

MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE FOR
SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY
WORKING PAPERS



MAX-PLANCK-GESELLSCHAFT

WORKING PAPER No. 156

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HYBRID
PASTORALISTS –
DEVELOPMENT
INTERVENTIONS
AND NEW TURKANA
IDENTITIES

Halle/Saale 2014
ISSN 1615-4568

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Hybrid Pastoralists – Development interventions and new Turkana identities¹

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Abstract

Publications on the Turkana in Kenya indicate that development interventions have divided them into pastoralists and non-pastoralist paupers, who are forever disconnected from one another, and that, at large, the Turkana are worse off than they were before these interventions. It is suggested that this view has to be modified, as Turkana society has adapted to the new situation, new hybrid forms of existence have developed, and pastoral and non-pastoral Turkana are co-operating more than is visible at first glance.

The paper does not concentrate on the future of pastoralism as other papers do,³ but it shows how the Turkana – pastoralists, non-pastoralists, and hybrid⁴ forms of both – are dealing with the prevailing situation. The economic lay-out of the Turkana society has changed and is changing, but not towards an ever-increasing alleged pauperisation. Livelihood diversification is, as it has always been, the lifeline of the entire Turkana society, but it has gained a new quality and cannot be seen any more as a mere supplement to pastoral life. The article highlights the economic connections between the pastoralist and non-pastoralist sectors from both ends and calls for a more in-depth research of cultural Turkana hybridity, including its impact on the social system.

¹ My thanks go to the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology for supporting the current research and especially to Artem Rabogoshvili and Markus V. Hoehne, who reviewed the draft paper and gave extremely useful comments.

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³ For recent examples, see Schlee and Shongolo 2012, chapters "Introduction" and "Some Comparative Perspectives, Conclusions and Recommendations."

⁴ This paper does not discuss the concept of hybridity but confines itself to the presentation of field data.

Introduction

When I was in the progress of writing this article, a friend of mine gave me a 1969 issue of National Geographic. The title story was on Kenya, and when I read through it, I could not believe my eyes as the author wrote “I had heard that the (...) primitive Turkana of northwest Kenya (...), even today, practice occasional cannibalism” (Fisher 1969: 198f.). There is not the slightest justification for this derogative assertion.

This was 1969, and today such a statement would probably no longer be politically correct. Still, the external view on the Turkana is somehow twisted even now. In September 2010, the Kenyan newspaper Daily Nation wrote: “A family is reported to have eaten its dog in Turkana where thousands of people are facing starvation.”⁵ Eating dogs is an unthinkable matter in Kenya, and educated Turkana saw this as a “fabricated story that discredits the image of a proud, pastoralist community.”⁶

Another example: the NGO Burnaby Blue Foundation⁷ speaks of the Turkana region as “one of the most desolate inhabited places on the continent and an area of absolute need”, but my interpreter Lucy Lokwale exclaimed admiringly “There is nothing like Turkan [Turkana call their land Turkan, HMD], and even when you try to find your luck somewhere else, you will always return.”⁸ The Turkana love their country, although most of the environment is semi-arid and harsh.

Apparently, the emic and the etic views of Turkana environment and society differ considerably. In this article, we shall have a look at the more emic side, and in particular at concepts of demands and poverty. False assumptions concerning poverty and needs as well as the alleged insustainability of pastoralism have led to the fact that development efforts in Turkan have not achieved their intended results. Some authors argue that the Turkana are worse off than before these interventions, as a rift between Turkana pastoralists and non-pastoralists has developed with the non-pastoralists having become paupers and ‘non-Turkana’ (Broch-Due 1999: 88; Anderson 1999: 256). My argument is that this rift does not seem to exist anymore, if it ever has existed, and that an economic system has emerged in Turkana, which is based on all sectors of a hybrid economy: pastoralism, on the one hand, and non-pastoral activities, on the other: agriculture, fishing, and jobs in government, with NGOs, and in the private sector. The data presented and their interpretation might of course be applicable to similar ethnic groups, but this is not explored here.

Data for this article have been collected during numerous field visits to Turkan and especially in November and December 2011 and again from November 2013 to January 2014 when my research agenda concentrated on this issue.⁹

⁵ 30.9.2010, Lucas Barasa and Jonathan Manyindo, Daily Nation, quoted from <http://in2eastfrica.net/wfp-told-to-act-on-turkana-hunger/> (retrieved 11.6.2012). Similar incidents have been reported recently, the latest on Kenyan KTN TV on 31.1.2014 (<http://www.standardmedia.co.ke/ktn/video/watch/2000074480/-families-in-turkana-county-resort-to-eating-dog-meat-as-famine-bites>, retrieved 10.2.2014).

⁶ Quoted from <http://lifeinturkana.blogspot.com/2012/01/politics-in-turkanathe-politics-of-food.html> (retrieved 11.6.2012).

⁷ Burnaby Blue Foundation, <http://www.burnabyblue.com/turkana> (retrieved 11.6.2012).

⁸ Verbal communication in 1986.

⁹ Of 88 Turkana interviewed, 47 were from the non-pastoral sector, 16 were pastoralists, 19 belonged to both sectors, and 6 were fishermen. 64 were male, 24 female. The selection of informants was not random, as a representative sample should have been. Since we asked for sensitive information, we relied on people we knew well and who trusted us. When there are direct verbal statements of informants on a certain issue, this is marked in the text with codes in square brackets, thus anonymising the informant. The un-coded list and details can be obtained from the author. When real names of informants are mentioned, this is done with the approval of the persons concerned. In one case I have anonymised a name by abbreviating it.

The Turkana, Their Environment, and Their Pastoral Way of Life

It was in 1980 when my wife and I first visited Turkan. We were not yet social anthropologists and just travelled the continent. What we mainly saw and felt was heat, dust, sandstorms, barren land, and starving people, who ate the thrown-away food that travellers had deemed spoiled. We could not imagine how anybody could survive under these conditions. We were actually witnessing one of the recurrent droughts that hit the area in more or less regular intervals.

Starving people: this is the picture of the Turkana and their neighbours in the Horn of Africa, which has been engraved into people's brains by, amongst others, countless do-gooder websites collecting money in order to assist the hungry people.

On my visit in Turkan in November 2011, however, I found lush green landscapes, huge numbers of well-fed, grazing animals, and happy people. To be precise: I found this along the mountains and in the riverine forests, whereas the rest of the country, although somewhat green, was still a thorn bush environment. Nature in Turkan offers both: relative abundance and well-being, and, unfortunately more often, scarcity and hunger. The limiting factor is the unpredictability and the amount of rainfall. As a rule of thumb, it can be said that out of five years only two may be good, two others are far from being good, one has a drought, and about every ten years there is a catastrophic drought when two or more drought years fall in line. Turkana pastoralists exploit this harsh environment with an intricate herd management, and they have shown their adaptability among others by substituting camels for most of their cows.

The Turkana are the descendants of the Jie in what is now called Uganda, and they have split off only some 200–300 years ago (cf. Lamphear 1976a and 1988: 32) and migrated into their present habitat. The Jie were fierce fighters, and thus the newcomers were able to expand their area of influence and settlement at the expense of those who had lived there before, or they incorporated them and mingled with them.¹⁰ The resulting Turkana are a quite heterogeneous and decentralised people, and, except for their common language, a dialect of the Ateker group,¹¹ they lack apparent strong common institutions binding them together, and even their age-set and moiety system¹² seems to have lost its strong binding force.¹³

Population figures on the Turkana living in Kenya's Turkana Districts (North, Central, and South), east of Lake Turkana, are inconsistent and vary between 520,000 and 850,000.¹⁴ The administrative capital is Lodwar. The Turkana lifestyle has been mainly pastoral, settlements were rather mobile, and the few town-like places were all created for administrative reasons by the British, when they ruled the area approximately during the first half of the last century.¹⁵

Over the last decades, for reasons laid out below, an ever-increasing number of pastoral Turkana had to leave the pastoral sector or found additional resources in the state and private sector. There

¹⁰ An example are the Siger who have become a Turkana territorial section and a clan, both called Ngisiger.

¹¹ The Ateker group includes the Karimojong, Jie, and Dodos in Uganda (some people also add the Teso), the Toposa and Jiye in Sudan, the Nyangatom in Ethiopia, and the Turkana. For historical relations between the groups cf. Lamphear 1976a.

¹² Young men around the age of 18 are initiated into named age-sets. Each man is a member of the moiety opposite to the one of his father. There are two age-set lines, one for each moiety, but there is a strong tendency of the two lines to unite into one.

¹³ There is, however, still a notion of 'being Turkana', in opposition to the rest of Kenya, who more or less despise the Turkana (see below).

¹⁴ 650,000 according to Macintyre et al. 2011. The official census of 2009 gives a figure of 855,399 but qualifies it as inconsistent (cf. Kenya National Bureau of Statistics 2010). Merie 2008 gives a figure of 521,000.

¹⁵ The first official British expedition reached Turkan in 1898. There was considerable Turkana resistance, and a tight grip on the Turkana was not established until 1918 (cf. Lamphear 1976b). In 1963, Kenya became independent.

are no figures indicating the numeric relation between pastoral and non-pastoral Turkana, for good reasons, as in many cases it is difficult to assess whether a Turkana household is pastoral, non-pastoral, or a combination of both. However, as pastoralism is the cognitive basis of all Turkana, even of those in town, we need to have a look at the pastoralist system first. More information on the non-pastoral Turkana is given below.

The main source of Turkana pastoral subsistence is animals: camels, cows, goats, and sheep as well as donkeys for relocation transport. The requirements of tending the animals govern the residence patterns. Turkana distinguish between three different ways of settlement:

- *Ere* (pl. *ngirea*) is the family homestead and the wet-season residence of the entire family. If a Turkana goes “home”, he or she goes to the *ere*. *Ngirea* are relatively stable settlements and rarely move. If the compound is infested and the huts eaten by termites, the *ere* may be moved but will normally remain within the same area. During the dry season, the older people and women with small children remain in the *ere*, while the younger people move with the animals to places where they find forage and water. These mobile settlements are called.
- *Adakar* (pl. *ngadakarín*)¹⁶ and in English often referred to as “cattle camps”, although they may not hold, in the Turkana case, any cattle but camels. Goats and sheep are everywhere, in the *ngadakarín* as well as in the *ngirea*, although in the latter their number will diminish as water and feed become scarce in the dry season.
- *Abor* (pl. *ngaborín*) is what an *adakar* is called when it is really far away from home, which may be 100 to 150 km or even more.

Some Turkana pastoralists try to cultivate Sorghum, but they rarely succeed, as rainfall is sparse and unpredictable. In the dry season, they collect wild fruit, and some of them also fish in Lake Turkana. They do not hunt, as after the arrival of the Europeans game populations have almost been eradicated. Turkana pastoralists employ a large array of livelihood diversification,¹⁷ and nowadays there are some more means of income, which shall be discussed below.

As mentioned before, since the arrival of the British, towns and town-like settlements have been established in Turkan, and a need arose for the Turkana to distinguish between those new entities and their original habitat. As a Turkana word was not at hand, the word *raiyá* was introduced. *Raiyá* is the countryside, the opposite of town (*etaun* or *erek*¹⁸). The term *raiyá* is borrowed from Kiswahili, designating ordinary people, ‘civilians’ (in opposition to those wearing uniforms). Since the environment where the Turkana pastoralists are living cannot be described properly with English words, as all of them would evoke wrong connotations, I shall generally use the emic term *raiyá*, instead of countryside, bush, etc., throughout this text.

¹⁶ Derived from *akidak*, to graze.

¹⁷ An excellent overview of Turkana livelihood diversification can be found in Juma 2009.

¹⁸ Mainly used in central and south Turkan.

Emic Conceptions – Etic Misconceptions

An early comment on the Turkana by a British Administration officer reads as follows;

“The Turkana (...) are a friendly and likeable lot and their powers of endurance are worthy of the greatest admiration, nevertheless it would be idle to pretend that they are other than irresponsible, dirty and shockingly immoral and their quaint coiffure and entertaining dances hardly compensate for their gross neglect of their stock or for that promiscuity which makes whoring the rule and marriage the exception. (...) With sheep and goats they are competent but with camels they are ignorant and apathetic. (...) Lack of discipline and internal authority amongst the Turkana (...) has always been a characteristic of the people; nevertheless there is the possibility that the authority exists but is not, for some reason, being exerted.” (Turnbull 1944: 121)

The Turkana never had much to say in political matters. Juma has described the marginalised political situation of the Turkana in Kenya:

“From the colonial era to post-independent Kenya, the Turkana pastoralists were seen as having less to offer the state, especially resources for the export market, which meant they had less political influence either in or on government (Hendrickson, et al. 1998). (...) Turkana people are still denied a voice in decision making because they have little political representation at the national level. Although by territory alone the Turkana region is one of the largest districts in Kenya in terms of size, it has only three representatives in the Kenyan parliament. These representatives have a very limited voice in policy formulation in a country dominated and ruled since independence, by major tribes from agriculturally productive areas. Thus the Turkana people have been consistently marginalised throughout history, and therefore have very little influence in the national arena.” (Juma 2009: 127f.)

A former Turkana Member of Parliament concluded:

“The rest of Kenya do not see any value of Turkana people. They call a Turkana ‘My dear friend a man of hunger who keeps begging’. They view them as backward, not educated, they walk naked, and their land is barren and they move from place to place, while herding livestock, and even those who are holding a position as a District Commissioner they still doubt his or her ability; saying let us see if he or she can speak English. And those Turkana who go looking for employment at downcountry¹⁹ places they are employed as watch men, cattle herders, milkers, digging their gardens and general house helpers. They consider them as people who eat donkeys which other people in Kenya abhor eating. But on the discovery of oil in Turkana everybody in Kenya would like to be associated with Turkana to the extent that GEMA (Gikuyu, Embu, Meru Association) would now like to be called GEMAT (they clamour to be called Gikuyu, Embu, Meru Association, and Turkana), so that they are also near Turkana.”²⁰

Since the colonial rule, there have been efforts to ‘ameliorate’²¹ life in Turkan. The peak level of interventions was in the 1980s,²² when the Dutch Government and the European Union pumped vast amounts of money into the Turkana Rehabilitation Project (TRP), together with the Norwegian

¹⁹ Anything south of Turkana district is called “downcountry”.

²⁰ Statement by Emanuel Imana, transmitted to the author by e-mail through Darlington Akabwai on 27.5.2013.

²¹ In quotation marks, as the Turkana have never really been asked what kind of amelioration they wanted.

²² After a devastating drought, which hit Turkan in 1979/80. The Turkana lost 90 per cent of their cattle, nearly 80 per cent of their small stock, and 40 per cent of their camels. Many were driven to the towns or to the relief camps. In February 1982, out of a total population of 180,000 still resident in Turkana District, some 80,000 were receiving food aid from the Turkana Rehabilitation Project (Hogg 1982: 164, cited after Baxter 1993).

Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). Due to diplomatic problems, NORAD had to leave Kenya in the early 1990s, and around the same time the TRP was scaled down dramatically. Today, all big-scale development efforts have ceased.

As will be shown below, development interventions have generally failed to achieve their intended results, and for most non-Turkana the area is still perceived as a place of hunger, starvation, misery, and backwardness. My own research does not support these views. It may thus be advisable to explore some features of Turkana life that, on the one hand, help to understand the Turkana and, on the other, seem to provoke the negative views on the Turkana and the apparently inadequate responses by white and black governments and development agencies.

Animals

Rainfall patterns do not support tillage in Turkana, and until around one hundred years ago, there was no alternative for the Turkana than a pastoral life, and when a family had lost the animals needed for subsistence, their relatives, in-laws, and friends had no other way than assisting them with food and with animals in order to rebuild their herd.

This changed with the arrival of the British administration around the turn from the 19th to the 20th century²³ and the settlement of white farmers in the Rift Valley and the Kenya Highlands, when administrative posts (e.g. administration police, chiefs) and agricultural jobs became available. Subsistence not based on animals became more frequent with the arrival of relief and development programmes since the 1980s.

We have to keep in mind that almost all Turkana adults, even those living in town, are former pastoralists, and most youths in town recall the pastoralist time of their family, and many do this in a romanticised way. Some of the adult people I interviewed in town, when asked what kind of an existence they dreamt of for their old age, wanted to live a hybrid life, not too far from town but in *raiyá* with a few animals. Even the poorest Turkana try to have at least a few animals, and when they come into even small money they prefer to buy a goat and go hungry themselves. At least for the moment, animals seem to be in the Turkana DNA. But this is more than a must-have feeling for keeping animals, as among the Turkana, in the same way as among their pastoralist neighbours, all social ties, be it marriage, bond friendships, or other relations, are established through the exchange of animals. We cannot dwell on this important issue here, but it must be remembered that their owning animals is more than a commercial or sentimental issue.

Alleged Nomadism

Administrations do not like nomads, as they are mobile and consequently difficult to administer. Turkana are often termed nomads, but they are not. They live a transhumant life. In general, every family has its home *ere*, where the graves of the ancestors are, and only part of the family moves around with the bulk of the animals in the dry season when the *ere* area does not sufficiently sustain the herds. Rare exceptions of whole families moving are cases of particular circumstances forcing them to do so.

Why then are the Turkana generally despised and labelled “nomads”? It may help to compare them to the Maasai, who are leading a life similar to the Turkana. In contrast to the Turkana, the Maasai seem to be the flagship of Kenyan tradition and the backbone of Kenya’s tourist industry.

²³ The East Africa Protectorate was established in 1895 and became a Crown Colony in 1920.

Maasai land is in a large part lush and green, and it is the area of game reserves and tourism. Turkana, however, is predominantly harsh, barren, and inhospitable, and non-Turkana are afraid to go there. It is also said the area is not safe because of raiding. This is not the place to discuss this extremely intricate issue, but it is true that Turkana herders are well armed and some do raid the animals of their neighbours – who would do the same. Again, Turkana and the Turkana seem to be a threat to non-Turkana, while the Maasai apparently have turned into (more or less) well-behaved and settled citizens, who respect the state's monopoly on the use of force and have given up raiding animals from their neighbours, while tourist guides entertain their customers with Maasai raiding stories of the past. Turkana, in contrast, still seem to be a threat.

Poverty

Poverty is a matter of perspective. It is relative and a matter of definition. There are numerous definitions of poverty, but all definitions share a common problem, i.e. they are based on standards of those who define poverty and do not necessarily reflect the views and the living conditions of those assessed.²⁴ I rarely found people in Turkana, who would perceive themselves as really poor, although in terms of most poverty definitions they surely would qualify for this label.

The fact that western concepts of poverty do not necessarily match local perceptions, has of course not gone unnoticed by researchers. Krätli e.g. writes that

“(...) many of the homesteads in our sample were not at all ‘poor’, although they all tend to qualify as such when the indicators used to determine wealth focus on income, ‘modernization’ (corrugated tin roofs, permanent houses, latrines, formal education, use of technology), or even food security if defined as the stable availability of food all year round.” (Krätli 2001: 31)

The Turkana language, which is rooted in the pastoral way of life, has no word for being poor. A person can be wealthy *ebarit*, and *ekabaran* is a wealthy man. A person may be *ebarit cha*, just wealthy, but not very much. He may be *ekechodon*, lame, meaning not having enough animals, but this may be a temporary situation, as he would build up his herd again by begging animals from his relatives and in-laws. If he were an *elongait* having no relatives or in-laws, this, of course, would be almost impossible.²⁵ A person having no animals is called an *ekebootonit*.²⁶ An alternative word, used in northern Turkana, for having no animals is *ekuliakit*.²⁷

Thus, the only distinction the Turkana language makes about the economic status of people is whether they have animals or not and whether they have many animals or only a few.²⁸ Turkana in town have adapted the Kiswahili word *maskini* for a poor person, but it must be emphasised again that the original Turkana language has no word for being poor.

²⁴ Cf. Alem 2012 and Chambers 1995, who discuss the matter extensively.

²⁵ Here, I am referring indirectly to the classification of pastoralist poverty situations as described by Broch-Due 1999: 53: *ekechodon* – *elongait* – *emetut*. On my part, I was neither able to trace such a classification among the pastoralists I interviewed (classifying matters is not the way Turkana think, and generic terms are almost not to be found in the Turkana language) nor could I confirm the term *emetut*.

²⁶ *Ekebootonit* (pl. *ngikebootok*) is derived from a group of Turkana living in the South of Turkana who were originally hunters and gatherers and only later became agriculturalists, with marginal amounts of animals.

²⁷ *Ekuliakit* (pl. *ngikuliak*) is derived from the Kuliak people (Ik, Soo, and Nyang'i), i.e. more specifically from the Ik who are subsistence farmers in the mountains of northeastern Uganda.

²⁸ Thus, Broch-Due's 1999 title *The Poor are Not Us* is fictitious, because the “us” refers to pastoralists and they would not have expressed themselves in that way. If it assumed that “poor” is equivalent to having no animals, the title is trivial.

As a matter of fact, Turkana material expectations from life are incredibly low in the eyes of a Westerner, except for those Turkana who have successfully adopted the Western lifestyle. Among pastoralists, where until recently a monetary system was not known, poverty assessments based on household income are not a viable criterion, a fact which is true for much of the rural population in the non-western world.²⁹ In order to exemplify this, I refer to a statement of Amina Kornhäusl,³⁰ who in 2011 had a house and a family in Lodwar, and told me the following:

“(...) that is why it is even cheap to get somebody to help you in the house. You can give her 500 Shillings [per month; about 5 Euro, HMD]. What is 500? Nothing, ya? It can't buy anything. But the good thing is what they like when they come to your house in the morning: you will make tea, they will have this tea and bread in the house. When you cook lunchtime, they eat this lunch with you, and in the evening they will also have something. If they have children, you know, some people, they cook a lot, so the children will get something from this food. In the end of the month they will get 500, they are not paying rent or anything, they live in their *manyatta*,³¹ they don't pay anything. So these 500 would still buy a *kanga*³², slippers or something small, but she still has food, she is eating three times. And if you compare it to the bush, you have all these animals, but you still have to wake up early in the morning to go out with your animals, to take care of your animals, and you forget about food [until the evening].” [24]³³

In order to understand Amina's narrative, we need to take into consideration that pastoral life in *raiya* is incredibly undemanding and frugal, in a way a member of a consumer society can hardly imagine. From a Western point of view, even the wealthiest Turkana pastoralist leads a meagre life. Besides a modest material culture, food is not always in abundant supply, and there are days or even weeks when people go hungry, let alone having three regular meals per day. Standard is one meal per day, in the morning. For the Turkana pastoralists, hunger is a regular and accepted unavoidable experience, and at the end of dry seasons it becomes rather the rule than the exception. The above statement must be seen against this background: a woman comes to town, to an area where plots are free. She goes to the bush and collects the building material for the house and builds it as she had always done at home. With the mentioned job in the house, she does not need money for food, for herself or for her children, whom she had brought with her. Her only problem is clothing, but one always finds clothes at a charity or so. Thus, at the end of the month, her balance is positive: 500 Kenya Shillings. And the life she is leading in town is easier than the hard life in *raiya*. Not everybody may perceive things in this way, but apparently some do.

The example given above shows, how many Turkana – even in town – are able to satisfy their substantial needs by non-monetary means, and they are by far not good consumers of a market economy. Non-Turkana tend to call this poverty, although the people concerned may not see themselves as destitutes. However, if the above woman would want to start a life according to western standards, she would quickly find herself in a destitute situation, not being able to raise the means for better housing, clothing, food, school fees for the children, and the extravagances of town life.

²⁹ Cf. Alem 2012, who described this for urban Ethiopia.

³⁰ Amina is of Somali and Turkana origin and is married to an Austrian volunteer.

³¹ Maasai/Samburu word for homestead.

³² The *kanga* is a colourful garment worn by women and occasionally by men throughout Eastern Africa. It is a piece of printed cotton fabric, about 1.5m by 1m, often with a border along all four sides. One of the longer edges of the border features a strip which contains a message in Swahili (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kanga_%28African_garment%29, edited).

³³ Amina's maid apparently received a reasonable salary, the amount of which was, however, not disclosed to me.

Hunger

As has been mentioned above, hunger is, to a limited extent, part and parcel of a Turkana pastoral life. Sabine Schwartz (1986) has shown this for East African pastoralists in general, and discussing the consequences of what she calls a “hunger economy” would merit a paper by itself.

Here, hunger is by no means advocated as an acceptable state of the Turkana society. It must be pointed out, however, that what may be called the ‘western hunger paradigm’ – nobody should be hungry at any given time – is not a Turkana paradigm. Having reduced or no food for a limited time span seems to be less of a problem for most Turkana than for Westerners. I frequently heard that Turkana who had been given money for food would rather buy a goat with it and themselves go hungry for a while.

However, Turkana and their neighbours quickly understood that real or even alleged hunger opens donors’ pockets. *Akoro*, hunger, has thus become a common greeting, when Turkana meet foreigners.

Development Interventions and Their Results

Some of the above-described features are hardly acceptable or even unknown to most Westerners and those educated in Western style. In consequence, emic perceptions and strategies have been generally neglected when outside interventions tried to assist the pastoral Turkana. For this and other reasons, all development attempts in Turkan have failed to reach their intended results, and it is worthwhile to explore this in some detail.

As a matter of fact, pastoralism in East Africa is under pressure. Conventional external causes are animal diseases, raiding by neighbouring tribes and gangsters,³⁴ and drought. Since the arrival of western economics, there are more threats to the pastoral life. Fratkin and McCabe compiled a comprehensive list:

“East African pastoralists currently face more threats to their way of life than at any time in their long history. Population growth, the loss of herding lands to private farms, ranches, game parks, and urban areas, shifts to agricultural production, increased commoditisation of the rural economy, urban migration by the young and poor, and increasing dislocations brought about by drought, famine, and civil war have accelerated dramatically in the past twenty years.³⁵ The future of pastoralism as a distinct category of socio-economic organisation faces many challenges, and it is far from certain if subsistence herding as we know it will be in place in East Africa in the twenty-first century.” (Fratkin and McCabe 1999: 5)

On top of this, it seems to be clear that the pastoral system is not able to completely accommodate all of the ever-growing population any more. However, instead of addressing these threats to the Turkana pastoral life, development policies tended to put the blame on the pastoralist way of life and mode of production, with these basic assumptions:

- Nomadic pastoralism is a culturally backward, out-dated way of life and an obsolete mode of production.

³⁴ Nowadays, there is also commercialised raiding. Eaton (2010) and Mkutu (2010) have shown in detail how, in Karamoja, formerly inter-tribal raiding has been commercialised. Animals are transported away by lorries and are marketed immediately. Frank (2002) reports similar incidents for Turkan.

³⁵ Fratkin and McCabe omit the increase in animal raiding playing another crucial role.

- Nomadic pastoralism is environmentally destructive.
- Pastoralists are economically irrational and unproductive.
- Pastoralists are hard-core traditionalists and resist change, innovation, and development.

Based on these assumptions, which are questionable and have been questioned (e.g. Hogg 1988; Krätli and Dyer 2006; Krätli 2001, 2006; McCabe 1983; Anderson 1999), development assistance at first developed two paradigms: rehabilitation and sedentarisation. The rehabilitation paradigm existed already since the 1930s, while it was complemented by the sedentarisation paradigm in the early 1960s (cf. Anderson 1999: 240ff).

The rehabilitation paradigm was based on the assumption that the pastoral way of land use was destructive to the environment, mainly because excessive numbers of livestock led to overgrazing and desertification. Hardin's *Tragedy of the Commons*³⁶ fitted neatly into this perspective, and counter-arguments³⁷ were ignored.

The basic idea of the rehabilitation paradigm was to improve the indigenous pastoral management. However, planners completely underestimated the pastoralists' capability of managing their limited resources and their ability, but also necessity, to flexibly cope with the harsh and unpredictable environmental conditions. The endemic bureaucratic and inflexible approach of development schemes was not able to meet these requirements, and thus no suitable solution for this kind of rehabilitation was ever found and put into operation.

East African pastoralists including the Turkana would have been in a much better position to defend their way of life, if droughts had not struck regularly. Oddly enough, hunger has become a big business. For example, in late 2011, aid organisations advertised a centennial drought and asked for money to assist with food, whereas Turkana informants told me that it was a bad year but nothing really exceptional. Droughts have become the gateway for external manipulations of the pastoral system in East Africa, and most pastoralist development schemes did in fact start out as relief projects (Anderson 1999: 241). This is how the assumptions of the destructive and unsustainable pastoral system and the occurrences of drought and hunger merged.

The narrative of bad pastoralist range management reinforced the view that destitution was the product of overstocking and desertification. The solution was to be found in destocking, so as to restore sustainable carrying capacities. This would inevitably reduce the number of pastoralists who could be sustained by the land. The other individuals would need to be settled³⁸ and given alternative means of securing a livelihood (Anderson 1999: 246). These alternative means were mainly irrigated agriculture.

However, sedentarisation and irrigated agriculture could not be the final solution because the irrigation projects did not generate sufficient income for the tenants. Rain-fed irrigation or irrigation from seasonal rivers cannot be sustainable when rain only falls every other year or even less frequently.³⁹

³⁶ Hardin 1968. According to Monbiot (1994): "one of the modern world's most dangerous myths".

³⁷ Cf. Gilles and Jamgaard 1982; McCabe (1990b: 146): "Results of this research suggest that the livestock management practices of East African pastoralists do not degrade the environment, livestock numbers do not exceed the carrying capacity of the land, and social institutions successfully function to cope with environmental problems." This account does not take into consideration the fact that the carrying capacity of a given area may be over-stressed by a growing population in spite of an adequate pastoral management.

³⁸ In Anderson's original this reads "resettled".

³⁹ In the meanwhile, this has changed along river Turkwel which since 1993 has become a perennial stream, due to the Turkwel Dam Hydro Power Project.

Even though the sedentarisation policy did not have the expected positive effects, it resulted in a dramatic change of Turkana residential patterns and economy, i.e. in the creation of a settled part of the Turkana population and a diminution of the pastoral sector (Anderson 1999: 240). Figures on the proportion of pastoral and non-pastoral Turkana are not available, but it can be estimated that presently out of the total Turkana population approximately one third is living in *raiyá* and predominantly pastoral, one third is living in town-like settlements, while the rest cannot be assigned to either category.

Donor policies were not consistent at all. When it became clear that the rehabilitation paradigm as well as its sibling, the sedentarisation paradigm, were not the anticipated success stories, a third approach was tried in the 1980s (cf. Anderson 1999: 248). In exact opposition to what had been postulated before (pastoralism is unproductive and environmentally destructive, and people need to be settled), the third and final paradigm, which donors tried to implement, was restocking. This time, the logic was as follows: people are pastoralists, and they are poor because they have lost their animals. Thus, let us give them animals so that they can rebuild their herds. However, if we accept that in the eyes of most Turkana pastoralists the root cause for individual poverty is peoples' poor pastoral management, i.e. the inability to make the right decisions and to establish a wide-ranging network, which they could fall back on in times of need, then the donation of a few animals would not solve their problem. On top of this, restocking was also unsuccessful because people who had been living in town before the restocking were no longer accustomed to the frugal *raiyá* life and by then were used to the more costly standards of life (maize instead of locally grown sorghum, clothing, school fees, etc.) – and in order to fulfil those they would have to sell the animals one by one.

Thus, development interventions in Turkan do not seem to have had significant or lasting impact as such. Some visible results are an increased urbanisation, continuing aid, and the establishment of some irrigated agriculture.

Relief

In some strange way, the outside intervention efforts have gone full circle: they had started with relief in the old millennium, and in the beginning of the new millennium they came back to relief. In the beginning, relief food was handed out in distribution centres. This had a disastrous side effect. Old and weak people were thrown out of the pastoralists' solidarity networks and remained in the famine camps. The managers of these camps had been puzzled that, outside of the distribution hours, half or more of the camp population was absent. Those absentees were of course people who had registered with the camp, received their share, and then went back to their daily business. When the next distribution was scheduled, all of them would come back. Turkana are a highly mobile people and walk long distances in order to exploit any resource, and they enjoy a well-functioning news network, which at present is perfectly supported by mobile phones.

Aid organisations had learnt their lesson. Relief food was now being brought to the people, thus avoiding hunger ghettos and the disruption of the Turkana society. However, the problem remained that traditional means of solidarity had broken up (cf. Broch-Due and Anderson 1999). Even before aid organisations were present, a man who had lost his animals to drought or raids would often

have difficulties to convince network peers⁴⁰ to share any of their animals with him, when they themselves had also been affected by disaster. Yet, people had to share before the advent of relief aid, as there was no alternative. Now, there were alternatives: the World Food Programme of the United Nations and their executing partners, such as Oxfam,⁴¹ World Vision, and others. The Churches organised their own relief aid, the Kenyan Government did, and none of the interventions are well co-ordinated. The Turkana are still highly mobile, and some collect a share at different locations, from different organisations or registered under different names, and quite often the distribution is somehow blurred altogether (cf. Hogg 1982). Thus, the amount of relief food distributed had become excessive, leading to the fact that almost every Turkana family, even wealthy pastoralists, had access to this extra means of subsistence.

In 1986, I visited Lotubae, which at that time was a relief distribution centre, where people lived solely depending on food aid. When I visited Lotubae again in 2011, it had become a small settlement, where people still receive some food aid, but have also acquired a few animals, and have income from a neighbouring irrigation scheme. Some small local economy has developed as well. In a number of places all over Turkan, small settlements developed very much in the same way as in Lotubae.

Over the last years, the amount of incoming food aid has decreased,⁴² and food aid as a means of subsistence does not play as important a role as before. It has been replaced by monetary assistance to vulnerable households through the Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP), organised by the Kenyan Government and the NGO HelpAge with funding from the British and Australian Development Organisations DFID (Department For International Development, UK, main donor) and AusAID (Australian Agency for International Development). Mobile teams of the Kenyan Equity Bank are distributing the money. The programme began in 2008, covering 27,000 Turkana households, and in 2014 the number of households will increase to 40,000. Each household received 3,000 Kenya Shillings per two months. Since May 2012, this amount has been increased to 4,600 Kenya Shillings per month. Presently, the programme has funds allocated up to June 2017.

Irrigated Agriculture

It has already been mentioned that, in Turkan, irrigated agriculture is not a viable singular alternative to the original Turkana way of life. As an example of what actually happened to the people involved in failed irrigation schemes, the case of Katilu will be presented below.

The Katilu Irrigation Scheme was established in 1964 as an FAO⁴³ development intervention and implemented by Italian missionaries. Water was diverted from the river Turkwel and distributed via furrow irrigation. The FAO also sponsored a cooperative for marketing the produced maize. In 1983, NORAD⁴⁴ took over and implemented an integrated approach, with school education, health care, and forestry. They also changed the irrigation system from furrow to basin irrigation, which – through water logging and salinisation – ruined the soil and in combination with local politics led to the collapse of the project soon after 1997. In 2011, with the Turkwel river since 1993 flowing

⁴⁰ I.e. those men, friends and in-laws, which whom he had established relations through the exchange of animals.

⁴¹ Oxford Committee for Famine Relief.

⁴² Obtaining exact figures on the amount of food aid is difficult as the major player, the UN World Food Programme in Turkana District, has an extremely restrictive information policy. Turkana informants complained that the amount has dramatically decreased.

⁴³ Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations.

⁴⁴ Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation.

perennially, after the construction of the Turkwel Dam and Hydro Power Station, the Kenyan Government revived the scheme by restoring furrow irrigation with heavy machinery and by distributing seeds, tools, and fertiliser mainly to Internally Displaced People (IDP) who had escaped the 2007/2008 post-election violence.⁴⁵

“Today, there are 680 members of the Katilu Irrigation Scheme. In addition, there are many other farmers on land surrounding the Scheme (in total some 6000 farmers) many of whom have created their own canals from the river. Within the Scheme boundaries, 100 acres are planted with maize, the rest is planted with sorghum. Members also mentioned that they grew several species of Napier grass, 50% of which was used to feed their own animals, and the remaining 50% was sold, primarily during the dry seasons to migrant pastoralists.” (Watson and van Binsbergen 2008: 16f.)

The Turkana I interviewed around Katilu all practised a mixed economy, and irrigated agriculture was only part of their income. They all owned animals, although not as many as those pastoralists mainly relying on their herds. They had eagerly learned the new technology in the 1960s from the Italian missionaries, who had implemented the former FAO project, but some of them had even tried it before. Without heavy machinery, some Turkana are digging their own irrigation channels – decentralised, small-scale, and sustainable.

Irrigated agriculture thus has some value in Turkana, but only with two preconditions: material input has to be low, and it can only be complementary to pastoralism and other means of income.

A New Hybrid Economy

The question remains, if the Turkana at large are now better or worse off than before the development interventions. This has been intensely investigated and discussed by the scientific community (cf. Fratkin, Roth and Nathan 1999; Broch-Due 1999; Broch-Due and Sanders 1999; Hogg 1982, 1986; McCabe 1990a). Some of the main statements are:

- “Today the donors have pulled out completely and Turkana are worse off than before they came.” (Fratkin and McCabe 1999: 9)
- “Colonial and postcolonial interventions led to the creation and perpetuation of a group of permanent paupers of Turkana people” (Broch-Due and Sanders 1999: 36) having no means to return to the pastoral sector.
- Towns have become “sites of poverty and destitution, poverty traps.” (Broch-Due 1999: 86)
- Pastoral Turkana have excluded destitute pastoralists and townspeople from their lives, have made them into non-Turkana. (Broch-Due 1999: 88; Anderson 1999: 256)

The main assertion of the above is a division of the two sectors of pastoral and non-pastoral livelihood and a one-way relation between them: whoever dropped out of the pastoral sector has no way

⁴⁵ The 2007/08 Kenyan crisis erupted after incumbent President Mwai Kibaki was declared the winner of the presidential election held on December 27, 2007. Supporters of Kibaki’s opponent, Raila Odinga, alleged electoral manipulation. In addition to staging several nonviolent protests, opposition supporters went on a violent rampage in several parts of the country. Police shot a number of demonstrators, including a few in front of TV news cameras, causing more violence. Ethnic clashes followed in many parts of the country leaving around 1,000 people killed and around 200,000 people displaced. In February 2008, Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan conciliated a power-sharing agreement between the two parties, who then formed a coalition government. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007%E2%80%9308_Kenyan_crisis, accessed on 1.5.2013)

to return. My 2011 and 2013 research, however, suggests that this dual view of things does not reflect the current reality, and thus I would like to propose a different view: from the economic point of view, an increasing hybridisation is taking place among the Turkana, i.e. the pastoral and non-pastoral sectors become more and more linked, and people in both sectors are increasingly co-operating.

Since Ibn Khaldoun in the 14th century, or even before, antagonistic as well as symbiotic relations between towns and countryside, and especially between settled and pastoral populations, have been described as well as the fact that livelihoods of ethnic groups may change between the two modes of life or take hybrid forms of both.⁴⁶ Thus, the hybridisation referred to here, is nothing new as such, but in its present form it is new for the Turkana. A formerly pastoral life, with all its conventional kinds of livelihood diversification, is presently being amended, modified, and altered into different sorts of hybrid existences. All of them are more or less connected to the existence of modern settlements.

The Town as an Economic Resource

Besides the capital Lodwar with approximately 20,000 inhabitants, a substantial number of small, town-like settlements have developed in Turkana over the last thirty years, and their economic interweaving with their hinterland *raiyá* has become substantial.⁴⁷ Today, the quotation below seems to be out-dated:

“Although the pastoral Turkana view the town as a site of poverty and destitution, they also use it as the contemporary arena in which to slough off those they consider to be morally deviant and socially different.” (Broch-Due 1999: 88)

My 2011 and 2013 data do not support this statement. Of course, the town and the modern life connected to it are viewed by some pastoral Turkana with suspicion and rejection and as a place of crime, corruption, government, and HIV/AIDS, but almost all of them find something in town which is attractive and which they are willing to exploit. Some of the pastoralists just come for shopping or asking relatives for supplies, some settle permanently in town and some temporarily. Below is an incomplete list of what a town has to offer to the pastoral Turkana:

- Income by producing and selling firewood, charcoal, milk, mats, brooms, and other handicrafts
- Foodstuff, drinks, and tobacco, i.e. maize, soft drinks, bottled beer, strong alcohol, tealeaves, sugar, tobacco, and other luxury goods, all of which increasingly penetrate pastoralist life
- Glass beads and other adornments
- Modern tools and utensils. A good example for this are mobile phones. Except for the very remote areas, service coverage for mobile phones in the Turkana District has become quite good, and pastoralists use them to their advantage, mainly in order to co-ordinate the movements of their herds. Of course, they can also be used to co-ordinate cattle raids, but also to avoid them by alerting those who are targeted. LED torches are another example. The Turkana

⁴⁶ E.g. Barth 1969, 1973; Khazanov 1984; Hjort af Ornäs 1990; Salih 1995; Pantuliano 2002; Sawayan 2005 and publications of the collaborative research centre SFB 586 ‘Difference and Integration’ at the Universities of Leipzig and Halle-Wittenberg (cf. <http://www.nomadsed.de/publikationen/lesecke/titeluebersicht/index.html>).

⁴⁷ A special case, which cannot be dealt with here, is the Kakuma refugee camp housing more than 100,000 non-Turkana from Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, and other countries.

in *raiyá* had them before they were widely available in Germany – a congenial co-operation between traders and the Turkana pastoralists, who quickly appreciated the battery-saving qualities of LEDs.

Those Turkana who had sought refuge or settled in town for other reasons mentioned the following advantages of town life:

- Security from raids: many of the people now in town had been pastoralists before and had become victims of raids. Not having enough network ties for restocking or preferring not to quarrel for assistance with their families, in-laws, and friends, they rather relied on the help of charities, the churches, or others in town that came without stress and at no cost.
- Jobs with the government, NGOs, or in the private sector.
- Income by producing and selling firewood, charcoal, mats, brooms, and other handicrafts.
- Independence from family constraints: life in a family can be hard, not only among the Turkana. Parents impose their will on children, as well as older siblings on younger ones, girls are married against their will, children eager for education are denied schooling, young married women are mistreated by their husbands or mothers-in-law, and some of them run away hoping to find an alternative in town, which some actually do.
- Relief food. This is not the place to discuss some apparently negative aspects of relief food distribution, or more precisely, excess distribution of food. As matters stand, relief food had become a resource for almost every Turkana household until around 2011 when unconditioned food aid decreased as laid out above.
- Food in general: there is always some institution or somebody who would share food with a hungry person.
- Support from churches, NGOs, individuals, self-help groups
- Health care
- Schools: ever more Turkana send their children to school, while some of my older interview partners still had to run away from home in order to go to school. Many pastoral Turkana have acknowledged the fact that one has to cope with modern times and that schooling and having modern jobs is part of it, and they see it also as a way of livelihood diversification: having somebody in town, preferably in a good government position, helps a lot.

Some of the townspeople interviewed were comparatively well off, but most of them had only a small income, which sustained only them and their family, and I always wondered how all of them managed to acquire a few animals. They kept these animals in *raiyá* with their relatives, or – if they were wealthy – with one of their wives.

It has to be mentioned that the benefits of towns also have their costs. Poorer Turkana households are often quite strained by raising school fees for those children going to school. And living in town is more expensive than staying in *raiyá*: clothing, hairdo, food, drinks, and all sorts of seductive goods. Alcohol is a problem. Bottled beer is heavily consumed, with all known negative effects.

Town and *raiyá*

Some women complained that the majority of husbands in town behaved irresponsibly, were hanging around, were courting other women, and did not properly care for their family. I also heard the contrary, that men in *raiyá* neglected the women, e.g. when they preferred one wife at the expense of the others or neglected their family in favour of their animals. As women are always those caring for the children, they generally feel more responsible than men and are often more active in securing the livelihood of the family. As an example, it is always the women in town who are organised in self-help groups.

Turkana have diverse views about life in town as compared to life in *raiyá*. Perceptions are different between those living in town and those living outside, between men and women and, of course, there are also individual variations within each of these groups, according to the individual experiences of each person.

Townpeople specified the following differences between town and *raiyá*: people in *raiyá* are more sociable and hospitable than those in town, where envy, distrust, and malevolence are all too frequent. There is more social control in *raiyá*, which of course has positive as well as negative consequences for the individual. Life in *raiyá* is tougher than in town, but “when there is rain and when there is grass, everything is nice in *raiyá*.” [25]

When I asked people in *raiyá* about town, they regularly specified the advantages of town life as the goods and services available, and they rarely gave negative statements about town. This may of course have been politeness as I was an apparent townee. A widespread assumption was that people in town were lazy. “They want to sit and earn.” [12]

Factually, both life in town and life in *raiyá* have their advantages and disadvantages. In *raiyá* people are independent from employers, are living in nature with their animals, and enjoy a rich social life, which, however, also often constricts them. Life as such in *raiyá* is tough and precarious and may quickly turn into a nightmare when drought, disease, or raiding strike. Life in town is safer in terms of raiding, but everybody is dependent on somebody, jobs are also precarious. Social control is not as severe as in *raiyá*, but social life is not as strong, and there is crime, HIV, etc.

Many Turkana townspeople have nostalgic feelings about life in *raiyá*. Some men have managed to split their lives between *raiyá* and town, and some men in town could imagine returning to *raiyá* if only they had enough animals. Returning from town to the pastoral sector is difficult, and only few succeed, while other men preferred to stay in town as they were fed up with the constant fight for survival and restocking animals.

When I posed the question to Turkana living in town whether they would return to *raiyá* if they had the means, men were often somewhat undecided while women were always negative,⁴⁸ as in most cases they had children going to school whom of course they would never leave behind. And schooling itself is a one-way road from *raiyá* to town. Schoolboys and schoolgirls are not able to acquire the pastoral skills and capabilities necessary for survival in *raiyá*. The Turkana language is not taught in school,⁴⁹ and the curricula and the entire socialisation in school despise pastoralism and alienate the children from their ethnic background. The overt agenda of the Kenyan curricula is to convert pastoralist children into modern townspeople (cf. Krätli and Dyer 2006; Krätli 2001,

⁴⁸ In contradiction to Schultz 1997.

⁴⁹ English and Kiswahili are the official languages in Kenya. Kiswahili is the national language. All school-going Kenyans are required to learn English. English is the language of instruction in schools and institutions of higher education. (http://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kenya#cite_note-lang-6)

2006). Jobs are only available in town – if they are available. The unemployment rate is high, even among the well-educated, and there is no social security system in place.

Despite these problems, life in town seems to be much easier for many people. There is always water, food, and entertainment. People become used to town life, people in *raiyá* are seen as being backwards, and that is why the majority of those in town disapprove of returning to the place of their ancestors.

Modern life apparently has some effect, but it does not altogether sever the links between town and *raiyá*. Firstly, a Turkana remains a Turkana having an affinity to animals, even if he or she lives in town or even abroad, and secondly, pastoralists are eager to establish and keep as many links as possible to their people in town and to the non-pastoral sectors as such.

There are ‘animal relations’ between people in town and those in *raiyá*, i.e. marital or friendship bonds which have been established and reinforced through the exchange of animals. This is another reason why any Turkana in town, male or female, who acquires some money, will try to invest as much as possible in animals. However, a problem arises as soon as it has to be decided who should tend them. Normally, one would entrust them to the care of the family in *raiyá*, but then all the constraints of family affairs would immediately come into play. The animals would become family animals, and the original owner would possibly have little say in what was done with them, and in the worst case he would never see them again. This applies even more to women than to men. This is why some townspeople entrust their animals to unrelated friends or to paid herdsmen. The latter may also cheat, but within limits. Thus, the relations between town and *raiyá* range from faithful co-operation to distrust.

People in town and *raiyá* assist each other, even if this often involves persistent begging, nagging, and trying to exploit the other resource to the utmost, and thus, again, town-*raiyá* interactions are not always without tension.

Intermarriages between town and *raiyá* do exist, but in most cases only in the one direction from *raiyá* to town. “If somebody from Lodwar marries a girl from the bush and he would take her to town, she would forget about the bush.” [2] And a town girl would never return to *raiyá*. If a man wanted to marry her, he had to come to town. The same is true for male Turkana, who grew up in town, because anyone accustomed to town life is alienated from the comparatively simple life in *raiyá*.

There are Turkana men who try but cannot manage town life. However, when they return to *raiyá*, they would usually maintain some of the habits they had adopted in town.

After all, the relations between town and *raiyá* are of a complex and difficult nature. Some Turkana in town look down on *raiyá* people. Others idealise life in the bush, but few of them would in fact return forever to *raiyá*, as the frugal life would seem unbearable to them. They might visit during the good times of the year, but they would not want to or be able to survive during the dry season. There are cases of old men taking their retirement in *raiyá*, but those are ones who grew up there and came to town for only a part of their lives. Whoever grew up in town, male or female, would never go back. And those already mentioned, who dream of spending their old age at the fringes between town and *raiyá* with some animals, would not effectively return to *raiyá*.

Pastoralists in *raiyá* readily adopt modern assets like torches, bicycles, radios, tea and sugar, plastic containers, and the like. They also learn some Kiswahili so that they can communicate in town with everybody, and they have adapted in their clothing habits. Life in town has some suction ef-

fect and influences life in *raiya* in the long run – to which extent and whether this will be for better or worse will only become clear in the future.

Turkana Identities

From a purely pastoral society, Turkana have developed into a society where, on a continuum with pastoralism at one end and non-pastoralism at the other, different modes of hybrid life have developed. Non-pastoralism may be conducted as holding a job in town, agriculture and fishing, or some form of home industry like charcoal burning or mat weaving. Some typification may help to understand the present diversified set-up of the Turkana society:

- Pastoralists
- Hybrid Pastoralists
- Peri-urban hybrid pastoralists and villagers
- Agro-pastoralists
- Fishermen
- Urbanites
- Survivors

Pastoralists

In the same way as all pastoralists, Turkana employ a wide range of livelihood diversification,⁵⁰ i.e. opportunistic sorghum production, fishing in Lake Turkana, collection of honey, wild vegetables, and wild fruits, etc.

The arrival of western culture has created an additional range of resources and income potential, most of which is connected to the proximity to urban centres,⁵¹ like employment in government, NGOs, or private enterprises; selling animals, skins, and hides; weaving mats and baskets; brewing strong alcohol; having small shops; renting out houses; selling milk and other domestic products; prostitution; selling honey, firewood, and construction wood; charcoal production;⁵² gold mining; etc. – and, last but not least, relief food or monetary assistance through the Hunger Safety Net Programme. The latest development occurred in 2012 when oil was found in south Turkana, the impact of which for the Turkana is yet unclear. An underground reservoir of fossil water was discovered in 2013, but the high-tech methods necessary to exploit it will most probably bring little benefit to the average Turkana.

However, western culture, with all its practical and seductive goods and with its raised consumer standards, also puts a high strain on the pastoral economy, which had previously been characterised by an incredibly basic and undemanding lifestyle and a frugal diet. Expenses for clothes, alcohol, school fees, and many other things have to be met, and some time ago money has found its way into the formerly non-monetary Turkana economy.

Droughts and other calamities have had their impact on the Turkana society, and Broch-Due and Sanders (1999: 36, 41f.) conclude that development interventions led to the creation and per-

⁵⁰ For an in-depth investigation into Turkana livelihood diversification cf. Juma 2009.

⁵¹ An exception are the Turkana smiths (male and female), who provide iron tools, spears, iron beads, etc. made from scrap metal.

⁵² This is not the place to discuss the environmental consequences of these activities.

petuation of a group of non-pastoralist paupers of Turkana people who are, strictly speaking, non-Turkana (Broch-Due 1999: 88) and who, lacking the necessary animal and social capital, could not return to the pastoral sector anymore.

These statements require some comment. The categorisation of people as paupers is problematic as has been shown above, and the equations of ‘Turkana = pastoralists’, ‘non-pastoralists = non-Turkana’ are not valid anymore, if they ever were.

The assumed ‘pauper’ is treated as a stand-alone figure, but in Turkana this is rarely the case as a Turkana is generally part of a wider family. I found many Turkana families who have members both in the pastoral and the non-pastoral sector, with varying percentages. Some of the alleged ‘paupers’ were in reality those members of a family network who are tapping additional resources like relief aid.

To an increasing extent, wealthy pastoralists and also rich non-pastoralists are employing stock-less herders or poor pastoralists to tend their animals. It would be worthwhile studying to which extent these employed herdsmen are able to restock their own herds.

Pure pastoralists without any relations to town barely exist anymore. Almost everybody has some relatives or friends in town, and all the resources offered by the town are exploited, as listed above.

Some pastoralists live in *raiyá* at a distance from settlements and towns, and some of them live in *raiyá* but close to a settlement with part of their family and some animals, while the rest of the family is herding animals at some distance or even far away.

Hybrid Pastoralists

Hybrid pastoralists split their activities between *raiyá* and town, in order to exploit the resources of both sectors, and in the same way they split their families: some members live in *raiyá*, some have settled in town, while the man travels between the two places and enjoys the benefits of both worlds. Some of these men are influential persons being councillors, chiefs, etc.

An interesting example of a hybrid pastoralist is my friend A., whom I first met when he was still a young man, some 25 years ago, when I interviewed his old father. At that time, they were pastoralists living deep inside *raiyá*, and on my second visit we found it quite difficult to find them in the bush. Meanwhile, A.’s father had died and things had gone badly as the area in South Turkana had suffered frequent raids and diseases. A. and his wife, together with their children, had lost most of their animals and would not have survived if they had not tapped the modern resources, notably relief aid. When I met him in 2011, it was easy to find him as he had established his home close to the road at the fringes of a settlement, where he was always informed on what was going on and when relief food would be around. Apparently, A. owned only one camel with a foal and a few goats, he and his family were wearing western clothing, and his wife no longer wore the typical Turkana bead collar, a clear sign of poverty in Turkana eyes – they obviously qualified for relief aid. We ate one of the goats, and when I tried to refuse this gift from a poor man, he revealed to me that he had a second ‘traditional’ wife with children and a number of animals a few miles away.

Schlee mentions some other form of hybrid pastoralists, who could also be called part-time pastoralists, as they spend “parts of the year in paid urban employment, often as watchmen.” (Schlee and Shongolo 2012: 20)

I found several older hybrid pastoralists, who had a modern past as they had been in the administration police or had had some other government job. Besides their job, they always kept animals. When I interviewed them, they were living close to a settlement but not really in town. They own

an undisclosed amount of animals, may receive a pension from their former job, and they may also receive their share in relief food or in money from the Hunger Safety Net Programme.

This kind of hybrid existence is only for men: women of hybrid pastoralists live either in *raiyá* or in town.

Peri-Urban Hybrid Pastoralists and Villagers

A new form of hybrid life has developed around and in close distance to towns, especially Lodwar. Some of these people had their homes there already before the arrival of the town, but most came after a drought or a raid when they had lost most of their animals and saw no chance to rebuild their herds in their original *raiyá* place. They own some animals, but mostly small stock in moderate numbers and only few camels or cows. Their main income comes from home industries like mat weaving or broom making out of Doum Palm leaves, collecting and selling firewood, or producing charcoal, all of which is mostly done by women. Once in a while a goat is sold in town, either directly or through *ngimucurus* (sg. *emucurut*),⁵³ professional petty traders who walk the animals to town.

Another type of hybrid life is represented by many inhabitants of small roadside villages who all earn income by way of different non-pastoral activities and at the same time keep animals. They try to send their children to school, and whatever surplus money they have is invested in animals. This type of livelihood is for men as well as for women, and it is often the women who generate the non-pastoral family income, as in the case of the peri-urban hybrid pastoralists.

An example for this type of hybrid life is the Silale family in Lokapel. They originated from Kapedo in South Turkana. During the seventies, when the area was affected by large-scale raids by the Pokot, they left as destitutes for Katilu in Central Turkana and were allotted a plot for farming. They settled in Lokapel, where they still reside today. Silale had been a chief in Kapedo and thus enough money to send some of his children to school. One of them, Mateo, later became a chief in Lokapel and was thus able to sustain the family. After his death, his brother took over the position as chief and now provides the main income for the family. His sister Esther, working in a drug store and producing charcoal, generates other earnings. Mateo's widow also has a shop and is an agent of the Equity Bank distributing the money of the Hunger Safety Net Programme. The compound of the Silale family is spacious, and it comprises several kraals for cows, camels, and sheep, and goats. An undisclosed number of animals are tended by somebody somewhere in *raiyá*. The family has given up farming, as there is apparently no need for it any more. It must be said, however, that the Silale family is not representative, as many families in these villages have much smaller incomes.

Agro-Pastoralists

The amount of crop production in the pastoral system is so small that the Turkana pastoralists as such cannot reasonably be called agro-pastoralists.⁵⁴ However, a new kind of Turkana population has developed that may rightly be called so, with an emphasis on 'agro'. They grow sorghum and other crops along the main seasonal rivers using irrigation by diverting the river when it carries water. This is done by way of sponsored irrigation schemes or the people's own small enterprises. Any surplus is invested in livestock, but the amount of animals will always remain below a pastoral subsistence threshold.

⁵³ Derived from the Kiswahili word *mcurusi*, pl. *wacurusi*.

⁵⁴ An exception are the Ngikebootok, Turkana agriculturalists in the southern part of Turkana District, who practice irrigated agriculture at perennial rivers and who also own some animals and are linked to the modern sector.

Some of these agro-pastoralists are mentioned by other authors as the “permanent paupers of Turkana people” (Broch-Due and Sanders 1999: 36) having no means to return to the pastoral sector. The original intention of turning them into crop producers with irrigated agriculture failed, but they complemented the limited value of irrigation agriculture with animal production, thus creating a new hybrid production system.

In 1984, Njeru has studied the Katilu irrigation scheme and found negative impacts on the social system, especially with regard to the status of women⁵⁵. It would be worthwhile to explore whether this has endured in the present hybrid situation.

Fishermen

Many families along the western shore of Lake Turkana lead a hybrid life, as one part of the family lives in *raiyá* tending animals at some distance from the lake, and the other part lives close to the lake and fishes, continuously exchanging family members between the two. Turkana fishermen confirmed that their grandfathers and their great-grandfathers have done this already. Their equipment is rather simple but effective. They use nets and rafts made from palm tree trunks.

A high concentration of Turkana fishermen can be found around Kalokol at the Lake’s Ferguson’s Gulf. Most of them have arrived since the 1980s when NORAD tried to install a fishing industry here, which failed, but some boats remained. Here, only few of the fishermen are using the traditional palm-tree rafts. There are fishermen’s co-operatives and private boat owners. There are also Luo fishermen at the Lake, and some Luo are constructing boats at the lakeshore. Some of the young Turkana fishermen interviewed supported their families somewhere in the hinterland, and some older men had a wife and a family at the Gulf, and another wife and family at some distance in *raiyá*, together with the animals they were able to acquire from the surplus generated by fishing.

Some of these fishermen with a hybrid family – part at the lake fishing, part in *raiyá* herding – actually were former Elmolo fishermen who insisted firmly that they now were Turkana. Their grandfathers had migrated from the south-eastern end of the Lake to Ferguson’s Gulf when fish had become scarce in their former fishing grounds. Their grandfathers had married Turkana women, and they had also acquired Turkana clan identities – from their Turkana wives (normally Turkana clan membership is patrilineal). But in order to integrate properly into the Turkana society, which apparently they wanted, they could not remain mere fishermen. They had to acquire animals so as to fulfil the Turkana social obligations in marriage, bond friendship, age-set matters, and ritual.

Urbanites

All Turkana living in town have a pastoral background. Their remembered forefathers were living in *raiyá* when there were not yet towns in Turkan. Successful and established urbanites have in most cases gone to school, and they are employed by the government, NGOs, or the churches, or they run their own business. Most of them own animals, which they have tended somewhere in *raiyá*, either by the traditional part of their family or some paid herdsmen.

An example for this type of an urbanite is Lokopir, age 32: Lokopir’s family was originally pastoralist. After a drought, they requested assistance and were settled in an irrigation scheme, in a place called Turkwel. Lokopir went to school and completed his primary educa-

⁵⁵ Caused by the non-availability of animals for marriage dowries so that no ‘proper’ marriages could be established.

tion, but was then unable to continue his education due to lack of money. He squandered a few years simply lazing about with his friends.

In 1992, there was another drought in Turkana, and the ICRC⁵⁶ distributed food in Turkwel. The ICRC co-ordinator was in need of a translator, Lokopir offered his services, his English was good enough, and he was hired. Apparently, the co-ordinator was pleased with Lokopir, and after the food distribution was complete he took him to Nairobi in order to find a job for him there. This did not work out well, but Lokopir developed an idea. He knew that there was a high demand for ostrich feathers in Turkana – ostrich feathers are the main adornment for men. He found an ostrich farm close to Nairobi, which sold feathers at a cheap price. He obtained permission from the Kenyan Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife and started his own business, which went well, and he became relatively wealthy.

Lokopir invests his income surplus in animals, which are kept by his relatives in *raiyá*.

Another interesting example for the hybrid relations between town and *raiyá* within one family are Lomosingo and Margaret, a couple living in Lodwar. Lomosingo, the man, has strong ties to the pastoral sector, reflected by the fact that he prefers to be addressed by his Turkana name⁵⁷, while Margaret ignores her Turkana name and has less to do with pastoralism though remains involved.

Lomosingo's family was pastoralist, and he had learnt all there is to the herding profession. They lived at some distance to Lorengippi, a small administrative centre in western Turkana. At 24, he set out to receive education and free food and went to school in Lorengippi, but he felt uncomfortable there due to his comparatively old age and thus went back to herding after only one year. In the 1980s, Lomosingo's family lost almost all of their animals to raids by the neighbouring Pokot, and he went back and forth between Lorengippi and Lodwar in search of jobs and income. In 1986, he met a girl called Margaret Alema in Lodwar, and in 1987 she followed him to live together in Lorengippi. Turkana are masters in networking, and Lomosingo managed to become close with a Member of Parliament who then supported him, and in 1991 he was appointed as an assistant chief in Lorengippi. Margaret had completed primary school, and as she was literate she helped her illiterate husband to manage the chief job, thus learning all about it. In 1994, a number of Turkana raided the Pokot and seized a substantial amount of animals. The government requested that these animals should be returned, and when the chief and his sub-chief Lomosingo were not able to effect this result, they were both dismissed.

Lomosingo and Margaret then moved to Lodwar. Margaret was happy about this decision as she was used to town life and had not felt very comfortable in the forlorn settlement of Lorengippi. Lomosingo learned from a friend how to make bricks and earned his money with this new occupation. Margaret opened a small shop. From then on, their lives went in different directions.

Lomosingo kept his contacts to *raiyá* while living in Lodwar. He acquired a substantial number of animals, which his two brothers tended, one of them in Lorengippi and one in Katilu.

Margaret's life took a different path. In Lorengippi, she had involved herself in a women's self-help group and had become its Secretary, and, in addition, the District Officer had appointed her an assistant teacher. When she and her husband returned to Lodwar, she worked in adult education, joined the NGO World Vision, and soon became the chairperson of the latter's Supervising Committee. She did a good job and became very popular. The "community asked her to apply" [Margaret's words, HMD] for the post of an assistant chief in 2004, and she was appointed. In 2007, she was elected chief of Lodwar, the first woman chief ever in Turkana. As Margaret had never been able to attend to secondary school, she continued her education privately and completed her O-levels in 2013. All her children go to school, and two of her sons went on to college.

⁵⁶ International Committee of the Red Cross.

⁵⁷ All people in Turkana have a Christian and a Turkana name. The name is completed by the Turkana name of their father or, in the case of married women, by the Turkana name of their husband. The complete names of this couple are thus Emanuel Lomosingo Naro and Margaret Alema Lomosingo.

As any Turkana, she buys animals with her surplus money, integrating one part into the family herd, i.e. the herd of Lomosingo's family. Yet, to be independent, she also keeps her personal animals in the custody of paid herders.

Within this family, it is not only the pastoral and non-pastoral activities competing with one another, traditional gender roles are challenged as well. It seems, however, that this couple has found ways of respecting each other and reconciling the different and conflicting aspects of their lives.

Some of the wealthier men in town have one or several wives in *raiyá*, and a few of them could be called hybrid urbanites as they, although their point of gravity is in town, are substantially involved in pastoral matters. Contrary to men, women rarely have the chance of living hybrid lives. They are living either in *raiyá* or in town, and once they have come to town, they hardly ever go back. If women are single urbanites, they face a cultural problem, as in traditional Turkana culture there are no single women. Women can only be girls, married wives, or widows, and therefore single Turkana women lack an acknowledged social status. As they are Turkana, they invest their surplus money in animals, but they find it difficult to give them to their families and insert them into the pastoral flow of livestock in a way so that they have access to them again. Thus, they need to find alternatives – like paid herders – which, however, alienates them from their families even more.

Survivors

Of course, not all Turkana urbanites are well off. There are the school dropouts and those who finished school but do not find employment due to a lack of job opportunities. Some of them try their hand in small business or petty trade, some more successfully than others. There are those having an income neither from the pastoral nor from the non-pastoral sector, but they do make their living somehow and just survive. Common speech would call them destitutes, but as most of them survive with much pride and dignity, I prefer calling them survivors.

There are survivors in towns and settlements, few can also be found in the countryside. They have no or only a very marginal amount of animals, and they have no job or other kind of income. They survive with the help of relatives or friends, and/or they have access to relief aid or other NGO assistance. They are uncertain about their future, and for the moment they just survive. They are living under marginal conditions, but compared to the hardships of a pastoral existence they are feeling comfortable, and none of them stated that they were truly poor.

A good example of survivors are the people of Lokwakica,⁵⁸ whom Oxfam identified to us as destitutes and whom it supported with relief food. When I interviewed them, they strongly denied being poor⁵⁹. Their animals had been lost to raids and Oxfam had offered to assist them. With the few animals they had retained from the raid and with some surplus from the relief aid they are now trying to rebuild their herds of small stock. When Oxfam sometimes gave them money instead of food, they rather went hungry and saved most of the money for buying animals.

For lack of animals, they cannot marry in the traditional way, but of course there were families and children. However, we could not see many children. In fact, we did not see many people, and when I asked where everyone was we were told they were in the fields. However, it was not the time of the year for field work. It would have been quite interesting to investigate the situation a bit further.⁶⁰ Why were there so few people in the village? People had admitted close contacts to *raiyá*. Would their relatives in *raiyá* inhabit these houses only

⁵⁸ Name changed.

⁵⁹ As there is no Turkana word for being poor, we used the Kiswahili word *maskini*, which was known to them.

⁶⁰ This was not possible, as it would have meant a longer stay of participant observation.

when there was food distribution? Are the people of Lokwakica some kind of an outlying post of their relatives in *raiyá*?

Another kind of survivor can be found among the resettled IDP⁶¹. These are Turkana who had been living outside Turkan, in the southern part of Kenya. They were the victims of the post-election violence ravaging Kenya in 2007/2008,⁶² who fled back to Turkan but had nobody to support them there. The Kenyan Government mostly settled them in irrigation schemes, but some are also living in places like Lodwar. Most of them are registered, some are not and belong to the ‘survivors’, and their relations to non-IDP Turkana are not exactly clear to me.

Some people, like those of Lokwakica as well as some of the IDPs, could possibly be in a transitional phase from survivors to another way of life. The change mechanisms between survivors and other lifestyles would definitely be a subject worthwhile of further study. One thing can already be predicted: IDPs and other people, who have been living in an urban or semi-urban environment, would never return to a purely pastoral lifestyle with all its hardships.

The above categorisation cannot accommodate all Turkana living in Turkan – like those wives of hybrid pastoralists who are living in town embodying the modern branch of the pastoral enterprise, Turkana who are married to non-Turkana, and Turkana who have gone south outside Turkan i.e. have, in the words of my informants, “gone to the forest” or are “hiding in Nakuru, (...) hiding in Nairobi.” [12]. And of course, the dividing lines are not clear-cut, and persons may belong to more than one category.

A Hybrid System: Turkana at the beginning of the 21st century

Ethnographic evidence shows that at the beginning of the 21st century an economically hybrid system has developed in Turkan. Pastoralists have their connections to town, and sometimes they have part of their family there. Townspeople have maintained their connections to *raiyá*, and they invest their money in the family herd or even have a wife in *raiyá*. Sometimes it is difficult to say whether a certain polygamous man is a pastoralist or a townsman. As women are monogamous, they cannot lead a hybrid life in this way. Outside the towns, hybridity takes different forms – with some pastoralism that is always maintained, but also home industries, agriculture, or fishing. For many families this is complimented by some form of external aid through aid projects like “food for assets”, feeding programmes for children, and direct food or monetary aid.

It can be expected that economic hybridisation is accompanied by social and cultural hybridisation. I cannot address this important issue in detail here but shall conclude this paper with some fragmented information on the topic.

Recently, there has been some revitalisation of Turkana culture. Traditional Turkana women in *raiyá*, but also some in town, wear abundant bead collars which in recent years have even become more glamorous than before. Pastoral men wear blankets in a typical way, together with little hats, and also their hairdo (*emedot*) in the form of mud caps has had a revival in recent years.

The leather clothes women used to wear have widely disappeared in daily life, except for some distant *raiyá* places, and women nowadays normally wear some cotton drapery. Most older women are keeping, however, the leather clothing for festive occasions. In Lodwar some stunning combi-

⁶¹ IDP = Internally Displaced People

⁶² Cf. footnote 44.

nations can be seen: girls wearing miniskirts or tight jeans, a – preferably white – blouse and an enormous Turkana bead collar. Long artificial hair is also very much in vogue.

Compared to the situation in the 1980s, when the Kenyan Government discouraged the wearing of beads,⁶³ modernisation pressure⁶⁴ on the Turkana has decreased. Today, on official occasions Turkana men and women are invited to dance in ‘traditional’ dresses.⁶⁵ Here, however, a folklorisation is taking place: women are wearing standardised bead collars, preferably in national colours, and instead of their original leather clothing they wear *kangas*⁶⁶. Men’s costumes on these occasions are more fashion or fantasy than tradition, and the songs sung are religious chants or songs from ‘downcountry’⁶⁷ Kenya, all with melodies that have nothing to do with Turkana melodies. This kind of hybridisation has been discussed elsewhere (cf. Reuter and Bucakli 2004), and with regard to Turkana would merit its own paper.

There was no Turkana I met who did not have a Christian name besides his or her Turkana name, although in *raiyá* the Christian name was often not used. And although almost all Turkana are members of one of the countless churches and sects that are present in Turkan, most of them are not really practising their Christianity. When it comes to the churches’ view on traditional Turkana practises, the Roman Catholics are more liberal on selected *ngitalio*,⁶⁸ with drumming and singing in the church and the women wearing their traditional heavy beadwear.

We even came across a Roman Catholic diviner. Traditionally, most Turkana diviners are fortune tellers, throwing sandals, bones, etc. and interpreting the pieces’ composition, or dreaming, and each of these *ngimurok*⁶⁹ is specialised in one of these practices. This man had converted to Christianity and is now receiving his dreams from the God of the Roman Catholic Church⁷⁰ – a hybrid diviner.

The protestant churches are more critical of Turkana *ngitalio* and, also depending on the respective priest, often condemn them all. Some Turkana, however, think that this is unjust, and, sometimes against the wishes of their church, continue to practise certain *ngitalio*.

One afternoon in Lodwar, my assistant and friend Peter invited me to join him when he went to his father’s grave, in order to pour libations on the grave. He is a member of a church that definitively bans such ceremonies, but Peter told me: “What can I do (...) my father had told me to do this, and I have to listen to my father whom I loved and respected. The church cannot forbid this (...)” [105] On top of this, Peter was initiated in the Turkana way called *asapan*, another *faux-pas* for the Protestants.

Almost all Turkana I met in town insisted that a Turkana man has to be initiated i.e. undergo *asapan* in order to become a real man, and almost all of them were either already initiated or they were planning for it in the future. This is one of the strongest bonds between town and *raiyá*, because *asapan* can only be performed in *raiyá* and has to be supervised by the pastoralist elders.

Asapan is also the basis for the two other rituals that seem to be most important even to Turkana in town: burial ceremonies and marriage (including *akoota*, spearing the ox). A ‘proper’ Turkana marriage, even for townspeople, must comprise the exchange of animals and the spearing of the

⁶³ From 1980 until 1982 the import of glass beads was forbidden in Kenya (Vierke 2006: 498).

⁶⁴ “I was told by government officials in Lodwar that beads are discouraged because ‘We want to civilize them and have them take their children to school.’ ‘We want them to change their way of life’.” (Williams 1987: 35)

⁶⁵ There is no official government policy on ethnic diversity and traditional dress etc.

⁶⁶ Cf. footnote 31.

⁶⁷ Anything south of Turkana district is called “downcountry”.

⁶⁸ *Ngitalio* (sg. *etal*) = traditional practices.

⁶⁹ Sg. *emuron*.

⁷⁰ The Turkana religion is monotheistic, with a High God called *Akuj*.

marriage ox. This, like *asapan*, takes place in *raiyá* and has to be supervised by the local elders. Any traditional rite is connected to the exchange and/or killing/sacrificing of an animal, which is one of the reasons why every Turkana, even if he lives in town, must own some animals – at least those Turkana townspeople who want to retain their links to *raiyá*, and they are, at least for the moment, in the majority.

Thus, there are plenty of strong connections between town and *raiyá*, and where they are denied they are most probably and purposely hidden but exist nonetheless. Uncovering these hybridisations including their social implications would be a challenge for further research.

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