

Political Democratization and Inter-ethnic Dynamics of Pastoral Groups in East Africa: Emergence of a New Ethnic Identity in the Ariaal in Northern Kenya

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Abstract

This paper investigates the dynamics underlying the homogenization of ethnic differences characterizing a pastoral society within a nation-state and the subsequent revival of diversity. The elimination of ethnic antagonisms is among the key precursors to the successful introduction of a democratic multi-party system in African countries. Nevertheless, since the introduction of a multi-party system in Kenya in 1992, many ethnic groups have created new or re-created old conflicts, leading to frequent inter-ethnic conflicts and disputes about political issues. Thus, multi-party systems must create opportunities for dialog among groups that developed different interests during election campaigns. The Kenyan national election, which was held on Dec. 27, 2007, caused a major disruption in the country. During the election, ethnic claims about political resources created a confrontational relationship between two pastoral societies in the Laisamis constituency in Northern Kenya that had maintained a symbiotic relationship for many years. However, people encouraged reconciliation after the election by promoting the flexibility with which ethnicity had been treated previously. Marginalized pastoral societies in Northern Kenya have exhibited different styles of ethnicity that vary according to the political, economic, social, and cultural conditions at any given time. This paper examines the possibilities inherent in the ambiguity and flexibility that characterize the ethnic identities of East African pastoral societies as they develop new strategies for surviving in modern situations.

Key words: Multi-party Politics, Elections, Ethnicity, Ariaal, Kenya

Mila (N.S.), Vol. 11 (2010), pp. 59 – 76, © 2010 Institute of Anthropology, Gender and African Studies

Introduction

This paper investigates the dynamics underlying the homogenization of ethnic differences characterizing a pastoral society within a nation-state and the subsequent revival of diversity. The elimination of ethnic antagonisms is among the key precursors to the successful introduction of a democratic multi-party system in African countries. Neverthe-

less, since the introduction of a multi-party system in Kenya in 1992, many ethnic groups have created new or re-created old conflicts, leading to frequent inter-ethnic conflicts and disputes about political issues. Thus, multi-party systems must create opportunities for dialog among groups that developed different interests during election campaigns.

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a confrontational relationship between two pastoral societies in the Laisamis constituency in Northern Kenya that had maintained a symbiotic relationship for many years. However, people encouraged reconciliation after the election by promoting the flexibility with which ethnicity had been treated previously. Marginalized pastoral societies in Northern Kenya have exhibited different styles of ethnicity that vary according to the political, economic, social, and cultural conditions at any given time. This paper examines the possibilities inherent in the ambiguity and flexibility that characterize the ethnic identities of East African pastoral societies as they develop new strategies for surviving in modern situations.

The Kenyan national election, which was held on Dec. 27, 2007, caused a major disruption in the country. Due to the riots that broke out in the western part of Kenya, the coast, and Nairobi, more than 1,000 people were killed or injured, and several hundred thousand became refugees. In the Marsabit district, 400 km north of Nairobi on the Ethiopian border, no violent conflict arose. However, during and following the election, a new ethnic identity was forged by a group that aligned itself with the campaign for the election of parliamentary members that occurred simultaneously with the presidential election. The ethnicity-based claim on political resources that emerged from the election created a confrontational relationship among pastoralists who had maintained peaceful and symbiotic relationships for a long period of time.

Since the introduction of a multiparty system in Kenya in 1992, many ethnic groups have invented or reinvented themselves, increasing the frequency of inter-ethnic conflicts and disputes related to political issues

(Matsuda, 2004). Eliminating ethnic antagonism is a key element of ensuring that the introduction of a multiparty system in African countries provides a sufficient condition for the emergence of a democratic political system (Lindberg, 2006). That is, opportunities for dialogue among groups that developed different interests during the course of electoral campaigns conducted within the context of a multiparty system must be established.

My research area is in a dry region of northern Kenya that has long been marginalized by both the colonial government and the sovereign government after independence. A study conducted by Soga (2001) examined the process by which a pastoral society, an apolitical entity in northern Kenya, was integrated into the nation through an election. This study concluded that the election resulted in the reorganization of the pastoral society from a flexible cultural community with various connotative differences to a fixed, homogeneous, politico-cultural community. Thus, consideration should also be devoted to the target area's long history as a British colony because formal ethnic categories were created during the period of British rule. Given that the politicization of ethnicity emerged primarily during the process of nation building following independence (cf. Little, 1992), it would have been extremely difficult for the community to resist change. It would be more realistic to contend that the marginalized pastoral society exhibited various styles of ethnic identification according to the political, economic, social, and cultural conditions at any given time (Little, 1992). If so, it would be important to investigate the dynamic process of how such ethnic identities within the pastoral society were homogenized and reified and how their diversity and flexibility were revived.

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On the basis of this perspective, I examined several expressions of new ethnic identities that occurred in the Laisamis constituency in the northern part of Kenya during the 2007 general election. After providing an overview of the research area, I will explain the impact of decentralization on the local community of pastoralists in northern Kenya. In addition, I will examine how the by-election in 2006 and the national election in 2007 gradually changed the ethnic identities of the residents of the Laisamis constituency. Finally, I will analyze the dynamics of the inter-ethnic antagonism among pastoral groups in northern Kenya in relation to the decentralization and democratization of the Kenyan nation and will offer several practical solutions.

Who Claimed New Identities?

“Ariaal” and “Massagera”

The Ariaal is a loose cultural community that belongs “somewhere between the Samburu and Rendille” (Spencer, 1973). It is impossible to understand this group with the binary logic (Falkenstein, 1995) used to represent the ethnic identities of the pastoral peoples in Northern Kenya (Schlee, 1989). In terms of ethnic boundaries, the Ariaal have expressed their identity by negotiating with others according to particular situations and circumstances (Naito, 2004). Those who claimed the Massagera identity during the parliamentary elections in 2007 are known as “Ariaal” or “Ariaal Rendille,” and they have often been the subjects of anthropological research (e.g., Spencer, 1973; Fratkin, 1991; Schlee, 1989; Falkenstein, 1995). The Ariaal emerged from the interdependence and cooperation of the Samburu and Rendille groups during the generations in which they shared common enemies; their alliance was maintained

through intermarriage, intermigration, and non-competitive cattle (Samburu) and camel (Rendille) ranching (Fratkin, 1991; Spencer, 1973).

The Ariaal speak a Nilotic language, a combination of Samburu and the Kushitic language of Rendille. Although bilingualism was widespread in the past, Schlee (1989: 210) observed that the Ariaal spoke Rendille poorly. Moreover, in recent years, the Ariaal and Rendille have come to adopt the Samburu culture in terms of language, clothing, and livestock-feeding habits as their contact with the Samburu economy, which is geographically closer to the market and more consolidated due to the market economy, has grown (Fratkin, 1993). The degree to which communities have assimilated Samburu culture differs. However, during this research, the Ariaal people primarily spoke the Samburu language and some did not even understand Rendille at all. Therefore, I regarded the Samburu language as the local language.

Ariaal (*ariaal*) is a term used by the Rendille. In the Maa language, the word corresponding to Ariaal is *massagera*. According to research I conducted from 1999 to 2004, however, only a few elderly people knew the meaning of this term in Ariaal and Samburu. Most Samburu people do not distinguish Ariaal from Rendille and simply refer to the people as Rendille (*rantillei*). In contrast, the Rendille people distinguish the Ariaal from the Samburu (*kolo*). It seems that the Rendille differentiate the Ariaal from those Rendille who belong to the Samburu clan or originate in Samburu.

Outline of Ariaal Society

The Samburu, Ariaal, and Rendille societies have adopted similar segmentary descent and age-set systems. The norms inhering in each

social category direct individual actions or relationships with others such as marriage, cohabitation, cooperative work, exchanges of wealth, and confrontation.

Segmentary descent systems in each society consist of segmented social categories based on the paternal kin principles of moiety, clan, and sub-clan, in order. The Ariaal people do not have their own descent system and borrow parts of the Samburu system.³ The most important segment is the clan, which is also a unit of exogamy. Important rituals, such as upgrading one's age grade approximately every 14 years, are also based on clan units. The Rendille and Ariaal organize clan settlements. Rendille clan settlements are populated primarily by members of a sub-clan, whereas members of Samburu clans are distributed over regions. The Ariaal organize clan settlements, but their settlements include members of other clans and Rendille individuals.

The age system includes the social categories of age set, generation set, and age grade. These are organized based on biologi-

³Spencer (1965) structurally divided the Samburu's descent system into moiety, "phratry," clan, and sub-clan. In the Samburu, the clan (*Imarei*) is a unit of exogamy, but cases of endogamy occur in some clans such as the *Imasula* and *Ipsikisyu*. In consideration of these clans, Spencer set the analytical unit of "phratry" above that of clan. Nakamura, however, argued that phratry was merely a unit of analysis with no corresponding local word. Admittedly, this analytical unit does maintain logical consistency with the rules on exogamy. However, in some cases, phratry and clan refer to the same category, which is very confusing. For that reason, Nakamura did not use phratry in his analysis. Following his method, the analytical unit "phratry" is not used in this article. At the same time, I would like to add that cases of endogamy occur in two other Ariaal clans (the *Imasula* and *Ituria*).

cal and social principles involving young and old, such as chronological age and generational relationships. Males in Samburu, Ariaal, and Rendille⁵ societies are divided according to age set through a series of rituals held every 14 years or so. As of 2008, four age sets had existing members: *kimaniki*, *kishili*, *kololo*, and *moli*, in ascending order of age. In 2007, an *Imetere* (*kishami*) age set⁶ was organized to include the *moran* (single men). Members of the same age set are expected to be cooperative with one another. When the Samburu, Ariaal, and Rendille individuals have to work together across clan or ethnic boundaries, people often remark about this phenomenon.

Impact of Decentralization on a Marginalized Society

Election System and Laisamis Constituency

Every 5 years, Kenya holds a general election in which the people vote for members of the parliament and council as well as for the president. Members of parliament are elected from 210 single-seat constituencies, whereas council members are elected from wards in each district. This article does not directly address the campaigns for president and parliament because people in the Laisamis constituency generally exhibited the least interest in the presidential election, and members of parliament were elected accord-

⁵In the past, the Rendille used their own generational system, but they recently adopted the age system used by the Samburu.

⁶In some cases, several names exist for a single age set until they are formally determined by the "Tumuget of name," which is held approximately 5 years after the organization of the age set. Since February 2008, this age set has usually been called "Ikishami" by the Samburu and "Imetele" by the Ariaal and Rendille.

ing to the balance of power within each constituency.

The Laisamis constituency is located to the south of the Marsabit district (see map). Although most residents are Rendille and Ariaal pastoralists, a relatively small number of Samburu and Turkana pastoralists also inhabit this area. The map below shows the locations of the central administrative towns in the Laisamis constituency. Rendille people live in the Korr and Kargi areas, and Ariaal people live in the Logologo, Laisamis, Merille, and Ngurunit areas. A small number of Samburu reside around South Horr and Mt. Kural. The Rendille and a small number of Turkana live in Loyangallani. In this article, I divide the Laisamis constituency into Rendille, Ariaal, and Samburu/Turkana regions based on the basic concentrations of these populations.

Introduction and Impact of Financial Decentralization

A highly centralized political regime was established after Kenya achieved independence in 1963. Indeed, Kenya is the least decentralized country within the East African community consisting of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. Local governments and local administrative organizations in Kenya are fragile, and the system that delivers social services is undeveloped. As a result of the political pressures emerging from democratization and the need to reduce poverty, Kenya began to implement major reforms focused on decentralizing the financial system during the latter half of 1990.

Under these circumstances, the Kenyan government introduced the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) in 2003. The CDF is a financial decentralization system

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introduced as part of the tide carrying decentralization in Africa. The purpose of the CDF is to develop constituencies, and 2.5% of government revenues were dedicated to this purpose at the time of its establishment (this percentage is planned to increase to a maximum of 7.5%). Approximately 70% of the CDF is divided equally among the 210 constituencies, and the remaining 30% is distributed according to the poverty index of each constituency. The specific budgets for the CDF are determined by committees in each constituency. Members of these committees include the parliament members from the constituency, civil servants, representatives of NGOs, and local people. Thus, commentators have noted that the CDF is sometimes used as a political resource by members of parliament (Sasaoka, 2007).

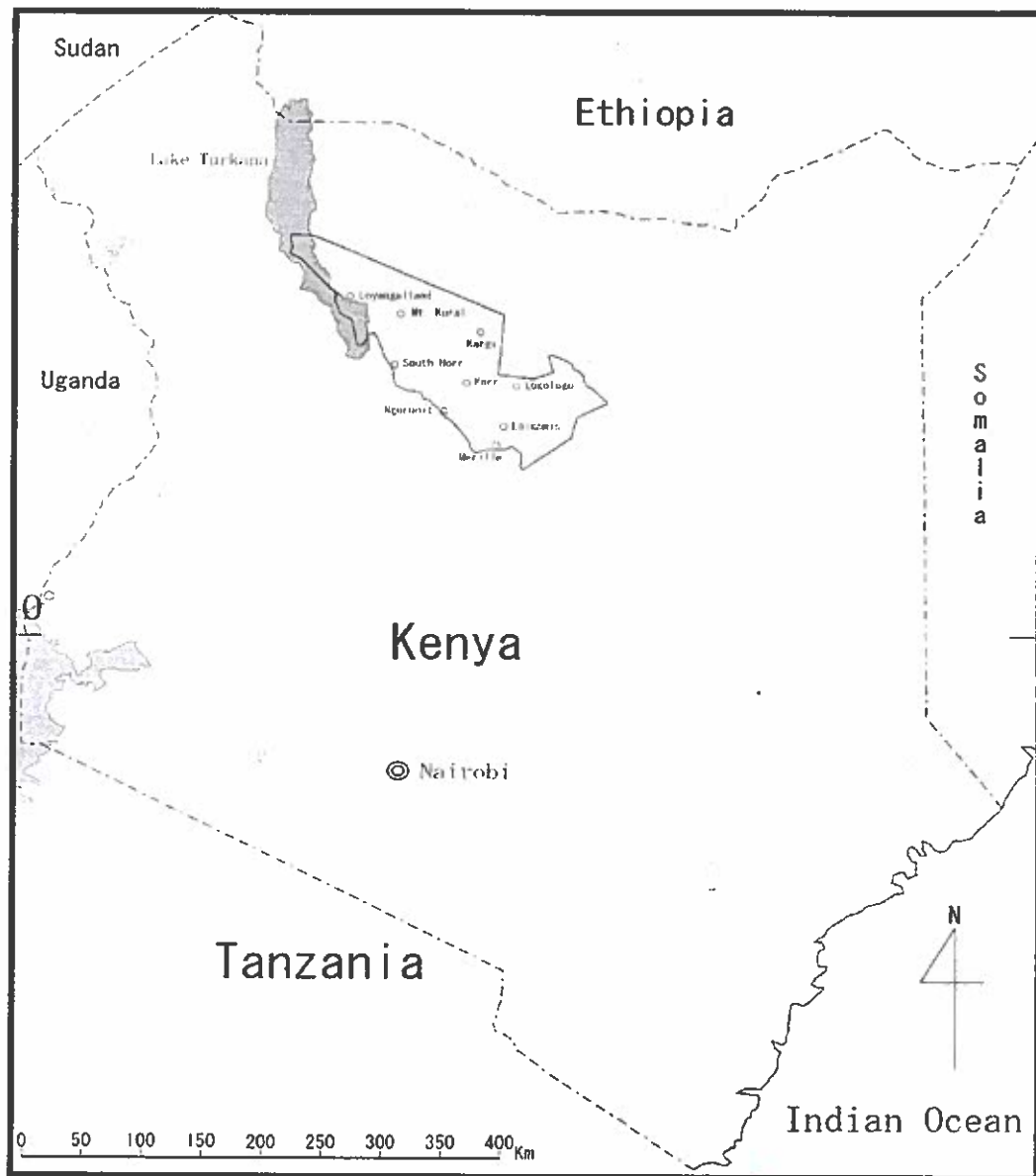
Sasaoka (2007) analyzed the features of Kenyan decentralization and underscored the following positive functions of the CDF: 1) providing resources for regions in need; 2) targeting important sectors (education, insurance, or water) for the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS); and 3) acting as domestically funded local owners, resulting in less dependence on outside support. He also noted the following risks associated with the CDF: 1) difficulties relating to and negotiating with the administration, 2) duplication of other budget resources, and 3) weak connections to the regular budget.

Table 1 shows the fluctuations in expenditures for CDF-related projects in each area of the Laisamis constituency. CDF investment in the Ariaal area tended to increase the budgets for constructing clinics, schools, and water resources (bore holes) (Table 2), which enabled the establishment of these institutions or services in this re-

gion after 2003.

Rapid changes and popular surprise about CDF-sponsored programs also meant that the CDF became a powerful political resource used by members of parliament to show their power. Previously, members of parliament had been considered as potentially helpful in fulfilling individual requests. In that context, people were not

particularly conscious of ethnic affiliations and asked members for various favors such as releasing prisoners, arranging work, establishing contacts with regard to higher education, and providing economic support. Parliament members also did not seem to distinguish between Ariaal and Rendille petitioners.



Map: The Laisamis constituency and its towns

Table 1 Changes in CDF allotment (Ksh) by area in Laisamis Constituency

Year	Ariaal area	Rendille area	Samburu & Turana area
2003	1,620	1,250	6,300
2004	5,300	4,750	2,182
2005	10,200	5,300	5,700
2006	14,133	5,800	5,050

Source: Constituencies Development Fund: <http://www.cdf.go.ke/>

Table 2 Application of CDF by area in the Laisamis constituency

Area	Application of CDF (Ksh)			
	Water	Education	Health	Others
Ariaal area	8,200	5,550	2,550	800
Rendille area	9,673	11,660	5,700	1,220
Samburu & Turana area	2,400	12,882	3,150	800

Source: Constituencies Development Fund: <http://www.cdf.go.ke/>

Since the introduction of the CDF, however, members of parliament have acquired the power to access and create important resources with implications for the well-being of their constituents. For the people, members of parliament became more than political resources; they became the ultimate resources. Practically speaking, this meant that parliamentary elections came to involve an element of resource conflict (Markakis, 1998). Meanwhile, from the perspective of democratization, these changes had positive ramifications in that people were paying increasing attention to interpreting the underlying meanings of campaign speeches. Indeed, people studied speeches to ascertain, before voting, their chances of procuring resources if the speaker were elected.

New Electoral Tactics and Increased Political Awareness

Personalization of Electoral Campaigns

In July 2006, a by-election for members of parliament was held in several constituencies in the northern part of Kenya, including the Laisamis, because several incumbent members of parliament had died in an airplane accident on their way to settle ethnic conflicts in this area. One victim from the Laisamis constituency was a member of parliament from the Sale clan in Rendille. The mass media and most interested parties expected that the winner of the by-election would be Mary L Ngoyoni, the wife of the deceased incumbent from the Masula clan in the Ariaal (e.g., Daily Nation, 2006). However, Joseph L. Lekuton, a new face from the Lologushu clan in the Ariaal, was elected.

After graduating from high school, Mr.

Lekuton attended university and graduate school in the US. While working as a teacher in the US, he also continued to work for NGOs furthering education in Kenya (Lekuton, 2006). He apparently started his political career with eventual plans to run for a seat in parliament. Upon hearing of the deaths of the incumbents, he expedited his plan and ran in the 2006 by-election. At this point, two issues emerged: 1) the means by which Mr. Lekuton, who was from the Ariaal, and his campaign aides mobilized people using political resources and public speeches; and 2) the impact of this campaign on the Ariaal and Rendille societies.

Prior to the 2006 by-election, popular votes were determined by elders at a meeting of clan settlements. Thus, candidates often visited clan settlements in the Rendille and Ariaal and invited elders to attend their public speeches. Candidates also provided small gifts such as cash, sugar, and tobacco, which were distributed equally among the elders. Such activities were generally included under the rubric of campaigning. However, people were not particularly interested in elections and did not care much about who voted for which candidate.

Several supporters of Mr. Lekuton introduced a new electoral tactic to the by-election in 2006. They selected a couple of supporters from each clan settlement to organize a "committee." The members of this committee were relatively young people who had experience working for local celebrities, leaving town for educational purposes, as guest laborers in Nairobi, or working for development projects and commercial organizations. These individuals acted as a secret campaign staff and ex-

panded electoral activities in the settlements. According to an interview in M settlement, the supporters of Ms. Ngoyoni gave 40,000 Ksh (Kenyan) to the elders, whereas Mr. Lekuton's supporters gave only 5,000 Ksh. However, Mr. Lekuton's supporters secretly organized a committee at M settlement and gave its members 20,000 Ksh as a campaign fund. Mr. Lekuton allowed his staff to work secretly to attract voters in M settlement.

The organization of the committee included members of many clan settlements from the Ariaal and Rendille. Until the ballots were counted, most people expected Ms. Ngoyoni to win, given that most elders among the Rendille and Ariaal had conveyed the message to allow Mary to serve this term and then recruit new people for the next election in 2007. However, Mr. Lekuton received about 6,000 votes compared to Ms. Ngoyoni's approximately 5,000 votes, which had a major impact on the elders in Rendille and Ariaal. Indeed, the election results revealed to most people the existence of the committee.

The success of the committee system is widely considered to be related to the complex structure of the Ariaal group. Clan settlements among the Ariaal employ a clan structure for the sake of form, but actually include people from other clans as well as people from the Rendille.⁸ In the past, the meeting of the clan elders reached a consensus, and this was treated as the decision of the clan as a whole. In reality, however,

⁸In the M settlement of the Masula clan, where I conducted intensive research, 39% of the households in a population of 445 originated from the Masula clan. The remainder were from three clans in the Ariaal and four clans in the Rendille (Naito, 2007).

many people held positions or opinions that differed from those reached at these meetings.

Case 1: Conflict of Opinions in a Clan Settlement and the Exposure of Original Descent (2006)

The M settlement of the Masula clan in the Ariaal held a circumcision ritual for the *lmetere* (*kishami*) age set in 2007. Ideally, this ritual occurs during the same month in all settlements of a given clan. Due to the late rainy season in 2007, the M settlement, which is located on very dry, low-altitude land, conducted the ritual three months later than the other five clan settlements, which are located in highland areas with relatively wet climates. The M settlement experienced an intense argument over the postponement of the ritual.

The boys, who would become *moran* after the circumcision ritual, wanted the ceremony to be conducted during the same month as those of the other clan settlements. They gathered around the house of the elder of the *kololo* age set who was to administer the ritual and appealed for the prompt performance of the ceremony. This elder and his family originally came from the Rongumo clan in Rendille but moved to this settlement nearly 10 years ago. At the elders' meeting, the ex-Rendille elder and the boys insisted that the ritual be conducted during the same month as that of other clan settlements following the common practice.

The other three elders of the *kololo* age set in the M settlement opposed this idea. One of them came from the Masula clan, and the remainder came from other clans that had joined the Masula clan one generation ago. These three elders noted that the

dry season was extremely "fierce" at this point, that it was difficult to procure the livestock products necessary for the ritual, and that the boys were the only ones available to take care of the livestock, which were scattered over a large area. They proposed that the ritual be postponed until the rainy season and until the livestock were returned to the settlement.

The meeting of the elders was filled with arguments, but the proposal to postpone the ritual was approved as a decision of the clan settlement as a whole. The result of this argument was clearly illustrated by the following conversation between the head of the founding family of the M settlement and the two elders, brothers B1 and B2, who had proposed the swift performance of the ritual.

A: You know where the circumciser for our Masula clan is, don't you?

B1 & B2: We don't know...

A: You don't know? If not, go to Falakoren (a Masula clan settlement in the highlands) and ask them.

B1 & B2: We don't know anyone in Falakoren...

A: How can you conduct a circumcision when you don't even know our circumciser or the person you should ask?

B1 & B2: We have no idea!

A: Go to the place where you used to live. You don't circumcise our boys. They have their circumcisers!

In this conversation, the head of family A, a legitimate member of the Masula clan, pointed out that the two elders were immigrants from the Rendille and identified them as "others." Typically, an implicit understanding is operative that Ariaal clan settlements include members of other clans

and ethnic groups, and distinctions among groups are rarely emphasized in daily life. People living in a clan settlement are basically considered to be "one of the clan." When a conflict of opinions among members goes further, however, participants tend to distance from others by raising the issue of background to belittle the ideas of opponents.

Most members of the committee could view their culture objectively from an outsider's perspective. Although they lived in a clan settlement in a marginalized area, they had had experiences with leaving the area for education, wage labor, commerce, or development. For that reason, they were able to view the political process of the Ariaal, which constructed the grand narrative of "one clan community," more objectively. They focused on the problematic process by which some differences of opinion among individual inhabitants were handled and tried to persuade or mobilize individuals on a one-by-one basis.

I will now summarize the impact on Ariaal society of the new electoral tactic involving the committee system. In the past, voters decided for whom they would vote according to the decisions reached at the elders' meeting, a system in which decisions proceeded on the basis of the authority of the elders of the clan community. During this election, however, committee members who used to live in towns or who had left the settlement in pursuit of their education gained increased influence over the election. In this context, electoral activities were conducted secretly rather than during open discussions at an elders' meeting. Thus, decision making about individual votes was left to the discretion of individuals. As a result, the solidarity of the clan

settlement weakened.

Creation of voters through National Registration

Mr. Lekuton and his supporters developed another game-changing electoral tactic during the by-election: increasing the number of eligible voters by promoting national registration in the Ariaal. In Kenya, although people are required to participate in national registration to receive ID cards, such ID cards are frequently issued inappropriately. This problem has been raised by the parliament, but corrective measures have yet to be implemented (Tsuda, 1995)

People in the Marsabit district, located on the boundary with Ethiopia, were unable to register for some time due to a 2002 government policy, which was established because of the difficulty in distinguishing Kenyan from Ethiopian individuals. Although this policy was lifted in 2004, people were then required to engage in complicated and time-consuming procedures to acquire ID cards. Thus, even people who enrolled sometimes failed to get ID cards. Therefore, the number of those with ID cards remained minimal, but people did not feel inconvenienced because they had few opportunities to use ID cards in their daily lives and were not interested in elections. ID cards are necessary only when going to urban areas, as travelers are required by police to submit them at security checks. Men have many opportunities to visit towns to sell livestock, serve as guest labor, and attend school, but they usually borrow ID cards from others. Young men, particularly those who serve guest labor, often have their ID photos taken in their *moran* costumes, in which the entire face is decorated with beads and red

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colorant. They know that even if they show another person's photo, police in urban areas such as Nairobi and Marsabit, who are from different ethnic groups, will be unable to perceive differences between the faces. Therefore, many people are unregistered in Ariaal, and local people deal with the situation by lending or borrowing ID cards. As a result, however, numerous residents without ID registrations do not have the right to vote. It is certain that many potential voters would be created in the Laisamis constituency were political resources more abundant.

In this context, the minimal number of ID registrations in Ariaal became a major issue in the 2006 by-election in 2006. According to an interview at M settlement, Mr. Lekuton's campaign staff addressed the issue with the following statements:

Case 3: "Even children have IDs in the Rendille."

"How about us? Many of us do not have IDs."

"That's why the Rendille have always won the elections."

"If Mr. Lekuton is to be elected to be the member of the parliament, he will give IDs to all of you."

"Let's get rid of the situation under

Rendille control!"

According to an interview conducted after the by-election, public officials were sent to arrange ID registration in each region of the Laisamis constituency. Thus, the number of registered voters increased significantly. Table 3 shows the number of voters eligible to vote in the parliamentary elections in 2002, 2006, and 2007. This table shows a rapid increase in voters between 2006 and 2007.

Upon learning the 2007 electoral results, the Laisamis constituents believed that most of the additional votes leading to Mr. Lekuton's second win came from the Ariaal people. As a result of the campaign speeches during the by-election in 2006, and the promotion of ID registration following the election, a political minority drawn from the Ariaal emerged and became empowered. People in the Laisamis constituency certainly interpreted the situation as empowering. Moreover, this political movement underscored the differences between the Ariaal and Rendille. With the 2006 by-election as a turning point, the Ariaal and Rendille, who had previously co-existed cooperatively and without distinction, came to have a clear boundary and became polarized into politically opposed groups.

Table 3 Changes in registered voters in the Laisamis constituency

Year of election	Number of registered voters
2002	14,087
2006	15,610
2007	22,411

Source: Electoral Commission of Kenya: <http://www.eck.or.ke/>

The 2007 General Election and the Emergence of New Ethnic Identities
Creation of Antagonism

Another election was planned for one year after the 2006 by-election. Immediately after the end of the by-election, campaigns for the 2007 parliamentary election began and continued for a substantial period of time. In this section, I will analyze the process by which the Massagera identity emerged as clearly different from the Rendille election during the 2007 electoral campaign.

During this electoral campaign, the ruling Party of National Unity (PNU) supported Mr. Lekuton, who was from the Lologushu clan of the Ariaal, whereas the opposition Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) supported Abubakar G. Harugura. Allegedly, Mr. Harugura, who worked as a computer engineer in Nairobi after graduating from the university, originally came from the Sale clan of the Rendille and later moved to the Longeli clan, living among the Ariaal. From an academic perspective, both candidates were from the Ariaal clan. In the local context, however, Mr. Lekuton was regarded as the representative of the Ariaal, and Mr. Harugura was regarded as the representative of the Rendille. Although Mary L. Ngoyoni, who had lost the previous by-election, ran again and was supported by the ruling party, she was considered unworthy of serious consideration during this election.

All candidates organized their own committees for this campaign. Each committee promoted various differences between the candidates while campaigning in the Ariaal and Rendille clan communities and tried to use these distinctions to their respective political advantage. These dif-

ferences were not limited to ethnicity or clan. For example, because Mr. Harugura was in the *moli* age set and Mr. Lekuton was in the *kololo* age set, each appealed for votes to members of his own age set on the basis of a sense of solidarity. In Rendille, the point at issue was attachment to the moiety, given that several members of parliament from the Laisamis constituency came from the Eastern moiety. Mr. Lekuton was positioned as the representative from the Western moiety, and Mr. Harugura was positioned as the representative from the Eastern moiety. Although various social distinctions were raised as political issues during the campaign, the difference between the Ariaal and Rendille was the most controversial, and the campaign included many ideas and references intended to stir antagonism along this dimension.

Case 4: A Rendille elder, in support of Mr. Harugura, called Mr. Lekuton a “small black calf with its tail cut. Cattle can’t beat a camel.” That story spread among the Ariaal.

“Black calf” is a reference to Mr. Lekuton’s membership in the black-cattle moiety in the Samburu, and this remark emphasizes the cultural alienation of Mr. Lekuton from the Rendille by underscoring the important livestock-related and segmentary descent system of the Samburu. Additionally, “small” and “with its tail cut” imply that Mr. Lekuton is powerless and flawed. The figurative expression, “cattle can’t beat a camel,” and the invocation of the traditional livestock of the Rendille and Samburu underscore the typical differences between the groups and then show the supposed advantage of the Rendille over the

Samburu. In this instance, the Ariaal is equated with the Samburu and strongly distinguished from the Rendille.

Many references in the speeches given during the 2007 general election campaign focused on differences between the Rendille and Ariaal. Since that time, people of the Ariaal have used the term "Massagera" on a frequent basis.

Case 5: According to my interviews, members of the Lekuton campaign staff made the following public comments at several settlements in the Ariaal area: "Members of parliament from the Rendille do not listen to our petitions, as we speak the Samburu language and can't speak the Rendille language well. We need a member of parliament who can communicate with us in our language" and "We will vote for a candidate from 'Massagera' to send him to parliament and ask him to construct a new bore hole to compensate for the one that the Rendille people have used exclusively." Additionally, campaign staff often carried satellite phones, and they regularly called Mr. Lekuton after speeches to demonstrate that they could actually petition "directly, in their language."

Campaign staff and supporters focused on cultural differences such as the descent system, language, and vocational issues to create a distinct category of "people different from us." The Ariaal tried to identify themselves as "people who speak the Samburu language and serve as leaders of the Samburu culture." It is generally believed that the term Massagera, a word from the Samburu language that had almost been forgotten due to disuse, re-emerged in the service of this message, replacing the term Ariaal, which is a mnemonic term in the

Rendille language.

Some campaign staff implied that the CDF had been manipulated in favor of the Rendille. As noted above, however, the CDF had actually favored the Ariaal regions since the previous parliamentary elections. Thus, although this implication was not based in fact, it was effective in creating an identity for the political minority that came to be known as the Massagera. Furthermore, the Rendille and Massagera were often regarded as mutual enemies.

Case 6: During public speeches at Ariaal settlements, Mr. Lekuton's campaign staff metaphorically referred to voting cards as "weapons" and elections as "battles" (e.g., "Let's fight a battle against the Rendille with this spear!").

In the past, the Ariaal regarded the Rendille and Samburu not as different ethnic groups (*muge*) but as half-brothers (*lanache*) or as other members of the clan (*leiching'a*). Those considered to be members of "different ethnic groups" (e.g., the Turkana, Borana, and Somari) are so reviled that killing them is actually regarded as an honor. On the other hand, killing a member of the Samburu or the Rendille group would lead to the same consequences as killing another Ariaal. Moreover, the spear is a traditional weapon used in battles with "different ethnic groups." By using this word, the campaign staff mobilized the people by implying that the Rendille are a "different ethnic group" worthy of being killed; they thereby encouraged the people to vote as Massagera to defeat the Rendille.

In this way, the campaign staff and supporters of each candidate constructed a confrontational relationship between allegedly different ethnic groups during the 2007

Table 4: Changes in voter turnout and the winner's proportion of votes in the Laisamis constituency

Year of election	Voter turnout (%)	Winner's proportion of votes (%)
2002	57.61	83.03
2006	72.49	55.24
2007	78	57

Source: Electoral Commission of Kenya: <http://www.eck.or.ke/>

election for the purpose of gaining the resources available to members of parliament. The Massagera identity was created by such campaign activities, and appeals to this identity were widely accepted by many people because it was created by "othering" the Rendille.

Most Rendille people regarded Mr. Harugura as the representative of the Rendille. In addition, some Rendille feared that their majority in the Laisamis constituency might be overturned by the election. The Rendille knew that they had to obtain as many Ariaal votes as possible to win and that they were short of votes. The following case study also shows that the Rendille internalized the antagonistic relationship between the Ariaal and the Rendille even though they did not actually use the Massagera label.

Voter turnout in the Laisamis constituency for the parliamentary elections was only 57% in 2002, but this figure increased to 72% in 2006 and to 78% in 2007. At the same time, the winner received 83% of the votes in 2002, but only 50% in both 2006 and 2007 (Table 4). We can see that people who were not previously interested in voting began to vote and that the elections became closer over time. Thus, the Massagera and Rendille, who emerged as

distinct groups as a result of the appeals of the electoral campaigns, actively devoted themselves to fighting over the political resources that accompanied membership in parliament. In the end, Mr. Lekuton received 10,001 votes, whereas Mr. Harugura received 7,189. and Mr. Lekuton took office again.

Possibility of Acquiring the Domain of the "Massagera"

The position of the Laisamis constituency in the presidential administration changed dramatically during the 2007 general election. During a public speech in the Marsabit district in December 2007, the incumbent president, Kibaki, declared that the Laisamis constituency would be promoted to the status of district. In Kenya, where decentralization is undeveloped, administrative power is organized by district. Thus, this promotion enabled the Massagera and Rendille to pursue further initiatives in local governance. If ethnic politics continued, the Massagera might lead the local government.

During the parliamentary elections in 2006 and 2007, the Ariaal achieved three successes: 1) establishing a clear identity for the Massagera, 2) recruiting eligible voters through ID registration, and 3) rea-

lizing the possibility of ethnicity-based local autonomy due to the increased power of the Laisamis district. Given these changes, it would appear that the emergence of a new ethnic identity during the 2007 general election was part of a process whereby the Ariaal were transformed from a loose cultural community characterized by an ambiguous boundary between Samburu and Rendille to a cultural and political community known as the Massagera and characterized by a clear identity, a restricted membership, and a region of influence gained via a battle over national resources.

Resolving Electoral Antagonisms

Two campaigns created ethnic antagonism in the Laisamis constituency. Both the Kenyan electoral system, which is characterized by single-seat constituencies and multiple parties, and the connection between local government and development, which resulted from the recent introduction of the CDF, make it possible that each of the 210 constituencies will become battlefields in which charged language and ideologies are used to mobilize people.

The elimination of the antagonism and violence created by elections is among the most important goals of efforts to promote democratization in Africa. This study addressed this issue by analyzing the process by which an ethnic category was created through targeting one Kenyan constituency and by investigating how collective identities were mobilized and polarized during a democratic election following the introduction of the multiparty system.

What happened to the new collective identities following the election? I will now turn to an examination of the neutralization of these categories and explore their

specific roles within Ariaal society. Based on these analyses, I will investigate the feasibility of democracy in East African pastoral societies.

The Kenyan general election in 2007 created chaos for the entire nation, and it is unclear whether the country has completely recovered from these events. It seems, however, that people in the Laisamis constituency have been trying to recover by relaxing the previously strict definition of Massagera identity, softening their previously highly confrontational relationship with the Rendille, and returning to more normalized and casual relationships in the region. Attempts to recover have included conventional methods of negotiating cycles that move from radicalized clan attachments to neutralization.

Originally, the Ariaal clans included members of other clans as well as immigrants from the Samburu and Rendille. Among the Samburu, Ariaal, and Rendille, differences in terms of clan or race became focal only during age-system rituals, which occur at intervals of approximately 14 years. With the exception of these occasions, however, such differences were rarely central. Indeed, these societies have their own methods of dealing with cycles that move from radicalized clan attachments to neutralization. During these cycles, the Ariaal people probably redefine their own attachments and form multi-layered clan attachments.

Case 9: In February of 2008, immediately after the national election, I interviewed an elder from the Longeli clan of the Ariaal concerning the migration history of families currently residing in the clan settlement. On the occasion of a ritual performed in

2007, the clan settlement was divided into two groups: the Ariaal and the Rendille. The Longeli clan consists primarily of two sub-groups: one originating from the Longeli clan among the Samburu and the other originating from the Sale clan among the Rendille. The sub-group from the Sale clan is known as the *haruguraiyo*. This is the group from which Mr. Harugura, the representative of the Rendille, came during the 2007 general election.

The elder hesitated to talk about the history of family X in the divided settlement. Generally speaking, revealing the familial descent of someone who currently lives within the clan settlement is avoided, as it emphasizes the otherness of that person. One adolescent who observed the elder's hesitation said "Speak up! There is nothing to hide. We Massagera should vote for a candidate from Massagera. But the family X originally comes from the Sale clan, and that's why they support candidates from Rendille."

The elder was probably trying to hide the differences between sub-groups in the clan because he wished to neutralize the rivalry between the Massagera and Rendille, which had been greatly exacerbated by the election. The adolescent, who was still embroiled in the rhetoric of the election, tried to enunciate the differences. Nevertheless, both the elder and the adolescent maintained the same friendly relationship with the sub-group from the Sale clan as before the electoral campaigns. In this settlement as well as in all other Ariaal settlements, many people did not vote for the person the clan supported, and some people even belonged to the committee supporting an opposing candidate. However, no violence was ever directed against people on

the opposing side.

The Ariaal's clan settlements have highly competitive structures, as they include immigrants from other clans and other ethnic groups. Many disputes among settlements arose during the elections, and campaign staff took advantage of clan and ethnic identities to politically mobilize people. However, people gave priority to living together and did not behave violently as a result of their political differences.

A saying in Ariaal insists, "No one is pure" (*meata ltung'ani neweinie nabo*), meaning that everyone has multi-layered identities, and no one has only one identity. It has been suggested that such previously "hidden identities" (Little, 1995) surface according to context. This concept is common in both East African pastoral societies and many other types of African societies. With respect to the Laisamis constituency, the Samburu heritage within the Ariaal culture became a political issue on the occasion of national decision making, the election, and a new identity that was clearly distinct from that of the Rendille was created for the first time. However, I would also like to emphasize that, as in case 1 above, people disclosed their opponents' hidden identities to exclude them from their communities and to disenfranchise them in the local decision-making process. In other words, people of the Ariaal are skilled at political bargaining involving negotiating and manipulating hidden, multi-layered identities.

Conclusion

The introduction of the multiparty system served as a primary method of political democratization, and the dynamics of decentralization resulted in the creation of new

ethnic identities in marginalized areas. The Rendille and Ariaal, residents of the Laisamis constituency, had maintained a symbiotic relationship over a long period of time. Like the people of Somalia (Lewis, 1961; Little, 2005), Rendille and Ariaal individuals did not pay much attention to ethnic differences, attending instead to clan affiliations. Their clan identities were multi-layered as the result of interactions between the social system and personal decisions. Moreover, the extent of the ambiguity in multi-layered clan identities changed as a function of cycles within the age system. To coexist with cultural "others" in the community, people of the Ariaal manipulated their own ambiguous identities according to situation and place.

However, the financial decentralization system in Kenya produced extremely powerful members of parliament who were able to funnel various resources to marginalized areas. After the introduction of the multiparty system, parliamentary elections became proxy wars between two major political parties. Political rhetoric about the Massagera and Rendille fighting over limited resources was constructed under such circumstances. In the process of creating the Massagera identity, campaigners revealed hidden identities among the Rendille and Ariaal. Thus, the dynamics of decentralization and political democratization in Kenya involved the construction of a narrative in which groups in marginalized areas competed for limited resources.

However, people seemed to cope well with the antagonism created by the election. For example, unlike other areas in Kenya, Rwanda, and Nigeria, neighbors with different ethnic identities or affiliations were not killed. Moreover, people of the Ariaal

tried to reestablish the ambiguity in their identities immediately after the election by continuing daily face-to-face interactions with one another. These strategies for managing ethnic classification and antagonism are common to other pastoral societies as well. For example, the neighboring Turkana pastoralists "do not rely on [such] external reference points as laws and rules, but take impromptu measures suited to the individual occasion when they seek mutual consent" (Ohta, 2005: 237). Those who settled near the refugee camp developed collaborative relationships with the refugees from the Sudan and Somalia by using these impromptu measures, which were facilitated by face-to-face interactions (Ohta, 2005).

Through democratization and decentralization, the Kenyan nation tried to classify, homogenize, and control the people. The people of the Ariaal, however, opposed these processes, making use of their personal relationships and the ambiguity of their identities. These appear to be among the new survival strategies adopted by pastoralists in contemporary contexts.

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