tendency to be mobile or nomadic, this has ostensibly put them at odds with sedentary society and, particularly, the governments that they produce, which, according to Fratkin (1997) have only managed to 'encapsulate' pastoral communities, rather than incorporate them.

Government policy towards the pastoralists that they have 'encapsulated', meanwhile, is largely driven by two impulses. The first is to render pastoral communities governable through sedentarisation programmes and incentives (see Scott 1998). As Fratkin and Meir (2005: 3) argue, 'Emerging nations in Africa and the Middle East often hold the view that they cannot achieve nationhood on a stable and permanent basis until non-sedentary tribal units become fully integrated with the rest of the nation.' In the case of Kenyan Maasai, the post-independence government attempted this by legally fixing pastoralist spaces through the introduction of group ranches. Group ranches are private titles to land owned in common by groups of registered members. Introduced in the mid-1960s under Phase I of the Kenya Livestock Development Project, they were introduced as a means of securing land rights for the Maasai community, to enable a secure basis for local investment by giving communities a form of collateral with which to take out development loans, and also to provide a mechanism for the future individuation of once communal land (Galaty 1992). In effect, group ranches also

(technically) prevented the migration of unregistered persons across group ranch boundaries, thus serving as a sedentarisation measure. The second impulse has been to try and destock pastoral communities, to 'develop' them economically by encouraging market participation, and to diversify pastoral livelihoods. This is done on the assumption that traditional pastoralism degrades environments, through a 'tragedy of the commons', or that it is an inefficient use of resources and 'backward' (Hardin 1968; see Nassef et al 2009: ii). I outlined in the previous chapter how the colonial administration in Mukogodo arrived at a similar position regarding the pastoralists in their jurisdiction. This antagonistic approach to pastoralism on the part of governments has ostensibly resulted in pastoralists adopting various means of negotiating their relationship with the state in such a way as to maintain distance, in order to protect their livelihoods (Fratkin and Meir 2005).

In Kenya, many pastoralist communities are thought to have been historically distant from the Kenyan state, if not outright hostile towards it. The neglect by successive colonial and post-colonial governments of the Northern Frontier District (NFD), initially occupied by the British as a buffer zone against Ethiopia and Italian Somalia, contributed to the political marginalisation of groups like the Samburu, Rendille, Gabra, Borana, Somali and Turkana (Fratkin and Roth 2005: 40). The threat of Somali secessionism in the 1960s led to active hostility on the part of the post-independence government towards the largely pastoralist North Eastern Province, culminating in the 1984 Wagalla massacre in which thousands of ethnic Somalis were killed by state security forces (Sheikh 2007). Meanwhile, Maasai politicians in Kenya and Tanganyika formed the Masai United Front in 1960, with a view to making a case for an independent Maasai ethnostate, an idea that has been revived periodically since (Hughes 2005: 212). Maasai involvement in the Kenya African Democratic Union's (KADU) campaign for *majimbo*, or ethnoregional autonomy, exhibited a similar concern that Maasai interests would remain unrepresented in a Kenyan nationalist state dominated by the larger Kikuyu and Luo ethnic groups (Anderson 2005).

While these issues were not necessarily conceived as oppositions between 'pastoralists' and the state, often being articulated instead in ethnic terms, 'pastoralism' has recently come to enjoy increasing salience in the Kenyan political landscape. The devolution of some executive power to counties (formerly districts) in Kenya's 2010 constitution, and the stipulation that presidential candidates must secure 25% of the vote in at least 24 counties, increased the importance of swing votes in the NFD (Carrier and Kochore 2014). In the 2013 general elections, current Deputy President, William Ruto, actively courted the pastoralist vote by playing up his pastoral Kalenjin background, calling on northern voters to 'bring their herds together' in pursuit of northern development (ibid.: 144). His former party, the United Republican Party (URP), featured several prominent pastoralist politicians in top positions, many of whom were linked to the Pastoralist Parliamentary Group (PPG) (ibid.). Meanwhile, as I describe below, recent conflicts between pastoralists and smallholders and ranchers in Laikipia have brought specifically pastoralist issues, such as pasture and historical land injustices, to the fore in media and political debates. How politicians appeal to pastoralist interests, how and by whom these interests are decided and contested, and whether or not these appeals are successful, are therefore of increasing importance in contemporary Kenyan politics.

5.2. Moral identity and the ballot box

That ethnic identities feature prominently in Kenyan elections is nothing new; discussions regarding ethnic divides in Kenyan politics are now something of a cliché. Ndegwa (1997) argues that the reason for ethnicity's prominence in Kenyan politics is because of two competing conceptualisations of citizenship in Kenya. On the one hand, belonging to an ethnic group is a form of republican citizenship. Individual autonomy is subordinate to the claims of the group, within which the individual gains rights and benefits only as active members of a community. Those benefits are 'secured by obligations and participation' in that community (ibid.: 603). That this form of civic-republican citizenship should be delineated by ethnic boundaries is not naturally occurring or self-evident, but a product of the crystallisation and politicisation of ethnic identities under colonial rule, and by the continuation of colonial political institutions under post-

independence governments. This account of ethnic citizenship contrasts with the liberal citizenship of the modern democratic state, in which the individual is sovereign and autonomous and chooses whether to activate the rights guaranteed to them as citizens by the state (ibid.). In Kenya, Ndegwa continues, 'people experience a convergence of demands from both of their citizenships', with the liberal citizenship demands of the state at a national level sometimes finding inconsistency with civic-republican demands within ethnic communities (ibid.: 603). The former form of citizenship often ends up undermining the liberal citizenship assumed in the national community, because 'parochial civic-republican obligations taint one's "individual" preferences in the nation-state arena' and because 'for those who capture the state, the state becomes an arena in which to fulfil obligation to the subnational community' (ibid.: 603-604). These obligations, meanwhile, are defined through a 'moral economy' within identity groups in which 'individuals in various contexts rely on non-bureaucratic mutual aid networks and ... reciprocate toward those who belong to a common society' (ibid.: 601).

As outlined in the introduction to this dissertation, Lonsdale (1992) argues that the/a moral economy forms the bedrock of what he terms moral ethnicity, by providing a motive for individuals to seek belonging in an imagined community that sets standards for 'reputation' and virtuosity. He also gives an account of how moral ethnicity served as a foundation for the emergence 'political tribalism'. 'The effects of colonial rule', he argues, 'linked the internal debate on civic virtue to the other new question of how to represent one's community in the external, unequal, arena of state power' (ibid.: 140). He continues, 'politicians who may have won power in a contest of civic virtue within their ethnic constituency can hold on to it only if they suppress the multi-vocal debates of moral ethnicity that would otherwise carry on behind their backs... at the cost of pandering to inter-tribal suspicion...' (ibid.: 141). As a consequence, politicians both present themselves as representative of a single ethnic 'voice' and present political choices in terms of inter-ethnic competition, including, at times, choices between broad ethnic coalitions.

There is some debate about the extent to which ethnic identity, configured as 'political tribalism', influences individual voting practices. Kenyan elections, along with African democracies elsewhere, are often described as ethnic censuses, with tribal solidarities predicting voting behaviour to the extent that elections serve as a head count of identity groups (Horowitz 1985, Nugent 2001). Following the introduction of multiparty politics in 1991, it appears that opposition parties splintered according to ethnic groupings (even if this was not admitted too openly by party representatives) (Muigai 1995, Kimenyi 1997). Bratton and Kimenyi (2008), however, argue that ethnicity is only one factor among many determinants in explaining electoral choices in Kenya. To the extent that Kenyans do vote along ethnic lines, they argue, it is because, while they would prefer to vote on non-identity related issues, they worry that people from other ethnic groups will not do the same. It is the perceived tribalism of other ethnic groups and the fear that political opponents will 'rely on formulae of ethnic exclusivity' that provides the impetus for voting along ethnic lines (ibid.: 10). Moreover, they found that those who are more likely to identify themselves in non-ethnic terms – by their occupation, for example – are far less likely to vote along ethnic lines, but are instead more inclined to vote on certain policy issues. This indicates that we should not take ethnicity for granted as the basis for understanding voting behaviour, and that we should pay closer attention to the ways in which identities more generally are negotiated and configured.

As Lonsdale (1992) and Ndegwa (1997) acknowledge, there are strong historical reasons why the Kenyan electorate may be fractured along ethnic lines. The colonial government banned nationwide political organisations in 1953, which restricted political parties to individual districts, which tended, as we have seen, to be ethnically homogenous (Throup 1993: 372). By the time of the first elections in which Africans could run for seats on the Legislative Council in 1957, state politics consisted, for the most part, of ethnic groups electing one of their own to represent their interests. With the slow emergence of nationwide parties in the late 1950s, namely the Kenya African National Union (KANU) and KADU, these district parties were co-opted by their nationwide counterparts, alongside trade unions and other social organisations (Ndegwa 1997: 604). After independence,

the first President, Jomo Kenyatta, pursued a strategy of shoring up support among his Kikuyu ethnic group and among their Central Kenya allies, the Meru and Embu (Branch 2011: 85). As already mentioned, the fear among minority ethnic groups of dominance by larger ethnic groups resulted in KADU's pursuit of ethnic regionalism or *majimbo*, until their dissolution in 1964 (Anderson 2005: 563). Kenya's second President, Daniel arap Moi, set about dismantling Kikuyu hegemony and filling key positions with his own supporters from among the Kalenjin and other minority groups (Mueller 2008: 188). Given the overwhelming power of the central executive in Kenya's post-independence government (Branch and Cheeseman 2006), the transition to multiparty elections in 1991 created the conditions for 'winner-takes-all' elections, in which ethnic blocs competed for the presidency in order gain control over national resources (Mueller 2008: 186).

However, despite this close attention to the role of ethnicity in Kenyan political history, scholars have also identified alternative aspirations among political actors beyond ethnic capture of the state. Willis et al (2018) note how elections in late colonial Africa, while encouraging clientelism, asserted the primacy of development as the mark of legitimate government. While colonial governments regarded elections as a means of reigning in African radicals and legitimising both their rule and, later, the transition of power to a suitable cohort of African elites, African nationalists saw the ballot as 'a demonstration of collective political maturity and as a tool to induct a restive public into citizenship', which further aided their demands for universal suffrage and, ultimately, independence (ibid.: 1130). Meanwhile, Klopp (2002) has highlighted how ethnicity itself has been utilized in Kenya to build a tolerant and cosmopolitan politics, due to the capacity for coalition-building and boundary-crossing across ethnic lines. What is perhaps often missed, then, are the ways in which the language of moral ethnicity is used by voters and politicians to 'root [...] political dispensation in a more familiar logic of moral accountability' (Willis et al 2018: 1133).

As I demonstrate below, during the 2017 general elections, members of Laikipia's pastoral communities frequently used the language of 'community' to hold politicians accountable and support their legitimacy as electoral candidates. While

the 'community' in question was sometimes imagined as particular sub-sections, sometimes as particular ethnic groups or ethnic conglomerations, alternatives also arose during particular moments, including the notion of a wider 'pastoralist' community. While this vernacular may have drawn on standards of moral accountability and obligation that Lonsdale (1992) identifies with moral ethnicity, these were applied to non-ethnic compatriots as much as fellow Maasai, and likewise were applied on behalf of a range of 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1983), the common denominator of which was not always of an ethnic nature. To rescue the analytical value of this vernacular from the narrow constraints of ethnicity, I refer to it, as I have done throughout the dissertation, as moral identity. In what follows, I look at the processes by which the standards and parameters of moral identity were produced, negotiated and contested among Iling'wesi during the elections, as well as how they were applied.

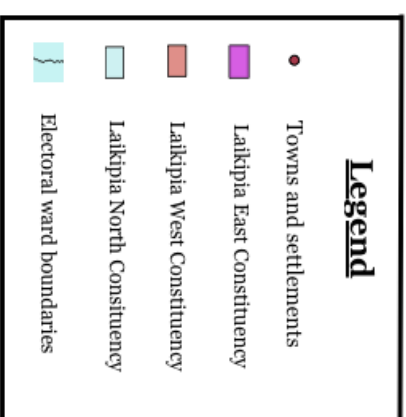
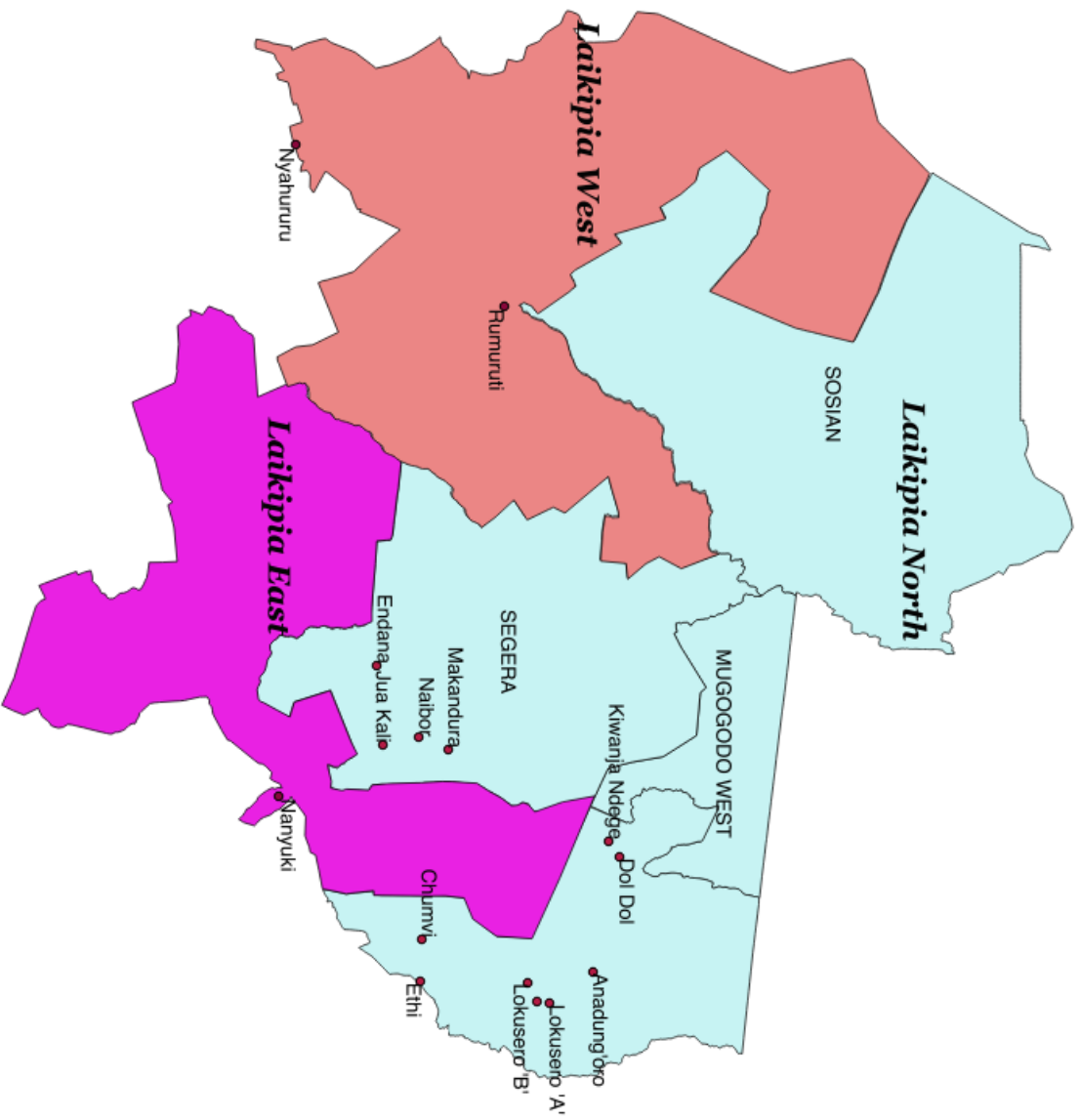
5.3. A Who's Who of the 2017 General Elections in Laikipia

In 2017, following the 2010 constitution which devolved considerable power to County governments, there were six seats for which every constituent in Kenya could cast a vote. These seats were those of President (and Vice-President, candidates for which run on the same ticket as presidential candidates), Member of Parliament (MP), Senator, Women's Representative (WR), County Governor and Member of the County Assembly (MCA). Candidates for President are voted in by all sub-County constituencies at a national level. In addition, each County returns a Senator and Women's Representative, and each constituency returns a Member of Parliament. Both seats form part of the national legislature. At the County level, each constituency votes for a gubernatorial candidate, who campaigns across constituencies within each County. The County Governor, and their Deputy Governor, lead the executive branch of County governments. Finally, at a sub-county and sub-constituency level, smaller 'electoral wards' return an MCA, who sit in the county assembly, the legislature of the County government.

In Laikipia, there are three constituencies: Laikipia North, Laikipia East and Laikipia West (see map 5). The vast majority of Iling'wesi reside in and vote from

Laikipia North constituency and tend to be spread across two electoral wards: Mukogodo East and Segera (see Map 5). Both the Laikipia North constituency and the two electoral wards are home to other Maasai sections and ethnic groups, such as Samburu, Kikuyu and Meru. Segera ward, in particular, is remarkably cosmopolitan, as it is home to satellite settlements on the road to Nanyuki town, such as Naibor and Jua Kali, and because much of the ward consists of abandoned ranches occupied by diverse groups of 'squatters' (albeit mostly pastoralists) (Laikipia Unity and Land Initiative, 2013). Although I have been unable to acquire precise figures, these squatters include Maasai, Samburu, Turkana, Pokot, Nandi and Somali households. While Mukogodo East tends to be more ethnically homogeneous, the settlement of Ngare Ndare in the far east of the ward is home to a significant number, if not a majority, of Kikuyu and Meru, who are often associated with distinct voting patterns (e.g. Willis and Gona 2012: 63; Lynch 2014). Meanwhile, Laikipia North constituency is home to a numerically insignificant, but economically powerful and influential population of white settlers, who occupy vast ranches neighbouring pastoralist-inhabited areas. The ethnically fragmented nature of the constituency and wards (particularly Mukogodo East, where particular areas are easily divisible along ethnic lines) is regarded as conducive to identity-based voting behaviour (Bratton and Kimenyi 2008: 2).

Before I analyse the public and private debates that accompanied the elections in 2017, I will give a brief account of the most significant campaigns that took place. The Presidential contest in 2017 was, in effect, a two-horse race between the



Scale: 1: 885,495

Map 5: Laikipia electoral boundaries. GIS data from UN-OCHSA Humanitarian Data Exchange

incumbent, Uhuru Kenyatta of the Jubilee Party, and Raila Odinga of the NASA coalition. The Jubilee Party is closely associated with voters in Central Kenya and with Vice-President Ruto's supporters in the Rift Valley, although they campaigned on a platform of national development and anti-tribalism, which broadened their appeal beyond these strongholds. Odinga, with his stronghold in Western Kenya, led a mildly social democratic campaign that focused on endemic government corruption and the protection of devolution reforms. Kenyatta eventually won the race, with 54.27% of the vote to Odinga's 44.74%. The vote in Laikipia North was split in a similar fashion, with Kenyatta taking home 56.94% of the vote, and Odinga receiving 41.85% (IEBC 2017).¹⁴⁹

Following the death of incumbent Senator G. G. Kariuki, the senatorial race was a contest between the eventual winner, John Kinyua Nderitu, of the Jubilee Party, and John Maina Njenga Kamunya, known popularly as Maina Njenga, of KANU. While not a close race, it provoked some controversy due to Njenga's history as leader of the Kikuyu militia group, Mungiki, who have a reputation for racketeering and playing a role in the 2007/2008 post-election violence (see Anderson 2002, Frederiksen 2010). The Women's Representative race was similarly dominated by the Jubilee candidate, Catherine Waruguru, although the Jubilee party primaries generated considerable excitement in Laikipia North due to the candidacy of a notable Yaaku activist, Jennifer Koinante. The race for the Laikipia North MP seat, although it featured several candidates, was effectively a battle between the incumbent, Mathew Lempurkel, from the Orange Democratic Movement, and Sarah Lekorere, from Jubilee. This was arguably the most hotly contested race in Laikipia North, due to a series of violent attacks against ranchers, smallholders and pastoralists in the region believed by many to be linked to Lempurkel (I elaborate on this below). In the gubernatorial race, the two frontrunners in Laikipia North were the incumbent Governor of Laikipia, Joshua Irungu of the Jubilee Party, and Nderitu Muriithi, who initially stood for the Jubilee ticket and later, ran, and won, as an independent candidate. The Jubilee primaries

¹⁴⁹ IEBC 2017. *Declaration for Results for Election of the President of the Republic of Kenya at the National Tallying Centre*. Nairobi: IEBC. Accessed on November 23, 2018 at: <https://www.iebc.or.ke/uploads/resources/m3f8arLNjp.pdf>.

were particularly controversial, as the Laikipia North vote had initially been nullified due to accusations of electoral malpractice and intimidation on the part of Irungu, which his supporters regarded as evidence of rigging by the Jubilee establishment. Finally, the MCA contests in Mukogodo East and Segera featured a high number of candidates, particularly during the party primaries. They were perhaps least defined by opposition politics or rivalries, and due to these contests being highly localised, were most defined by the interpersonal familiarity between the candidates and their voters.

5.4. Debating Iling'wesi ambitions during the 2017 Kenyan general elections

In this section, I will attempt to give a sense of what it was that the Iling'wesi with whom I was acquainted wanted to achieve when voting in the 2017 general elections. In particular, I will look at the ambitions which Iling'wesi had for their political leadership, and the qualities and priorities that they looked for in political candidates, as well as the political issues which appeared to most galvanise voters. Many in Laikipia North idealised the constituency as a potential voting 'bloc' – that is to say, a constituency that votes unanimously in favour of one party or another¹⁵⁰. However, in the run up to the 2017 elections, this proved not to be the case, with the constituency split on which way to vote at almost every level. I will describe these divisions as they manifested in political debates and discussions in Laikipia North between January and May 2017. These discussions took place in various settings – whether in pubs and bars in settlements like Dol Dol and Kiwanja Ndege, in Laikipia Maasai homesteads and at rallies held by election candidates throughout the constituency. They mostly involved groups of men, with women usually socialising separately elsewhere, although on some occasions I joined in discussions involving both men and women. These latter discussions typically took place among groups of younger, educated Iling'wesi, some of whom had relocated to Nairobi and all of whom were politically engaged in some way or another. Such discussions were not only an opportunity to debate the merits of different politicians but are also the primary forum in which people exchange

¹⁵⁰ The implication is usually that these 'blocks' vote unanimously owing to their ethnic homogeneity.

news, rumour and gossip about politicians and political candidates. In the absence of a printed press covering news in Laikipia North, the dissemination of news information takes a primarily oral form. The rise of social media platforms on mobile phones has helped to change this somewhat, allowing news and rumour to travel further and at a more rapid speed. This has arguably enabled the imagining of new communities at a larger scale and along different axes than may have been previously possible (Kavoura 2014). While it would have been impossible to record the discussions for which I was present in person, I took extensive notes whenever possible. As such, I have a good sense of the kinds of opinions held by Laikipia North constituents, although I have little in the way of direct quotes or quantitatively polled opinion. As I discussed in Chapter Two, where I do have record of the views of any particular individual, I anonymise them here to avoid putting them at risk.

Applying a qualitative analysis to these debates and discussions is useful because, according to Lonsdale (1992), they are one of the crucial processes by which the standards of virtue in moral ethnicity (or as I argue here, moral identity) are negotiated. It is through these debates that people define themselves as members of a political community and delineate the boundaries and standards for ethical reputation of that community. It is these standards that they use to evaluate the performance of their political leaders and the suitability of political candidates. Such discussions also allow for the reconfiguration of group identities, including the alignment or separation of identities that do not, by necessity, overlap – such as those of the ethnic and the political. In this sense, these discussions allow us to examine how *Iling'wesi* is produced as a particular political identity, as well as how *Iling'wesi* negotiate the linkage of their political ambitions to other identities, such as particular occupational or class identities. Although I begin by positing the importance of these discussions as a bedrock for the formation of moral ethnicity, I argue in this section that the discussions in which I was involved did more than address parochial concerns. While much discussions are couched in language reminiscent of moral identity – such as a focus on politicians' patronage of 'the community' – they also address much broader and more general political concerns, such as the responsibilities of political leaders, the appropriate use of

state violence, and the role of the state in justice and development. Moreover, I argue that IIng'wesi use of the term 'community' allows for the inclusion of much larger, 'imagined communities', as well as coalitions of communities, than could reasonably be expected to engage in coherent internal debate (although use of social media is making these debates more far-reaching than might have been previously possible). I therefore argue that while moral ethnicity, and at times, 'political tribalism', colour political debate in Laikipia North, this does not limit the 'imagining' of political communities to those delineated by ethnicity. It is for this reason that, as I argued in the Introduction chapter, I am proposing moral identity as an alternative concept.

5.4.1 'Community' and moral identity in political rumour and narrative

The main way in which IIng'wesi, among others, tended to index moral identity is through the term 'community'. 'The community' was often used to describe the unit to which politicians are in some way accountable. It is common to hear someone remark that a certain politician (usually at the local level) has 'been good to this community', or conversely, 'has no interest in this community'. Of course, such examples only tell us how the term is used in English, which is usually a third language for those Laikipia Maasai that speak it. In Maa, the closest equivalent to 'community', insofar as it is used in the same fashion, is *olosh*. *Olosh*, incidentally, is also the word used to describe a Maasai section. For example, one might describe the IIng'wesi as *olosh loo ng'wesi* (literally, the IIng'wesi section), while the Purko Maasai are *olosh loo purko* (the Purko section). As discussed in Chapter Four, the section in Maasai society is essentially a socio-territorial unit. It denotes a group of Maasai who, for the most part, live in the same area and who are highly interconnected through kinship relations. In Laikipia, the different Maasai sections also differ somewhat in their ceremonies and traditions, and are identified with different origins (IIng'wesi, for instance, are widely associated with Meru, from which they returned to the Laikipia plateau in the early twentieth century). While *olosh* may strongly connote the parameters of Maasai 'sections', its usage is not limited strictly to these sections. One may also use the term *olosh*

le Maa to refer to the Maa speaking population as a whole. Often this is done in such a way as to imply unity among Maa speakers.

In the kinds of political discourses that I examine here, the term is mostly used on its own, leaving its exact referent undefined. However, if we consider the many ways in which *olosh* was typically used, then I suggest that we can adopt a broad definition for the term, and concurrently, for uses of the term 'community' in English. There is a clear locative component inherent in the terms 'community' and *olosh* in political discourse, insofar as they are used to refer to those in rural areas. 'Community'/*olosh* was rarely, if ever, used to describe Maasai living in Nairobi or working within government institutions, and therefore ethnicity is not sufficient grounds for inclusion. We can thus also argue that the terms introduce a distinction between 'the community'/*olosh* and those outside of it. In conversations about elections, those deemed outside of 'the community'/*olosh* were typically politicians and electoral candidates. When such politicians and candidates were originally from 'the community'/*olosh* itself, then their status as members of 'the community' was acknowledged. However, their performance as politicians was typically evaluated in relation to its benefit to 'the community'. Such individuals were therefore simultaneously framed as members of the community, to whom they were accountable, and as agents acting upon the community from a position of power and influence outside it. This ambiguity is made possible by the third function of 'the community'/*olosh* (hereby just 'the community') which is to homogenise the people living in the relevant location and present them as one entity with the same aspirations and needs. During the elections, Laikipia North constituents used the quality of the relationship between 'the community' and a political representative as a (usefully vague) benchmark for measuring the success or failure of a politician's tenure in office. If a positive relationship between 'the community' and a politician signals their success, then how is this relationship idealised discursively and enacted in practice?

In many ways, the tendency to discuss what a politician has done 'for the community' is reminiscent of discussions of patronage in Kenyan politics. For some scholars (e.g. Clapham 1982, Berman 1998, Willis et al 2018), the

relationship between those in power and those over whom they rule throughout rural Africa is cast as that between patrons and clients. Berman (1998) traces this particular form of power relation back to pre-colonial African societies, which he says were 'pervaded by relations of domination and dependence, based on patriarchal power exercised across differences of genders and generations, lineages and clans, languages and cultures' (ibid.: 310). Later, the patron/client relationship was formally institutionalised in the colonial state's exercise of indirect rule, in which European administrators appointed local African chiefs and headmen to supply the 'day-to-day presence and muscle of colonial domination' in exchange for their patronage, which often included a share in the profits of local commodity production (ibid.: 316). The result of this was that it made patron/client relations 'the fundamental mode of access to the state and its resources' as well as 'the fundamental relationship between ordinary people and those with wealth and power' (ibid.). Meanwhile, Willis et al (2018) argue that when elections were introduced in the late colonial period, they served as a space for the local politics of clientelism, claims-making and accountability. Klopp (2001) describes how President Moi used his network of 'patronage bosses', who were able to galvanise support in 'ethnic enclaves', to resist multi-party elections and build a movement for ethnic regionalism, or *majimboism*. In more recent times, Willis and Chome (2014) have argued that the promise of patronage and the importance of personal ties in political campaigning in Kenya increases participation in elections, by drawing in those who may otherwise feel alienated from the political process. We therefore have a range of literature that centres patronage and clientelism in Kenyan elections, both as a means for elites to gather support and institute control in their home areas, and as a means for ordinary voters to hold politicians to account for coming short on their patronage promises.

The language of patronage certainly featured in political discussion in Laikipia North. It does so in two key ways. On the one hand, political discussants would evaluate candidates by asking what they had done for 'the community', a tendency which I discuss further below. On the other hand, political discussants would gossip about the networks of patronage that tied particular candidates to broader political factions in Kenya, in order to situate them in the broader political

landscape. Election campaigns in Kenya are expensive, with party nomination fees alone costing upwards of 25,000 KES (or \$250; see Appendix III for a list of fees for candidates in the two main parties). In order to access the necessary resources, it is widely recognised that some political aspirants must therefore seek the support of wealthy patrons. This is rarely a transparent process, and each candidate therefore finds themselves the subject of various rumours over who might be financing their campaign. Such rumours are not limited to financial patronage but extend also to conspiracies regarding powerful figures seeking to rig elections in favour of their preferred candidate. For example, during the gubernatorial contest in Laikipia, it was rumoured that the eventual victor, Nderitu Muriithi, had been aided in his campaign by former president Mwai Kibaki, of whom he is a nephew. For his opponents in Laikipia North, this tied him to what they regarded as Kibaki's pro-Kikuyu 'tribalism'. When the Jubilee party was accused of rigging the party nominations for Laikipia Governor in favour of Muriithi, his connections to Kibaki were offered as one of the explanations regarding the party's motives. Eventually, the courts ruled that there had been electoral malpractice and the nomination was given to the incumbent governor, Joshua Irungu. Despite thereafter running as an independent candidate, Muriithi had been identified as the establishment candidate (aided somewhat by his continued support for Uhuru Kenyatta as presidential candidate).

As well as situating candidates within the national political landscape, rumours of patronage also serve to implicate candidates in local factionalism. This applied in the case of Sarah Korere, the Jubilee candidate for MP in Laikipia North, who ran, and won, against the incumbent ODM MP, Mathew Lempurkel. Although of Samburu origins, Korere had grown up among Ildigirri Maasai in the area surrounding Ilpolei, and was therefore counted among the Ildigirri *olosh*. Between 2013 and 2017, Korere had been a nominated MP for the United Republican Party (URP)¹⁵¹ before contesting the MP seat in 2017. In both her election campaign and her time as nominated MP, it is widely supposed that she was aided by Francis ole Kaparo, a seasoned political veteran, former Speaker of

¹⁵¹ Before its assimilation into the Jubilee Party.

the National Assembly and former chairman of the URP. Kaparo is also from the Ildigirri section. In order to understand the implications of Korere's ties to Kaparo, it is necessary to first understand the long-running role Kaparo has played in the relationship between Laikipia North and the operations of central government. Kaparo was born near Dol Dol in the 1950s. A nephew to the Ildigirri chief, Kaskas Kaparo, he became one of a handful of children from the area to attend school, following which he studied for a law degree at the University of Nairobi and of the National Assembly in 1993. He held this position until 2008, and was admitted to the bar.¹⁵² He successfully ran for parliament in 1988 for Laikipia East constituency, in what was then a one-party state. Following this, he served in various ministerial posts in the Moi government before being appointed Speaker since appointed Chairman of the National Cohesion and Integration Commission of Kenya.¹⁵³

For many older IIng'wesi, the Kaparo family seem to have been at the source of a political rift between the IIng'wesi and Ildigirri since the colonial period. A story that I heard frequently in interviews and conversations with IIng'wesi elders describes how an Ildigirri chief during the 1950s, Kaskas Kaparo, conspired with the paramount chief, ole Kosigiri, to 'cheat' the IIng'wesi chief, Tugendei, into giving the Ildigirri a portion of IIng'wesi territory in exchange for an Ildigirri bride (I18). Again, the story ought to be interpreted as rumour, rather than a presentation of fact. It is difficult to say whether the sense of grievance over this 'betrayal' emerged before or after Francis ole Kaparo became a well-known figure. However, the story is sometimes cited by older IIng'wesi as proof of the untrustworthiness of either Kaparo or the Ildigirri in political matters. For these Kaparo skeptics, Lekorere's candidature represented a continuation of the factions that had first started to emerge under the chieftancy of Kaskas Kaparo. Having risen to influence and power under Kaparo's patronage, many IIng'wesi

¹⁵² Julius Sigei. 2011. Yes, I'm fit to run for highest office in the land, says Kaparo. *Daily Nation*. August 12. Accessible at: <https://www.nation.co.ke/news/politics/1064-1218102-gtvxap/index.html>.

¹⁵³ NCIC, 2018. Hon. Francis Ole Kaparo, Commission Chairman. Accessed on October 27, 2018 at: <http://www.cohesion.or.ke/index.php/about-us/commissioners/24-commissioners/168-hon-francis-ole-kaparo-commission-chairman#>

identified Sarah Lekorere both with these factions and the political elite to which Kaparo belonged. Be that as it may, however, she won the 2017 general election, largely because of her reputation as a socially progressive candidate committed to containing the disorder that had affected the region that year (see below) (Fox 2018).

However, the work of political rumour in Laikipia North also presents alternative ways of framing relationships between ‘the community’ and politicians than that offered by the notion of patronage. One way in which it does so is by rendering political candidates familiar to their voters, and essentially including them within a common moral identity, and therefore leaving them accountable to moral identity’s standards for ethical reputation. This, in turn, is said to give ordinary citizens power over their political representatives. In one of my interviews (I18), a contemporary of Kaparo from Ilng’wesi told of how he and Kaparo had competed in a singing competition, known as *eoko*, at a circumcision ceremony. The *eoko* took place in a home in the remote area of Arjiju and was attended by eight other elders. Kaparo was far from the hierarchies and power plays of Nairobi’s political elite. Immersed in the Maasai milieu of his home constituency, Kaparo’s status relative to those around him would have been significantly flattened as he sat to drink *muratina*¹⁵⁴ with his age-mates. A singing competition, with its potential for defeat and mild embarrassment, would have diminished Kaparo further in the eyes of his acquaintances. Ultimately, Kaparo lost the contest. Kaparo’s competitor described how, having defeated Kaparo at *eoko*, he had ‘become his brother because I had defeated him.’ The interviewee claimed to have used this opportunity to urge Kaparo, who was then an MP, to lobby for the return of the old boundary between Laikipia and Isiolo counties (which had shifted to concede territory to Isiolo) and to retrieve the livestock that had been stolen from Laikipia North by Samburu morans. Eventually, so the story goes, the old Laikipia boundary was returned to its former state.

¹⁵⁴ A beer made from honey and aloe vera.

Whether or not it is true, the story reveals how, even within the autocratic operations of the 'bureaucratic-executive' state (Branch and Cheeseman 2006), the space of interpersonal relations and the interface between the state and pastoral village life reveal themselves as avenues for political contestation. Stories like this regarding notable political actors render them as ordinary members of 'the community', to whom they are accountable and in which they are subjects of the same moral identity. These stories also enable ordinary citizens to dispense political legitimacy in such a way that politicians themselves have little power over.

At various points during political campaigning season in 2017, it appeared that political candidates tried to assert some degree of control over the rumours that could either legitimise or deligitimise their candidacy. This was notable in the campaigns for the Laikipia North MP seat. The incumbent MP since 2013 had been Mathew Lempurkel, the ODM¹⁵⁵ politician of Samburu origin. His main rival, Sarah Lekorere, discussed above, was the daughter of a Samburu landowner who had grown up among Ildigirri. She contested the seat on the Jubilee Party ticket. Between his election in 2013 and 2017, Lempurkel had been linked to the wave of Samburu ranch invasions and cattle raids that had taken place in Laikipia in that time. He was arrested for incitement to violence, and even the murder of British rancher Tristan Voorspuy, although, crucially, these charges were later dropped, and some interpreted the charges as evidence of political persecution (I6). While many pastoralists in Laikipia North appeared sympathetic to his confrontations with Laikipia's white settler community, some were suspicious that he was also behind Samburu attacks on IIng'wesi homesteads. Although he posed as a staunch defender of pastoralist and Maa-speaker interests, his detractors accused him of willing Samburu expansion into Laikipia and attempting to displace Maasai residents by sponsoring violent cattle raids by Samburu morans.

By contrast, Lekorere was viewed by many as a moderate, whose main promises consisted of the restoration of law and order in Laikipia North and the protection

¹⁵⁵ A party led by opposition leader, Raila Odinga, which later combined with others to form the NASA coalition.

of private property. While she proved particularly popular among the Ildigirri Maasai, among whom she had been raised¹⁵⁶, as well as the white settler community and other violence-averse constituents, her critics accused her of serving as a puppet for Francis ole Kaparo (as outlined above). It was the conflict between Lempurkel and Lekorere, and the values they were perceived to represent that dominated discussions around the race for the Laikipia North MP seat.

The race between these two candidates lent itself to the emergence of two competing narratives that gave force to their political profiles. While Lekorere was the female pastoralist who had overcome gendered prejudice in order to engage in Uhuru Kenyatta's development-focused political agenda, Lempurkel was the poor pastoralist from a minority Samburu clan fighting to save his people, the Maa nation, from historical land injustices. Each candidate was and continues to be the subject of narratives that tie them to factions at both a national and local level, and that portray them as either disruptors or continuations of historical trends. I have already outlined the rumours regarding Lekorere's ties to Kaparo and the Jubilee party establishment. However, these narratives were by no means set in stone, and had to be actively maintained in response to events on the ground, and potentially even in order to obscure genuine policy agendas. Throughout the elections, it often appeared as if political candidates sought to deliberately sabotage the narratives of their opponents. All of this was particularly clear in relation to the incidents of violence that took place in settlements throughout Laikipia during the elections.

Much of the violence noted by the media, namely 'invasions' by Samburu and Pokot pastoralists on private ranches and smallholding farms, was concentrated in areas further west than the former Mukogodo reserve, particularly in areas close to Rumuruti and the northwest of Laikipia County. However, there were several incidents in which morans (assumed to be Samburu) attacked settlements inhabited by IIng'wesi, such as at Anadungoro, Lukosero, Arjiju, Kiwanja Ndege

¹⁵⁶ The Lekorere family are regarded to be Samburu.

and Dol Dol. In the aftermath of many of these attacks, the identities of the culprits remained unknown for some time. This left a vacuum in which speculation and rumour thrived, and political candidates and their runners, fixers and ambassadors made the most of it by attempting to spin the account of each attack in their favour. To illustrate, I give an example from my fieldwork.

On the 31st of March 2017, I was sitting in a bar in the village of Kiwanja Ndege in Laikipia North after a day of interviewing in nearby homesteads. Two days prior, there had been an attack on a nearby homestead, in which roughly sixty goats had been stolen. I had been discussing the likely culprits with the bar's other clients. Most of the people involved in the discussion assumed the attack had been carried out by Samburu morans¹⁵⁷, as part of a series of attacks by Samburu morans on IIng'wesi homes and settlements since February that year. As the conversation progressed, an employee of Lempurkel arrived, ordered a drink, and joined us. Upon hearing the topic of conversation, he explained how he had spent the last couple of days with a group of IIng'wesi morans who had set off in pursuit of the stolen animals. It was at this point that he asserted that the Samburu raiders had been assisted by morans from the Mukogodo Maasai, or Yaaku. He claimed to have found fifteen goats in Mukogodo homesteads while pursuing the thieves. He further explained how Mukogodo had been involved in many of the recent livestock raids, even posing as Samburu in order to deceive their IIng'wesi victims. On occasion, he continued, the Mukogodo thieves even enlisted the help of Samburu morans in stealing animals from IIng'wesi, in order to avoid blame.

The intervention of Lempurkel's employee, whom I will call Peter, was likely carried out in order to absolve Lempurkel of responsibility for the attacks. This is not necessarily to say that Peter was lying. However, the timing and setting of his comments does raise the question of whether or not they served a political purpose. Even at this point, Lempurkel was suspected by many to have been behind the attacks in some way or another. While at rallies in Maasai areas he spoke of the need to defend pastoralism and the Maa nation as a whole, when in

¹⁵⁷ 'Morans' is a commonly used English term for *ilmurran* – members of the 'warrior' age grade, which young men join following circumcision, in Maa-speaking communities.

predominately Samburu areas his speeches allegedly took a different tone. One of my interviewees recalled attending a meeting in Ol Donyo Nyiro, Lempurkel's home, in which Lempurkel told his predominately Samburu audience: "No children should suffer from mosquitoes' disease. Vote for me and I will bring you to the land where there is no disease" (I18). This was a clear reference to Laikipia, which owing to its high altitude is free of malaria and other mosquito-borne diseases (unlike lowland parts of Samburu and Isiolo counties). My respondent argued that Lempurkel had incited Samburu morans to invade Laikipia, pledging to both fund their invasions and protect them from legal repercussions as long as they registered as voters in his constituency and gave him their votes. This echoes many of the allegations that have been directed towards Lempurkel by others since. Although disinterested and unbiased opinions are difficult to come by on the matter, the anonymous 'Cattle Barons' report released in May 2017, based on a number of interviews with Pokot, Samburu and Laikipia Maasai respondents, makes the same accusations (Anonymous 2017).

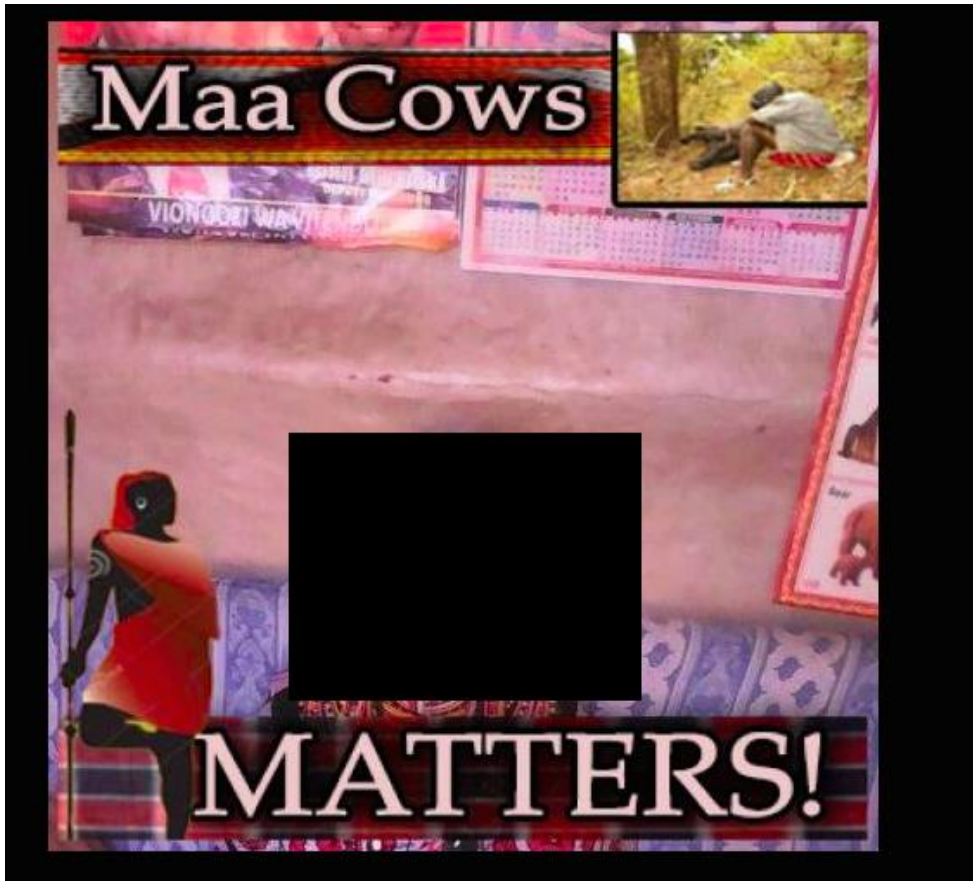
Peter's version of events, of course, tells a different story. It appeared to absolve Lempurkel of responsibility for recent animal thefts, reducing the incidents from a major expansionist conspiracy to a localised grudge between neighbouring Maasai sections. His account is also plausible. As I discuss in the next chapter, the various 'ranch invasions', stock thefts and attacks on homesteads that constituted the Laikipia crisis were often lumped together as if part of the same process, or even conspiracy. Ultimately, the lack of concrete information about the culprits of animal thefts and homestead raids in the immediate aftermath of such attacks enables politically interested actors to manipulate the truth, without having to stretch it particularly far. On occasion, ordinary voters will make their own minds up about the causes of these attacks in such a way that reflects their voting intentions. On the 15th of May, for instance, 180 goats were stolen from an IIng'wesi homestead in Kantana. I was staying in an IIng'wesi *boma* at the time, around twenty kilometres from the scene of the crime. Upon hearing the news, my hosts were quickly divided as to whether the raid had been organised by Lempurkel or organised by supporters of Lekorere seeking to discredit Lempurkel's campaign.

In this manner, the general election became a competition between narratives, and the myths and rumours that either supported or debunked them. These narratives, as observed in the previous example, even operated independently of the people whom they were supposed to serve, as they were adopted, adapted and used to interpret events on the ground by ordinary people with little involvement in political campaigning. As we have seen, however, political actors appear to have attempted to exercise some control over them. These narratives also served to position political candidates in relation to moral identity, by asserting whether or not they really met the standards for inclusion within ‘the community’, or for ethical reputation. Rumours that tied candidates to livestock raids, for instance, essentially served as claims that they were actively working against the community, and also that they were willing to violate taboos regarding livestock theft against those in one’s own community (which I outline in Chapter Six).

In doing so, such discussions negotiated who and what constituted ‘the community’, what its values were, and where its boundaries lay. In many instances, political discourse in Laikipia North attempted to extend the boundaries of ‘the community’ beyond that of any particular ethnic group. Due to the minority status of Laikipia’s non-Kikuyu ethnic groups, ‘minority alliances’ are often crucial for electoral victory in the County (Fox 2018). Lempurkel’s campaign relied strongly on the idea of a unified pastoralist front against white settler interests. His campaign literature and merchandise sported the slogan ‘*nkauwo ee nkishu*’, or *sword of the cattle*, in reference to his militant defence of pastoralist rights in Laikipia (see Picture 1). The police campaigns against ‘ranch invasions’ in Laikipia helped to stir this sense of pastoralist unity in the face of what was perceived by many to be police brutality and state persecution. However, there was no unanimous sense of how extensive this solidarity ought to be. In some cases, it appeared to extend as far as the ‘Maa nation’. Following the shooting of (allegedly) three hundred livestock in Laikipia by police, a Facebook and Twitter hashtag, #MaaCowsMatter, as well as a Facebook profile photo ‘frame’ depicting the same slogan, emerged on social media (see Picture 2). The events themselves were followed by protests on the part of pastoralists in Nairobi and Nanyuki. The

slogan, the origins of which are unclear, is a direct reference to the Black Lives Matter campaign in the United States, which protests police violence against black people, and particular the shooting of unarmed black men. The political discourse generated by these events therefore attempted to base political community upon the idea of an embattled pastoralist identity, generated by the Kenyan state's hostility towards pastoralism, which, as I explored in Chapter Four, has its roots in the colonial period.

For many, however, this was an unconvincing foundation for a unified political community. As outlined previously, there were suspicions that Lempurkel had been responsible for directing Samburu attacks against IIng'wesi households, and these attacks themselves served to undermine calls for a unified Maa political community. This was later demonstrated in the elections, when Lekorere, who had campaigned as a candidate for all communities in Laikipia, and not just pastoralists, won with 58% of the vote. While appeals to a common pastoralist moral identity succeeded in galvanising a political community broader than that enabled by 'political tribalism', this political community was ultimately unstable. However, as the political rifts between Laikipia Maasai supporters of Kaparo and those who oppose him demonstrate, political communities founded on non-ethnic moral identities are not necessarily any less stable than those founded on an ethnic basis. Moreover, as we see in the next section, Lekorere's own attempts at building an 'ethnic coalition' seem to have met with relative success.



Picture 1: A 'Maa Cows Matter' Facebook 'frame'



Picture 2: Mathew Lempurkel campaign t-shirt

5.4.2. Use of 'community' to discuss the state

Political discussion that invoked ideas of patronage and accountability to 'the community' were not exclusively concerned with parochial concerns, such as who counted as 'the community', or whether or not political candidates had demonstrated sufficient willingness to patronise 'the community'. The language of community was also used to pose valid questions and critiques of the state. In the gubernatorial race, the two frontrunners in Laikipia North were the incumbent Governor of Laikipia, Joshua Irungu of the Jubilee Party, and Nderitu Muriithi, who initially stood for the Jubilee ticket and later, ran, and won, as an independent candidate. Both candidates had originally vied for the Jubilee ticket, and the race continued to stir controversy from the Jubilee primaries until long after Muriithi eventually won the election. The primaries, held on April 21, saw the initial victory of Irungu, however his nomination was revoked after the Jubilee party's Appeals Tribunal nullified the votes from the Laikipia North constituency.¹⁵⁸ According to the Tribunal, this was because they had found an extra 22,000 votes from Laikipia North, which could not be accounted for, in Irungu's favour. Irungu's opponents also claimed that vehicles carrying armed men had travelled to polling stations throughout Laikipia North in order to intimidate voters. Although, according to my own sources, there is no evidence that this happened, in the absence of broadcast media or video recordings at the polling stations, the rumour was allowed to disseminate and served to confirm Irungu's opponents' suspicions of electoral malpractice. On the day of the nominations, there also appeared to be a shortage of ballot papers, causing protests at several polling stations in Laikipia North, which threatened to turn violent (according to eye-witnesses; I6).

The Jubilee party's nullification of the Laikipia North vote provoked mass protest. Pro-Irungu campaigners in Laikipia North organised private *matatu*¹⁵⁹ transport to ferry voters to Nairobi, where they protested their mass disenfranchisement

¹⁵⁸ The Standard, 2017. Laikipia residents yet to know their Jubilee Gubernatorial aspirant. May 8. Available at: <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001238960/laikipia-residents-yet-to-know-their-jubilee-gubernatorial-aspirant>

¹⁵⁹ A minibus used in public transport.

outside State House, the residence of the President of Kenya. In addition to anger at the removal of their right to participation in the Jubilee primaries, many on the Irungu side suspected that the nomination was being rigged by the Jubilee establishment, as Muriithi is nephew of former president Mwai Kibaki, while Irungu, those in Laikipia North argued, had made himself unpopular with the Kikuyu elite by patronising the Maasai community during his time in office (I elaborate on this below). By rejecting the Laikipia North vote, upon which Irungu had been reliant for his nomination, Jubilee deemed Muriithi to have won the nomination, which for many Laikipia Maasai confirmed that their preference was being ignored in favour of a candidate more popular with Laikipia's Kikuyu population. Irungu brought the case to the Court of Appeal, who eventually overturned the nullification of the Laikipia North vote and returned the nomination to the incumbent. Muriithi, dissatisfied with this result, campaigned as an independent candidate for the gubernatorial election, although he continued to affiliate himself unofficially with Jubilee and Uhuru Kenyatta's presidency campaign.

The two candidates, in the eyes of Laikipia North constituents, represented two competing visions for political leadership. Supporters of Irungu pointed to the fact that he had employed several Maasai men in his administration, thus demonstrating commitment to multi-ethnic politics and patronage of the Laikipia Maasai community. As one of my acquaintances put it, 'Irungu employed eight members of our community, he is not a tribalist like other Kikuyu and has been very good to us actually' (I6). During his election campaign in 2013, he appeared to have targeted the vote in Laikipia North by pledging to 'develop the areas surrounding the conservancies', almost all of which are located in Laikipia North and inhabited by pastoralists. It is likely that his interest in doing so was genuine; in previous years, he had worked as a co-ordinator for Laikipia's Semi Arid and Rural Development programme, which gave him both contacts and experience in working in pastoralist areas.¹⁶⁰ However, his opponents, as well as his more

¹⁶⁰ Daily Nation, 2013. Development comes ahead of party politics in Laikipia, January 7. Available at: <https://www.nation.co.ke/news/politics/Laikipia-County/1064-1659114-bmeqyvz/index.html>

cynical supporters, argued that his patronisation of Laikipia Maasai was due to a relative lack of support outside of Laikipia North.

Further, those in support of Muriithi argued that Irungu had done nothing to develop infrastructure or services in Laikipia North, and that Muriithi was more likely to prove effective in this regard. For these supporters, Irungu's patronage of Maasai bureaucrats was nothing more than a superficial gesture intended to pander to the voter base upon which he relied for electoral victory. Muriithi had also positioned himself as the law and order candidate, pledging to restore stability to pastoralist areas. Interestingly, however, some of the Lempurkel supporters that I spoke to said that they intended to vote for Muriithi, indicating that the fault lines in debates around the security crisis in Laikipia did not necessarily extend seamlessly into debates around the gubernatorial race (although many of Lempurkel's closest allies among the IIng'wesi were staunchly in favour of Irungu).

While the language of 'community' was used in these debates, it often appeared to assert a sense of accountability and familiarity in promoting non-parochial interests, rather than representing ethnic or intra-ethnic factionalism. By evaluating Irungu's track record in serving 'the community', IIng'wesi discussants were also debating the forms which political patronage should take, and the role that the state ought to play in regional development. Perhaps this is primarily indicative of the fact that the above discussions took place between IIng'wesi, rather than between members of communities competing for state patronage. However, it does suggest that the invocation of 'community', which I believe to be rooted in moral identity, serves as a useful vernacular for debating broader political issues than those serving 'community' interests. To some extent, this contrasts accounts of identity politics in contemporary Kenya which regard the invocation of community as a means of entrenching local identities and pursuing exclusively parochial interests (e.g. Lynch 2016).

5.5. *From moral ethnicity to moral identity*

The discussions outlined above highlight some of the key uses and pitfalls of moral identity in analysing the politics of Laikipia North. When evaluating political candidates in the run up to the 2017 election, IIng'wesi tended to use narrative and rumour, as well as direct political debate, to discuss whether or not the candidate had been or would be 'good to the community'. Being 'good to the community' indexes notions of patronage, as well as the obligations of political representatives as intermediaries between 'the community' and the resources of the state. This kind of language is therefore very similar to the ways in which IIng'wesi interviewees spoke of colonial chiefs (see Chapter Four), and amounts to what I consider to be the vernacular of moral identity. It is also not dissimilar from the language of Lonsdale's (1992, 1994) moral ethnicity. In 2017, the values and priorities of an imagined community were debated and then assessed against the merits of a candidate perceived to be either external to the community, or a representative to be sent 'away' to the urban centres of power.

However, it is the point at which these debates generate 'ethnicity' that I depart from 'moral ethnicity'. The idea that the moral or political debate can take place at the level of the ethnic group (see the discussion of moral ethnicity in the Introduction) clearly obscures the divisions and relations of power that permeate political debate in rural areas. In the discussions in which I participated involving individuals of different age groups, it was usually seen as disrespectful for those of younger age groups to argue with those two age groups or more above them, which meant that elders were permitted to speak freely while *morans* could only express their disagreements in private or among themselves. Elders also wield considerable power on a wider scale than group discussions. For instance, in February I was told that a group of Ildigirri elders had visited Kiwanja Ndege (a primarily IIng'wesi settlement) to announce that they had cursed anyone who did not vote for Sarah Lekorere – a power which only older men are capable of wielding, and the force of which carries much further than opinions expressed in a group discussion. As well as age, the power to speak is also defined to a significant degree by gender. With the exception of discussions that featured

urban-based, educated IIn'gesi women, the discussions in which I was involved rarely included women (as men often prefer to associate in spaces separate from women), although women frequently discuss political matters among themselves. When discussion groups were more mixed, women rarely adopted an argumentative stance, with men dominating discussion largely unchallenged.

Further, as we saw in attempts to build a pastoralist political community, the language of moral identity was used to try and construct political communities broader than that of the ethnic group. That is not to suggest that these efforts were always successful. We have seen how efforts to build a sense of Maa unity in Laikipia were ultimately undermined by conflict between Laikipia Maasai and Samburu over access to grazing on IIn'gesi conservancy and due to repeated livestock raids by Samburu morans on IIn'gesi households. These attacks were widely attributed to incitement by Mathew Lempurkel. These attacks and his divisive rhetoric likely cost him the election. As I explore in the next chapter, these raids are widely condemned by IIn'gesi, and cattle rustling in general has gradually come to be externalised from IIn'gesi moral identity. While Lempurke's appeal to a pastoralist moral identity ultimately failed, Sarah Lekorere's victory may have been due to her own success in building an alternative alliance through appeals to 'community' and moral identity.

As the daughter of a ranch owner, Lekorere asserted her role as a 'broker' figure in mediating the relationship between pastoralists and neighbouring landowners, fostering a voting alliance between Laikipia North's pastoralist and white settler communities in opposition to Lempurkel's militancy and divisiveness (Fox 2018). The possibility of such an alliance rests equally on appeals to moral identity. When I spoke to some of my IIn'gesi acquaintances about how they felt about their white settler neighbours, many responded in a way that appealed to notions of community. While many described white settlers with whom they felt they had a poor relationship as doing 'nothing for the community', one interviewee said of the IIn'gesi's more positive relationships with Borana, Lolldaiga and Lewa conservancies that 'those whites are now part of IIn'gesi community, because they are our neighbours' (I12). Indeed, during the drought of 2017, while IIn'gesi

invaded and grazed their animals on Ole Naishu ranch, the owners of whom were perceived to be antagonistic towards them, Borana, Lolldaiga and Lewa were spared mass occupations. According to one interviewee, this was because of the effort they made to give grazing concessions and assistance of various kinds during periods of drought (I6). There is a sense then, that one can build 'community' outside of ethnicity through mutual reciprocity, which is reminiscent of IIng'wesi practice with regards to their moral economy (interlinked as this is with moral identity; see Chapter Three). The language of 'community' is therefore not just used to evaluate the legitimacy of politicians' claims to representing IIng'wesi constituencies, but also to set criteria for neighbourliness, upon which meaningful political alliances and relations of reciprocal trust and exchange can be founded.

While the process of building political communities beyond ethnic groups is evidently fraught, founding a distinct political community on the basis of Laikipia Maasai or IIng'wesi *ethnicity* is no more straight forward, with the community split along several axes. For instance, the members of the two IIng'wesi group ranches, IIng'wesi and Makurian (often referred to as IIng'wesi 1 and IIng'wesi 2) are known to disagree on the allocation of resources, such as benefits from sand mining (which is mostly carried out in Makurian) and from conservancy-based tourism (which mostly takes place in IIng'wesi, as this group ranch neighbours two high-end conservancies, Borana and Lewa, both of whom have assisted IIng'wesi group ranch in setting up a conservancy of their own). This cleavage has led to two distinct sets of elites and influential elders within the IIng'wesi community from whom political candidates can seek approval in order to build their legitimacy (I1, I13, I7).

Even within age-sets, at the very core of which lies an ideal of unity and egalitarian solidarity, and which arguably provide the most obvious domain in which the 'debates' of 'moral ethnicity' could take place, owing to the fact that men of the same age set form close bonds and frequently spent time together, elections have proven divisive. For instance, during the 2013 general elections, there were

significant divisions within the *Ilmerishari*¹⁶¹ age set over whom they should collectively support for the MP seat. While one faction pledged their support to John Letai, a well-known pastoralist advocate, public administrator and intellectual who contested the seat on a URP ticket, the other threw their weight behind Mathew Lempurkel. These divisions were so deeply felt that they affected the selection of Ilmerishari's *ilaiguanak*, or age set leaders. While, apparently, these are usually selected from the Legei or Piroris families, today's Ilmerishari *ilaiguanak* are from the Legei and Mepukori families – reflecting the fact that internal divisions disrupted historic allegiances (I6). In this instance, not only did it prove impossible to unify the age set behind one electoral candidate, but disagreements over politics effectively restructured the community base from which, in accounts of 'political tribalism' or ethnic citizenship, the resolution of debates usually extend legitimacy to political representatives.

These examples all suggest that the process of building political community using the vernacular of moral identity is equally fraught, and prone to failure, at all levels, including that of the ethnic group. It is for these reasons that I have sought to move beyond 'ethnicity' in exploring the analytical validity of moral identity. It is not that ethnicity played no role in the 2017 General Elections. I frequently heard references to Kikuyu conspiracies to rig the election, or the idea that the Laikipia Maasai voted as a homogenous block. However, my point is that ethnicity is merely one register among many for the political articulation of moral identity, and not one that is necessarily more stable or 'natural' than any other.

Conclusion

What we have seen above is that the language of moral identity was embedded in political discussion in Laikipia North and among IIng'wesi during the 2017 elections. However, the 'imagined communities' that Lonsdale (1992) and Ndegwa (1997) regard as providing both the platform and space for these debates, as well as the source of political legitimacy in Kenyan politics, frequently appear fragile, fractured and, at times, ephemeral. While Lekorere was able to build a

¹⁶¹ The most recent age set to graduate to junior elderhood, in 2018.

successful alliance of pastoralists and land-owners to win her campaign to become MP for Laikipia North, this failed to convince over 40% of her constituents. Lempurkel's attempt to build a broad pastoralist coalition against white settler interests was regarded by many as a smokescreen for ethnic animosity and Samburu expansionism. Political divisions regarding the two candidates appeared to run directly through 'ethnic units' at various scales, whether this was the Laikipia Maasai as a whole, the Iln'gesi, and in the case of previous elections, even individual age-sets. It is therefore difficult to argue that the ethnic community, however imagined, formed any kind of stable basis for a political community.

Conversely, I think we can argue that Iln'gesi, among others, deploy the language of moral identity to make political claims and to express political aspirations that go beyond parochial interests, and to make locally meaningful commentaries regarding the appropriate role of the state and political leadership. We see this particularly in the use of 'community' to hold political representatives, and others, to account using a set of values perceived to be held in common by a political constituency. The appeal to 'community', which I have argued to be rooted in moral identity, does little to foster unity on political matters, but perhaps that is not the point. It provides a meaningful anchor with which people can ground meaningful critique and express stark disagreements. The debates concerning the gubernatorial race between Joshua Irungu and Nderitu Muriithi are an excellent example of this. 'Community' was deployed not so much to homogenise community interests, but to serve as a yardstick for the evaluation of candidates, and a vantage point from which to examine what it is that politicians ought to be doing when in power. In this sense, moral identity is a means of looking outwards, at the state, rather than exclusively inwards at the interests of 'the community'.

The elections therefore provided an opportunity for Iln'gesi and others to contest how their political community should be constituted, and to examine how their layered identities might align with particular political promises or potential alliances. In the process, it appears that they found several possibilities, and there was never any unanimity as to which direction the Iln'gesi should take

themselves in this regard. To say that IIng'wesi subscribe to a particular moral identity is not, therefore, to argue that this identity is fixed or to define its content on the political stage. Rather, moral identity, forms the basis of multiple, transient and creative engagements with other identity groups, including the wider identity groups within which IIng'wesi are nested, as well as the state.

Finally, understanding the operation of moral identity politically has implications for how we anticipate the political future of pastoralism. As I discussed above, the Kenyan state and its political actors are taking a greater interest in pastoralism and pastoralists as a political community (as discussed above), a trend that may well have future policy implications. Understanding how pastoralist groups appeal to one another to form broad (albeit tentative) political alliances is crucial in accounting for their own agency in this process. While further research is perhaps needed in this area, particularly on a wider geographical scale, I hope that this chapter will at least have started in the right direction by emphasising the alliance-building potential of moral identity.

Chapter Six – *Empurore oonkishu*: Cattle rustling and moral identity in Laikipia

“For me, I know there’s nothing as sweet as cattle rustling because it’s the only thing that makes you shiver like when you were circumcised. Cattle rustling will even make you fight with the most respected warriors.”

- Former Ilng’wesi cattle rustler of the *ilmeoli* age set (GI3).

In Kenya, cattle rustling is a phenomenon closely associated with pastoralists, and a cause of considerable anguish among state officials, media, landowners and certain academics (e.g. Hendrickson et al 1996, Fleisher 1998, Gray et al 2003, Mkutu 2006, Gleditsch 2009). Much of the commentary from these quarters fails to do justice to the variety of forms that cattle rustling can take, as well as the varied purposes for which they are carried out. This is partly because a diverse array of practices, some more violent, criminal or even oriented towards ‘ethnic cleansing’ than others, typically get ‘lumped together and labelled as ‘cattle rustling’ or ‘cattle raiding’ (Greiner 2013: 217). While some research has been done on historical changes in the practice of cattle rustling, often tinged with narratives of moral decline and increased violence, certain historical accounts set up too stark a division between earlier forms from the pre-colonial and early colonial era, and ‘modernised’ forms that serve the ends of profit-making and political boundary-making or voter displacement (e.g. Hendrickson et al 1996, Fleisher 1998, Greiner 2013). Moreover, little research has been done to gather the perspectives of cattle rustlers themselves. As I outline below, this is, in part, because many researchers take a detached, ‘top-down’ view of cattle rustling as a means of redistributing and channelling wealth in particular ways, or one that focuses on inter-group dynamics, ignoring the meaning which rustlers themselves invest in rustling practices. Throughout this chapter, I explore how cattle rustling

offers a means for IIng'wesi morans¹⁶² to achieve ethical reputation, as well as a discursive focal point for negotiating the standards of ethical reputation and lauding the moral qualities of the ideal moran. The significance which IIng'wesi attach to cattle rustling therefore emerges from its role in the production of the moral identity of morans.

I begin this chapter by categorising the different forms of cattle rustling that have been identified in academic research. I do so by first outlining the main scholarly approaches to cattle rustling, before discerning from these varied accounts the different kinds of raiding practices in which pastoralists appear to engage, or to have engaged, throughout East Africa. I argue that these categories do not represent discrete sets of practices, between which pastoralists have 'transitioned' historically according to prevailing circumstances. Rather, they represent ideal types, features of which may be more or less present in certain raids, and which become more or less accentuated depending on the perspective used to analyse raids. Following this, I explore the perspectives of IIng'wesi on cattle rustling, in order to give a sense of what they feel to be the most important aspects of the practice. I do so by presenting the lyrics of songs used to 'praise' those who have stolen livestock and other animals¹⁶³, known as *repeta*. *Repeta* songs offer not only a record of past thefts, but are used to extol the qualities of the ideal moran. I analyse lyrics from songs composed by several age sets in order to explore what these ideal qualities and concerns are, how they are conveyed, how they are contested and negotiated, and how they have changed over time. These songs also express wider community concerns, such as the reclamation of the colonised landscape, and posit morans as essential actors in addressing those concerns. These songs indicate that cattle rustling offers a means for IIng'wesi to engage with and produce various aspects of moran moral identity –namely, standards for ethical reputation, the normative morality of those who identify as

¹⁶² Cattle rustling is widely regarded by IIng'wesi and other Maa-speakers as a moran prerogative.

¹⁶³ Although I refer to 'cattle rustling', 'cattle raiding' and 'livestock raiding' throughout this chapter, this is mostly to reflect terms frequently used in the academic literature. In Laikipia, at least, sheep and goats are also commonly stolen in raids and acts of stock theft.

morans, and the celebration of idealised moran virtues – as much it is a means of acquiring stock.

Following this, I present a history of cattle rustling in Laikipia over the course of the twentieth century, particularly among IIng'wesi. Throughout this period, IIng'wesi practised a form of cattle rustling which others have tended to describe as 'stock theft' (Waller 1999: 36, Anderson 1986), although IIng'wesi themselves tend to use the term 'cattle rustling' when speaking in English. According to Waller (1999: 36), stock theft (*empurore*) is distinguished from raids (*inchorin*) in Maasai thinking. Raids (*inchorin*) are (or were) openly planned and sanctioned, while stock theft (*empurore*) is carried out secretly and is largely unauthorised by elders. It tends to consist of small groups of moran stealing relatively small numbers of animals in a discreet and relatively non-violent fashion. In Laikipia, these thefts primarily involve stealing from white-owned farms. While there has been variation in how the material proceeds from stock theft were used, as well as in the scale of stock theft operations, stock thieves themselves emphasise a purpose for stock theft that has remained, until recently, remarkably uniform despite considerable political and economic change. They argue that stock theft is primarily performative, and carried out in order to demonstrate to others that they possess the ideal qualities and virtues of the Maasai moran, although sometimes wealth accrual is also posited as a secondary purpose, particularly among the generation that were responsible for recovering IIng'wesi herds following their period in Mt Kenya.

The most significant change, according to IIng'wesi, is the recent decline of stock theft (*empurore*) among their morans. They attribute this to the recent popularity of school education, which takes up most of the morans' time and has led to a change both in how moran moral identity is idealised and the role they are expected to play in the community. Taking a moral identity-centred approach thus leads to the opposite view of what I call the 'modernisation thesis', which posits that certain features of modernity have served to make cattle rustling more violent and 'predatory' (e.g. Hendrickson et al 1996). In the case of IIng'wesi, the shifting moral identity of the 'modern moran' appears to be leading to a decline of cattle

rustling altogether, as well as a social criminalisation of the rustling that does occur. I thus conclude the chapter by reflecting on the account of cattle rustling that results from my approach, and argue that future research on other forms of cattle rustling, particularly those that are more violent, could benefit from its application.

In presenting a *longue durée* account of cattle rustling in Laikipia that begins in the early twentieth century, this chapter upsets the chronological order in which chapters have been arranged thus far. I have put it at the end of this dissertation because it brings together many of the themes and conclusions offered in the previous chapters. Chapter Three attempted to make the case for moral identity as a concept that emerges from the history of IIng'wesi and the ways in which my IIng'wesi interlocutors expressed the value of pastoral livelihoods. Chapter Four sought to examine the impact of colonisation on IIng'wesi moral identity. Chapter Five then examined the operation of these legacies in the 2017 General election. In essence, the previous chapters used key moments in the history of IIng'wesi moral identity in order to historicise it and to flesh out the concept into a more robust theoretical framework. This chapter differs from those previous insofar as it seeks to apply some of the insights that I think moral identity has to offer to a more specific set of issues, namely cattle rustling and the idealisation of moranhood, over a longer period of time. Further, it relies upon the contextual information provided in other chapters, such as the IIng'wesi return to pastoralism in Chapter Three, the account of colonisation and white settlement in Chapter Four, and the political prominence given to pastoral violence, as well as the internal divisions and contestations of IIng'wesi moral identity, that I highlighted in Chapter Five.

6.1. From redistributive to predatory raids: identifying different forms of cattle rustling amidst crisis narratives

6.1.1. Categories of cattle rustling

The practice of cattle rustling in Kenya is often traced back to the large-scale cattle raids prevalent throughout pre-colonial East Africa. Among many pastoralist

ethnic groups, large-scale organised raids against outsiders were a means for herd and territorial expansion, typically carried out by morans (or their equivalents) with the consultation of elders and the blessing of *iloibonok* or other ritual leaders (Anderson 1986: 402). These are the kinds of raids that in Maa are referred to as *inchorin*. Hendrickson et al (1996) regard such raids as relatively benign, arguing that they served an important role in re-distributing wealth, aiding herd recovery after drought, brokering peace agreements among neighbouring pastoral groups and in offering young men the chance to accumulate social and symbolic capital. Further, they argue that raiding parties were bound by strict rules concerning the use of violence, the 'extreme' use of which was not 'acceptable', particularly against women and children. This particular view of pre-colonial raiding practices suggests a degree of stasis or equilibrium in the long term, as raids allowed poorer pastoralist groups and households to rebuild their herds and prevent destitution. I elaborate on this further below, however, for now I will regard this form of raiding as an 'ideal type'¹⁶⁴ and assign it a category of its own: 'redistributive raiding'.

Contrary to Hendrickson et al's characterisation, pre-colonial raids were not merely redistributive. Previous research indicates that raids were used as a tool of warfare in conflicts that led to the annihilation of certain pastoralist groups. For instance, as I outlined in Chapter Three, in the 1850s, raids by the Laikipiak on the Loosekelai Maasai forced the latter to encroach on Purko Maasai territory in Nakuru, causing the latter two groups to engage in war between 1859 and 1864, and ultimately resulting in the absorption of remaining Loosekelai refugees by the Purko (Waller 1979: 384-392). Similarly, following their own defeat by the Purko, raids by remaining Laikipiak on Rendille, Samburu and Boran settlements in northern Kenya led to a series of skirmishes and battles that resulted in the Laikipiak's ultimate dispersal (Sobania 1980; see Chapter Three). For Maasai, raids (*inchorin*) are distinct from warfare (*olarabal*), insofar as *inchorin* might be

¹⁶⁴ An analytical construct developed by Max Weber, in which certain features of a social phenomenon are accentuated, and variability between actual instances of such phenomena are ignored, in order to allow for simplified comparison and analysis (Weber 1949: 90).

used as a tool of *olarabal*. However, pre-colonial cattle raids clearly played a role in pastoralist groups' attempts at territorial expansion by putting the inhabitants of an area under sustained pressure and forcing them to relocate (Galaty 1993, McCabe 2004, Greiner 2013). Moreover, these raids evidently had the propensity for violence.

Raids are carried out for a similar purpose today, albeit in the post-colonial context of fraught land ownership claims and conflict over control of electoral constituencies and wards. Greiner (2013) describes how Pokot pastoralists use raids to intimidate agricultural settlers into leaving their farms in East Pokot and Laikipia, to expel Turkana in the north of East Pokot, and to maintain dominance and control over particular electoral constituencies. Raids over control of space are not necessarily linked to state politics or electoral boundaries, but also the resources and ritual sites contained within certain areas (McCabe 2004, Greiner et al 2011). These particular raids do not merely result in claims to territory, but also access to the resources within them (Krätli and Swift 1996, Greiner et al 2011). These conflicts may become exacerbated when certain groups are pushed out of one area, by government actors or other ethnic groups, and into other territory (see Abbink 2009: 42-46 for a discussion of Suri raids against neighbouring groups in southern Ethiopia). While I am therefore describing a broad plethora of circumstances here, I categorise the above as 'political raiding', insofar as the kinds of raids described appear to be, in one way or another, directed towards claiming, accessing or defending territory and resources.

The colonial government in Kenya regarded raiding to be a pastoralist institution, rather than an ordinary crime for which only participating individuals were culpable. In 1913, they passed the Stock and Produce Theft Ordinance, a piece of legislation that provided for the collective punishment of a stock thief's wider community, due to the fact, administrators argued, that communities collectively encouraged and abetted livestock raids (Anderson 1986: 405). Prior to this, they had not always been against the practice. In the early 20th century, for instance, the colonial government had sanctioned punitive raids by Maasai moran on other ethnic groups as a means of subduing them (Waller 1999: 36). However,

persistent raids on the farms of white settlers brought about increased pressure on the government to try and curb the practice (Anderson 1986: 405). Anti-raiding legislation is argued to have changed the nature of raiding, and pastoralist communities, in two key ways.

Firstly, while morans rarely carried out large-scale raids as they had done in the past, they instead focused their efforts on smaller, secretive stock thefts (*empurore*), mostly on the farms of white settlers.¹⁶⁵ ¹⁶⁶ In essence, stock theft became a new means for morans to continue carrying out what they perceived to be their raiding prerogatives. However, when compared with elder-sanctioned raids (*inchorin*), stock theft had a morally ambiguous status in Maasai communities. Part of the reason for this is the second change brought about by anti-raiding legislation. The switch from raiding to stock theft resulted in increased tension, if not a transformation, in the power dynamic between elders and morans. Because stock thefts were carried out secretly by morans, they evaded the authority of and control of elders. However, morans still sought the blessing of ritual leaders (*iloibonok* in the Maasai case), who therefore were able to exert more influence over morans than they had done in the past (Anderson *ibid.*: 406). Meanwhile, because elders were often those held responsible by the colonial administration for the indiscretions of stock-thieving morans, particularly when the latter were unable to pay fines when arrested, elders were incentivised to try and do away with cattle rustling altogether. For morans, this was regarded as an unacceptable compromise of their right to autonomy. However, because the benefits of stock theft were not distributed as widely as with raids, it contributed less to the economic regeneration of Maasai communities. This erosion of the inter-generational contract resulted in elders further restricting morans' access to livestock, the morans' claim to which was

¹⁶⁵ They had done so prior to new anti-raiding measures, when Europeans began settling in the Rift Valley, but participation in small-scale stock theft increased with these measures.

¹⁶⁶ At least in the Rift Valley, where there was a higher administrative presence than in other pastoral regions, such as the Northern Frontier District, as well as a dense concentration of white settlers.

now significantly weaker because they no longer contributed as much to livestock wealth through raiding (Waller 1999: 39).

As we shall see shortly, this account of the transition from raiding to stock theft, and the tensions this produced, chimes well with the interviews I conducted with elders from the age sets that experienced this change most keenly (such as *ilterito* and *ilnyangusi*). However, that the new form of stock theft had a morally ambiguous status in pastoralist communities should not mislead us into believing that stock thieves themselves regarded it as shameful. Indeed, in Laikipia, much like the raids of the past and despite elder disapproval, it was widely regarded as a display of courage, cunning and strength, necessary for moran to gain recognition from potential partners and to win leadership positions. Crucially, most of my interviewees argued that the purpose of stock theft was not to accumulate wealth, but to demonstrate the above qualities and to acquire meat that morans could consume in order to keep themselves strong. Most stolen livestock in Laikipia was brought to secluded areas, usually in Mukogodo Forest, and consumed immediately. I elaborate on stock theft in Laikipia in the next two sections. For the purposes of the current discussion, I distinguish 'stock theft' as a third category of cattle rustling, as a largely small-scale, non-political, non-commercial and relatively non-violent practice.

Finally, commentators have noted the recent emergence of what some call 'predatory' raiding. While regarding 'traditional' raids as economically beneficial for pastoralism as a whole, Hendrickson et al (1996) describe a transition among Turkana in northern Kenya from these raids to a more violent, 'predatory' form of raiding, which extracts rather than redistributes wealth from pastoralist communities. 'Predatory' raids, they argue, occur when external actors, such as political elites, sponsor pastoralist youth to steal high numbers of livestock and then trade them, often over national borders, either in exchange for cash or firearms. They attribute the increase in such raids to a number of factors. For instance, they argue that the influence of elders over youths has 'dwindled significantly', leaving youths more susceptible to the influence of wealthy external patrons (ibid.: 24). They also point to the failure of state power and the rise of

illicit trade in light arms and livestock resulting from violent conflicts throughout the region. Further, they point out that these raids have led to an escalation of violence, as the winning side in raids (whether the raiders or defenders) tend to be those with the most weapons, leading to an emphasis on arming and displays of violence. Through a combination of these factors, ‘predatory raiding’ refers to a form of raiding that is detached from the perceived interests of specific pastoralist groups, or groups within them (such as morans), and are instead co-ordinated by and in the interests of actors external to pastoralist communities. The proceeds of cattle raids are extracted from pastoralism as a whole, rather than being redistributed among pastoralist groups or individuals. ‘Predatory raiding’ can therefore be discerned as another distinct category of cattle rustling. I distinguish predatory raiding from political raiding here because the former is characterised by (mostly) external actors seeking to extract value from pastoral communities, rather than competition between groups over resources or political constituencies.

These four categories of raids can be compared as in the table below:

Type of raiding	Violent	Commercial	Extractive/ Redistributive	Political
Redistributive raiding	Sometimes	No	Redistributive	Sometimes
Political raiding	Yes	Sometimes	Either	Yes
Stock theft	Rarely	Sometimes	Redistributive	No
Predatory raiding	Yes	Yes	Extractive	Sometimes

Table 1: Livestock raiding categories

As the table indicates, each category of raid may share characteristics with others, dependent on the circumstances and specificities of each raid. However, in the table, each category of raid also has at least one feature that is distinct. For example, stock theft is the only category of raid listed above that is mostly non-violent and non-political. This is not to suggest that stock thefts cannot turn violent, nor that they are never underscored by political claims, but rather that, in order to create categories of ‘ideal types’, these features can be accentuated and

used to distinguish categories for the sake of analysis and comparison. On the ground, these categories of raids are not always recognised as such. Raids that fall somewhere between these categories may occur. Moreover, the features of a raid that appear most distinctive are a matter of perspective. For example, to be able to argue that a raid is 'redistributive', one needs to take a detached, top-down perspective that traces the flow of livestock between collective social units such as ethnic groups or households. Such a perspective is likely to ignore the reason that a cattle rustler has for participating in a raid, such as avenging a previous raid suffered by their own household, or winning the approval of members of his community. It seems unlikely that cattle rustlers maintain a long-term account of livestock lost and gained by members of their wider social group, and proceed with raids on this basis. Indeed, the categories of raiding described above are mostly derived from the accounts of academic researchers, each of whom brings a different interest and approach to their analysis, but almost all of which adopt a wider, societal view of cattle rustling, rather than exploring emic categories. The categories may therefore reflect this divergence between researchers more than a divergence between actual raiding practices. However, as we shall see for Laikipia, differences between cattle rustling practices do exist, and they are recognised by pastoralists themselves, even if they do not necessarily render them in the manner above. I therefore retain these categories as heuristic devices for considering the dynamics and factors that account for differences in cattle rustling practices, and for highlighting the role played by positionality in perceiving these differences.

6.1.2. Cattle rustling in crisis narratives

While sorting different cattle rustling practices into categories in the manner above may have its uses, as is already evident in the above discussion, previous research on cattle rustling has often identified differences through narratives of linear transition from one form to another. Often, this has been done in such a way as to suggest a state of crisis within pastoralist communities. For example, as detailed above, Hendrickson et al (1996) describe a transition among Turkana from 'redistributive' to 'predatory' raiding in around the early 1980s. Prior to this, 'redistributive forms of raiding [could] be understood as internal conflicts,

occurring between actors practising the same activity... When raids occurred livestock remained within the broader pastoral system. This contributed to a certain 'system stability'...' (ibid.: 22). Since the transition to 'predatory' raiding, however, they argue that 'the increasing use of modern weaponry, where spears were once the norm, has helped erode the checks and balances governing redistributive raiding' (ibid.). They also posit that 'as the viability of the pastoral sector as a whole has fallen... the difficulty of fulfilling the social obligations linked to raiding has undermined men's role in pastoral society' (ibid.: 24). Meanwhile: 'The influence of elders, once sufficient to check the aggressive ambitions of younger 'age-sets', has in many cases dwindled significantly' (ibid.). As a result of these two factors, they argue that 'the pressures on young men to employ violence have increased' (ibid.).

I see no obvious causal link between the loss of status for young men associated with a decline in the pastoral economy and 'pressure' to commit acts of violence, although it might leave young men open to influence and even employment by the powerful 'external actors' that Hendrickson et al hold responsible for sponsoring and profiting from 'predatory' violent raids. There are several other problems with their analysis. Firstly, their account of 'redistributive raiding' describes both a dynamic stasis and an autarky within pastoralism as a whole, ignoring longstanding trading relations between pastoralists and non-pastoralist groups. In the nineteenth century, for example, Swahili traders would frequently purchase livestock from the Maasai in exchange for iron wire (Waller 1975: 7). Bernstein (1976) describes close symbiotic ties between Maasai and their closer neighbours, particularly *iltorrobo* and Kikuyu agriculturalists. Further, Nuer pastoralists from modern-day South Sudan are known to have exchanged their livestock for rifles and ammunition with Ethiopian traders as early as the beginning of the twentieth century, in a trading network relied upon by the imperial Ethiopian state to satisfy their demand for cattle (Johnson 1986: 231-237). Given that there has long been a demand for livestock from non-pastoralist entities in East Africa, the pressure of this 'extractive' demand may likewise have played a longer role in driving cattle raids than Hendrickson et al acknowledge. It seems very unlikely that a system of intra-pastoralist redistributive cattle raiding could have emerged outside of these

longstanding trade networks. Further, I have already outlined how pre-colonial cattle raiding was often used as a tool of warfare, and so to argue that high levels of violence are a recent phenomenon is similarly short-sighted.

There are therefore significant shortcomings in the chronology of transitions detailed in Hendrickson et al's account. We might equally apply this criticism to the way in which they describe the recent loss of control by elders over younger men. Indeed, Hendrickson et al's account exemplifies how narratives of transition from one form of raiding to another are often coloured by claims of moral decline and wider crises within pastoralist communities as a whole. Later in the chapter, I use a historical study of stock theft among Ilng'wesi to explore whether changes in the distribution of stolen animals, or the material circumstances of stock theft, are perceived by Ilng'wesi to have resulted in such moral decline. However, before I do so let me examine such narratives in more detail. In particular, the idea that young men have become uncontrollable and more prone to violent raids due to a loss of authority on the part of elders has become a commonly heard assertion in relation to recent events in Laikipia.

In recent years, there has been an increase in violent raids in Laikipia, widely attributed (by Laikipia Maasai) to the acquisition of light arms by Samburu and Pokot herders. In Kenyan news media, these raids are often associated with the 'invasion' and 'occupation' of white-owned ranches and other grazing land, and the attempted displacement of smallholders and other pastoralists from their land. This security crisis arguably began in 2013, with sporadic attacks on smallholdings in west Laikipia and the Laikipia group ranches in the northeast, followed by 'ranch invasions' by Samburu and Pokot moran and culminating in the expansion of these invasions throughout 2017, during which the government announced a major police operation in the area to drive out herders from private land (see Table 2 for a timeline of the crisis). The shooting of British-South African rancher Tristan Voorspuy in March was followed by a flurry of articles and broadcast pieces debating the cause of the so-called Laikipia crisis. The biggest fault line in these debates was between those who believed the ranch invasions, raids and illegal grazing to have been caused by the severe drought, echoing claims

regarding climate change as a driver of conflict (Barnett and Adger 2007, Burke et al 2009, Raleigh and Kniveton 2012, Hendrix and Salehyan 2012), and those who believed it was all co-ordinated by politicians – such as Mathew Lempurkel (see Chapter Five).

I do not wish to try and resolve these debates, as the way in which the debates were framed served to homogenise what was in fact a set of disparate conflicts and processes in different parts of Laikipia. For example, attacks on smallholders and ranches in northwest Laikipia are widely believed to have been incited by politicians with the intent of displacing voters in the region and replacing them with their own supporters (Anonymous 2017, Fox 2018). These attacks frequently involved cattle and smallstock raids. Meanwhile, further east, IIng'wesi and other Laikipia Maasai occupied Ole Naishu ranch, owned by hotelier and chairman of the Kenyan coffee company C. Dorman's Group, following a standoff over grazing access during the drought. Both sets of invasions were entirely separate, with the latter having little to do with incitement by political leaders, but more likely longstanding frustration on the part of moran and herders over Ole Naishu's lack of grazing concessions at a time when animals were starving to death due to a lack of available pasture on the neighbouring group ranches.¹⁶⁷ Both sets of 'invasions' were later the subject of the same police operation. The picture is further complicated by the fact that later, in July 2017, the number of occupiers on Ole Naishu increased, with Samburu, Turkana, Borana and Somali pastoralists joining the Maasai that had initiated the occupation.

¹⁶⁷ As I mention in Chapter Five, other private ranches, such as Borana and Lewa, were not invaded because they had consistently offered grazing concessions.

Timeline of the Laikipia Crisis

- **Ca. 2013 – 2015:** sporadic attacks (raids, murders) on smallholdings in west Laikipia and the Mukogodo group ranches (in the north-east).
- **2015:** First large-scale ranch invasion (as opposed to small-scale illegal grazing) by Samburu morans on Loisaba.
- **2015-2016:** Expansion of invasions onto other ranches, such as Lombaara and Kifuku.
- **Late 2016:** Short rains fail, onset of drought. Peace brokered between Mukogodo Maasai groups and Samburu from Isiolo. Ole Naishu ranch occupied by Maasai herders.
- **10th February, 2017:** Drought declared a national disaster by President Kenyatta.
- **Mid-February, 2017:** Samburu moran killed by IIng’wesi Conservancy rangers. Samburu morans spotted in Mukogodo Forest.
- **22nd February, 2017:** IIng’wesi Maasai man shot by Samburu moran in Mukogodo Forest while keeping bees. Tit-for-tat killings and animal raids continue until present.
- **4th March, 2017:** Tristan Voorspuuy killed while inspecting damage to lodges on Sosian ranch.
- **7th March, 2017:** Rose Kuraru, mother of two, shot along with her children by Samburu on Makurian Group Ranch.
- **17th March, 2017:** Visit of British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson to Laikipia, including Lewa Conservancy. Operation to drive out herders from private land and from Mukogodo Forest.
- **28th March 2017:** Peace meeting between IIng’wesi Maasai and Samburu elders in Tassia Lodge. Ultimately failed.
- **23rd April, 2017:** Author and conservationist Kuki Gallmann shot on her ranch.
- **15th May, 2017:** 150 goats stolen from Makurian group ranch by Samburu – peace meetings failed.
- **Late May 2017:** Release of anonymous ‘Cattle Barons’ report (Anonymous 2017).
- **June 2017:** Warnings of continued drought.
- **June 2017 – August 2017:** Continued police operations, raids by moran and illegal grazing.
- **August, 2017:** Firebrand ODM MP for Laikipia North, Mathew Lempurkel - allegedly connected to the ranch invasions - loses to moderate Jubilee candidate, Sarah Lekorere.
- **October, 2017:** End of drought in Laikipia.

Table 2: Key events in the 2017 security crisis in Laikipia

Similarly, the wave of attacks against IIng’wesi by Samburu morans in 2017, while related and possibly encouraged by the same leaders, were also separate and underpinned by different dynamics to the invasions of private ranches. Although

fighting between the two groups has been sporadic for years, the 2017 IIng'wesi-Samburu conflict began when Samburu moran tried to enter IIng'wesi Conservancy in order to graze their livestock. A conservancy ranger shot at one of the moran, allegedly killing him. This triggered a series of revenge attacks, including the murder of an IIng'wesi elder while beekeeping in Mukogodo Forest, and a series of attempts by elders from both communities to broker peace. While it is impossible to say whether these skirmishes were connected to attacks by Samburu elsewhere in Laikipia, it is clear that the attacks on IIng'wesi were at least partly the result of localised factors which deserve their own treatment. Indeed, when I travelled to Archer's Post in Samburu County to get a sense of Samburu perspectives on the conflict, those with whom I spoke argued that a significant reason for the animosity towards IIng'wesi was the perception that they were being favoured by the Northern Rangeland Trust (NRT), who had helped them to set up IIng'wesi Conservancy (GI1). In terms of assigning a 'category' to raids during this security crisis, one could argue that these were all 'political raids' in some form or another, as they either attempted to displace people from their homes or concerned claims to dry-season grazing. However, the crisis in Laikipia also highlights the analytical shortcomings of these categorisations. The differences between raids carried out by different communities were quite stark in terms of their scale and support by elite sponsors.

Despite the heterogeneity of localised conflicts and political dynamics, analysis of the crisis tends to reduce it to one causal factor or another. One such factor in particular, as mentioned above, is an ostensible loss of authority on the part of pastoralist elders over morans. As we have seen in my earlier discussion of stock theft, this loss of elders' authority over cattle rustling is not particularly new. However, in the midst of the crisis, an anonymous author published a report (Anonymous 2017), titled '*Cattle Barons: Political Violence, Land Invasions and Forced Displacement in Kenya's Laikipia County*', detailing their research into the causes of the ranch invasions and attacks. In the report they describe how 'various trappings of development and modernity in Kenya has in recent decades eroded [pastoralist] gerontocratic governance structures'. Many young men, they argue, receive an incomplete education, which is enough to 'make them arrogant' and

ignore the advice of elders. Meanwhile, the absence of employment opportunities following education leaves a sense of dissatisfaction. Many morans thus feel simultaneously alienated from 'both the traditional ways of home and the modern structures of the educated or urban society' (ibid.: 13). This, they claim, has been enough to fuel armed movements 'from South Sudan to Sierra Leone' (ibid.: 12). Further, the popularity of mobile phones among morans has enabled them to make decisions based on communication with a network of herders and individuals from far afield, rather than the elders in their own home community, thus further eroding gerontocratic power structures (ibid.: 13). The prevalence of mobile phones has also made it easier for morans to come under the influence of external 'patrons' for whom they can carry out sponsored attacks, aided by mobile payment technologies such as M-Pesa. The influx of light arms due to regional conflicts, meanwhile, has helped to further facilitate an increase of armed criminality (ibid.).

The report was circulated among conservationist communities, government personnel and researchers through various online platforms in May 2017, and largely confirmed the suspicions of those who felt that the ranch invasions in Laikipia were an orchestrated political move, rather than a response by pastoralists to the drought. However, as should be apparent, the story it tells about morans and the erosion of their relationship with elders is one that we have heard before. In the same way that education and the organisation of herding activities through mobile education is argued here to have led to a loss of elders' control over morans, the organisation of secretive stock thefts on white farms, rather than open raids on other pastoralist communities, was equally thought to have excluded and undermined gerontocratic authority at the beginning of the twentieth century, as we see above. Indeed, the argument makes a number of assumptions about the social category of the morans that are worth discussing. Firstly, it assumes that morans and elders are locked into a *structural* relationship defined by static traditions that have recently been eroded through the influence of exogenous factors such as education, wage labour and modern technology. However, we have already seen above how intergenerational relations in pastoralist communities are determined through constant negotiation and the

ability of certain age grades to gain control over key resources as a means to leverage power (e.g. Spencer 1965, Anderson 1986). While delineated through the 'structural' pattern of age grades, those within the age grades themselves are not simply bound by rules, determined according to 'tradition' and pertaining to their position within the social structure. Rather, they exercise the rights afforded by their age grade with a great deal of autonomy, limited only by the extent of their power gained through control of certain resources and by their obligations to others.¹⁶⁸

Narratives about the erosion of elders' control and 'traditional' authority should therefore be interpreted within this context, as a tool in the struggle for control and autonomy between elders and morans. As Spencer (1965: 141) writes of his own fieldwork during the 1950s among Samburu in Northern Kenya, 'The accusation against morans that they are worse than all their predecessors is admitted to be a well worn cliché and is sometimes denied in private.' The elders, Spencer claims, often tried to persuade morans that they were too immature to graduate to junior elderhood (when they would be allowed to marry and, therefore, compete for brides). To do this, they would 'publicly harangue the morans for their lack of respect and irresponsibility' and 'grossly exaggerate the gravity of the situation'. He continues that 'the elders justify this by claiming that this has always been the custom' (ibid.). We therefore need to exercise some caution when dealing with claims that morans are becoming less controllable, particularly if such claims are made by elders, as they have long served the factional interests of older men in pastoralist communities (see also Waller 2006). Indeed, as I explore below, many elders today express nostalgia for the days when they themselves could exercise the autonomy and freedom of moranhood.

Hendrickson et al (1996) produce a narrative in which relatively static social structures and systems in pastoral communities, maintained and supported by the redistribution of wealth via non-violent raiding, are undermined by exogenous

¹⁶⁸ Although participation in networks of obligation also enables morans and elders alike to further actualize their autonomy and power, and should not be seen solely as a constraint (see Englund 2008).

changes, setting off a spiral of moral decline that produces new, violent and predatory forms of cattle rustling. Similarly, the author of the *Cattle Barons* describes how a previously fixed power structure, guaranteeing the authority of elders over morans and determined by 'tradition', was recently undermined by the intrusion of education and modern technology, leading to unfettered violence sponsored by political and economic elites from outside traditional power structures. In both cases, a largely ahistorical traditional baseline gives way to newer forms of predatory and political raiding in a largely linear fashion. I have already tried to highlight some of the problems with these linear accounts, particular regarding the chronologies of change that these authors describe. Other accounts of change in cattle rustling begin from a more thoroughly historicised starting point and account for such changes in a less linear and reductive fashion (e.g. Greiner 2013, Krätli and Swift 1996). Rather than linking new forms of cattle rustling to transformations in pastoral societies as a whole, they acknowledge that a wide array of options are possible at any given moment, dependent on local or even wider political and economic circumstances and the pressures and opportunities these present. If categorising different raiding practices is to be useful, it is crucial that they are presented in this fashion – as possibilities that present themselves to raiders without necessarily entailing historical transformation and crisis.

Another point to be repeated here, of course, is that the different kinds of raids discerned by the authors above depend on a detached, society-wide appraisal of cattle rustling, rather than a phenomenological approach centred on the perspectives of cattle rustlers. To be able to argue that pastoralist societies, the authority of elders or the status of morans are beset by crisis, however, one surely needs to explore whether this is perceived to be the case by pastoralists themselves, acknowledging the factional interests that may underlie such claims, using emic and not etic categories to do so. In what remains of this chapter, I give an account of how, if we take an etic approach to the history of cattle rustling in Laikipia, focusing in particular on how and for what purpose livestock wealth was transferred through raiding, Inng'wesi frequently carried out raids that, at different moments, shared features with different raiding categories as outlined

above. However, in the eyes of raiders themselves, these shifts in raiding practices are rarely seen as significant moments, particularly not as indicators of crisis or transformation regarding their own status or identities within their community. The most dramatic change, they argue, is a recent one, in which the moral identity of morans has come to be redefined through their widespread participation in school education, leading to a decline of cattle rustling among IIng'wesi. In their view, then, meaningful changes in cattle rustling practices were defined and led by the reconfiguration of moran identity, understood in emic terms, rather than changes in the material and political-economic context in which cattle rustling takes place.

In order to demonstrate this, I first need to outline the emic meaning of cattle rustling for IIng'wesi, and how this has developed over time. In the next section, I explore interviews and songs with and by both current morans and elders regarding the practice of cattle rustling in Laikipia. As mentioned previously, for the most part IIng'wesi carry out what I have described as 'stock theft', primarily on white ranches in northern Laikipia. However, in what remains, I continue to use 'cattle rustling', to reflect the preferred term used by IIng'wesi when speaking in English. As well as giving a sense of the significance of cattle rustling for IIng'wesi, I use cattle rustling as a lens with which to interrogate assumptions about 'moranism'. By looking at the performance of praise songs about cattle rustling in particular, I look at the performative dimensions of cattle rustling. I ask what values and qualities morans project when they use praise songs to signal their participation in raids. Similarly, in analysing the songs of elder IIng'wesi, I look at how they eulogise their time spent as morans, and the features of 'moranism' about which they express nostalgia. In addition to exploring the performance of moran identity through these songs, I also examine what IIng'wesi regard to be some of the benefits of cattle rustling.

Following this, the next section gives a historical account of cattle rustling among IIng'wesi, beginning with their move to the Mukogodo reserve and ending with a discussion of the present. I draw on interviews with former cattle rustlers from several generations and age sets, as well as other IIng'wesi. I combine these

perspectives with accounts taken from the colonial archive. I highlight moments throughout this history in which cattle rustling, from an etic perspective, may have become more commercialised or violent, but which resulted in no profound transformation of cattle rustling or moran identity. I finish by discussing emergent changes in moran identity and the implications of this for the future of cattle rustling, as well as the violent raids that have recently been inflicted on Laikipia by (largely) external actors.

6.2. '*Repeta*': cattle rustling and praise songs

The term *repeta* is used among Laikipia Maasai to refer to any song or declaration in which an individual or a group of people are praised or admonished for past deeds or their qualities and general behaviour. For the purposes of this chapter, I use it to refer specifically to songs that praise the deeds of former or current morans, usually by their age mates or by women. In this sense, they present an opportunity to explore the normatively ideal qualities of particular categories of person – such as morans. The demonstration of these qualities, as I illustrate below, can gain morans virtuous recognition when their deeds are recounted through praise songs, as well as other methods of communicating successful livestock thefts. These praise songs can take different forms and are performed in a variety of contexts. For example, Spencer (1965: 120–127) describes at length the performance of *sesiai* in Samburu communities by morans and girls of the same age. In *sesiai* performances, Spencer (ibid.: 120-121) describes:

a soloist of either sex gives a narrative account of stock thefts by members of the Club [an informal association of morans and girls their age]. There is little personal boasting in this song, but those that have stolen cattle can still enjoy an enhanced prestige when their deeds have become established in the repertoire of the Club. When the girls take over the lead they taunt those moran that have never been on a stock raid.

In Spencer's account, stock thefts and cattle rustling feature heavily in *sesiai* performances, and the same is true of *repeta* generally. The purpose of praising successful thieves in these performances is twofold. On the one hand, it enhances the prestige of those who have gone out on raids, and rewards them for their initiative by letting their peers and prospective partners know of their successes

(usually through deeply idiomatic phrases that do not directly reference stock theft, so as to avoid admission of guilt should the songs be heard by elders or authority figures, such as chiefs). On the other hand, the performances encourage others to go on raids, and to achieve reputations of their own, by provoking feelings of shame, guilt or inspiration.

While I have collected some lyrics used in *sesiai* performances in Laikipia, for the most part the songs I recorded were more general *repetā* songs. The songs that I recorded were performed in individuals' homes, among groups of men of the same age set. They were performed mostly during *miraa*¹⁶⁹ chewing sessions, when groups of friends sat together and socialised in someone's home until the early hours of the morning. The setting was thus very casual, and the *repetā* performances were usually triggered whenever someone decided to pick up an *enkita* – a locally-made guitar (see Picture 1) – and start playing music. As people were usually aware of my interest in these songs and in cattle rustling generally, my hosts would often encourage me to record (indeed, it is likely that this provided an impetus for people to start performing). On some occasions, individuals performed songs purposely so that I would be able to record them. However, the same songs are often performed during more formal occasions, such as circumcision ceremonies and other rites of passage and celebratory events, and I have observed them being performed in each of these settings. There is also a form of *repetā*, called *imparinkoi*, which morans are known to sing among themselves during the daytime, and particularly on happy occasions.

¹⁶⁹ Otherwise known as khat - a plant grown in Meru that is commonly chewed in social settings as a mild stimulant.



Picture 3: *Repeta* performance accompanied by *enkita* (guitar).

As with *sesiai*, the emotive impact of other *repeta* performances ought to be emphasised here. The songs are said to be performed not only to make morans feel a certain way, but to evoke emotions strong enough to provoke them into action. As one of my interviewees, an elder man of the *Ilsieuri* age set, put it: 'I remember very well, they [the songs] were there to make people emotional, and to act upon that' (I24). One interviewee described it thus: 'Praise songs used to make weak moran strong, and any moran who will not be praised in the song will feel ashamed of himself, because you will feel like you have done nothing, and sometimes we compete in cattle rustling so that we will be praised' (GI3). Indeed, there is even a local proverb that says: *Kereu entemerr ilmoran lenchore*, which means 'when the praise song is sung, the moran will always achieve' (I5).

The power of the emotions these songs evoke is palpable during the performances. During those for which I was present, the other men would jokingly comment that the songs made them feel like marching off and conducting a stock theft. Even the elderly men present during these performances would sometimes react by loudly shouting '*supa!*' (a common greeting in Maa) during the songs. As well as promoting a sense of competition between individuals, the songs also

boasted of the deeds of different age sets, provoking a sense of rivalry between them at a collective level. As one of my Inng'wesi friends from the *ilmerishari* age set (who were morans at the time) commented during a performance by an *ilmeoli* junior elder: 'I can't just let him sit here and sing about *ilmeoli*, I have to sing an *ilmerishari* song now' (I6).

As the above quotes indicate, *repetas* songs usually evoke these powerful reactions by recounting the deeds of individual morans. Initially, then, many of the lyrics are improvised to accommodate new deeds by current morans. These lyrics may then become routinised and enter the repertoire of an age set's *repetas* songs. In addition, *repetas* songs rely on repeated refrains that are common across age sets, such as the ubiquitous line: 'I cannot leave here without praising [a reference to a particular individual or group]'. Regarding the content of these lyrics, as we shall see shortly, references to cattle rustling or other illicit activity are often conveyed implicitly, through idioms or metonymic references that index that a theft is being described. This is largely to avoid incrimination (GI3). Some *repetas* lyrics emphasise the need for secrecy, as in the following line from an *ilmeoli* song:

*Ooiyie young ones, ooyie young ones,
Don't reveal secrets! Don't reveal secrets!*¹⁷⁰

Communication regarding a successful theft is therefore often carried out in codified ways, even aside from *repetas* performances. For example, one interviewee, a junior elder of the *ilmeoli* age set, informed me that a moran that had conducted a theft would often attach a strip of hide to his right arm, in order to signal to those around him that he had stolen livestock. Morans would also smear their *rungus* (clubs) and bodies in the fat of stolen animals in order so that the smell would indicate to others that they had been rustling (GI3). News about a theft would also spread through rumour via specific channels. As another former cattle rustler, also of the *ilmeoli* age set, explained, 'Morans will tell the ladies [young women of their age], the ladies tell the women, and that way the morans

¹⁷⁰ See Appendix IV for a full transcript of six songs (those that could be recorded and translated in full), both in Maa and English.

get respect. But you can't just go around telling everybody' (GI3).

The following, then, are some examples of *repeta* lyrics, translated to English, that indicate individuals have taken part in a successful cattle theft. The first comes from a *repeta* song from the *ilmerishari* age set:

You warriors, it's already evening in the sky and on the land. It's already evening in the sky and on the land

...

It's evening, almost morning, one thing has not been done. The cows are not milked and the boys have not been found, the boys of the villages.

In this stanza, the singer is describing how one group of morans, who had been named earlier in the song, had been away from their homes all night. As a result, there were no morans around to ensure that early morning chores were being completed at dawn, such as milking the cows and waking up the boys responsible for looking after the sheep and goats. The implication is that the morans in question were away conducting illicit activities of some sort (such as stock theft or illegal grazing). I know from asking about the song that this was a reference to an act of stock theft, but, as is apparent above, this does not get referenced explicitly in the song, presumably to ensure plausible deniability. In another stanza, the lyrics describe a cattle rustling excursion in more detail:

*Supa hodi hodi [a greeting to listeners of the song],
The tree of mixed colours of the barrier,
We passed by in the evening. We passed by in the evening.
Footsteps at the stadium next to Nanyuki,
Where I talked to our lady. Woi, our girlfriend!
Those who went to Mukima side, those who went to Mukima side.
Woi, our girlfriend!*

In this stanza, the singer is describing how the group of morans passed by the police road barrier at Ilpolei, which before its removal in 2013 had been used to mark the boundary between the former Mukogodo reserve and the road leading to Nanyuki. According to one of my Iling'wesi friends, this line also hints that the morans bribed the police, who are stationed at the barrier, to turn a blind eye to

their activities. Following this, the song indicates that they proceeded to Mukima, an area just outside of Nanyuki that encompasses several smallholdings and farms, as well as a luxury tourist lodge. Again, cattle rustling itself is not mentioned, but the description of morans trekking, at night, to an area outside of that in which they live, is supposed to serve as another indication of illicit activity (which is again, generally assumed to mean stock theft).

Other songs do contain more explicit references to thefts. In one song from the *ilmeoli* age set, the lyrics state:

*We have gone through Rondoinyo, we have gone through Rondoinyo,
The wheat farms in Pore, the wheat farms in Pore,
The plains of Mungushi, the plains of Mungushi,
Of loud screams, of loud screams,
Our gang attacked, our gang attacked.*¹⁷¹

The verse above clearly indicates a violent altercation that took place in Mungushi, connected to a cattle raid, as well as the route through Rondoinyo and Pore that they took to get there. However, as before, the verse is light on the details of who exactly took animals from whom. The detail is, however, enough to indicate that those being praised in the song had taken part in a dangerous affair in the plains of Mungushi. In another *ilmeoli* song, the opposite takes place, in that there is no reference to theft or an attack, but the song mentions a white-owned ranch to which the morans travelled, and which is known to be a popular target for cattle rustlers:

*Put on your shoes, put on your shoes,
And again, take back the young morans,*

¹⁷¹ 'Attacked' here is a translation of *kitara*. *Kitara* is the collective first person past tense of the verb *-aar*, which can mean 'to kill' or 'to beat'. Usually, the past tense of 'to beat' in this context would be rendered *kitara*, while that for to kill is *kitara*. The two can be difficult to distinguish for non-native Maa speakers, so I struggled with this translation. However, my research assistant, Shadrack Noah Kuraru, confirmed the word in question was *kitara*. Although this technically means 'we killed', it is distinct from *kitara metua*, which means 'we killed so that she/he/it would die'. As such, I have left it as 'we attacked' so as not to assume that a killing took place – there is a chance that the use of this word was hyperbole.

*Go up to Kamwaki, Go up to Kamwaki,
To Purungai, the place of the hot sun,
Purungai, of the hot sun, that the path goes through,
The path that goes through Kereu.*

Kamwaki is the former name for Ole Naisho Ranch, situated on the southern boundary of Makurian group ranch, one of the two Ilng'wesi group ranches. As Laikipia Maasai were largely banned at this time from going through Kamwaki, the implication here is, again, that the morans in question were going to the ranch in order to carry out illegal activity.

Another song, from the *ilkororo* age set, recalls:

*We will never leave without praising where our squad went to attack,
Swiftly, swiftly, swiftly!
At Sepeyo, the place of interaction, Sepeyo the place of interaction
We put on our shoes, the black ones made from tyres¹⁷²*

In these descriptions of specific stock theft missions, the individuals involved are generally not named. However, because part of the purpose of these songs is to 'praise' certain morans for their deeds, those morans usually receive their praises in a separate verse, with the link to described thefts remaining implicit. In most cases, those individuals are not usually praised on their own, but praised along with other members of their family – usually their mother or sister. This is probably linked to the perception that women of all ages are those most pleased by successful thefts, and often responsible for encouraging morans to take part in them. I discuss the gender dynamics of cattle rustling in more detail in the next section, when I examine my interviews about the subject. The praising of key individuals and groups tends to take up the bulk of most *repeto* songs. The following is an example:

*When we are seated at the house of my mother,
When we are seated in our land, just seated in our land
I will never forget to praise the young one of his mother's sister, ooiyie*

¹⁷² Many Maasai in Laikipia wear shoes made from used car tyres.

In the house of his mother's sister, ooiyie, our young sister

*The company of Naibordo, the young one who belongs to Milanoi's mother
The son of Milanoi's mother, ooiyie, the son of Milanoi's Mother,
May you live long in the company of Lemugie, the proud man.*

The practice of naming individuals 'against' their mother or other family members is common through these performances, and serves to include men and women of all ages as stakeholders in the activities of morans, including cattle rustling. Regarding what it is that they are praised for – in other words, the qualities that they demonstrated through cattle rustling – these tend to be a combination of personal characteristics, as well as commitment to moran ideals. For instance:

*I bless and praise the young morans of God,
My fellow moran, Lempusia, the honest man, and our moran Looyieyo Nasika,
Our moran, the proud one, that we had to stop from being destructive!*

In this case, while on the one hand a moran is being praised for his honesty (in the sense of being direct and having integrity, the other is jokingly referred to as 'destructive'. The implication here is that the latter moran is headstrong and reckless. While these may seem like negative qualities, they also signify the fearlessness and ferocity of the idealised moran. As well as embodying these intangible qualities, the ideal moran is also committed to the many duties of moranhood, the tireless performance of which is also praised in certain individuals and groups throughout several *repeta* songs. For example, one *ilmerishari* song goes:

*When you ga, haa, to soils of other people, soils of other people, haa,
If the air could speak, if the air could speak,
I would have said hello to the guys of star spears,
Who can't get tired, who can't get tired.*

The reference to visiting 'soils of other people' here can mean time spent by morans finding pasture in another part of Laikipia during the dry season or a drought, which is one of the primary responsibilities of morans. However, it can also refer to visiting the 'soils of other people' in order to steal some of their

livestock. In both cases, the demonstration of endurance is commonly celebrated. Equally, the term 'star spears' is intended to suggest that the morans being praised were capable of throwing their spears as far as the stars, thus celebrating their strength.

Even in my interviews and more casual conversations, older men would proudly recall the long distances they travelled, by foot, as morans. In another song, from the *Ilkororo* age set (who were elders at the time of recording), the singer called upon his age mates to recall the times they spent together as morans:

*We have put up our herding camps [laleta],
We have put up our herding camps,
Inside the cold forest,
Inside the cold forest
We have stayed warriors, we have stayed
Even when rapa naibor¹⁷³ leads the small cows
That hate being thirsty*

Here, the singer is praising his fellow morans for their resilience in staying put in a cold forest, even while the cows were trying to leave. The verse highlights the feeling of solidarity that morans are said to build while facing adversity together. This sense of mutual feeling is said to endure among age-mates long after they graduate to elderhood, and is likely reinforced by nostalgic verses such as this one.

As well as praising the positive behaviour of individuals and groups of morans, several *repeta* songs also admonish people for their perceived failings, or for obstructing morans in the pursuit of their duties and ambitions. In one *ilmeoli* song, such criticism was overtly political:

*I will never forget to question the old men of KANU,
Child of my mother, the old men of KANU,
We stopped the chief from Lempusia family, in Olkinyei
Chief Lempusia in Olkinyei
In the company of white cows, the company of white cows.*

¹⁷³ A white cow that likes to lead the others in

In this verse, the singer takes aim at the former ruling part of Kenya (still in power when he was a moran), for getting in the way of morans fulfilling their obligations and aspirations. In particular, he describes how they stopped a chief (who, at the time, were under the direct control and on the payroll of the KANU government) from arresting them as they made their way through Olkinyei (an area which borders Ole Naisho ranch) with 'white cows'. Indeed, most negative portrayals in *repeta* songs tend to be authority figures or those with significant power, and those who collaborate with them. One *ilmerishari* song, for instance, takes aim at the informants of white farmers:

*I won't leave without saying,
Those of the warriors' army who talk to the whites,
I won't leave without saying that the heifers will tell,
The heifers will tell through their bells.*

Here, the singer appears to be warning potential informants that there is no point in informing 'the whites' of planned stock thefts. The whites would learn of the stock thefts sooner or later, as 'the heifers will tell through their bells' (cows in Kenya typically wear iron bells around their necks so that they are easy to find when out of view).

In addition to praising or admonishing individuals and groups of people, *repeta* songs also celebrate acts of cattle rustling for reclaiming features of the landscape – particularly those that form part of the colonised landscape, in and around white-owned farms. The verse above, in which morans slip past the Ilpolei barrier, is an excellent example of this. Another can be found in two lines from a song used in *sesiai*, given to me by an IIng'wesi woman of an equivalent age to the *ilseuri* age set (she was in her early eighties) (I15):

*The moran has grabbed all the red cows in the green gate.
...
Somebody has taken animals from the red house.*

The 'green gate' refers to the paddock on white farms where white farmers are said to keep the best breeds of livestock. The 'red house', meanwhile, refers to the main gate that links white farms to the former Mukogodo Reserve. In this *sesiai*, morans are praised for breaching prominent features of colonised spaces in northern Laikipia. This is not my own interpretation, but is the explanation given to me by the woman who offered these lyrics. "We knew that the [green] gate belonged to the people... So we used to praise [the morans] because, in our area, we don't have anything to do with the gates. The morans defied them." (I15). In many *repeteta* songs, current and former morans claim ownership of landscapes, paths and grazing routes, by virtue of having moved through them while either grazing or stealing livestock. The following verses, each from a different song, are some examples:

*Our cows have made paths all over the plains, paths all over the plains
When the rain comes, when the rain comes.
Remind our young ones, remind our young ones
Of the cows in our land, of the cows in our land,
So that our cows can thrive everywhere.*

*I won't leave without saying that Makandura¹⁷⁴ is our land,
Makandura is our land,
Makandura, the lorien tree, live long forever,
As long as the mountains live.*

*"Makurian, our land, where the acacia goes to the sky,
While it absorbs water from the ground,
I won't leave without praising the sides of Oldaiga,
I won't leave without praising the plains of Kiwanja Ndege.*

* * *

Analysing the lyrics of *repeteta* songs helps to underline the importance of cattle rustling's performative dimension. While some accounts of cattle rustling focus on its material and socio-political outcomes, such as the redistribution of wealth, the displacement of voters or the entrenchment of socio-territorial boundaries, such

¹⁷⁴ Makandura is an abandoned ranch currently squatted upon by various pastoralist communities.

analyses take place at the scale of the group, whether this be the ethnic group, the 'section' or the residential/territorial unit, and tell us very little about why it is that individual young men endeavour to steal livestock. If we regard these songs as one of the primary means by which the wider community comes to hear of the illicit deeds of morans, then they present us with an insight into how it is that morans wish to be perceived by others by virtue of having taken part in thefts. Those who get mentioned in *repeteta* songs are praised for their ferocity, their endurance and their commitment to the duties and collective solidarity of moranhood. They also earn praise and recognition for their families, particularly their mothers and sisters, who are said, at least in the past, to have played a significant role in encouraging thefts. *Repeteta* songs also make claims and serve as a reminder of the importance of moran sovereignty in the landscapes through which they trek with their animals, whether stolen or otherwise. In this sense, moran autonomy and freedom from the control of elders is not the outcome of a modernisation crisis, as has been suggested by Hendrickson et al (1996) and the *Cattle Barons* report (2017), it is celebrated and defended vehemently by both morans and by the elders who reminisce about their time in moranhood through song. *Repeteta* songs celebrate this autonomy as an aspect of moran moral identity. As I discussed in the introduction, as well as providing standards for ethical reputation, moral identity encompasses the ways in which members of particular identity groups extol the imagined virtues of those groups – in this case Iln'g'wesi morans.

In the next section, I will look at both my interviews and archival material on cattle rustling to give an account of how the practice has changed in Laikipia over the last ninety years or so. Where possible, I try to emphasise whether key changes in the practice of cattle rustling were perceived as significant by cattle rustlers themselves, as well as other Iln'g'wesi. The account differs, in this sense, from broader or etic analyses of cattle rustling, in that it seeks to prioritise the experiences and motivations of those directly involved. In doing so, I argue that what is perceived as the most significant change with regards to cattle rustling is not so much changes in the distribution or the flow of proceeds from stock theft (such as a change from 'redistributive' or consumptive raiding to 'predatory' or

commercial raiding), as has been posited by others, but rather a major change in the normative content of moran moral identity and the standards for ethical reputation, and a subsequent distancing by IIng'wesi contemporary morans from cattle rustling, which is increasingly perceived as criminal and anti-social behaviour.

6.3. The history and future of cattle rustling in Laikipia

Following the removal of the Maasai from the Laikipia Plateau between 1911 and 1914 (Hughes 2005), the IIng'wesi expanded their grazing patterns beyond the forests of Mt Kenya and onto the plateau itself, particularly the area around Oldaiga (officially known as Lolldaiga). We have already seen, in Chapter Four, how the IIng'wesi were able to rebuild their herds by selling ivory to trading caravans, assisting in elephant hunts and by working as herders for their Meru and pastoralist neighbours. According to my interviewees, they also did so by raiding and stock theft, whether from newly established white settlers, or from Meru and Kikuyus or from the Borana and Somali pastoralists near Isiolo (I21). With the alienation of the White Highlands for settlement by Europeans, the IIng'wesi found themselves being gradually 'pushed' from their grazing areas and bomas in Oldaiga and Emboori into a smaller and smaller parcel of land in the northeast of the Laikipia Plateau. Here, their territory was delineated from those of other Laikipia Maasai sections by the colonial administration, and administered as part of the wider Mukogodo Native Reserve (see Chapter Four). Thus, they found themselves occupying the plains of Makurian and the southern hills of Mukogodo Forest and Leparua, where they were bounded to the west, south and east by white ranches, and forbidden from leaving their territory without a special Kipande pass from the administration (Karari 2018: 6-7; see Map 4).

With theft from other Maasai regarded as taboo, and given IIng'wesi's expansive territorial border with several white ranches, it is perhaps no great surprise that IIng'wesi morans began to turn their attention towards cattle rustling on white farms in around the 1920s. One elder Ng'wesi who had been circumcised around the time that IIng'wesi were moved from Mt Kenya describes how 'Our fathers used to steal there [in Emboori], but we started stealing when we came here. We

normally stole from the whites... We didn't even used to take them [the animals] anywhere, we just ate them' (I12). For the Inng'wesi people, we only steal from the whites, not anywhere else'. Other interviewees of a similar age mentioned that they had also stolen from other ethnic groups, such as the Somali in Isiolo, but their main focus appeared to be white farms. 'Oldaiga, Kamwaki, Isiolo, even Rumuruti - we used to raid from all these farms', boasted one elder of the *ilnyangusi* age set (I13).

The main purpose of stock theft at this time appears to have been immediate consumption of stolen animals by morans. Typically, morans would take stolen animals into a secluded part of Mukogodo Forest, or the forests of Mt Kenya, and consume the animal. 'We took the animals to the forest, just for the purpose of eating', explained an *ilnyangusi* elder (I12). Another described how: 'We used to steal when we were morans. We were the thugs. We used to take the big bulls from the white farms, slaughter them to make our own bodies strong so we could do some more stealing' (I11). The reasons for this were twofold. On the one hand, morans are expected to spend time together in the wilderness, where the collective consumption of meat is regarded as important for morans' strength. As one moran put it in a group interview: 'I know morans are like the government soldiers, who people depend on for security, so then that's why morans have to feed on meat to make sure they are strong enough' (GI3). An elder from the *ilkishili* age set explained how, during the colonial period, 'the meat from white people's cows were believed to make morans more energetic, and we consumed it a lot' (I18). On the other hand, most of the livestock on white ranches were either of a different breed to those commonly owned by Laikipia Maasai, or they were tagged, which made either keeping or selling them risky business. However, during this early phase of the colonial period, when the Inng'wesi were still rebuilding their herds, stolen livestock were sometimes kept: 'The female cattle we used to keep at home, but the male cattle we slaughtered', argued my eldest interviewee, of the *ilterito* age set (circumcised in the 1920s) (I11). His younger brother, of the *ilnyangusi* age set confirmed that the two reasons for cattle rustling were 'consumption, and to acquire wealth' (I13).

The extent of cattle rustling in the area was such that, by 1933, the chair of the Nanyuki Stockbreeders' and Producer's Association complained to the District Commissioner about the problem:

The Nanyuki Stockbreeders' and Producers' Association wishes to bring to your notice the unsatisfactory state of affairs in the area at the present occupied by the so-called Wanderobo.

In the course of the last few months there have been intertribal fights, murders and cattle thefts from Settlers, and the Association is of the opinion that, unless drastic steps are taken, further and more frequent cases of murder and encroachment will take place.¹⁷⁵

In response to this pressure, the administration made various efforts to try and reduce stock thefts by inhabitants of Mukogodo Reserve. This included establishing police camps and posts along the periphery of the reserve. One example is Loiragai Police Post, located at the very southern tip of Mukogodo Forest (today bordering Borana Conservancy). Initially a police camp for (mostly) Tribal Policemen¹⁷⁶, it was upgraded to a permanent police post by 1957. One visiting Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) wrote in the post's guestbook in April 1957 how he had explained to a new Assistant Inspector of the Tribal Police what the primary purpose of the police post was:

I have discussed the functions of this post with A. I. Kyambi and have instructed him in his duties particularly with regards to stock thefts from settled area [sic]. A. I. Kyambi has met the farmers in the area. Kyambi is on good terms with [Ilng'wesi chief] Tugendei, which may be of great assistance when stock thefts occur.¹⁷⁷

In addition, the police conducted patrols in and around the periphery of the reserve. Punishments for those who were caught appeared to vary. Most thieves

¹⁷⁵ R. Y. Phillips, Chair of Nanyuki Stockbreeder's and Producers' Association to District Commissioner, Nyeri, November 6 1933. KNA FLI/1/11.

¹⁷⁶ The Tribal Police were the administration's own police force, usually consisting of African personnel. They are today known as the Administrative Police.

¹⁷⁷ V. Cussane, ASP, entry on April 4, 1957, Loiragai Police Post guestbook. Located at Loiragai Police Post, Mukogodo East, Laikipia, Kenya.

were fined, although there were provisions for collective punishment in cases where thieves were either unable to pay or where they were not caught. Many were also imprisoned in Nyeri for anywhere between three to six months. By the 1950s, it also appears that the administration had begun to force Mukogodo residents to compensate white settlers for any thefts from their stock, with many writing to the District Commissioner in Nanyuki for compensation.¹⁷⁸

It is unclear whether the administration's efforts did much to curb cattle rustling. It has already been noted in Chapter Four how the administration encountered considerable resistance and incompletion from some of the chiefs, headmen and tribunal elders whom they had recruited to administer the reserve through customary law. In one case, that of Toika Lemongai, a tribunal elder was able to manage an elaborate cattle-rustling syndicate, using his reputation as an *oloiboni* and his position as president of the Native Tribunal, along with the aid of his brother in the Tribal Police, to allegedly assist his recruited thieves in evading conviction (see Chapter Four).¹⁷⁹ While the extent to which Lemongai traded his stolen livestock is unknown (it is unlikely that he sold them for cash), the nature and scale of his operation brings to mind Hendrickson et al's (1996) description of elites taking advantage of morans for their own gain. Lemongai typically blessed cattle-rustling morans in exchange for one animal from every raid (I13). He used his political position in the colonial administration and judiciary to facilitate this further, and relied on networks of herders in and around Mukogodo Forest to conceal his stolen wealth¹⁸⁰. The emphasis on hoarding livestock, even if he did not sell any of it, arguably indicates a 'predatory' approach to stock theft – at the very least, it is hard to imagine that Lemongai had 'redistribution' in mind, even if his actions lead to a minor transfer of wealth from white farms to the Mukogodo Reserve. More crucially for this discussion, however, the administrative machinery set up by the colonial administration to deal with crimes like stock theft appear to not always have worked according to design, and in some cases could

¹⁷⁸ C. Kuhle, Ngare Ndare Farm to DC Nanyuki, February 2, 1957. KNA FLI/4/18; DO Mukogodo to DC Nanyuki, February 22, 1957. KNA FLI/4/18.

¹⁷⁹ DO Maralal to DC Nyeri, March 8, 1941. KNA FLI/1/11

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

even be subverted to facilitate bigger and more complex cattle-rustling operations by its own personnel.

While the cattle rustlers whom I interviewed, of all ages, claimed that IIng'wesi did not conduct violent raids, rather preferring stealth and the discreet theft of small numbers of animals, there were incidents of violence during stock thefts on white farms. In the archival record, these almost always consisted of clashes between rustlers and the police and security guards enlisted to help prevent it, although attacks on ranch staff also occurred. However, the perception among administrators was that residents of the Mukogodo reserve were mostly unarmed, and so violence mostly consisted of attacks using *rungus* (clubs) and spears. However, a new source of firearms, as well as the opportunity for collaboration as members of multi-ethnic armed gangs, came with the escalation of the Mau Mau insurgency in Laikipia in the mid-1950s.

The Mau Mau insurgency and conflict began and largely took place in the Mt Kenya region (see Githuku 2016). It consisted primarily of loosely affiliated 'gangs' or units of insurgents engaging in guerrilla attacks on white farmers, security personnel and those Africans perceived to be 'collaborators' or loyalists, in the struggle for independence from colonial rule and the restitution of alienated land. Most of its participants, particularly in the early phases of the insurgency, consisted of Kikuyu, Meru and Embu men and women, based in their respective 'native reserves' and in urban townships in Nairobi and elsewhere (Branch 2009). Perhaps for this reason, the insurgency is largely regarded to have been the struggle of members of Mt Kenya ethnic groups, and particularly Kikuyu, with many pastoralist ethnic groups, including the Maasai, stereotyped as having been 'Home Guards' or members of the Kenyan Police Reserve.¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹ Despite a Maasai from Narok, Kurito ole Kisio, having been a prominent general in the insurgency movement (Daily Standard, 2014. How Maasai warriors led revolt against colonialists. October 18. Available at: <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000138655/how-maasai-warriors-led-revolt-against-colonialists>).

By 1952, several arson attacks on farms near the Mukogodo reserve had taken place, and there were reports of oath-taking ceremonies throughout Nanyuki District.¹⁸² Although the chiefs of the Mukogodo Reserve expressed dismay at the idea of Mau Mau infiltration, it appears that several people from the reserve were directly involved in the insurgency, while the administration suspected that many more residents supplied food and shelter to Mau Mau insurgents, particularly in Mukogodo Forest.¹⁸³ Indeed, many of my interviewees claimed to have assisted Mau Mau insurgents in various ways (sometimes because they were threatened), while several Ilng'wesi and other Laikipia Maasai enlisted in a local cell. This cell is alleged to have attacked a major Kenya Police Reserve post at Ngare Ndare, while a passing out ceremony was taking place (I32). Meanwhile, the district officers at the time pressured morans into joining the Kenya Police Reserve to help fight the Mau Mau, which many did, while others refused (I24, I34).

It appears that incidents of cattle rustling decreased during this period, as well as in the immediate aftermath of the Mau Mau insurgency. While many of the men that I interviewed tended to insist that their age set had been the most prolific cattle rustlers, there are several indications that Mau Mau led to a decrease in the practice. One woman, who had married during that period, argued that morans had been too afraid to carry out thefts on a frequent basis during that period (I17). Another elder, who had been a moran during the Mau Mau insurgency, also admitted that, although his age set were still the second best at cattle rustling, 'it was not easy to hear about our age set being arrested' (I34). Increased security presence and harsh penalties for those taking part in criminal activity is likely to have been the cause of this decrease. However, the recruitment of the reserve's young men into the Kenya Police Reserve may also have contributed to this, as fewer would have had the time to spare. By 1957, when the colonial administration finally dismantled its Mau Mau internment camp in Dol Dol, the district officer boasted that Mukogodo was one of the most orderly places in the

¹⁸² Special Intelligence Report: Meru District, March 1952. NA FCO 141/572; Special Intelligence Report, Nanyuki District, June 1952. NA FCO 141/572

¹⁸³ DO Mukogodo, Appendix "B", Report of Collective Punishment Ordered Under Regulation 4 B of the Emergency Regulations 1952. NA FCO 141/6079

country, continuing that 'total cattle proved to have been stolen during the first five months of this year is not more than 20 head'¹⁸⁴. However, it may have been that, with security personnel distracted by the spectre of Mau Mau, rustlers had become better able to avoid detection. A white farmer, writing to the District Officer, had an entirely different impression:

I am informed [by administrators] that stock thefts from the Laikipia ranchers have been considerably reduced... while here [among farmers] the position is becoming intolerable and farmers can no longer stand the losses caused by a breakdown of law and order.¹⁸⁵

In terms of the actual character of thefts on white farms near to Mukogodo¹⁸⁶, and the motivation to carry them out (whether this be consumption, profit or assisting insurgents), my interviewees who had been alive during this period reported no significant changes, nor did their answers about thefts vary much from those of previous generations. If stock theft did decrease during the 1950s, it appears to have bounced back again following Kenya's independence in 1964. As one elder woman put it:

Cattle rustling came again when this age-set called *ilkeramat* were circumcised [those circumcised around the time just after independence]. And again, many started again the issue of stealing, They used to bring cows and goats. So those guys used to come, they stole from the whites, and again from the Meru, almost everywhere. So they used to bring a lot of cows, but those who had the marks are all consumed. They used not to keep them. So they are even taken to the forest and they stay there for a while, eating the cows. Now those people were the ones who brought again a lot of cattle rustling to our area. (I15)

¹⁸⁴ DO Mukogodo to Mr Randall, June 21, 1957. KNA FLI/4/18

¹⁸⁵ Maurice B. Randall to DO Mukogodo, May 16, 1957. KNA FLI/4/18

¹⁸⁶ There does appear to have been some increase in armed raids by members of other ethnic groups, such as the Borana, on Ilng'wesi during this period.

Her perception was that cattle rustling expanded following independence, not just in terms of frequency, but also in terms of the geographical area it encompassed, with raids taking place further afield than white farms in the immediate vicinity of the (now former) Mukogodo Reserve. This was confirmed by an IIng'wesi elder who had been a moran at that time, who claimed that for a period there had been successive raids between IIng'wesi and Boran in Isiolo (I29). However, the primary purpose of stock theft from white farms appears to have remained more or less the same as before – namely, the consumption of meat by morans. The next most obvious potential 'transition' in the practice of cattle rustling came when stock thieves began selling stolen livestock to brokers, during the moranhood of the *ilmeoli* age set.

Ilmeoli were first circumcised in 1987 and they remained morans until 1998, when they graduated to junior elderhood and were replaced by *ilmerishari*. They are widely known to be the first age set to commercialise cattle rustling, which they did by selling stolen animals to brokers from both within and outside the community. According to my interviews with former *ilmeoli* cattle rustlers, it was an increase in the number of brokers that provided the impetus for stock thieves to begin selling their stolen animals (GI3, GI4). However, brokers were by no means new to northern Laikipia at this time. As early as 1949, the colonial administration issued licences to Kikuyu livestock to participate in stock sales in the Mukogodo Reserve.¹⁸⁷ While some of these 'stock sales' appear to have been formally organised auctions and sale yards, there also appears to have been a practice of allowing licensed brokers to visit the Reserve freely in order to buy small stock from individual households.¹⁸⁸ While it is difficult to say how many brokers operated in the area at any given time, as well as how frequently they visited, they were certainly present and active for quite some time prior to the moranhood of *ilmeoli*.

¹⁸⁷ Provincial Veterinary Officer, Central Province to Director of Veterinary Services, Veterinary Research Lab, Kabete, December 5 1949. KNA BV/14/113

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

What may have changed in the practice of meat buying between the late colonial period and the onset of the *ilmeoli* age set is the degree of regulatory oversight by parastatal organisations such as the African Livestock Marketing Organisation (ALMO) and its daughter organisation, the Kenya Meat Commission (KMC). Founded in 1950, the KMC was responsible for organising animal purchases from African districts and maintaining prices of meat produced for the domestic market, and continued to do so following Kenya's independence (Abbott 1967). While the KMC allowed some competition from private buyers, in an effort to expand the meat sector, its stronghold over prices ensured dominance in Kenyan meat markets, including a monopsony in some areas, until they withdrew significantly from meat-buying in the early 1980s (Bailey et al 1999, Waller 2012: 17-20). The KMC kept prices low, in order to appease urban meat-consumers, until its collapse in 1987 led to the deregulation of meat and livestock prices and the opening up of meat markets to further competition by local traders (Bailey et al 1999: 18-19). With little regulation in the meat-marketing sector, there was now room for an increase in the number of brokers trading in northern Laikipia. Further, a lack of regulatory oversight over prices meant that stock thieves could now sell livestock to brokers below normal market rates (which one of my interviewees argued was the primary point of selling stolen animals).

However, this is not to say that no informal trading or black market took place alongside the purchases of the KMC. Waller (2012: 20) argues that unregulated transactions constituted the only part of the livestock sector that expanded between the 1950s and the collapse of the KMC in the 1980s, rendering central institutions such as the KMC the option of last resort for livestock sellers. However, the colonial and postcolonial state discouraged mobile traders in favour of traders based in administrative settlements (Little 1992). In Laikipia, this meant that the facilities necessary for organising stock sales were only developed at key settlements, such as Dol Dol, where the KMC had dominance until its collapse. Without the necessary vehicle transport, it would have been difficult for brokers to reach livestock sellers outside of these settlements. In the early 1990s, new livestock yard sales were organised by local private actors in settlements throughout northern Laikipia, and they became more widespread and, therefore,

accessible as a result (GI4). They continue to operate today, and serve as the main means by which IIng'wesi and other pastoralists sell and buy livestock and smallstock. The deregulation of livestock trading, combined with an increase in the number and accessibility of markets is likely to have contributed to the sudden ease of selling stolen livestock at a time which coincided with the onset of the *ilmeoli* age set. As I outline shortly, however, this did not bring about a fundamental change to the character of stock thefts.

Finally, a further factor highlighted by some of my respondents is the fact that, by the late 1980s, the breeds of livestock kept by Laikipia Maasai had become far more similar to those of white ranchers in the area (GI4). Before, they argued, it made little sense to try and sell animals that looked nothing like those that they kept themselves. By the time of *ilmeoli*, however, the only major difference, generally speaking, between the animals of Laikipia Maasai and those of white ranches was the way in which they were branded, as Laikipia Maasai had begun to acquire livestock of similar breeds to white settlers. This still demanded that the brokers to which stolen animals were sold were also in on the fact that they had been stolen, but it made it easier to herd and smuggle the animals across northern Laikipia without being immediately caught.

According to former cattle rustlers from the *imeoli* and *ilmerishari* age sets, the selling of stolen animals was mostly carried out in order to meet a subsistence need, or other costs requiring a quick source of cash, rather than to accumulate wealth. One former rustler of the *ilmeoli* age set argued: 'For me, cattle rustling is just something small to keep you waiting, just to sustain you for the time being, and to help you get your own things from somewhere else' (GI3). Even had they wanted to accumulate more, it appears that livestock brokers take advantage of the lack of base cost associated with cattle rustling, and only ever offered extremely low prices for stolen livestock. Another *ilmeoli* respondent explained: 'There was a big disadvantage in selling stolen animals because you can bring a cow that can cost 50,000 Kenyan shillings, but finally you sell it at around five thousand shillings, and that therefore discourages people very much in that business' (GI3). Commercialised cattle rustling therefore appears not to have

developed into a major enterprise, in the way that it has elsewhere (e.g. in Turkana, according to Hendrickson et al 1996).

Moreover, despite an attitude shift with regards to the commercial potential of cattle rustling, despite the availability of channels for selling stolen livestock, as well as changes in the visibility of stolen livestock, and despite the fact that many Ilng'wesi today own illegal firearms, there was no major transformation in how the nature of cattle rustling was perceived locally. The *ilmeoli* and *ilmerishari* rustlers whom I spoke all argued that cattle rustling was carried out primarily so that morans could 'eat meat and be strong', to earn praise from others and to demonstrate solidarity and trustworthiness among those of one's age set (GI3). One of my respondents pointed out that 'it was believed to be good because normally if you don't participate and interact with other morans then you are not a strong moran, and even in terms of knowledge you are not trusted fully.' Even instances in which stolen livestock are sold are interpreted as necessary for 'subsistence', which morans need to be able to provide for themselves independently. As one moran, put it: 'Many morans still ate the stolen animals because not many of them had an interest in making money, most morans had an interest in bodybuilding'. Another confirmed, 'nobody has ever become rich because of cattle rustling' (GI3).

More recently, however, it is possible to say there have been some major changes in the nature of cattle rustling in Laikipia. To begin with, there is a general perception that the practice has declined dramatically since the moranhood of the *ilmerishari* age set. *Ilmerishari* are widely perceived to be the first age set in which the majority of members have received an education, at least up to secondary level. The impact of this is that morans are now more likely to spend the majority of their time in school, following which they are now more likely to work in paid employment, both of which reduce the amount of time needed to organise stock thefts. In their songs, older generations and women are now more likely to encourage moran to seek an education in order to provide for their families. As one elder put it: 'Education is everything nowadays. So we don't encourage people to go for thefts, we are preaching more about education' (I18). An *ilmeoli* man

explained: 'What mostly made IIng'wesi embrace education is because we have seen the very old people who went to school and succeeded, and after seeing their progress then everybody would want to go to school' (GI3).

This recent emphasis on education and finding paid employment as a means of providing for one's family appears to have gone some way towards changing how morans idealise themselves, particularly in opposition to older generations and those who are uneducated. On one occasion, I accompanied a group of morans to a bar in Nanyuki town, where we took our seats on the second floor of the building. I asked one of them why we did not just sit on the first floor, given that the music was so loud upstairs. 'That floor is for analogue Maasai', one of them joked, 'we are digital Maasai'. Among educated morans, there is an increasing emphasis on the importance of personal development, entrepreneurialism and technical skills. My own circle of friends would frequently boast that the older generations knew nothing of business, whereas they were adept at predicting price fluctuations and taking advantage of good markets for their sheep and goats. There are now a number of moran-led organisations that emphasise the need for education and development in their communities, with names such as 'Warriors 4 Change' and the 'Maasai Cricket Warriors' (the latter of whom play cricket matches in order to raise awareness regarding the need to end female genital mutilation). This change is also acknowledged by older generations. The age set name, *ilmerishari*, translates roughly as 'the unstoppable'. According to an interviewee from the preceding age set, *ilmeoli*, who played a role in naming *ilmerishari*, the name was supposed to refer to the fact that *ilmerishari* are the first age set to come of age during the 'digital' age (in which they had access to mobile phones, the internet and so on), and serves as an acknowledgement that change is unstoppable and inevitable (I3). While it is too early to judge the full extent of these shifts in the identities and ideals of morans and moranhood, as they are still ongoing, there is certainly a sense that today's moran are less likely to identify with those who stole livestock in the past.

However, this does not mean that IIng'wesi moranhood is disappearing or in decline. Older IIng'wesi boys nearly all undergo circumcision, and are expected to

observe certain rules during their time as morans, such as eating meat together, and to look after animals when they are not in school. In an interview with a (then) moran of the *ilmerishari* age-set, I asked whether potentially emerging class divisions could undermine community cohesion in the future. He replied that even if there were significant income or wealth disparities between households in the future, it was unlikely that families would stop circumcising their children and sending them to spend time ‘in the bush’ with their age mates (I37). This experience, he argued, produces a sufficiently strong sense of egalitarian solidarity among age mates that would prevent economic class distinctions from becoming social distinctions. Clearly, then, there is a sense that moranhood would endure through significant socio-economic change. It has been noted elsewhere that the age set/age group system is in some ways a tool of gerontocratic power, as moranhood subjects young men to the ritual power of older men (Lamphear 1998: 81). It is therefore not only a matter for morans themselves to retain the age set system, but it also appears to be in the power interests of older generations.

The *ilmerishari* interviewee (I37) whom I quoted above essentially argued that, even as the socio-economic composition of Iling’wesi change, a commitment to Maasai ‘culture’ would ensure the future survival of moranhood’s fundamental features. Indeed, rather than constituting the *habitus* of social behaviour (Bourdieu 1977), ‘culture’ for many Iling’wesi appears to be increasingly reified, with the term used to refer to any practices that distinguish Iling’wesi, or Maasai more generally, from others or, tacitly, from ‘modernity’.¹⁸⁹ This phenomenon has been noted before, and is often given negative treatment, particularly when ‘culture’ is seen to produce commoditised or politicised cultural essentialism (e.g. Kuper 2003, Comaroff and Comaroff 2009). However, in Laikipia, this conscious engagement with the idea of a distinct Maasai ‘culture’ is producing creative expressions and critical explorations of Maasai and Maa moral identity. An excellent example is the work of Samburu musicians Lemarti and Siampa Marleni. Both artists produce pop music in Maa (among other languages), which sets traditional singing styles, performed through digitally distorted vocals, as well as

¹⁸⁹ If we understand modernity as a homogenizing force tied to ideas of progress.

rap, against a backdrop of synthetic instrumentation. Their lyrics are highly varied, but touch on fundamentally pastoral themes, such as the struggles of herders and the need for peace among Maa communities. Their music videos¹⁹⁰, meanwhile, tend to take place in rural settings, featuring Maasai and Samburu in traditional dress, as well as pastoral landscapes and livestock (see Picture 4). Their work is highly popular in Laikipia and beyond, and such artists often play at so-called 'Maa nights' at nightclubs and hotels. Maa nights are Maa-themed parties, organised by Maasai and Samburu youth, intended as a conscious celebration of Maa culture and identity. They indicate that, as culture is reified, and as pastoralist youth align their identities with emerging conceptions of what it means to be modern, a fundamental connection to certain hallmarks of pastoralism and Maa identity, such as moranhood, rurality and livestock ownership, is not disappearing. However, this consciousness of 'having a culture' has also led to a critical engagement with culture and pastoral identity. As one young Ilng'wesi woman put it, 'we should keep the good in culture and move forward with those, but we should leave those things that are bad'. This kind of critical engagement with 'culture' is, I think, the basis upon which today's moran are able to abandon that which they perceive to be negative, such as stock theft, whilst still retaining and celebrating moran identity.

¹⁹⁰ Examples can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8PYTkHzKzuQ> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DrgarF4HlkI>



Picture 4: Still image from the music video for Matashama by Lemarti. Note the blend of references to pastoral livelihoods and modernity; e.g. the spear, traditional dress, livestock, couch and sunglasses. Credit: Lemarti Music, Maralal.)

While moranhood might endure, its meaning therefore appears to be changing. If we consider the strongly performative dimension of cattle rustling, we can argue that, in part, morans once took part in stock thefts in order to demonstrate that they possessed certain qualities and values. Today, the desire to prove one's worth as a moran remains, but some of the idealised qualities that morans are expected to demonstrate have changed, while new opportunities exist for morans to demonstrate those that have not. Whereas bringing home a stolen cow, or consuming stolen meat in order to become strong, were once regarded as beneficial to the community, today, providing an income for one's family is preferable. This is not limited to educated morans – new opportunities to earn cash have emerged in northern Laikipia even for the unqualified. Sand harvesting, in particular, provides morans living in certain group ranches and abandoned land with opportunities to dig sand for visiting sand lorry owners, who in turn transport the sand to urban centres for use in construction. Indeed, Jørgensen (2014) notes that sand harvesting in northern Laikipia is largely organised and controlled by youth, much to the frustration of elders in the region. For a morning of sand digging, morans can expect to earn around 300 shillings (\$3), and participation is both ubiquitous and now memorialised in *repeta* song lyrics from the *ilmerishari* age set (the most recent to graduate to junior elderhood, in 2018):

It was long that we waited, it was long that we waited
The disturbance of the elephants, the disturbance of the elephants
At the three of the mixed colours of the barrier,
It was late while we waited, it was late while we waited
The lorries of sand harvesting, the lorries of sand harvesting,

It is not yet obvious how these changes will develop, nor indeed if they are being felt equally or in the same way by all morans. Although I have been unable to acquire precise figures, a minority of morans have not received a formal education, and their position within these changes is an ambiguous one. On the one hand, my educated Iling'wesi moran acquaintances remarked that many of their uneducated age mates were 'the best in terms of livestock'. Indeed, at first glance, many of the uneducated morans with whom I became acquainted appeared relatively wealthy in livestock and small stock, and were also frequently recognised as age set leaders and senior age set members. However, political leadership in Iling'wesi today is increasingly bifurcated between 'traditional' structures and opportunities offered by the state, and opportunities for wealth accumulation increasingly depend on labour markets. Uneducated Iling'wesi are unlikely to be able to take advantage of the latter, much as they are less likely to acquire full-time employment. As older pastoralist practices, such as stock theft, are increasingly likely to be identified with 'backwardness' and 'thuggery' (both arguably moral categories), there is a risk that those moran unable to fit the mould of the 'digital Maasai' get stigmatised in the same way.

Crucially for the argument made in this chapter, however, Iling'wesi appear to regard this shift in the moral identity of moran as the most significant factor in the changing nature of cattle rustling, while material and political-economic changes, evident throughout the twentieth century in Laikipia, are regarded as secondary, if indeed they are perceived at all. This is a different argument to those positing that changes in raiding practices are linked to societal transformation or crisis. I am arguing that, in terms of their position within pastoralist power relations, the status of the moran has not necessarily changed all that much. As one *ilmerishari* moran complained in a group interview:

For me, the main challenge is our parents, because for those who have found their parents alive, I'm sure they must have seen a lot of challenges, because our parents still don't give us freedom to serve them, but still they want to be served, so there's no freedom to deliver all those services. They still want to control you and give instructions on what to do and they don't provide anything, but for *ilmeoli* and *ilmerishari* they are the only people who comfort you, especially in trying times. But to the old people, when you go through all the challenges, ups and downs and when you fail at any point, then you just carry all the blame. (GI3)

As I have shown, this tension between the moran's desire for autonomy and the elder's desire for control has been ubiquitous in accounts of intergenerational relations in pastoral communities (see, for example, Spencer 1965; also, Lamphear 1998, Waller 1999). What has changed, however, appears to be the means by which morans can achieve ethical reputation, as well, to an extent, the idealised qualities that they believe to best represent their moral identity. While some aspects of IIng'wesi moral identity may be shifting, others remain the same. This certainly appears true for the principle of livestock ownership. As I highlighted earlier, pastoralism remains a cornerstone of the moral identity of IIng'wesi morans and youths, albeit a modern pastoralism practiced by market-savvy entrepreneurial subjects. In this sense, the shift in the moral identity of IIng'wesi morans offers an example of how some experiences are 'sedimented' amidst social, economic and moral change, exogenous or otherwise.

All of this does not necessarily mean that the categories of raiding, outlined earlier in this chapter, serve no value. It is clearly necessary to be able to distinguish between different raiding practices, so as not to present raiding as one homogenous practice. What I hope to have highlighted in this chapter, however, is that the extent to which we ascribe significance and substance to these categorical differences depends largely on the perspective taken in analysing cattle rustling. This should especially be borne in mind, when accounts of change in cattle rustling practices are used to buttress narratives of crisis in pastoralism.

Conclusion

Analyses of cattle rustling, and how it has changed over time, have often tended to focus on material or political economic factors and material outcomes. This has led to a perception that cattle rustling underwent significant transformation in recent decades. While this may be true for other parts of East Africa, in Laikipia, dramatic changes in the political economy of the region appear not to have changed the character of stock thefts very much at all. This conclusion is partly due to the method I employed to study cattle rustling, which was to focus on the perspectives of those who take part in it, to analyse the way in which they convey cattle raids and their benefits to others, and, crucially, to contextualise these perspectives historically. The most significant change in cattle rustling, according to Iling'wesi, appears to be to its recent decline, linked to increased participation in education and a shift in the moral identity of moranhood that have resulted.

At the same time, however, cattle raids continue in the region. During my own fieldwork, raids involving as many as eight hundred head of livestock took place on white ranches, such as Ole Naishu. At the time, these raids were denounced by my Iling'wesi acquaintances as the work of criminals and 'thugs'. What this may indicate is that, as the moral identity of moranhood shifts towards commitment to education and self-development, there is a simultaneous distancing from the practice of cattle rustling, with the practice externalised from Iling'wesi moral identity via its reconstruction as a criminal practice. Iling'wesi also complain of a marked increase in the number of raids carried out against them, primarily by Samburu morans from the neighbouring counties of Isiolo and Samburu. The increase in these raids is largely regarded as a political move to attempt to intimidate Iling'wesi from their homes on the Laikipia plateau, which is known to possess a friendlier climate than the hot drylands occupied by many Samburu. It is also widely regarded as shameful, particularly as the Samburu share a language with the Maasai. According to police sources, the conflict is very much one-sided, with Iling'wesi rarely taking part in counter-raids on nearby Samburu settlements, even if Iling'wesi morans do play a defensive role in chasing those who raid them and recovering stolen herds, often with police assistance (19). The violence of these raids, and the fact that, to some, they appear to violate the taboo restricting

raids against those of the same ethnic group, has further served to turn IIng'wesi opinion against cattle rustling.

More research clearly needs to be done on the causes of these newer, socially criminalised forms of cattle rustling. Indeed, these have tended to be the subject of other academic enquiries into the practice (e.g. Hendrickson et al 1996, Fleisher 1998, Gray et al 2003). However, I hope in this chapter to have highlighted that, in the case of IIng'wesi, the ideals and qualities associated with a distinct moral identity within IIng'wesi society – that of the Maasai moran – have tended to be central in determining why people engage in cattle rustling. That recent notable changes in these ideals are widely perceived to have led to a decline in cattle rustling among IIng'wesi morans should underline the analytical value of moral identity in future research on cattle rustling. However, even within these changes, certain features of IIng'wesi moral identity appear to change more slowly – particularly the centrality of livestock ownership and pastoral livelihoods. While I discuss this observation in the Conclusion, I wish to conclude this chapter by noting that a balanced perspective between that offered by the lense of moral identity, and that of more materially-oriented political economy and ecology approaches should lead to a more nuanced understanding of cattle rustling, in Laikipia and further afield.

Conclusion

This dissertation has largely considered the analytical value of what I have termed a moral identity perspective in understanding various aspects of IIng'wesi history and the issues affecting their livelihoods in the present day. In the Introduction, I outlined how the concept of moral identity emerges when we seek answers to the question of why pastoral livelihoods are deemed valuable by those who practice them, and what the threshold for livelihood 'collapse' might be. These two questions are very much interrelated and carry weight both in scholarly debate and among IIng'wesi themselves. As we see in the history of IIng'wesi, those who once practiced pastoralism, but who have since exited pastoral livelihoods, may aspire to return to livestock ownership and engagement with a pastoral moral economy. This aspiration to own livestock appears to have considerable durability – even today's 'digital Maasai' idealise livestock ownership. Indeed, an ability to both acquire livestock through market activity and maximise revenue through an acute understanding of livestock markets serves as a cornerstone of 'digital Maasai' moral identity.

Exploring the emic processes of meaning-making through which people evaluate their livelihoods therefore appears crucial in defining the point at which those livelihoods truly disappear in the long run. I proposed moral identity as a framework for understanding these processes. Moral identity, I argued, is an assemblage consisting of a series of interconnected parts: processes of collective self-understanding or identity that, in the case of IIng'wesi and other Maasai, are fundamentally linked to the practice of pastoralism; a sense that belonging to this identity bestows moral virtue; standards for achieving ethical reputation within a community that mutually recognise one another as sharing a moral identity; a vocabulary for negotiating the content and boundaries of the above. As an assemblage, moral identity is the emergent property of these building blocks, and thus relies upon their interconnectedness. However, these building blocks can also be examined independently, which I have done at various points in the dissertation.

In Chapter Three, I outlined how these questions emerge from the history of IIng'wesi at the turn of the twentieth century, when they set out to recover their herds after a long period hunting and gathering in the forests of Mt Kenya. It appears that an aspiration to own livestock endured beyond the point at which pastoral livelihoods, for IIng'wesi, collapsed. I followed this with a discussion of the emic value of livestock ownership for IIng'wesi, from which the building blocks of moral identity emerged. This chapter therefore served to demonstrate how the questions with which I began the dissertation, as well as the framework of moral identity, emerge as matters of concern in my empirical material. I then set about exploring what I regarded as key moments in the history of IIng'wesi moral identity, and its constituent parts, in order to subject the framework to further interrogation and to assess whether it could accommodate change and dynamism. In Chapter Four, I assessed the impact of the colonial period on IIng'wesi moral identity and in Laikipia North more broadly, with a particular focus on the interventions of the colonial administration in the Mukogodo reserve. I noted that the primary legacies of the colonial period were to reconfigure the ethnic geography of northern Laikipia and create new loci for the articulation of moral identity. In Chapter Five, I explored the extent to which some of these legacies were relevant to understanding the politics of northern Laikipia during the 2017 General Election. I also used this chapter to make a case for moving beyond moral ethnicity, as the vocabulary of moral identity was used to construct broader political communities that cut across ethnic boundaries. Finally, in Chapter Six, I argued that moral identity offered a useful framework for understanding the *longue durée* history of IIng'wesi cattle rustling practices. According to IIng'wesi interlocutors, the material and political-economic factors identified by other scholars as causally significant in instigating change were less relevant than changes in the moral identity of IIng'wesi morans. This moran moral identity is celebrated in both song and the recollections of former cattle rustlers, and stock thefts are widely described as an assertion of this moral identity.

My emphasis on moral identity is something that is echoed in recent literature on pastoralists, even if it has not been expressed in those terms. Work on the 'new pastoral commons' (Bollig and Lesorogol 2016, Galaty 2016, Archambault 2016),

as discussed in the Introduction, has demonstrated how what should amount to restrictions on grazing mobility – namely land privatization and individuation – have been overcome through appeals to a common pastoral moral identity. Further, as discussed in the introduction, in the on-going research on pastoral resilience, there is a need for a robust definition of what aspect of pastoral livelihoods needs to change in order for such livelihoods to have ‘collapsed’ (Anderson and Bollig 2016). Social-ecological systems are said to have an identity, and if they are unable to retain this identity, they are non-resilient (ibid.: 5). I think that moral identity brings us closer to such a definition. When pastoral livelihoods collapsed for Ilng’wesi, their moral identity seems, at least in part, to have served as an organising principle for returning to pastoralism several decades later. The fact that such ‘returns’ are possible suggests that the ‘identity’ of social-ecological systems may well consist of the ways in which they are invested with particular meaning, a point also made by Crane (2015).

Further work is needed, however, to more fully integrate social-ecological and moral identity perspectives. I have been unable in this dissertation, for example, to offer insights into the link between Ilng’wesi moral identity and their specific material practices, such as herding strategies and mobility patterns. An exception is the chapter on cattle rustling, where I have drawn more direct links between moral identity and material practices than in other chapters. This limitation is partly a result of the sources available, and the methods I used to conduct my research. My discussion of livelihood practices has instead been mostly rather broad, although I hope at the very least to have demonstrated at least a plausible link between livelihood transitions and the shifts and negotiations of moral identity. Despite its deficiencies in this regard, I hope that this dissertation can at least serve as a starting point for further discussion and research that explore more fully the link between pastoralism as a social-ecological system, among other livelihood strategies, and as a focal point of moral identity.

Further research is also needed in other areas, and to different ends. I have been unable here to do sufficient justice to the gender dynamics of Ilng’wesi moral identity, aside from the veneration of particular masculinised virtues – as in the

case of stock thieving morans. In Chapter Five and Chapter Six, I highlighted how distinct moral identities can be discerned within IIng'wesi society. Further research could illuminate how IIng'wesi women navigate and contest an IIng'wesi and Maasai moral identity that, at least in my account, often appears to be dominated by virtues and routes to ethical reputation that are (mostly) exclusive to men. Important work has already been done in this regard, particularly by Hodgson (e.g. 2001, 2005). Integrating such gendered perspectives into discussions of moral identity and its link to material practices is, I think, crucial for considering whose account of moral identity and social-ecological resilience is given more weight in scholarly research, and whether there is an imbalance in whose practices and perspectives become 'sedimented experiences' (Mbembe 2016: 221).

As well as gendered perspectives, there are other perspectives that could be considered here. I am particularly keen to stress that moral identity is a universal phenomenon, and not specific to IIng'wesi, Maasai or Africa. There is exciting research to be done on the interface between different moral identities. I have tried to emphasise at various points that moral identity is a vantage point from which people engage moral questions, rather than a fixed perspective held by a bounded group. Laikipia presents a valuable case study for examining the interaction of multiple, sometimes competing moral identities, due to its history of colonisation and the prominent political and economic position of its white settler community, even today. I was unable to carry out much research on settler perspectives during the periods discussed in this dissertation. However, combining their accounts with those of IIng'wesi would present an excellent opportunity to study plural (perhaps even overlapping or merging) moral identities within a field of power relations and sustained economic and social interaction.

It should also be clear, at this point, that, despite claiming to examine the changes and continuities in IIng'wesi moral identity, this dissertation has refrained from offering a comprehensive history of IIng'wesi from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. Instead, I have tried to use key moments in IIng'wesi history,

including more recent events, to illuminate the traction of IIng'wesi moral identity over time. These 'moments' are included in this dissertation because I felt that they brought moral identity to the fore, and therefore enabled a more detailed examination of moral identity's constituent parts. This may have been due to the availability of appropriate sources for these moments or because particular issues during those moments demanded a change, contestation or the invocation of moral identity in some way or another. I do not think that this selective account of IIng'wesi history necessarily gives undue weight to moral identity. If anything, I hope that the chapters in this dissertation successfully demonstrate that moral identity can and does have prominence in particular instances. However, in order to be able to meaningfully discuss moral identity's prominence in the *longue durée*, further research is needed to fill in the gaps in my overall historical narrative.

For now, I think that my account offers some useful changes of perspective, particularly regarding the various purported crises in pastoralism. This comes out most strongly in my account of the history of IIng'wesi cattle rustling, but should also apply to alarmist accounts of pastoral livelihoods facing existential threat as a result of market expansion. There may very well be a tipping point where livestock herding mobility, political hostility and access to pasture cause pastoral livelihoods to reach a point of unfeasibility. Pastoral livelihoods throughout East Africa face many challenges in the form of hostile government policy, climate change and increased land privatisation and individuation. However, it should be clear that IIng'wesi present an example of a pastoralist group that have continued with a commitment to pastoral livelihoods in spite of such threats, as well as opportunities for alternative livelihoods. However, further research that takes the moral identity component of pastoralism seriously is needed in order to demonstrate it has wider value outside of the IIng'wesi context. Indeed, as Galaty (1982) suggests, the Maasai social milieu seems to present an unusually moralistic commitment to pastoral livelihoods.

Carrying on with this line of enquiry is important, furthermore, because of its policy implications. Pastoralist development efforts that seek to preserve

pastoralist livelihoods as static configurations of material practices may end up being just as detached as the top down initiatives that seek to eradicate pastoralist livelihoods altogether, if they do not take their cues from how pastoralists perceive and evaluate their own livelihoods and their connections to them. As my account of contemporary IIng'wesi moranhood in Chapter Six indicates, pastoralists actively embrace and celebrate change, and build new identities around supposed 'intrusions' like the market economy. This should not, however, be taken as a statement that pastoralists ought to accept *any and all* changes, particularly those imposed from the top down, or by powerful factional interests within pastoralist communities. It is merely a word of caution, and a call for real engagement with pastoralist priorities and perspectives.

To conclude this dissertation, however, I would like to make a final comment regarding what I believe to be the true value of my research. Without wishing to exaggerate my work's importance, IIng'wesi histories have rarely, if ever, been mapped out to this extent in scholarly work to this date. While the empirical material in this dissertation may have been of little significance to wider scholarly interests without theoretical discussion, I received positive comments during my fieldwork from my research participants regarding how interesting, enjoyable and valuable it was to be able to discuss the IIng'wesi past, and how important it was that the stories of elders should be written down. While nobody can match the expertise, passion and insight of IIng'wesi themselves regarding their own history, traditions and culture, I hope that my small role in putting some of these stories to paper will repay the hospitality, warmth and friendship that I received in Laikipia.

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Appendix I

List of interviews/correspondences

Interview number (in-text reference)	Person interviewed	Location of interview	Date
I1	IIng'wesi man of <i>ilmeoli</i> age set, age unknown, involved in Mukogodo Community Forest Association (ILMAMUSI)	Loiragai Police Post	November 2016
I2	IIng'wesi man of <i>ilmeoli</i> age set, age approx. 40. Forest guard in Mukogodo Forest.	His home in Lukosero	November 2016
I3	IIng'wesi man of <i>ilmeoli</i> age set, age approx. 40. Senior in ILMAMUSI.	Loiragai Police Post	November 2016
I4	IIng'wesi man of <i>ilmeoli</i> age set, approx. 37. Owns no livestock – relies on labour in Loiragai. Known to have good knowledge of botany.	Loiragai Police Post.	January 2017
I5	IIng'wesi man of <i>ilmeoli</i> age set, age approx. 40. Works for IMPACT.	Joskaki Hotel, Nanyuki	January 2017
I6	IIng'wesi moran of <i>ilmerishari</i> age set, age approx. 29.	Nyakio Hotel, Nanyuki	January 2017
I7	Chief of IIng'wesi location, male age unknown.	Loiragai Police Post	January 2017
I8	Mumonyot woman, age approx. 29, married to an IIng'wesi man.	KWS camp, Nanyuki	January 2017
I9	Police corporal, age unknown..	Loiragai Police Post	January 2017
I10	IIng'wesi man of <i>ilmeoli</i> age set, approx. 40. Is a livestock broker.	Makuti Bar and Grill, Nanyuki	January 2017
I11	IIng'wesi man of <i>ilterito</i> age set. Age unknown, approx. 115.	His home near Ngare Ndare	February 2017
I12	IIng'wesi man of <i>ilnyangusi</i> age set. Age unknown, approx. 95	His home on Makurian Group Ranch.	February 2017
I13	IIng'wesi man of <i>ilnyangusi</i> age set. Age unknown, approx. 105.	His home in Makandura	February 2017

I14	White settler, male, owns a ranch close to Mukogodo Forest.	His office on his ranch	February 2017
I15	Iling'wesi woman. Age approx. 78.	Her home in Olkinyei, Makurian group ranch.	February 2017
I16	Iling'wesi woman. Age 32. Known to have excellent knowledge of praise songs.	Sinoiya Legei's Bar and Lodge, Kiwanja Ndege, Makurian Group Ranch.	February 2017
I17	Iling'wesi woman, age approx. 80. Of Kikuyu origin, married an Iling'wesi man of <i>ilnyangusi</i> age set around the time of Mau Mau.	Her home on Makurian Group Ranch.	February 2017
I18	Iling'wesi man of <i>ilkishili</i> age set. Age approx. 85.	His home near Ngare Ndare.	February 2017
I19	Iling'wesi moran of <i>ilmerishari</i> age set. Works for Administration Police.	Makuti Bar and Grill, Nanyuki	March 2017
I20	Iling'wesi woman, age approx. 85.	Her home in Endana.	March 2017
I21	Iling'wesi man of <i>ilkishili</i> age set, age approx. 85.	His home on Makurian Group Ranch.	March 2017
I22	Iling'wesi man of <i>ilnyangusi</i> age set, age approx. 90. Involved in Toika Lemongai's cattle rustling syndicate.	His home in Ngare Ndare	March 2017
I23	Iling'wesi man of <i>sieuri</i> age set. Age approx. 88.	His home in Makandura.	March 2017
I24	Iling'wesi man of <i>sieuri</i> age set. Age approx. 81.	His home on Makurian Group Ranch.	March 2017
I25	Iling'wesi man of <i>sieuri</i> age set, approx. 83.	His home on Makandura Group Ranch.	March 2017
I26	Iling'wesi man of <i>sieuri</i> age set, age approx. 73. Former poacher.	Sinoiya Legei's Bar and Lodge, Kiwanja Ndege, Makurian Group Ranch	March 2017
I27	Samburu moran, age unknown.	Sinoiya Legei's Bar and Lodge, Kiwanja Ndege, Makurian Group Ranch	March 2017
I28	Iling'wesi moran of <i>ilmerishari</i> age set, age 31.	Sinoiya Legei's Bar and Lodge, Kiwanja Ndege, Makurian Group Ranch	April 2017
I29	Iling'wesi man of <i>sieuri</i> age set. Age approx. 81.	His home in Olkinyei, Makurian Group Ranch.	April 2017

I30	Iling'wesi man of <i>ilmeoli</i> age set, age approx. 45. Former policeman, now a disability activist.	62 Paradise Hotel, Nanyuki	April 2017
I31	Iling'wesi woman, age approx. 87.	Her home in Endana.	April 2017
I32	Iling'wesi man of <i>sieuri</i> age set, age approx. 85.	His home in Chumvi.	April 2017
I33	Iling'wesi man of <i>ilkishire</i> age set, age approx. 74.	His home on Makurian Group Ranch.	April 2017
I34	Iling'wesi man of <i>sieuri</i> age set, age approx. 80. Worked in the Kenya Police Reserves during Mau Mau insurgency.	His home in Ethi.	April 2017
I35	Iling'wesi man of <i>ilmeoli</i> age set, age approx. 42. Senior in Makurian Group Ranch Committee.	Sarafina Bar, Nanyuki	April 2017
I36	Iling'wesi woman, age 26.	Makuti Bar and Grill, Nanyuki	April 2017
I37	Iling'wesi man of <i>ilmerishari</i> age set, age 35. Works for Laikipia County Assembly.	Sarafina Bar, Nanyuki	April 2017
I38	Mumonyot man of <i>sieuri</i> age set, age approx. 77.	His home in Makandura.	May 2017
I39	Iling'wesi man of <i>ilnyangusi</i> age set, age approx. 88.	His home on Makurian Group Ranch.	May 2017
I40	Iling'wesi moran, <i>ilmerishari</i> age set, age approx. 29	His home in Makandura	May 2017
I41	Iling'wesi man of <i>ilkiroro</i> age set, age approx. 50	His home in Endana	May 2017
I42	Iling'wesi man of <i>ilkiroro</i> age set, age approx. 57	His home on Makurian Group Ranch.	May 2017
I43	Iling'wesi man of <i>sieuri</i> age set, age approx. 82.	His home in Makandura	May 2017
I44	Iling'wesi woman, age approx. 47.	Her home in Endana.	May 2017
I45	Iling'wesi man of <i>ilkororo</i> age set, age approx. 45.	His home in Makandura.	May 2017
I46	Iling'wesi man of <i>ilkitoip</i> age set, age approx. 68.	His home in Makandura	May 2017

I47	Iling'wesi woman, age approx. 45.	At a friend's home in Ngare Ndare	May 2017
I48	Iling'wesi man of <i>ilkitoip</i> age set, age approx. 65. Involved in establishing Iling'wesi and Makurian group ranches.	His home in Segera	May 2017
I49	Ngarsie Sembui. Iling'wesi woman, age approx. 85.	Her home in Endana.	May 2017
I50	Iling'wesi woman, age 28.	Online communication	December 2018
Group Interviews			
GI1	Group of three Samburu men. Ages unknown, approximately between 30-45 years old. One worked for Northern Rangelands Trust, another for the Samburu County Government, the other a student.	Archer's Post, Samburu County.	February 2017
GI2	Two Italian nuns based at Comboni Missionary Sisters Mission in Dol Dol.	Comboni Mission, Dol Dol	April 2017
GI3	A group interview of 10 <i>ilmeoli</i> and <i>ilmerishari</i> Iling'wesi men, all of whom had previously been involved in cattle rustling. During this interview, I would pose questions to the group and let them discuss the answer while I recorded the discussion.	Lodge in Jua Kali	May 2017
GI4	A group interview of 2 <i>ilmeoli</i> , 2 <i>ilkiro</i> and one <i>ilkitoip</i> Iling'wesi men, all of whom had previously been involved in cattle rustling. Interview carried out as in GI3.	Shadrack Noah Kuraru's home in Makandura	May 2017

Appendix II

List of age sets and their circumcision dates, 20th and 21st centuries

Age Set Names	Dates of circumcision (approximate)
Imirisho	1893-1912
IIterito/Ilkileku	1912-1925
IInyangusi/Ilmekuri	1925-1940
Ilsieuri/Ilkimaniki	1940-1958
Ilkilishi/ Ilkitoip	1958-1975
Ilkiroro/Ilkisaruni	1975-1987
Ilmeoli	1987-2000
Ilmerishari/Ilkishami/Ilmepuoakiti	2000-2013
Ilkibari	2013-present

Appendix III

Kenyan political party registration and nomination fees for election candidates

For those seeking nomination on the Jubilee ticket, MCA aspirants were expected to pay 50,000 Kenyan shillings (KES) (approximately \$500), MP and Women's Representative aspirants were charged 250,000 KES (approximately \$2,500) and gubernatorial aspirants paid 500,000 KES (\$5,000), in registration and nomination fees (*Daily Nation* 2017).¹⁹¹ Meanwhile, for those hoping to run on an ODM ticket (the biggest party in the opposition NASA coalition), all aspirants were charged the same amount, apart from MCA candidates, who were asked to pay 25,000 KES (approximately \$250).¹⁹² This is in addition to the cost of campaigning, which varies considerably.

¹⁹¹ Patrick Lang'at. 2017. Jubilee aspirants to pay Sh500,000 nomination fees. *Daily Nation*. February 21. Accessible at: <https://mobile.nation.co.ke/news/Jubilee-Party-governor-aspirants-to-pay-Sh500000/1950946-3821958-format-xhtml-6ue7cw/nation.co.ke>

¹⁹² Isaac Ongiri. 2016. ODM raises nomination fees, sets deadline for aspirants. *Daily Nation*. November 2. Accessible at: <https://www.nation.co.ke/news/politics/Why-ODM-has-raised-nomination-fees/1064-3438484-waglhyz/>

Appendix IV

Repeta song lyrics and their translations:

Ilmeoli age set:

Song 1:

Maa version:

*Iyie nkopon aai, nikiraa ng'amari, nikiraa ng'amari
Iyie nkopn aai, mepali merepa' netara
Rwuamba¹⁹³ lang, ooi seri seri, ooi seri seri
Sepeyo parranai, sepeyo parranai, nekishopie
Namuka narok ee nkinyera*

*Nketurrai ee sharrata aai, nagwetie ilshorteta
Aibotare ilmurrani iyie, aibotare ilmurrani
Ilmurrani lenkukwa iyie, ilmurrani lenkukwa
Oteyo teneiro iyie, oteyo teneiro
Mepali merepa, mepali merepa iyie
Nkopiro oo murrani, nkopiro oo murrani
Leshuel ongidaa, leshuel ongidaa iyie
Nkopiro oo murrani*

*Ooiyie nemama oiyie nemama emirem remo
Iyie emirem remo, kilepie rondoinyo, kilepie
Rondoinyo ngamoi tepre, ngamoi tepore,
Ngamoi tepore iyie, ongata ee mungushi
Ongata ee mungushi, ongata ee munghushi
Oorkiyioi sapuk, oorkiyoi sapuk
Kitana rwuamba lang, kitara rwuamba lang*

*Iyie nkopon aai, nikira ng'amari nikira ng'amari
Iyie nkopon aair, mepali merepa' netara
Rwuamba lang ooi seri seri, ooi seri seri
Sepeyo parranai, sepeyo parranai nekinshepie
Namuka narok enkinyera, narok enkinyera
Oo mamaai aah!*

English translation:

You my bead [a nickname used by morans for girls of their age], we are *ng'amari* [a group of determined people with a common purpose], we are *ng'amari*

¹⁹³ 'Or-' and 'R-' are often used in place of 'ol-' and 'l-' as a definite article in the Laikipia Maa dialect.

We will never leave without praising where our squad went to attack
Ooi, very quickly, ooi very quickly
Sepeyo, the place of interaction, Sepeyo the place of interaction
Where we put on our shoes, the black one of a tyre.

The Nketurai tree in Sharat is the place I made my rungas [wooden clubs]
Together with the morans, together with the morans
Morans of the season, oh you, the morans of the season
Who said when they talk, who said when they talk
We can't leave without praising, we can't leave without praisin, oh you
The feather of the moran, the feather of the moran [specifically, a feather that
marks the leader in a group of morans]
The proud man Leshuel, the proud man Leshuel, oh you
The feather of the moran.

And you young ones, and you young ones
Don't reveal secrets, don't reveal secrets
We have gone through Rondoinyo, we have gone through Rondoinyo
The wheat farms in Pore, the wheat farms in Pore
The plains of Mungushi, the plains of Mungushi
Of loud screams, of loud screams
Our gang attacked, our gang attacked.

You my bead, we are ng'amari, we are ng'amari
We will never leave without praising where our squad went to attack
Ooi, very quickly, ooi very quickly
Sepeyo, the place of interaction, Sepeyo the place of interaction
Where we put on our shoes, the black one of a tyre, the black one of a tyre
Oo my mother, aah.

Song 2

Maa version

*Ore kiweni neyieyo, ore apa kiweni t'enkop ang
Kiweni apa t'enkop ang, neiyieyo, kiweni apa t'enkop ang
Nemepali merepai oo neiyieyo neng'otonye nkanashe
Oo neng'otonye nkanashe oo neiyieyo
Neng'totonye nkanashe.*

*Oo sirito enaisordoo oo neiyieyo leng'otonye Milanoi
Leng'otonye apa Milanoi
Tabiko apa naa lemugie lang', maso leng'otonye paisa oo leiyieyo
Entarapu iyie nkamuka enatarupu iyie nkamuka
Oo neiyieyo oo tenaigilie ilbarnot.
Elepaki iyie Kamwaki, ooyi
Purungai oo ldama, purungai oo ldama ooyie,
Apa ninye eira rmanarie
Oo neiyieyo, oo kereu iyie rmanarie.*

*Mapa maai kusakan ilpaiyani lekanu
Ilpaiyani lekanu, ntoki eyiyio rpaiyani apa lekanu
Nekiniteuren rkubwa ntoki eiyiyo
Lelembusia t'orkinyei, lelembusia t'orkinyei ooyie
Lelembusia t'orkinyei sirit erimpa naibor, noitikie sirit erimpa naibor
Siroto olmurrani, sirito olmurrani, ooiyie apa
Siroto ulmurrani karep apa mabaiba lai leukukton maso
Ntoki eiyieyo leng'otonye neiyieyo*

*Kanga's ajo entasupa ntoki eiyieyo
Kang'as ajo entasupa, ooiyie
Apake ensupa leng'otonye nkaiyoni
Nekilepaki teipa ooipa
Olorisio lekampim oolorisio lekampi tubula akeiyie rmaibala
Ole ntore lemeropi yiyie t'enkang ang
Iroto tinilo ole nakuya maso te lntadamu iyie
Nemanya ooi amu iyie lnapa
Kop namanya kijijini ee umande ooi
Amu iyie nkjiji ee umande.*

English translation:

When we are just seated at the house of my mother
When we are seated in our land, when we are seated in our land
Just seated in our land, I will never forget to praise the young one of his mother's
sister
Ooiyie, in the house of his mother's sister
Ooiyie our young sister.

The company of Naibordo, the young one who belongs to Milanoi's mother
The son of Milanoi's mother, ooiyie, the son of Milanoi's mother
May you live long with the company of Lemugie, the proud man
The son of Paisa's mother, ooiyie,
Our young men put on your shoes, put on your shoes
And again, take back the young morans
Go up to Kamwaki [Ole Naishu Ranch], go up to Kamwaki to Purungai
The place of the hot sun, Purungai, of the hot sun,
Where the footpath goes through, the footpath that goes through Kereu.

I will never forget to question the old men of KANU,
Young one of my mother, the old men of KANU
We stopped the chief from Lempusia family in Olkinyei
Chief Lempusia in Olkinyei
With the company of the white cows,
The company of the white cows,
I will also praise the company of Lekukuton, the proud man
The young one of our mother.

I will start to say hello to everyone, our young one,

I will first say hello to everybody, hello everybody who belongs to the son's mother

We went up through in the evening
The flat land of the camp, the flat land of the camp
Where my loved one grew, the one that will never be bribed
Greet, when you go, Lenakuya, the proud man
Remind him when you get there,
Of the living place of the villages of Umande
The villages of Umande.

Ilkiroro Age Set

Song 1

Maa version

*Ooyie nemama, ooyie nemama, ooyie nemama
Nemapal majo sepeyo parrani, sepeyo parrani
Parranai menya losiriri, menya losiriri
Leng'oto nkaiyoni, leng'oto nkayioni
Lemeishori rmareita, meishori rmareita.*

*Nemepali merepa, siritto ormurrani, siritto ormurrani
Loonkunimi entapan aai, enkunini entapan aai
Kilipika laleta, kilipika laleta,
Supuko oirugutan, supuko oirugutan
Kitobikoitie mperia, Kitobikoitie mperia
Narik rapa naibor, arik rapa naibor
Nkini reiyo eiba ngure, Nkini reiyo eiba ngure.*

*Keitipika reiyo enkop, enkoitie torpukel enkoitie torpukel
Naa lopiyo tinisha, lopiyo tinisha
Taparu enkunini, taparu enkunini
Oo reiyo t'enkop aang, oo reiyo t'enkop aang,
Pee epiarie entauwa, pee epiarie entauwa
Peiyie atum atederie
Sirit ee masikiyo, sirit ee masikiyo
Otamanya meidurie, otamanya meidurie
Sipili t'orkinyei, sipili t'orkinyei mamaai.*

English translation

Oo young one of my mother, oo young one of my mother
I will never forget to say
Sepeyo, our land of interaction, Sepeyo, our land of interaction
We lived by Loisiriri, we lived by Loisiriri
The mother of a young boy, mother of a young boy
Who cannot be given to other relatives
Cannot be given to other relatives.

I will never leave without praising
 The group of our morans, the group of our morans
 The young one of my *entapan* [the name given to a child in order to praise his or
 her elder brother; sort of like 'sister of a great man']
 The young one of my *entapan*
 We have built our manyattas, we have built our manyattas
 Inside the cold forest, inside the cold forest
 We have remained warriors, we have remained warriors
 When *rapa naibor* leads, when *rapa naibor* leads [*rapa naibor* is a white cow that
 leads the other cows]
 Small cows that hate being thirsty, small cows that hate being thirsty.

Our cows have made footpaths all over the plains,
 Footpaths all over the plains,
 When the rain comes, when the rain comes,
 Remember, our young ones, remember, our young ones
 The cows in our land, the cows in our land
 So that our cows can thrive everywhere
 And so that I can get time to share together
 With the likes of Masikiyo, the likes of Masikiyo
 Who lived without moving, lived without moving
 From the hilltops of Olkinyei, oh my mother.

Ilmerishari age set

Song 1:

Maa version

Lamuran lang, euron marikino, lamuran lang nekinshopie namuka
Lamuran, enteipa kinyototo, Lamuran t'endikir olaini
Namaiyan narep lamuran, siritoo enkunini
Ooie nemama, kamaian aai, lchoro sirua nkare.

Lamuran lang'a, kinshopie namuka, lemuran lang'
Kimparaitie sesia, lamuran lang', kimparaitie sesia lamuran lang'
Kimparaitie sesia lamuran lang', ildoinyo kerikeri, lamuran lang'
Murai emaingi, lamuran lang', kite guretjie maisoro.

Ewuaso mburingei aai, lamuran lang', Lewuaso nalelia omuran lang'
Nkare nalekeno omuran lang', kimaian enkop ang, lamuran lang'
Kimaian narep lamuran lang', laijori lekokata lamuran lang'
Lempusia ooi sirisiri, omuran looyeiyo Nasika, Lamuran lang'
Lenaige maso lamurani, kitiringo einyala enkop.

Lamuran lang rongai lelemarti, lamuran
Kitigilie nkigwena lamuran lang', ilmaso pusi ntawua lamura lang'
Kitoriko t'orkinyei lamuran lang'

Nikarare ejya nejia lamuran lang'
Kumo siritio aainei lamuran lang'
Kaisho lapir imaiyan naisho rkulie repeta
Lamuran lang', obukoki enkare enkop.

English translation:

Our morans, I will never, our morans,
Where we put on our shoes, our morans
We started the journey in the evening, our morans
In the place of a straight footpath, and then I blessed and praised our morans
The group of the young men.
Ooyie nema ma [indicating a change of praise], I will always bless the place
where we fetch the brown water.

Our morans, we put on our shoes, our morans,
We kept on asking our morans, we kept on asking our morans, we kept on asking
When is it easy to get to the plains of Maingi and to finally proceed to Mt Kenya
Our morans, that's where we made our rungus.

My favourite river, our morans,
The river that drains slowly and silently, our morans
The river that meanders, our morans,
I bless our land, I bless and praise the young morans of God
My moran Lempusia, the straight one, and our moran Looyieyo Nasika
Our moran, the proud one that we stopped from being destructive.

Our slim moran from the Lemarti family
Our moran who controlled the gathering
Our moran, the proud one of the blue cows,
Our moran who took off from Olkinyei
And we took all the animals by all means,
Our morans we have many groups of ours,
Our morans, that I can always give the best blessings
I will give the other praise, our morans
Who pour water to the land.

Song 2:

Maa version

Wooi wooi wooiaa, meng'urori mauo etelelevision
Woi meng'urori, mauo etelelevision, woi nkopon aai
Nemapal majo woi nkopon aai
Makurian enkop ang' napuo lera nkador
Neiyietu enkare enkop, nemapal marep
Naitagita taikan, nemapal marep
Muruai enkiwanja tang'asu roroki
Enkerai ormurran enkerai ormurran

*Nabikie t'enkop ang'
Woi nkopon aai, hodi hodi*

*Woo, Makandura enkop ang' naapuro lera nkador
Nepuro rking'e level, roroki tinitum lenaigeo maso
Maso loonkunini mepali menepa
Roroki tinitum enkerai aang ormurran
Lenasoiki likae ong'ida limalie kijana
Roroki tiniyo lenaimanyu likae maso lookatesia
NEmepali maisha rekiei lormurran
Mepali maisha rekiei lormurran, supa hodi hodi
Orngatung otala kilepie t'oltaikan
Ilapie t'oltaikan nkoponii neiyeyo lomuran
Kulo entai kemuto enkai oo enkop keriuo
Enkai oo enkop kemuto nakenyna
Nabo nemeesa nabo nemelopo nkishu nemetumo
Nkaiyok, nkaiyok orkishaki
Supa hodi hodi*

*Muruai ee mukina rekiei loormuran emotu
Nkingojea emuto nkingojea lempusia mampuli
Ooteio teineiro sereuni ilmanyara, woi wooiee
Toloin'angi lenaibor, toloin'yangi lenaibor
Kingojea ilmurran, supa hodi hodi
Nshete keru embaria, nshetekeri embaria
Nekingaraki teipa, nekingeraki teipa,
Rekiei stadiu, rekiei stadium
Tenkalo nanyokie, nairorie nkopon aai woi, nkopon ang'
Loipira mukima, loipira mukima, woi nkopon aai
Sukuta oshi, enkop aang,
Nafiriri nkae, nafiriri nkae
Neiyiety ntare enkop
Makurian enkop ang', napuo lera nkador
Kebikoki nkarre, emuto kisiligu, emuto kisiligu
Keiran ntomie, keiran ntomie,
Ensheta keru embaria, kemuti kisiligi
Rori lemshanga rori lemshanga
Sinidkishaiki ildigiri lepisha lioshoki.*

English translation:

Wooi wooi woiaa, I hope the horn of the television doesn't fall, woi
I hope the horn of the television doesn't fall, woi my bead
Makurian, our land where the acacia goes to the sky,
While they absorb water from the ground
I won't leave without praising the sides of Lolldaiga,
I won't leave without praising the plains of Kiwanja Ndege
Start greetings with the lady of the warriors,
The lady of the warriors,

I stay with in our land, wooi my bead, *supa hodi hodi!*

Woo, Makundura our land, where the acacia goes to the sky,
And the Olking'e tree goes to the same level
Greet when you find Lenaigeo, the proud guy of the young ones,
We won't leave without praising him
Greet when you find our lady of the morans, Lenasioki,
He is the other proud one, whom we named Kijana
Greet when you see Lenaimanyo, the other one, the pride of Katesia
We won't leave for life, the footsteps of morans
We won't leave for life, the footsteps of morans
Supa hodi hodi! The place of the lion is visible,
We climbed at Lolldaiga, we climbed at Lolldaiga, my bead and mother
You warriors, it's already evening in the sky and on the land
It's already evening in the sky and on the land
It's the morning that's almost morning
It's already evening in the sky and the land
It's evening, almost morning, one thing has not been done
The cows are not milked, and the boys have not been found,
The boys of the villages.
Supa hodi hodi!

The plains of Mukima, the footsteps of the morans
It was late, while we were waiting
It was late, while we were waiting
Lempusia of the umbrella, who said when he gave good information of the homes
Woi, woiee, in the market of Naibor,
In the market of Naibor,
Where we waited for the morans, *supa hodi hodi!*
The tree of mixed colours of the barrier
We passed by in the evening, we passed by in the evening
Footsteps at the stadium, next to Nanyuki,
Where I talked to our lady, woi our bead.
Those who went to Mukima side, those who went to Mukima side, woi my bead
Sukuta is our land, where water flows straight, where water flows straight
It absorbs water from the ground.
Makurian, our land, where the acacia goes to the sky, and water stays for long
It was long that we waited, it was long that we waited,
The disturbance of the elephants, the disturbance of the elephants
At the tree of the mixed colours of the barrier,
It was late while we waited, it was late while we waited,
For the lorries of sand harvesting,
The lorries of sand harvesting,
Which we accompanied through Ildigiri of Pisha,
Where you go around the corner,

Song 3:

Maa version:

Haa, olesere ilmurran, olesere ilmurran
Ntanapa repeta, olesere ilmurran, nemapa marep haa
Nekinko Manyishon, haa, ngarramet olchoro toilikoi keenye haa
Emany lenaibala haa, neiyieyo ntito enche haa
Nemapal majo makandura enkop ang', haa, makandura lorien tobiko
Koiye, haa, naabik ildoinyo tobiko oolet
Aai baa inkunini ntanapai,
Olesere ilmurran, olesere ilmurran, haa
Nemapal marep, nemapal marep, haa
Narok ormareita
Natejo teinero, natejo teinero, haa
Lomuran kulontae entai nkamuka haa
Entai nkamuka matono tuki entai.

Kore ake pipuopuo haa nkulupuo oloreren
Nkulupuo olereren, haa
Tena nairo siwo, tena nairo siwo
Haa, anata airorok lolakiu Imperia
Lemerumatu lai, haa, lemeirumatu lai,
Ooi meng'urori, sipiri oltaika orok patum
Lie, haa, mauo nalysunye, mauo nalusunye
Lusunye t'oltaikan haa, natum atetelie
Makandura nlorien
Nemapal majo olmurran jeshi nairorie lmusungu
Nemapal majo ekiliki ntauwaua, haa
Ekiliki ntauwaua
Nkorkori manyisho, nkorkori manyisho, haa
Nemapal majo haa teneku nishoma
Ilchoki lang' ruma, haa
Nemapal majo haa, roroki naimutie, haa
Maso loontilengbe, lang'iyu apa
Likae lengiyo apa likae haa,
Ilmaso lokamama

Nemapal marep haa, nemapal marep haa
Ngumeshin enchege emamy letimo orok, haa
Nemepal majo, haa, teneku
Ishomo iyie teparu iroroki iroroki
Sikar aai, haa,
Ormeikash mepuo, ormeikash mepuo
Lobikoi kenya narok
Enkilalai naropil oltaika latidira natal, haa
Muruai oltaika orok, haa
Tobikoi kenya mono etelewe sian,
Tobikoi kanya, tobikoi kenya
Natidira natai, haa
Neikuna manyisho, neikuna manyisho
Supuko paranai, supuko paranai
Olpiro ltarakwo nkop

Netaushe ilgilai, Netaushe ilgilai
Nemapal majo supuko paranai, parani
Kiyonyo enkop enkerr, haa
Kironyo enkop enkerr.

Goodbye warriors, goodbye warriors
Advice and praise, goodbye warriors
I won't leave without praising, I won't leave without praising
Haa, the way we make our homesteads, haa
The tight parts of the wells, where people fetch water
That comes from underground.
Report always to the residents of Lenaibala
The young one of their daughter,
I won't leave without saying
Makandura is our land,
Makandura our land, the *lorien* tree
Live long forever, as long as the mountains live,
Live long my other me, haa
The young one of our family
Goodbye warriors, goodbye warriors
I won't leave without praising, I won't leave without praising
The black one of different houses
Who said when she talked,
When she talked to you warriors,
You warriors, remove your shoes,
Remove your shoes, so that I can give you blessings.

When you go, haa, soils of other people,
Soils of other people, haa
If the air could speak, if the air could speak
I would have said hello to the guys of star spears
Who can't get tired, who can't get tired
I wish that the peaks of the black Lolldaiga won't fall
So that I can view the one that goes higher than the rest
The one that goes high, so that I can view Makandura of the *lorien* tree,
I won't leave without saying
Warriors' army who talk to the whites,
I won't leave without saying,
That the heifers will tell, haa
The heifers will tell through their bells.
The homestead, haa, I won't leave without saying, haa
If you happen to visit our area,
I won't leave without saying,
Great Naimutie, haa, the pride of their daughter
Lengi'yo of the umbrella, Lengi'yo of the umbrella
The proud son of women.