

I F R A

Les Cahiers d'Afrique de l'Est

n° 18

**The East Pastoral Pokot Sapana
Ceremony (Kenya)**

Janick Maisonhaute*

* Université de Paris-X, 92001 Nanterre France

The East Pastoral Pokot Sapana Ceremony (Kenya)

Janick Maisonhaute*

Abstract

From September to November, when there is enough rain, *sapana* ceremony characterised Nginyang Division daily life. After a brief presentation of the Pokot and their socio-political organisation, the paper focuses on the different steps of the *sapana* ceremony I attended from September to November 1994 in various sub-locations of Nginyang Division, Baringo District (Kenya). The paper focuses on understanding the rite through the institutionalised roles of the following groups; the elders of the Chumo class, the members of the Korongoro following class, and the Kaplelach class which is still open to recruitment. It also discusses the complementarity between the women and men's roles, the organisation of the different areas/venues of the celebration, and the stake of such a celebration for the younger generation.

On language criteria, the Pokot belong to one of the three language families represented in East Africa: Bantu, Cushitic and Nilotic speakers. The Pokot are Nilotic people. The original Nilotic peoples were differentiated into three dialect groups: the River Lake Nilotic, the Plains Nilotic and the Highland Nilotic languages. The Pokot belong to the Highland Nilotic group. The ancestral Nilotic people probably inhabited the southern fringe of the Ethiopian highlands north-east of the Lake Turkana region. They no doubt kept cattle, possibly drunk their blood, and had some type of age-set organisation.

Ebret (1968) suggests that the more easterly Nilotic peoples should be considered together with the Cushitic-speaking peoples of East Africa. The earliest Nilotic or Cushitic-speaking peoples in East Africa were Southern Cushites (a people-group is called Cushitic because they speak a Cushitic language). "*The extensive differences existing among modern southern Cushitic languages*

* Université de Paris-X, 92001 Nanterre France

suggest that their presence in East Africa dates from a very early period, perhaps as much as 3,000–4,000 years ago or more. Other language data suggest that the ancestral Southern Cushitic community was formed by the assimilation of an indigenous and previously non-Cushitic-speaking population to a smaller group of Cushites. The Cushitic elements brought with them their language and the knowledge of pastoral pursuits. Presumably, the proto-Southern Cushitic community also had some acquaintance with agriculture and probably lived somewhere near southern Kenya, which is suggested by present linguistic evidence” (Ebret, 1968).

Northward in Kenya, the later proto community of about A.D. 1000 from which the Pokot come, may have had its home in the country east and north-east of Mount Elgon. Since their expansion, which would not have begun much before 1500, this group seems to have spoken a dialect having affinities with certain modern dialects. Sufficient time has to be allowed, firstly for the development of two distinct ancestor dialects, Pokot and Nandi-related, within Kalenjin, secondly for distinct dialects to form within the Nandi-related ancestor languages also. The great Highlands Nilotic group expansion was perhaps over by 1700 (Ebret, 1968).

Until the beginning of the XIXth century, Pokot peoples were settled agropastoralists and lived in the Cherangani Hills and around Mount Sekerr, the place of their ‘origins’, located in the north west Rift Valley, in West Pokot District: they are the Mountains Pokot. At the beginning of the XIXth century at least, a third of them left the mountains and migrated down to the Mösol plains, East Mount Sekerr, then to the Kerio Valley and up to Mount Tiati in the Rift Valley. The causes of this migration and scission are not precisely known. In addition to the expansion of the Maasai, a number of factors, such as climate, played an important role. *“The diseases and droughts causing scarcity of livestock, the over-population leading to competition for the scarce resources in the Sekerr and the Cherangani, the socio-political dynamics of a system which enhanced the ideal of warriorhood and promised quick access to livestock and prestige for participants of raiding parties on neighbouring pastoralists”* (Böllig, 1990).

Some time before 1800, the Maasai, discontent with the Rift Valley grasslands and other grazing places from Lake Turkana to Tanzania, penetrated over the escarpment into the Western Highlands to control the Pokot and related groups’ homelands, occupied the Uasin Gishu plateau and the Upper Nyando valley. They also encroached upon the Pokot lowlands at the feet of Mount Sekerr and the Cherangani Hills. Under pressure from the invading Maasai, a group of the Pokot, with the help of their *laibon*’s speech, left the mountains with their herds and started to move eastwards. They were much

freer there even though the lowlands were still controlled by the Maasai and the grasslands there of lesser quality. They reached the Masöl plains, the Kerio and Sukuta valleys, where some settled to become the eastern plains and pastoral Pokot of Masöl. The others continued south-east to lake Baringo where they settled and organised their new life in the dry plains and the hills (Mount Tiati, Paka and Silali Hills). They became east plains and pastoral Pokot of Nginyang “*When the Nyongu circumcision class became warriors (1865) they immediately tried to bolster their image by raiding Maasai around Nginyang, towards Paka hills and Baringo. In the latter years of their warrior-hood (1880), they raided as far as Leroghi Plateau*” (Böllig, 1990). From Baringo, other Pokot groups followed, chasing away the Maasai westwards back to the Cherangani hills and the Sekerr, “*because we, Pokot, must always return to where we were before*”, said Lamaku an elder from Chepareria (1995). When they reached Chepareria, the Karimojong grazing area, “*all the Pokot herds were stolen by Karimojong cattle raiders, ngoroko, so the Pokot raided the Karimojong, refusing to leave this place again and go back to Baringo. They chased away the Karimojong. We killed all the Karimojong up to Amudat,*” said J.W. Lochakai a Gazelle, Ngetei from Alale (1995). These are now the homelands of the western West plains pastoral Pokot of Kacheliba and Alale. This area was then opened up, and even the Pokot from the Sekerr moved to these grazing lands. “*Within roughly fifty years the Pokot had conquered about 5000 sq. km*” (Böllig, 1990). J.W. Lochabi (1995) continues “*we stayed like this till the Turkana raided us when we went grazing to the lower Turkana plains along the Turkwell river around 1912. They raided us with guns and drove us off until Kitale and Eldoret where we met the Baringo Pokot, who had also been chased away by the Turkana from the eastern plains. But at this time, Krimti, the British administrator, was present and organised a huge raid against the Turkana. We received Turkana herds as compensation for our losses around 1918*”.

The migrations of the Pokot are linked in a meaningful way to their myths of origin. “*While the Suk* nation was being evolved in the mountains of the Elgeyo escarpment the Kerio Valley was occupied by the Samburu. If ever the Suk descended from their fortresses they were raided and harassed by this tribe, "until there arose a wizard among the Suk who prepared a charm in the form of a stick, which he placed in the Samburu cattle kraals, with the result their cattle all died."* They then left the Kerio Valley, and formed a large settlement at En-ginyang. Perceiving that Kerio had been evacuated, the Suk descended from their hills in large numbers, and occupied Tiati and the hills as far south as Ka-rumon. From here they successfully raided the Samburu and captured a great many cattle” (Beech, 1911).

“*In the epic of the hero Merkol, we are told that during his eternal quest of green pastures he descended from his hill home in Sook and roamed at the head of his warriors in the plains*

* In the past, the Pokot were called the Suk.

occupied by the Karimojong. There, he set up his summer camp (kanasian), and learnt the customs of his Karimojong neighbours. When the position of his group of warrior-herders became untenable, he went to live in Kaplelit (in Tiati inhabited by eastern pastoral Pokot) where his fame as a great captain made him an outstanding figure. On being asked to advise the young men on how to become invincible in battle, he told them to plaster their heels with mud in which, when dry, they should make fast their ostrich feathers as this would enable the warriors to recognise each other from afar and would render them fearsome in battle. The narrative goes on to say that Merkol advised his warriors not to wear the outward sign of manhood unless they had 'speared the ox' and performed the full ritual of sapanā following in all particulars the practices of the Karimojong" (Peristiany, 1951).

"With the Turkana, there is a myth which says that a long time ago, a Pokot family—a man, his pregnant wife and a little son—were walking when they strayed into a Turkana home to ask for hospitality, as they were hungry, thirsty and tired. The family was given milk to drink, and a place to sleep for the night. However, during the night, the Turkana family raised an alarm and the Pokot family was murdered in cold blood. The Pokot consider this to have been a heinous crime against society and humanity. First, because according to Pokot culture, a man has no right to kill a person he has fed with his own food. Secondly, it is cowardly to kill a person who is asleep, one who cannot therefore, respond to aggression appropriately. Thirdly, they killed a microcosm of society, a whole nuclear family which is the cradle of society. Since this time, the Pokot and Turkana have never been at peace with one another" (Akong'a, 1986).

Since the early 1950s, the Pokot are called Kalenjin because their speech belongs to the Kalenjin group of language. The word 'kalenjin' means, "I tell you" and refers to the way these people introduce their statements: the Nandi and the Tugen say *Kolei*; the Pokot say *Kolano*. This name was devised largely for political reasons. Despite this, it remains a convenient term for linguistic and historical purposes, to embrace this group of people who are closely and obviously related to both language and culture (Sutton, 1976). The Pokot, the Nandi, the Kipsigis, the Terik, the Tugen, the Sebei, the Marakwet, the Elgeyo, the Kony and the Sabaot are all included into the Kalenjin group (Sutton, 1976).

According to the 1989 national census, the Pokot population stands at about 190 000, although these figures do not include the Pokot living in Uganda who are around 60 000 in number. In Kenya, Pokot people are roughly divided into two communities:

- a third of them, the East Pokot, live in the eastern plains as a semi-nomadic and pastoral group in Nginyang Division, in the Baringo District;

- about two thirds of them, the West Pokot, live as a settled agro-pastoral group ranging from north to south in the Chemorongit, Sekerr and Cherangani Hills, and as a pastoral group in the plains around, in the West Pokot District. “*Pokot herders and farmers are seldom more than a day’s march from each other. They intermarry, they exchange subsistence produce, they share common rituals*” (Conant, 1965). The complementarity of the two communities in West Pokot was noted early by the British administration (Beech, 1911; Barton, 1921), and became the subject of study by several scholars led by J. Peristiany (1951–1954), H.K. Schneider (1957–1959), F.P. Conant, R.B. Edgerton & R.W. Porter (1965), G.W.B. Huntingford (1953) and in East Pokot by J. Akong’a (1986).

A specificity of the Pokot developed when they migrated as described before and came into contact with the Turkana from north Baringo lake, with the Karimojong from Kacheliba to Alale, and again with the Turkana in the Turkwell and Kerio valleys. The geographic opposition and complementarity of the mountains and the plains is linked to the socio-political and territorial organisation. While the mountains Pokot are organised into circumcision classes (*pen*), the plains Pokot progressively introduced the *sapana*-classes of the Karimojong and the Turkana. Thus, they currently have both circumcision-classes and *sapana* classes. This specificity of their socio-political organisation is covered by Peristiany (1951).

The socio-political organisation of the East Pokot

The pastoral East Pokot have two distinct generation-classes :

- the old and lasting one built on the circumcision-classes (*pen*), which is a feature of their sedentary and agro-pastoral way of life;
- the *sapana*-classes concern the western and eastern plains Pokot and are the result of their meeting with the Karimojong and the Turkana people who also get such *sapana*-classes.

The traditional generation-classes of the Pokot include eight circumcision-classes with recurrent names:

- 1 Chumo
- 2 Korongoro

- 3 Kaplelach
- 4 Sowe
- 5 Kipkoimet
- 6 Merkutwa
- 7 Nyongu
- 8 Maina

The name of each class comes back only when all the members' sons of this circumcision-class are dead. Lomodita is a Chumo elder. The name of his circumcision-class, Chumo, is not allowed to come back again as long as there are Chumo sons still alive anywhere around the Pokot area. This is an important rite, which helps every member belong to the correct circumcision-class without any risk of being confused with any son of the precedent circumcision-class that was named as his father's was. They neither overlap nor cause any risk of embarrassment to anyone.

Each circumcision-class is divided into nine sub-classes, *ma* (fire) named as follows “*apparently symbolical of the respective values of the warriors: the senior, Nerkau, a reed buck or Chagenopero; the middle, Ngiru, a kind of fruit; the junior, Nimur, boulders of rocks.*” (Beech, 1911).

At Nginyang each sub-class is named according to a special event which happens during the circumcision time. The Kaplelach (East Pokot at Baringo) recruited two sub-classes in 1988 and 1990; the last one was recruited in December 1996. The senior sub-class of the Kaplelach is surnamed *Kapelkow*, a word which refers to the moment when the circumcision hut, *menjo*, is built; the middle sub-class is surnamed *Kakumiken*, the ‘very young ones’, because the circumcised boys were all very young boys of around ten years.

Inside the circumcision hut, *menjo*, the boys and men are differentiated into three groups according to their own age and status:

- (i) those who are already married: *benokobir*;
- (ii) those who are not yet men (around 15 and other teenagers): *wiaperi*;
- (iii) the children: *kamasiah*.

A boy (*kurachin*, *kurachona* [pl]) is circumcised between a wide period from ages 10–12 to 18–20: he becomes a circumcised male (*torusion*, *torustin* [pl]). “*After circumcision, he is sent by his father or male guardian into the wild to graze the family herds.*”

*During this time, his food is the nourishing blood mixed with milk. While he is in the wilderness, he meets other torusion on the same mission or uninitiated boys just helping out. After one year's absence from home, he may return home during the rainy season and ask his father's permission to graduate into the muren grade to become a circumcised man and a warrior through sapana ceremony. A father may agree that his son is fit to become a muren or he may refuse, meaning that he has to return to the wild for another period of time" (Akonga, 1986). After sapana, he is also allowed to marry. Then he has children and is a father (*pāpo*, *pāpōtin* [p]); he becomes an elder (*poyon*, *poi* [p]) when his sons are initiated with circumcision.*

The rules that govern belonging to a circumcision-class mentions that a son never belongs to the same circumcision-class as that of his father. The sons belong to the circumcision-class following that of their father and are distributed in the three sub-classes as follows:

- (i) the moment they have been circumcised;
- (ii) when the circumcision-class is opened, the father's oldest sons are circumcised first and belong to the first sub-class;
- (iii) the others follow in the subsequent sub-classes.

Thus, the fathers try to arrange things such that none of their sons belong to the same sub-class. Sometimes they belong to two circumcision-classes after their father's. For instance, Ngoriayang, an elder of the Chumo circumcision-class has seven wives and 54 children, half of them boys and the other half girls. His oldest sons, who are fifty years old today, belong to the Korongoro circumcision-class while his youngest sons, twenty years old today, are Kaplelach.

This quick presentation of the east pastoral Pokot circumcision-classes organisation does not mention the way the circumcision-classes are opened, how they are closed and about the handing over ceremony. The Nandi circumcision-classes organisation is briefly discussed below. A.C. Hollis (1909), G.W.B. Huntingford (1953) and M.S. Langley (1979) refer to 'the slaughter of the white bullock, *saket ap eito'*, which is also the handing over ceremony among the Nandi. It was last held in 1892–93 because of the ban imposed by the colonial government, and although it was authorised in 1923, the ceremony was not held. The Nandi ritual expert, *orkoiyot*, assembled the incoming and outgoing circumcision-classes in an appointed place. The white bullock was slaughtered, and its meat eaten by the elders of the senior circumcision-class while the warriors of the incoming circumcision-class made small rings with hide and each put one on a finger of his right hand. The

retiring warriors removed their clothes and put on old men's fur cloaks. The ritual expert then declared to the new warriors, "*you are now the Nandi warriors, murenik ap Nandi*" and their duty was to do all they could to advance the Nandi people, by acquiring cattle and protecting them. The ceremony was usually followed by a series of raids. None of the above-cited authors mentioned any handing over ceremony in the Pokot circumcision-classes organisation, but Meyerhoff (1981) introduces the *poro* rite among the mountain Pokot and says: "*Poros cannot be regarded as completely separate from circumcision and would probably be most accurately described as the last rite in the circumcision-sets cycle among the agriculturists*". At Nginyang, when I interviewed members of the three circumcision-classes in circulation today (the Chumo, the Korongoro and the Kaplelach) about *poro*, most of them told me that only Cheptulel people in West Pokot perform it. Some of the elders among the Chumo did not want to hear about *poro*, which they considered as "*something about bad spirits*." They claimed that I went to Cheptulel to interview elders about *poro*, which was rather difficult, because *poro* is a secret rite only known by the circumcised men who performed it. It is also the way to become a member of the *poro* secret society. Among the Pokot, the most meaningful ceremony, which closes every circumcision-class, occurs when the elders give this class its generation name after the third sub-class has been circumcised.

The circumcision-classes organisation is not the only socio-political and ritual organisation used by the east plains and pastoral Pokot: they also make use of their own *sapana* generation-classes, which they borrowed from both the Karimojong generation-classes (Hudson, 1958 & 1966) and the Turkana alternations (Gulliver, 1958). The case of the Turkana is a simplification of the Karimojong.

The Karimojong generation-classes, *nganyameta*, are based on a strictly applied rule which states:

- (i) a son never belongs to his father's generation-class;
- (ii) a son always belongs to his grandfather's generation-class.

This implies that:

- (i) all a man's sons belong to only one generation-class;
- (ii) a real opposition between adjacent generation-classes: fathers and sons;

- (iii) a close correspondence between alternate generation-classes: grandfathers and grandsons.

The distribution of the men is symbolised by the metal ornaments worn by each of the four Karimojong generation-classes:

N'gitukoi (Zebras) wear brass ornaments and are described as yellow;

- *N'gimoru* (Mountains) wear only copper ornaments and are described as red;
- *N'gigetei* (Gazelles) wear brass ornaments and are described as yellow;
- *N'gigatuyo* (Lions) wear copper ornaments and are described as red.

Every generation-class, *nganyameta*, is divided into five sub-classes, *ngasapaneta*. Because of the close correspondence between alternate generation-classes, the sub-classes names of any generation echo those of their alternate senior generation-class. Every generation-class progressively reaches the senior status through the succession handing-over ceremonies. These are

- i. the promotion of the generation of the ‘sons of the country’,
- ii. the retirement of the generation of the ‘fathers of the country’ and
- iii. the recruitment of the new generation of the ‘sons of the country’.

The three processes all take place together and thus form a single complex process. When do such ceremonies take place? As time goes by, the members of the awaiting generation increase but they are not yet considered as belonging to a corporate group as long as the succession ceremonies take place and open their generation-class. Thus, the members of the ‘fathers of the country’ retire after handing over the socio-political and ritual power to their sons, the ‘sons of the country’ through the dividing of the right haunch ceremony, *akidung amuro*. The prevailing generation-class of the ‘sons of the country’ become the new generation-class of the ‘fathers of the country’ and its members must “open” the generation-class of the new generation of the ‘sons of the country’. The new generation-class of the ‘sons of the country’ are now allowed to perform their *sapana* ceremony at the same period during the ceremonies of succession, and the following five or six years. Most of the time, they are numerous and most ages are represented from, teenagers to men of about fifty. The Karimojong periodically manipulated the recruiting procedure to keep socially disabled mature males at a minimum. Periods of dual recruitment follow the succession ceremonies.

According to Gulliver (1958), the two Turkana generation divisions, the Stones and the Leopards, are referred as ‘alternations’ because at birth, every male child automatically becomes a member of his grandfather’s alternation and not that of his father. Thus the Stones’ sons are all Leopards and *vice versa*. The distribution of the men is symbolised by the metal ornaments worn by each of the two alternations:

- *Ngumur* (Stones) wear black ostrich feathers and dark-coloured metal ornaments;
- *Ngirisai* (Leopards) wear white ostrich feathers and light-coloured metal ornaments.

This organisation implies:

- a man's father and all his sons belong to only one alternation;
- a real opposition between the two alternations: fathers and sons;
- a close correspondence within the age-groups of each alternation where grandfathers;
- and grandsons are mixed together and spread over the different age-groups from the senior-most to the junior one.

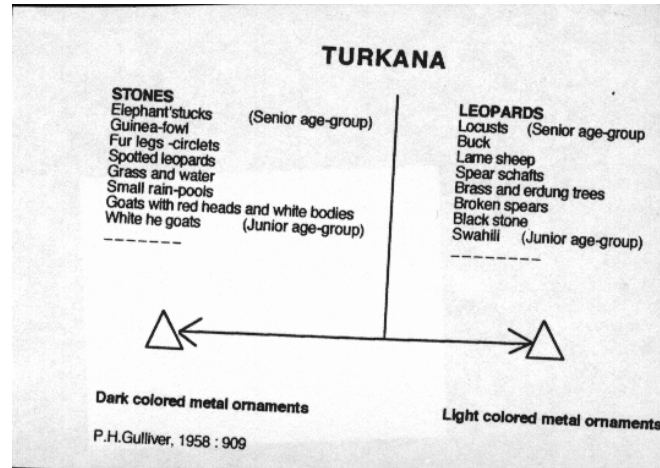
In general, there are between eight and ten age-groups with living members in each alternation, with a range of fifty years or a bit more, which, together with the average age of initiation at about eighteen, put the age of the oldest men at about seventy. The initiation occurs every good rainy season so food is plentiful. This is usually once in four or five years, but in the exceptions where two good years are consecutive or separated by only one year, the new age-group created in the first year can be continued during the second year. An age-group comprises the men initiated in a single wet season. The initiation occurs not only at special ceremonial feasts—there are twenty-five to thirty initiation centres in the Turkana area—but also when an animal is slaughtered just for meat for the immediate neighbourhood. Individual initiation gives automatic entrance to the current group without any subsequent ceremony. Normally, in each initiation year, two new age-groups (*athepan*) are created one in each alternation. At initiation, the youths of each alternation are dealt with separately, usually on different days but sometimes on the same day, at separate but adjacent groves. Sons are initiated when their fathers consider them to be of age, between fourteen and twenty, with an average of eighteen, and in order of birth. The initiation occurs for several days and each day, at least 15 youths present themselves, each with a castrated male animal (cow, camel, goat or sheep) provided by his father. After they have speared the animals, the Elders of the alternation smear the initiates with the chyme of their animal and the meat is cut, roasted and distributed. Females are not allowed to participate in any part of the affair, but uninitiated boys may be present and eat the inferior pieces of meat. At the end of the day each initiate separately goes off with a man, his 'patron', who must belong to the initiate's alternation, and to a junior, equal or senior age-group of the initiate's father. The patron is chosen by the father's initiative, and given a gift of animals. Through this gift, a type of 'stock association' is established between the father and his son's patron, as well as between the son and his patron. The initiate goes to the homestead of his

'patron', which is like his home. He remains there for five days. At the end of the period, the initiate and his patron formally exchange spears, knives, sandals and cloth, which establishes and symbolises the father-son relationship between the two men. The initiates of one year are given a name and their group takes its place in the total series of groups. There is neither opening nor closing of the group as such. A name is given to the two new age groups according to an evocative or recent notable event, with a different name for each alternation. This is usually the same name over wide regions accommodating several centres. A name that has been used before may not be used again. The process is totally informal and there is no recognised leader who might control the proceedings. Men will propose names in consideration of their fellows. The men of the senior-most group do not have any special privilege in the matter, except when the name is finally determined. It is then their duty to formally inform the initiates. The members of these new age-groups established in one initiation season do not find any special mutual interests, and each group tends to associate itself with its next senior alternation.

Moreover, in both systems, the generation-classes or alternations are associated with generation positions and status in a different way. Among the Karimojong, only two subsequent generation-classes are linked with the recognised positions—the 'fathers of the country' and the 'sons of the country', one of each colour. During the handing-over ceremony, the generation-classes are clearly defined, thus maintaining the positions between the subsequent generation-classes. The generation of the 'sons of the country' reaches the status of the 'fathers of the country' while the then 'fathers of the country' retires and the new 'sons of the country' are opened. Among the Turkana, the two alternations refer to generation positions but they co-exist in a crowd of males of the same age, such that about half will belong to each and refer to different status. In this situation there are neither 'fathers of the country' nor 'sons of the country'. Despite the general notion that Stones are in some way senior, 'the big ones' as an alternation to the Leopards, there appears to be no essential evidence of such a difference between the two groups. There is no equation between a group's position in the total series at any time and any social function, distinction, privilege or responsibility held by its members severally or corporately. There are no 'warriors' or 'elders' grades. A member of the newest age-group is a 'man' in a general sense, and a 'warrior', because he is a young man and not because he belongs to that age-group.

Among the Turkana, any man's development as a social person is an individual matter depending on his place in his father's nuclear family, the time

and nature of his marriage and inheritance, and the evolution of his own nuclear family. Imperceptibly, a man becomes an 'old man' because of individual matters—it is a relative status. He is an old man compared to his juniors in reference to affairs such as dancing, fighting or ceremonial performance. At an initiation ceremony, the only old men are the members of the senior-most group, but at a dance, the old men are all those who do not take a very active part. In some situations, a person is an old man and in others, he is not. The designation does not necessarily refer to this age-group membership. At no time does a group reach the grade of 'elders', though certain groups may sometimes be regarded as such. There is a scale of seniority through a single alternation, but the scales of each alternation are not comparable. Groups are placed in a chronological order so that the older groups are the most senior. Within each group there is a very sophisticated ranking of members defined by the order of seniority of the members' legal fathers. Where the fathers of initiates are not all members of the same age-group, but are drawn from the four or five senior groups in the total series, the initiate sons of members of the most senior age-group are automatically senior to sons of members of the second group, who are again senior to sons of members of the third group. Among the initiates who are sons of members of a single age-group, seniority depends directly on the relative seniority of their father in that group and the way it hands over to their sons. Thus, the greater the age gaps between father and son, the higher the seniority of the son in his own age-group. The smaller the gap, the lower the seniority of the son. Elder sons are therefore in relatively junior positions in their group and younger sons are relatively senior. But the elder sons still remains senior to their younger brothers in the total series in the alternation. In each case, the initiate son's position in his section of the new group is determined by his father's position relative to the fathers of his age mates. Under this system, sons cannot benefit from the wealth or prestige of their fathers to gain high seniority positions. It is also certain that, whether or not a man has high seniority in his own age-group, his elder sons will always be junior, and on the other hand, high seniority of a father will give a high ranking to his youngest sons in their groups. The following sketch shows the distribution between the Turkana generation positions:



P.H. Gulliver, 1958: 909

The *sapana* generation-classes organisation of the east plains and pastoral Pokot at Nginyang, borrows and simplifies some features from both the Karimojong and the Turkana systems. They respect the double rule in which a son never belongs to his father's generation, but always to his grandfather's, differentiated by the metal ornaments and the colour code: red or black for the *Nyimur*; yellow or white for the *Ngetei*. A man will say "I am a Ngetei and yellow" or "I am a Nyimur and red". They do not have four classes, but only two: the Stones–*Nyimur*, and the Gazelles–*Ngetei*. The positions of the 'father of the country' and the 'sons of the country' are not used but redefined through their circumcision generation-classes. According to my Kaplelach informant, "the Kaplelach called their fathers' generation, the Korongoro 'papo', meaning father, and our own sons will call them 'kuko', which means grandfather, although at this point there are no kinship ties". On the other hand, they attach the greatest importance to their *sapana* sub-classes: from 1958 till 1988, there were no circumcision ceremonies because of the raids, but they still celebrated *sapana*. The members of the last four *sapana* sub-classes (*Ngiriket*, *Ngilumum*, *Lokomeri*, *Dotomir*) of the still opened circumcision-class of the Korongoro celebrated *sapana*. The Korongoro members of the latter three *sapana* sub-classes celebrated *sapana* together with the members of the three first *sapana* sub-classes (*Ngilumum*, *Lokomeri*, *Dotomir*)

of the not yet opened circumcision-class of the Kaplelach. Both the next Kaplelach and the last Korongoro do not share the same celebration time and place, but they celebrated *sapana* the same year. They do it to enable them to get married because “*sapana is important and necessary for one to be recognised as an adult person, muren*”, says Steven, a Korongoro member. *Sapana* ceremony is a few days affair instead of the several months for the circumcision where up to a hundred initiates in 1988, or usually from twenty to forty, are together, and represent an easy prey for the Turkana. “*Who will go fighting against our enemies?*” adds Steven. In 1988, the men who were already married and had had children before being circumcised had to slaughter a black sheep as a cleansing at the place where the circumcision had taken place. They smeared their wives and children with the sheep chyme and blood so that they all recovered their father, mother and children status, before the father’s circumcision.

Every good rainy season, *sapana* ceremonies are performed to recruit the members of a new *sapana* sub-class among the members of the circumcision-class which is still opened, and whose fathers have authorised to celebrate *sapana*. The Elders give a specific name to the new *sapana* sub-class at the end of the *sapana* time. Then the initiate becomes *muren*, a ‘man’, and is allowed to get married, and to speak during the councils of Elders in the meeting place, *kokwa*. He is allowed to enter and sit within the ritual space and participate in the meat feasts with his companions. Through *sapana*, a cattle link is attached to the donor of the *sapana* cattle, who had received a heifer in compensation. These *sapana* rituals, year after year, define *sapana* sub-classes, which are ordered according to the circumcision-classes as indicated in Table 1.

The *sapana* sub-classes are named according to particular events that happen in the year of their celebrations, as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 1: The East Plains Pastoral Pokot at Nginyang

CIRCUMCISION CLASSES	CIRCUMCISION SUB-CLASSES	SAPANA SUB-CLASSES	SAPANA CLASSES & COLOUR OF METAL ORNAMENTS
Merkutwa (ca. 1840)		Kwagamong Nyonjon = Nyongu Ngolimong	
Nyongu (ca. 1865)	Senior Middle Junior	Nyonjon = Nyongu Mersel	
Maina (ca. 1890)	Senior Middle Junior	Ngururu Merkinel (ca. 1903) Ngormedot	
Chumo or Sowa (at Churo) (1920–1930) They hold the authority from 1964 to 1991	Senior Middle Junior	Meringmonion Kwamagong (ca. 1911) Kurupwa Rionomong (ca. 1919) Ngidewai (ca. 1920) Ditimong (ca. 1930)	Nyimur (copper) Ngetei (brass)
Korongoro (1936–1957) They hold the authority since 1991 1957–1988 : no circumcision because of raids	Senior Middle	Ngipurot (ca. 1935) Chumalinya (1940–45) Mamuk (ca. 1952) Ngiriket (ca. 1960) Lokomeri (1971) Dotomir (1972)	Nyimur (copper) Ngetei (brass)
Kaplelach (1988–1996)	Senior: Kapkelwo (1988) Middle: Kakumike (1990) Junior: (1996)	Ngilumum (ca. 1970) Lokomeri (1971) Dotomir (1972) Lomokore Siwamong (1975) Watali (1974 ? 1977 ?) Tapagora (1975 ? 1976 ?) Ngisingo ? Remakat (1979) Lotokiru (1983) Ngomuke (1985) Ngikanu (1987) Ngirupee (1990) Lotirii (1992) Chereel Korka (1994)	Nyimur (copper) Ngetei (brass)

Source : J. Maisonhaute 1994–1995

Table 2 : Meaning of the *Sapana* sub-classes names at Nginyang since 1920

THE CHUMO (1920–1935)	THE KORONGORO (1935–1972)	THE KAPLELACH (1970–1994)
<p>Kurupwa = ? Rionomong = the initiates kill black bulls Ngidewai = special medicine to kill the crickets coming from Sudan Ditimong = the initiates kill small bulls</p>	<p>Ngipurot = people started <i>sapana</i> drinking a special beer made of honey Chumalinya = the initiates killed with a pen knife instead of a spear Mamuk = the initiates killed the cattle barefoot, in order to be unique Ngiriket = they killed the cattle lower through the waist instead of the chest Ngilumum = the initiates wore a full blue mud cap Lokomeri = people caught a leopard Dotomir = during the animal skinning, they remove the penis</p>	<p>Ngilumum Lokomeri Dotomeri = <i>idem</i> Lomokire = special tree, <i>kopulwa</i>: <i>Gardenia volkensii</i> Siwamong = ? Watali = tourists come during <i>sapana</i> Tapagora = the initiates kill a he-goat Ngisingo = ? Remakat = the initiates killed the animal from the neck Lotokiru = it rained a lot during <i>sapana</i> and the mud caps were removed Ngimuke = the initiates killed white and black cows only Ngikanu = <i>Sapana</i> took place during Kanu elections Ngirupee = there was continuous rain without drought Lotiririi = when helicopters came to the area because of Turkana raids Chereel Korka = white woman (the author was present during <i>sapana</i> period)</p>

In September 1994, I reached Nginyang, in east pastoral Pokot (cf. Peristiany, 1951) data in mind. I was invited to attend my first *sapana* ceremony at Nakoko. After greeting the three initiates, I asked them which generation they belonged to. They all replied that they were Kaplelach, which refers to their circumcision-class. Then I asked them which *sapana*-class they belonged to. One said he belonged to ‘Stones’, *Nyimur*, the two others belonged to ‘Gazelles’, *Ngetei*. I did not expect such a distinctive answer. Ever since 1936, the circumcision-class of the Korongoro was opened at Ortum (Peristiany, 1951), the formation of the next two *sapana* sub-classes was evident. According to what happens at Ortum for the two first *sapana*-classes, the first sub-class names, *Tukoi* (Zebra) and *Nyetapa* (from *tapa*, stones) were the names of the next *sapana* generation-classes, the *Tukoi*, Zebra and the *Nyimur*, Rocks, would take the first sub-class name *Ngetei*. This means that the next *sapana* generation-class would be the *Ngetei*, Gazelles or the third Karimojong generation-class, as confirmed by the answers of the three initiates, although I did not record any *sapana* sub-class names, *Tukol*, *Nyimur* or *Ngetei*. I participated in twelve *sapana* ceremonies in Baringo District from September to November 1994 and the members of the three circumcision generation-classes in circulation—the

Chumo, the Korongoro and the Kaplelach—indicated that they belong to the *Nyimur* or the *Ngetei sapana*-class. During my different investigations, the *Tuko*i appeared sometimes and were usually members of the *sapana*-class of the father's or grandfather's investigated man.

For the time being, we can keep in mind that with the circumcision, two important celebrations punctuate the generation changes in the east plains pastoral Pokot: *sapana*, and *amuro*. They do not take place altogether in a 'simple complex process' as the Karimojong succession ceremonies: *sapana* takes place every good rainy season among the Turkana. *Sapana* is the *rite of passage* experienced by all men to become members of the Pokot community. It normally takes place between circumcision and marriage and is regularly performed by the east plains Pokot who are deeply linked to it. *Amuro* ceremony is celebrated when a circumcision-class retires and hands over its ritual powers to the subsequent circumcision-class. At Nginyang, the Elders informed me that an *amuro* handing-over ceremony was last performed in 1991. There, the Chumo retired and gave the socio-political ritual authority to the Korongoro, their sons and members of the subsequent circumcision-class. They taught them the special way to cut *amuro*, the right hind leg, and allowed them to cut it during the ceremonies and to eat *alamachar*, another sacred part of the meat. The Korongoro were also given *atoro*, the small coloured mud square decoration on top of the head and *alim*, the black round pompom ostrich feathers put on the mud-cap, *siolup*. All the men are covered with the mud-cap during the *sapana* ceremony. A handing over ceremony, *amuro*, from the *sapana*-classes organisation was performed in 1991, to hand over the socio-ritual power from the Chumo to the Korongoro circumcision-classes. This meant that the Korongoro could now carry, cut and eat the sacred right leg, *amuro*, the sacred *alamachar* and wear special ornaments.

In east pastoral Pokot, both *amuro* and *sapana* rites complete the different rules which define the organisation of the circumcision-classes, and define the powers which govern the Pokot generation-classes. With the non-overlap rules of their circumcision classes, each class can be opened if, and only if all the sons of the members of this circumcision-class are dead, the Pokot thus clearly distinguish the members' recruitment of the eight distinct circumcision-classes. With the *amuro* ceremony, the Pokot introduced a handing-over rule for the circumcision-classes which had been lacking, as far as we know.

The east pastoral Pokot *sapana* ceremony

John Peristiany (1951) was the first researcher to describe the Pokot *sapana* initiation ceremony. When I attended *sapana* ceremonies, his findings were forefront in my mind. I was actually experiencing the life he wrote about in 1951. Today, I would like to share what happened at Nakoko, Kositei, Chemolingot, Lomaciniko, Kopulwo, Chematony, Kaitunga, Kamakorimuk, Lokenoi and Cheserimion, from mid-September to mid-November 1994 when Kaplelach young men performed their *sapana*. The main features of *sapana* initiation will be presented first, then the successive stages of the celebration through the organisation of the specific stages and through four questions: who is doing what? how? why?

The main features of *sapana* ceremony

Sapana is a Karimojong word meaning ‘to shave’ according to S. Tornay (pc). *Sapana* normally takes place between circumcision and marriage for one to three or four candidates, of about twenty years old according to Peristiany, who attended four *sapana* ceremonies at Ortum in 1947. Among the twelve *sapana* I attended in different places around Nginyang, Baringo District in 1994, there were from two to eleven candidates in the same *sapana*, but mostly two or three; four *sapana* with three candidates; four *sapana* with two candidates; two *sapana* with five candidates; one *sapana* with four candidates; one *sapana* with 11 candidates. Peristiany (1951) also says “*There is a close co-relation between biological age and age at circumcision. Sapana normally occurs between circumcision and marriage. This period is more flexible and this is one of the reasons for the wide variations of age at sapana initiation*”. In the *sapana* I attended around Nginyang, from the 25 initiates I met, most were aged between 18 to 25 years, with a few of 30 years. It is performed every good rainy season, like 1994. There were no *sapana* in 1993 because of a lack of water. A Pokot dictum says *Atoropan ilat, kongun sapana*, ‘when rain falls, there is *sapana*’.

The announcement of *sapana*

One or two weeks before *sapana*, after the candidate decides to perform it, having obtained his father’s permission, and when the cattle is found from the herd of one of his father’s friends, they announce the date of the ceremony. All his life the initiate will keep in touch with the donor of cattle, by giving him gifts of cattle from the heifer received as compensation for the *sapana* cattle. The ‘godfather’ breeds the heifer in aid of his ‘godson’ through this stock

association which weaves new brotherhood ties with his own sons, as the Turkana do between the initiate and his patron.

Sapana day is chosen according to two factors: the moon and the rain. When the moon increases or is full, it is considered an opportune time. A Pokot dictum says *Maminye arawa, maminye sapana*, ‘when there is no moon, there is no *sapana*’. Though *sapana* only happens during a very good rainy season, when it rains too heavily in the days before the date, *sapana* can be delayed. *Sapana* ceremony takes place any day of the week but mostly Friday, Saturday or Sunday, and not far from the initiates’ father’s homestead. The announcement is very important and the initiate, his relatives and neighbours do their best to invite as many people as possible. There is generally plenty of milk and enough people to enjoy the celebrations. Peristiany (1951) talks about the necessity of more than 400 gallons (about 50 litres) of milk so that *sapana* is not shortened by a lack of milk.

The day before *sapana*

The day before *sapana* is emphasised by the drinking of *kumin*, the maize and millet beer made by the mothers of the initiate’s relatives and neighbourhood, and the organisation of the different spatial areas of the rite. These are:

- the *kerket*, the men’s place
- the *mboch*, the place of the women
- the *ruvei*, the place where women and men celebrate their *sapana* cattle with their blessings, songs and *adongo* dances around the heads of the sacrificed animals.

Here is the recipe of *kumin*, given to me by my informant’s mother. Three days are required in order to obtain a good *kumin*.

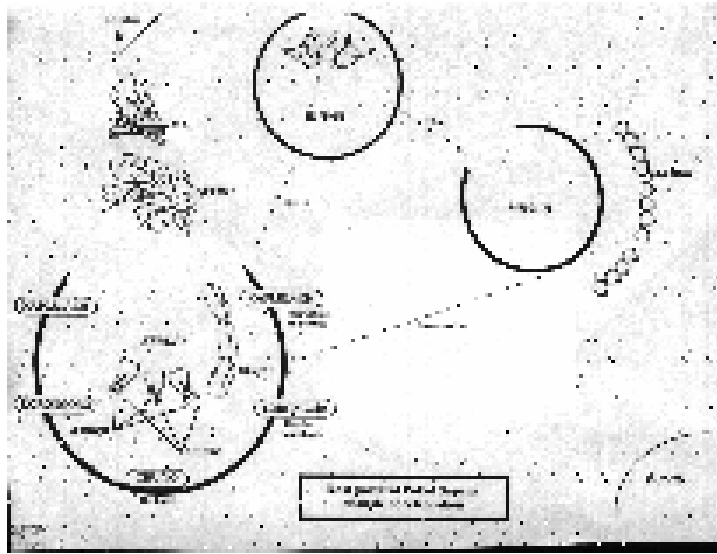
“On the first day (four days before sapana) buy 2kg of very white maize flour and 1kg of millet seeds. Put the millet in a large pan (sipirya) and cover it with water. Put the maize flour in another pan and cover it with water. On the second day, press the wet maize flour and put it in a large iron sheet. Brew it until the packets become smaller lumps. Put the iron sheet on the fire and continue brewing the ground maize until it gets very brown. The millet seeds start to germinate. Press them and let them dry on a wire netting. When the seeds are dry, put the millet on the grindstone and grind it into flour. From the last kumin, some fermented maize and millet had been kept and dried, and it constitutes today’s ferment. Mix the sprouted millet flour and brown ground maize in a

large container. Add the ferment with water, and brew the mixture to make it as homogeneous as possible. Leave it in a cool place. On the third day, the day before sapana, early in the morning, the female and male relatives and neighbours of the initiate come to his mother's homestead, as it is time to filter busa, to taste the filtered kumīn and the fermented maize and millet. Kumīn is really nice and makes people happy!"

After having enjoyed the *kumīn*, the women spend the day getting ready for the night. They put on their best leather skins, jewellery and adornments. They colour their hair with the black powder from a volcanic stone, *okup*, and fat. Married women wear beads and the young girls wear *tukowkow* (*Asparagus africanus*), bead necklaces with the pink powder from a red argile stone, *awuat*, and fat.

After tasting the beer, the men organised their *sapana* space: the half-circle *kerket*, which refers the place where the men eat. It is a shaded area, not far from the initiate's father's homestead near a river or any other place where the women can easily fetch water on the *sapana* day. The half-circle is indicated on the ground by many branches of leafy trees *seret* (*Acacia abyssinica*) on which the Chumo and the Korongoro will be offered roasted meat by the Kaplelach. The middle of the half-circle where the Elders sit, is in front of the entrance, faces north-west, and the sacred mountains of the Pokot—Mount Tiati and Mount Sekerr. It is imperative to walk clockwise, backwards, inside the *kerket*. With the *kerket*, two other spaces—the *mboch* and the *ruwei*—are the points of reference of a wide triangle of celebration between which all the actors of the ceremony will move in a special way, according to the different moments of the ceremony (see illustration).

The men decide the women's space, the *mboch*. It faces Mount Tiati and Mount Sekerr, north-west, on the right side of the *kerket* according to the reverse clockwise movement at about 200 to 400m from the *kerket*. The women will organise it on *sapana* day. The third space, *ruwei*, which is where the women and men are together, can be in the kraal (*kwego*); the round place surrounded by acacia branches where the cattle spend the night (Peristiany, 1951). At Nginyang, the *ruwei* never took place in the cattle night area (*kwego*) during the *sapana* ceremonies that I attended, but in a special round place, similar to *kwego*. It is built on the morning of *sapana* by the women and is usually situated between the *kerket* and the *mboch* but closer to the *mboch*. There is also the fourth place where everybody can have a drink of *kumīn* in a hidden and quiet place, around the area of the celebration.



At the close of the day before *sapana*, just as it gets dark, the women who are the initiate's kin start singing in the huts, joined by the men returning from the *sapana* place. Both groups sing loudly, the men sit and clap their hands, while the women hold the mast of the hut and move backwards, in a clockwise manner, with low heavy steps according to the rhythm of the blessing songs. The songs come from one hut, then two, three, four and finally from all of them, as if in response to each other. After one or two hours singing in the huts, everybody gathers progressively in a wider space outside, in the bright moonlight, and *adongo* dances start. Men and women gather around a large circle: a half-circle of men facing east opposite a half-circle of women facing west. They belong to the initiate's relatives and neighbourhood. The men sing to honour their cattle, they clap their hands and jump very high up, while the women hold their hands, jump alternatively greeting the songs with their strident ululations and large tilts. Soon after, another group of women runs inside the circle singing, shouting, moving everywhere in the circle and then leaving it. They are the relatives and neighbourhood mothers and women of the initiate's father's friend who gave the cattle for the initiate's *sapana*. They will start again and again, if the half-circle of *adongo* dancers is disturbed, they

then follow the *adongo* dance as soon as the gathered group of women leaves. This is a prelude of what happens the next day when the women in the group of the initiate's relatives and neighbours will be in competition with the cattle donor's group. Both sides will honour their cattle with their blessings and praise songs and simulate fights through institutionalised attitudes and behaviour. Both groups act as a corporate group.

It is almost midnight by the time most of the dancers sit in the huts to rest and drink tea or *kumin*. Some of them will continue with the *adongo* dances, the others will go to sleep. When the cocks begin to crow at around 4:30 am, a man sings incantations with a deep, strong and amazing voice. The women answer from the huts with their strident ululations, then join him outside for a while and then return to rest. This happens several times. At about 6 o'clock, the last incantations and ululations ring out. It is now time to get ready and accompany the initiate and the cattle. *Sapana* is starting and the cattle must be speared before the rising sun

The *sapana* day

Spearing the cattle (the early morning)

After having one more cup of tea, women and men begin their preparations—clothes, adornments and jewellery, jerrycans of water, special pottery dishes, *pochon*, used only during the *sapana* day to boil the meat stock, the calabashes, *muko*, full with milk, the *panga* to cut the branches of trees, knives, spears, stools (*ngachar*), and sticks. The initiate is 'ready to kill'.

The night cattle-area in the father's homestead is opened, and the flock leave the homestead to go to the *kerket*. The *sapana* cow is not isolated and follows the flock. The initiate carries his spear and is accompanied by his father, father's brothers and mother's brothers, his brothers, sisters, his mother and other women relatives and neighbours. He follows 'his' cattle among the flock. The men sing as they go along, blessing their cattle, and the women ululate fervently. At a short distance from the *kerket*, when the initiate decides, he spears his *sapana* ox, camel, sheep or goat, once, on the right side. Georges Devereux (pc) explains that spearing the animal on the right side bursts the liver, thus provoking a haemorrhage and a quick death. If the spear crosses right through the animal, it is a bad omen and the initiate will spear a second goat or sheep. The speared cattle must have horns. If the animal is a camel, a goat has to be speared as well. The behaviour of the flock is interesting to observe: as soon as one of them is speared, the other cattle protect it, lick the wound and encircle it. The first and main event of *sapana* as the men's rite of

passage is to spear the cattle, not only for the initiate to attain manhood, but also in keeping with the first meaning of it, which is to feed the Elders.

The carving of the meat (from 7:00 to 9–9:30am)

As soon as the animal is dead and lies on the floor near the *kerket*, a Korongoro cuts the part between the anus and the tail to extract *alamachar*: the first sacred part of the meat reserved for the Elders. Soon after, a few Kaplelach put the meat on the big fire in front of the *kerket*. The roasted meat is offered to the present Chumo Elders. No roasted meat can be eaten by anybody before the Chumo have eaten *alamachar*. Then the Korongoro butcher opens the body in the front from head to tail with care and attention. The abdomen is now opened. They take the stomach (paunch) and the intestines out of it and bring them inside the *kerket*. It is now the time for the *p'kwaniar*: 'this of the intestines', to predict the future, through the intestines, for the few weeks following *sapana* about rain, disease, raids and so on. "*The most important moment for the initiates is when they spear the cattle, and also when the p'kwaniar, the ritual expert predicts the future on the map of the animal's intestines. If he says everything is good, the Elders can smear the body of the initiates with the chyme of their animal. If not, it is a very bad omen, and they must do something about it, and the initiates are not 'sapaned'*", says Loyale, a Chumo Elder. After the reading, it is time for the initiates and the men already seated in the *kerket* to open the stomach and smear their chest with its contents, and according to Peristiany (1951), "*It is impossible to attend a sapana feast without being impressed by the profound almost religious attention and concentration which attend the rubbing of the stomach contents on the chest and the incantations which follow.*" Although the Elders authorised me to enter into the *kerket*, the 'men's place', I was not allowed to attend this particular moment with the men inside the *kerket*.

The head and trachea are then cut with the lungs, heart, other entrails and fat, which they bring to the women's place. The empty stomachs are brought later to the women, who wash them and put them on the branches of trees to dry. The body is now empty of its entrails and a few men are privileged to drink the fresh blood left on the bottom of the skin. The front legs are separated, then the ribs and the back. They are placed on the huge fire made by the Kaplelach in front of the *kerket*. After small cows, goats and sheep die, they are sometimes immediately placed on the fire and burnt quickly with the skin, before being opened.

The men put many leafy branches *seret*, between the *kerket* and the huge fire. This place is called the *aperit*, the place where men sleep. A Pokot dictum says: *keru aperit*, meaning that after eating, men must go to ‘their place to sleep’. During *sapana*, this is the place where the Kaplelach put the roasted meat and watch to see if it is cooked enough. The back right leg (*amuro*) and the left one (*apsigil*) are not separated. They are brought in the middle of the *kerket* beside the wooden troughs (*otupo*) filled with the blood of each speared animal, and are placed in front of the centre of the half-circle, ‘the seat of honour’ (Peristiany, 1951) where the Chumo are seated.

It is now about 9 to 9:30 am, and all the meat has been placed where it should be. Women and men join their respective half-circle spaces in respect of a very important *sapana* rule: the women should never come near or inside the *kerket*, except during a specific moment at the end of the afternoon. The *kerket* is strictly the ‘men’s place’, while the *mboch*, the women’s space can be visited by the men when they need water or other things. If a woman gets enters the *kerket*, she will be affected by the taboo of *amuro*, *kisekat*. If she sits, her legs will be affected. Peristiany respected the taboo so much that he neglected to mention the women, except that they entered the *kerket* to bring milk and that they danced what he describes as the *danse du ventre*! The picture of *sapana* he gives us is seen exclusively from the *kerket* point of view. In the *sapana* I attended, I was be introduced by a friend to the Elders and I asked them to allow me to enter the *kerket*. I went to six *sapana* and each time, I was accepted by the Elders. They allowed me to enter the *kerket* in my role as an anthropologist. I would say that I was neither a woman nor a man, but simply an anthropologist. During the seventh one, I was not allowed to enter the *kerket* and reverted to my status as a woman. It was a big *sapana*, performed by 11 initiates, among them a Pokot Member of Parliament (MP), so the Pokot rules were strongly applied, no matter what the anthropologist said. I never went back inside the *kerket* after the seventh *sapana* and carefully followed the women’s status duties!

Inside the *kerket* (from 9:00–9:30am to 2pm)

Let us enter the *kerket*, the men’s space. It has been organised the day before and all the actors are now seated in their correct places.

- the Chumo elders in the middle of the half circle, facing north west, Mount Sekerr and Mount Tiati, the entrance of the *kerket*, the *aperit* and the fire;
- beside them on both sides the Korongoro followed;

- on both sides of the entrance of the *kerket* sit the Kaplelach who have already performed *sapana* with those who are celebrating it. Those who have not yet performed it are not allowed to get inside the *kerket* and to share the meat with the members. They sit outside. At the centre of the *kerket* is the roasted meat; in front of the Chumo the back legs of the speared cattle, beside the wooden (*mokongwa: Ficus sycomorus*) troughs filled with their blood.

It is now time for the men to share news from their place. Peristiany (1951) says, “A *kerket* is a forum of public opinion in which everything of interest to a wider area than the normal *kokwa* assembly is discussed”. They generally stand and move around inside the *kerket*. Some of those who listen to the speaker can answer him. One tells us there is plenty of grass because of good rains. Another one advises that they should not provoke any raiding but only respond to those who attempt to steal their cattle. Some leaders, District Officers, Location and Sub-Locations Chiefs often join the *kerket*, give news and inform each other of the news from their respective areas. This is also when the information from the intestines is revealed, and the *p’kwanian*, the ritual expert, talks about sickness, rain, raids and other news from the intestine marks. In Pokot *sapana*, two people should give the interpretations of the intestines to confirm the predictions and give the truth. One of the Elders thanks the *p’kwanian*.

Inside the *kerket*, while the news is shared, a Kaplelach friend who already performed *sapana* a few years before fashions the mud cap (*siolup*) on the top of the initiate’s head. This is the distinctive feature worn by all Pokot men after *sapana*. Nowadays, school and professional activities oblige them to remove it soon after their *sapana* ceremony.

After the Pokot area news, the Kaplelach sing *akivir* praises at the entrance of the *kerket*, sitting on their stools (*ngachar*) and conducted by a Korongoro. They sang in Karimojong language at Ortum, and Turkana language at Nginyang. What are the *akivir* praises?

- *Akivir* is used to show the responsibility of being a member of one community and being responsible for protecting the community against foreign attacks from neighbouring communities.
- *Akivir* is also done to give the energetic men of the community a spirit of unity, togetherness, and brotherhood in doing things together without easily conceding defeat in war, raids, etc.

- *Akimvir* is also used to rebuke those young men who do not resist the temptation to run away from their family, in order to find work in the towns, meanwhile their cows die from hunger.

Here are a few *akimvir* praises I recorded:

1. This *akimvir* praises the ostrich, which enjoys plain places.

<i>Mina</i>	<i>nyate</i>	<i>nyero</i>
Like the place	ostrich	plain

2. This *akimvir* praises the cow, which goes around the water place and does not leave a place where there is water.

<i>Orimátee</i>	<i>musi</i>	<i>oyo</i>	<i>oyo</i>	<i>oyo</i>
Going around a place	water	"	"	"

3. This *akimvir* praises the camel: Assist me my friend this camel!

<i>Kinyarakinei</i>	<i>kare</i>	<i>nabai</i>	<i>keori</i>
Assist (help)	my	friend	camel

4. This *akimvir* praises the cows: the animal which like lichen with white and red spots is bull which is led by the men who are coming altogether.

Soloist

<i>Nyamechono</i>	<i>lelo</i>	<i>nangoria</i>
The animal which is like lichen	is	the bull with white and red spots

<i>Kiramu</i>	<i>nyachuresha</i>	<i>yalelo</i>	<i>eruko</i>	<i>nangoria</i>
Bring	the men altogether	are	mooring	the bull with white and red spots

Choir

<i>Naboko</i>	<i>kiamar</i>	<i>kisir</i>
The cows	come	together

5. This *akimvir* praises the cow: the meat of the cow is a mixture of blood (*keisun*) and fat (*mmagb*).

Soloist

<i>Lokomoli</i>	<i>kiring</i>	<i>onangoria</i>
Red/blood and white/fat mixture	meat	the cow

Choir

<i>Kiramunia</i>	<i>choresha</i>
Come all together	group of people

The *akimvir* songs introduce the *anyakar* war dances. Several lines of five or six warriors run in turn in quick time and long leaps from over the women's space to the *kerket*, brandishing their raised spears. When they pass the women's

surroundings, the strident ululations greet them and they answer back with broad movements of the left arm decorated with the long giraffe tail, *adado*, as the women accompany them for a while brandishing their horns of fat filled with oil. The warriors blow their whistle in time and “give the initially deep throated then high pitched cry of war, stop all of a sudden brandishing their spears, simulating a mock attack” (Peristiany, 1951). They repeat it on the way to the *kerket*, inside the *kerket* then disappear back into the bush outside the triangle of celebration and come back again. The *akimir* songs and the *anyakar* war dances will follow until about 2pm.

Inside the *mboch* (from 9–9:30 to 11am)

As soon as they have been given their meat: the heads, trachea, lungs, hearts, stomachs, other tripe and fat—the inside of the animal—the women organise their space. It is a shaded half-circle, which they will improve all day long by adding branches which they cut from other trees and drive into the soil in the best place to set up a very close, quiet and warm place. Under the trees, all the huge calabashes (*muko*) are put. They are filled with camel, goat and cow milk collected for several days with *sutom*, the ashes of the burnt wood *pilili* (*Acacia nubica*) they use to clean and disinfect calabashes with. This way of keeping milk gives it a special grey colour at the bottom, a delicious smoked flavour and the sour milk consistency and taste. Beside the calabashes, all kinds of bags (*mlo*) for carrying the calabashes of milk or the jerrycans of water are put inside this shady place as well as personal items. Here, the Elders, the women with young children and the women coming for a rest will sit on thick leafy branches of *seret* (*Acacia abyssinica*), chatting about everything, and carefully watching the dancers. Newly arrived friends are welcomed by the anointing of their chest with oil from their horn of fat, when they cross the threshold of the *mboch*.

While some of them make the place as comfortable as possible, the others, the initiate’s relatives, cut the heads of the speared animals in a special way. They first remove the tongue and put it away with the trachea, the lungs and the heart: this meat is boiled separately the day after *sapana*. Then the lower jaw is removed, as well as all the meat of the upper one with the cheeks. Sometimes the ears are removed as well. Most of the time, the forehead with the horns and the nose were kept. Sometimes, when a peculiarly big ox is speared, the whole upper jaw is kept to be honoured, as it was in my informant’s *sapana*. When the women receive the empty stomachs, they wash them and hang them up on the branches of trees to dry. The stomachs will be boiled with honey or sugar in a

special way four days after *sapana*. Outside the *mboch* along one side of the half-circle, they put as many fires between three stones as there are pottery dishes, *pochon*, according to the type of the speared cattle: two for a goat or a sheep, three for a camel and four for a cow. Inside them, the meat, fat and other entrails that the women were offered are boiled from the morning until about 5 or 6 o'clock, in the evening. The women's place is now ready.

Inside the *ruwei* (from 11:30am to 2pm)

It is about 11:30am when the heads of the cattle, which have been cut in a sophisticated way by the female relatives of the initiate, are carried by those women in the third space, the *ruwei*, between the *kerket* and the *mboch* to constitute what I call 'the triangle of celebration'. The heads are put on the soil and five or six mothers of the initiate's relatives surround them singing *ayopo* songs, dancing and brandishing their horns of fat full of oil. People arrive throughout *sapana* day. Some of them will have walked since the early morning to reach the place, following the women's *ayopo* songs to find their way. Women, men and children put on all their jewellery and adornments: they are magnificent and ready to enjoy themselves. *Ayopo* songs are sung by the women at all celebrations of the Pokot community. They sing in the Pokot language. Here are a few examples of their *ayopo* songs:

1. This song talks about an elephant killed by a person named Lokodiree whose mother is a Turkana and father a Pokot. He killed an elephant at a place called Sapulmoi near Kolowa.

Soloist

<i>Haa</i>	<i>kima</i>	<i>pelion</i>	<i>haa</i>	
"	dead	the elephant	"	
Lokodiree	<i>kimigi</i>	<i>pelion</i>	Sapulmoi	
"	was dead	the elephant	at Sapulmoi	

Choir

<i>Haa</i>	<i>kima</i>	<i>pelion</i>	<i>yee</i>
"	is dead	the elephant	now

Soloist

Lokodiree	<i>haa</i>	<i>kima</i>	<i>pelion</i>	Sapulmoi
"	"	is dead	the elephant	at Sapulmoi
Lokodiree	Cheptulel		<i>opuno</i>	<i>lokolis</i>
"	Cheptulel people		bring	bags
Lokodiree	<i>haa</i>	Lokodiree	<i>nero</i>	<i>chepto</i>
"	"	"	son	daughter of
				<i>punyon</i>
				an enemy

Choir

Haa kima pelion
" is dead the elephant

2. This *ayopo* song talks about the son of a daughter of an enemy who invented a small hand-knife called *akale* in Pokot language. However, it is used to cut meat and anything else.

Choir

Ohee akale ba kechumchanun
" the small knife " appeared to me
Korka wei kenyini
Woman " this year

Soloist

Wero chepto punyon
Son daughter of an enemy
Wero chepto potutai wei
Son daughter no circumcised "
Kechumchan korka wei kenyini
Appeared to me woman " this year

3. This song praises a bird: the harlequin quail that sings sweetly during the rainy season in Pokot land. It is called *aluru* (*Coturnix delegorguei*) in Pokot language. It hides in tall grasses in places like Natan and Kokoree as mentioned.

Choir

Aluru chomi Natan
The bird harlequin quail is present at Natan

Soloist

Aluru oyewei yange
The bird harlequin quail " likes this
Aluru chomi Kokoree
The bird harlequin quail is present at Kokoree
Aluru oyewei yange
The bird harlequin quail " likes this

When the men arrive at *sapana*, they join the *kerket* and their friends, and follow the celebration. When the women arrive, they are greeted by the initiates' relatives and neighbours, and smeared with oil on their head, neck and chest when they reach the threshold of the *mboch*, where they will put their calabashes of milk, have a drink of water and rest before joining the *ayopo* dancers in the *ruwei* circle. The *ruwei* circle is the place where the opposition between the two groups occurs. A few mothers (initiates' relatives) clap their hands or brandish

their horns of fat, while singing *ayopo* songs and dancing around the heads of cattle. The others, the initiates' relatives and neighbours sing and dance *ayopo* dances around the circle of the *ruwei*. Many gathered men who jump high and freely clap their hands occupy a part of the circle. On the rest of the circle, the singing and sometimes ululating women jump alternatively holding their hands. While the initiates' relatives and neighbours are doing so, the donors' relatives and neighbourhood mothers and women run to the *ruwei* in long singing and shouting lines, brandishing a branch from a leafy tree, *seret*. They surround the *ayopo* dancers and leave the *ruwei* soon followed by another line. The opposition is more or less emphasised. Sometimes all the lines gather and reach the *ruwei* circle as a big compact group, and at other times, institutionalised fights can occur. While the long lines of women are running out of the *ruwei*, their strident ululations greet the lines of warriors dancing *anyakar*. Some others run from the *mboch* or the *ruwei* brandishing their horns of fat to greet the *anyakar* warriors.

The *amumur* warriors (it is about 2pm)

At about 2pm, a gathered group of warriors play *amumur* dances. Many Kaplelach warriors squat in the *aperit*. They sing incantations and blessing songs directed by a Korongoro leader. Then they suddenly stand up, give a deep and loud shout and together walk, singing praises to honour their cattle. They squat and stand up several times with a loud shout. The gathered group of *amumur* warriors move slowly to the *ruwei*, singing praises and surrounded by the lines of dancers who continue with their *anyakar* demonstrations. They soon reach the *ruwei*.

The reconciliation inside the *ruwei* (from 3 to 4pm)

It is now about 3 or 4pm and the women and men can now celebrate their cattle together. There, the initiates' relatives who have been dancing around the heads of the *sapana* cattle since morning—the guardians of the place—smear the chest and back of the *amumur* warriors with the oil from their horn of fat when they cross the threshold of the *ruwei*. A few mothers of the initiates' relatives remain to protect the heads of the cattle while the rest continue dancing around the circle. The *amumur* dancers are gathered in the middle while other men close the *ruwei* circle on each side of the gathered group of women. This is the moment when the *amumur* dancers reconcile the women of the two corporate groups: the initiates' relatives and neighbours with the donors' relatives and neighbours. The *amumur* dancers squatting around the heads sing incantations and praise their cattle, caressing their heads on the soil. All the

men around the circle sing along with the first group around the heads, directed by a Korongoro. This is a very intense moment where the two groups of women are now reconciled. Women and men together celebrate and honour their cattle. After squatting, the men rise up in one bound and shout loudly together before they begin to sing blessing songs. The *amumur* dancers are “*like cattle at the rutting season. The cattle of this kraal will now grow fat and increase ten-fold and the dancers gain strength by trading on their dung*” (Peristiany, 1951). This interpretation is meaningful as it signifies that the *amumur* dancers are about to reconcile the two corporate groups of women, who were in opposition because of the origin of the speared cattle. Wherever the cattle come from, the procedure of reconciliation is the same. The blessing songs take place until the women join them to form long lines in a series of man-woman-man-woman. The lines break when they run and leap into the widening *ruwei* circle where other women and men remain, clapping their hands. A few mothers of the initiates’ relatives are still around the heads of the cattle so the running lines respect the order of that place. These long lines move quickly in the dust and the bright sunshine. Then men and women reconstruct the *ruwei* circle with the men on the outside, the *amumur* warriors around the heads with the five or six mothers of the initiates’ relatives while the group of women gather in one part of the circle. The *amumur* songs start again with consecutive squatting down and standing up, followed by the man-woman lines.

The Mothers’ procession (from 4 to 5pm)

It is about 4 o’clock when the celebration of the cattle is at its height in the *ruwei*. Most of the Kaplelach and a few Korongoro have now left the *kerket* to join the *amumur* dancers. Inside the *kerket*, the present men still exchange news from their place. Inside the *mboch*, the mothers are getting ready for their procession to the *kerket* where they offer their calabashes of milk to the initiates and their fathers. Another main part of the ceremony then starts, which is to strengthen the Mothers in their essential complementary role. They are organised in line by the men according to their membership of the initiates’ relatives, neighbourhood and friendship. Special round and big calabashes, *tambo*, are given to both the initiates and their fathers. The women are now ready, and the singing and ululating procession leaves the women’s space, *mboch*, on the way to the *kerket* while in the *ruwei*, other women among the initiates’ relatives bring the heads of the cattle to the *mboch* and the *adongo* dances start with both women and men. On the way to the *kerket*, behind the initiates and their fathers, carrying their round calabashes in their arms, the

mothers walk slowly; singing praises to the cattle accompanied by their strident ululations. Here are a few examples of the songs they sing:

This song is about Chemangany who gives her warm milk, is hanging her udder without removing the milk, loses men and everybody can get anything from her, and be the first one.

Soloist

<i>Oy</i>	<i>oyo</i>	<i>ee</i>		
"	"	"		
<i>Oluvoi</i>	<i>cheko</i>	<i>longolin</i>	<i>ee</i>	<i>Chemangany</i>
I do drink	milk	warm	"	of Chemangany
				(cow's name)
<i>Oluvoi</i>	<i>cheko</i>	<i>longolin</i>	<i>Chemeltin</i>	<i>ee</i>
I do drink	milk	warm	the one who is licking his mucus	"
<i>Oluvoi</i>	<i>cheko</i>	<i>longolin</i>	<i>Timbolol</i>	<i>ee</i>
I do drink	milk	warm	the one who is hanging her udder	"
<i>Oluvoi</i>	<i>cheko</i>	<i>longolin</i>	<i>Chelasta mren</i>	<i>ee</i>
I do drink	milk	warm	the one who has lost men (raiding)	"
<i>Oluvoi</i>	<i>cheko</i>	<i>longolin</i>	<i>Namaria</i>	<i>ee</i>
I do drink	milk	warm	there is so much work around the	"
			cow that makes the men to be together	
<i>Oluvoi</i>	<i>cheko</i>	<i>longolin</i>	<i>Natürum</i>	<i>ee</i>
I do drink	milk	warm	this special voice of the cows when	"
			they reach home	
<i>Oluvoi</i>	<i>cheko</i>	<i>longolin</i>	<i>Sanger kut</i>	<i>ee</i>
I do drink	milk	warm	the one with the rough mouth	"

Choir

Oy *oyo* *ee*
" " "

Soloist

Ee *oyoe*
" "

Choir

Oluvoi cheko *longolin* *ee* *ee* "
I do drink milk warm " "

Soloist*Chepkaramia*

Something good for everybody

Chepokomotum

It refers to Komotum who had a lot of cows and gives them to everybody

Choir*Ee aa*

" "

Soloist*Koyeku*

The sun is rising and

*chewitei**ee**oyo**ee*the tail of the cow is still moving from right to left
(*wetei*: praising the cow through his tail)

They carry large leather bags (*mloit*) with huge calabashes filled with sour milk (cow, goat or camel) on their backs. I followed the mothers' procession as soon as I reverted to my woman's status. I have always been impressed by the specific serenity and profound joy the Mothers express in this situation. The singing and ululating procession enters the *kerket*. The Mothers walk backwards, clockwise around the space in front of the Chumo, Korongoro and Kaplelach who greet them and stop in two, three or more circles according to their number. There, still singing and ululating, they squat, kneel or sit down on the floor. The attitude was different according to the different *sapana*, but most of the time, we knelt on the soil. According to Peristiany (1951), "*Squatting down shows respect and in this case the posture is essential for the practical purpose at hand.*" There, while following the praises to the cattle, the Korongoro collect their calabashes of milk from their leather backpacks and give them back one, two or three pieces of roasted meat. Steven, a Korongoro Elder adds: "*If the initiates are Ngetei's sons, the Ngetei must stand in the middle of the kerket to share the meat in a fair manner, because they want everybody to be happy.*" They first collect the round calabashes of the initiate and his father who both receive a piece of roasted meat as well. It is another very intense moment of reciprocal sharing: both men and women honour the roasted meat and the milk of the cattle inside the *kerket*. All the calabashes of milk are collected around and beside the back legs of the cattle with the round ones in front of them. It makes for a beautiful *sapana* picture! As I did not buy any cattle, I used to enter the *kerket* and carry my cloth bag with two or three kilos of sugar and one or two kilos of tobacco to chew and to sniff, the latter greatly reduced by the first distribution to the women. Sometimes Pokot Mothers and friends insisted that I be fully a part of them, so much so that they would give me a leather bag (*mloit*) and a big calabash of milk to offer the Chumo, Korongoro and Kaplelach with sugar and tobacco. From the first *sapana*, I joined the Mothers' procession, and they

quickly taught me to sing and to ululate and evoke the ancestors of their clans. At the moment when the Mothers begin to leave the *kerket* in a long singing and ululating line on the way back to the *mboch*, the last in line turn back, and are joined by the first ones. They respond to the men's provocations.

Okamara!

Stop them from going in the direction they are going: in the front, behind and on the sides!

They now sing the proper situational songs, with both women's and men's suggestive gestures: the women keep hold of their arms to symbolise the vulva; the men hold the elbow of one arm, brandishing the other one with a closed fist to symbolise the penis. They are now both playing reproduction jokes and the mothers' songs accompany them. They mention four themes asking the men:

- i. In which month have you being pregnant?
- ii. Where are the witnesses who saw that you gave birth in such a place?
- iii. During which months have you been suckling?
- iv. Who has seen us when you brought out your sperm?

Pokot women exult their woman power! They abuse themselves during their reproduction jokes and continue singing blessings to the young people so that they forget whatever their parents have done. Here is a an example of one of their special songs:

1. This song refers to different maternal precautions to their children.

Soloist					Choir
<i>Okitiog</i>	<i>mum</i>	<i>tionge</i>	<i>oe</i>		<i>Oe oe oe</i>
I restrict myself	from eating	something	"		" " "
Soloist					Choir
<i>Osoloi</i>	<i>warech</i>	<i>oe</i>			<i>Oe oe oe</i>
I praise	my children	"			" " "
Soloist					Choir
<i>Osoloi</i>	<i>mir</i>	<i>lokele</i>	<i>oe</i>		<i>Oe oe oe</i>
I praise	which ties	the belt	"		" " "
	<i>(the belt which ties the abdomen to sustain the life of the child)</i>				

Soloist

Kalel
She has made a mistake of telling the children
for what they have done

chemir
she ever protected you with milk

Choir

oe Oe oe oe
oe Oe oe oe

Soloist

Kale
She has done a mistake of
of telling the children for
what they have done

takol sira
because every day the child is
urinating on the leather skirt if becomes
hard and spoiled, but it has saved the child

Choir

oe Oe oe oe

This period is ended when the women all pick up stones, collecting as many as possible, especially the biggest ones. When there is a lack of stones, camel dung will do. The procession is now gathered, they walk faster, and with light bounds while they shake the stones in their two hands. They are singing blessings to the initiates to wish them as many and as large cattle as the stones they have collected.

Soloist

Ye *oe* *o*
" " "

Choir

Ye *oe* *o*
" " "

Soloist

Owo *Turkana* *orongu* *komolen*
I went to Turkana I brought a white and red spots cow

Owo *Turkana* *orongu* *nukurtin*
I went to Turkana I brought a cow with horns around

Owo *Turkana* *orongu* *koritin*
I went to Turkana I brought a cow with white and red spots altogether

Choir

Ye *oe* *o* *ee*
" " " "

Owo *Turkana* *orongu* *komolen nukurtin koritin*
I went to Turkana I brought all the cattle

They stop not far from the *mboch* and throw the stones on the floor, usually altogether in a big hole. They now walk slowly; singing praises with strident ululations. When they reach the threshold of the *mboch* they are welcomed by the ululations of the initiate's female relatives who smear their head, neck and chest with the oil from their horn of fat as a purification. It is now time for all

the women to rest, and to share the milk they kept for themselves and to enjoy the flavoured boiled meat. This is how they proceed:

They put a large piece of leather on the floor, pour the boiled meat on it out of the pottery dishes and cut it in tiny little pieces so that everybody can enjoy this delicious meat. The meat-stock is kept to cook the women's porridge the following day. The three stones of each fire will stand there forever: nobody is allowed to remove any of the stones used by the women on *sapana* day. These three stones, *kogi nyo kogb*, attain a special status and can be found all around the Pokot area.

As we see, distinct attitudes and songs according to its progression again punctuate the way from the *mboch* to the *kerket* and back. But it is necessary to further follow this first description and to try to understand what Pokot people express by such attitudes and songs and what it means for them. As soon as they have tasted the meat and drink some milk together, they rest a while. It is now time for the initiates to bring back the empty calabashes to the *mboch*. This moment is another profound and beautiful setting of *sapana*. If they are not too tired, they reach the *ruwei* again and join the *adongo* dances which continue on and on. When they return, it is between 5:30 and 6:00pm, time for them to go back home with their empty calabashes and their backpacks filled with this excellent roasted meat. I myself have never enjoyed *sapana* roasted meat as much when I roasted it again to share it with friends at home. Pokot men and women love their cattle so much that they still honour them in the way they roast and boil their meat. I do not think I have tasted such excellent meat anywhere else. As soon as the procession of the women leave the *kerket* and return to the *mboch*, another essential moment occurs inside the *kerket*. I would consider this the second *rite de passage* as according to Van Gennep (1909).

Inside the *kerket* (from 5 to 6pm)

At about 5 o'clock, most of the men of all generations sit around the *kerket*, with the back legs of the animals in the middle, surrounded by the calabashes filled with milk. The roasted meat has now been distributed to the women. Now, the initiates kneel on the soil in front of the trough with the blood of their own speared cattle. In front of them, some Korongoro empty a few calabashes inside the troughs and mix blood and milk to obtain a thick pink mixture. Then a particular Chumo Elder, who had many sons and daughters and lost only a few of them, kneels in front of an initiate. The trough, filled with the blood of the cattle speared by this initiate, is mixed with milk and

placed between them. After blessing the initiate and the cattle, the Elder laps up the mixture, mixes it with saliva, and watching the initiate, he spits on his chest, under his right and left armpit, and smears his body. Then the initiate does the same: he laps up a gulp of the mixture, spits on his chest, under his right and left armpit, and smears his body. The Elder starts again in front of the second trough, watching the second initiate. He repeats the process in turn for each initiate of the ceremony. This is the very moment of the second time in the *rite de passage*. This is again a very intense moment and we can only be impressed by the Elder, blessing the cattle, the initiates, the Pokot community, the land, their attitude both kneeling on the ground and sucking mixed blood and milk straight from the trough while everybody is silent inside the *kerket*. They show humility, respect and love to their cattle by this peaceful, religious and contemplative atmosphere. After this second moment of the *rite de passage*, the initiate laps up the blood and milk mixture from the trough and welcomes all the Kaplelach who are sitting inside the *kerket* to drink with him. All the calabashes of milk are now distributed to the men who enjoy the delicious sour milk. Among the Pokot taboos, there is one that does not allow them to drink milk and eat meat the same day except during the *sapana* when the taboo is broken. After they bring the calabashes back to the *mboch*, the initiates join *adongo* dancers as well as most of the Kaplelach and Korongoro and a few Chumo. Everybody dances till dark except those who have come from far away and have already gone home. The initiates' relatives and neighbours are still in the *kerket*. An Elder takes the back legs of the speared animals and removes the tail and the right leg, *amuro*. Then he gives the hindquarters and the left leg, *apsigit*, to the initiate's in-law—his sister's husband—who hits it strongly on the floor to separate the two pieces, and roasts them on the fire. When they are roasted, he brings the roasted meat to the centre of the *kerket* and presents it in his arms four times to an Elder. All the Kaplelach who did not perform *sapana* yet stand in line near the Chumo where an Elder gives them each a tiny piece of the left leg. All the right legs, *amuro*, are now the only pieces of meat lying on the soil in the middle of the *kerket*. They are carried home by the initiates' relatives and kept in a safe place for the day after *sapana*—the day of the right leg, *amuro* and the tongue, *ngaliep*.

The day after *sapana*: *akindung amuro*

The day after *sapana* is more private. The celebration takes place in the *kerket* with the initiates' relatives and neighbourhood. The Chumo and the Korongoro sit around the *kerket* in front of the right legs, *amuro*. The meat is cut with the spear and the spear only. A Chumo or a Korongoro allowed by the

Chumo removes the other right legs. It is around 11:30am when a Chumo Elder settles down in the middle of the *kerket* beside the right legs. There, he proceeds according to three distinct sequences. First, the initiate offers the Elder the *amuro* of his speared cattle. The Elder cuts the skin of the external side of the leg with his spear. He spreads it on the soil, then he removes two filets: one from the internal part of the leg, the other one from the external part now relieved of the skin. He gives the lot to the initiate who roasts the meat on the large fire, lighted again in front of the *kerket*. Second, the Elder separates the two pieces on the joint without reaching the bone. He removes the upper meat of the leg and gives it to the initiate to roast it. At last, the Elder removes the remaining meat in several thin pieces all tied together in a succession of pieces of meat which symbolise the successive generation-classes. The initiate roasts this meat on the fire.

When each of the three types of meat is roasted, the initiate lays them on the *aperit* where a Korongoro checks for the correct cooking. Then the Chumo cuts each piece of meat in tiny pieces and offers them to the Chumo and Korongoro present in the *kerket*. The bones of *amuro* are roasted and offered to the Chumo alone. Then, in the middle of the *kerket*, the Kaplelach stand line near the Elder who gives them a little bit of meat. The Kaplelach, who did not perform *sapana* yet come after, followed by the children and guests. The roasted deep tasty *amuro* meat is certainly a sublime meat. The atmosphere is very peaceful and quiet; there are no songs but everybody talks. When they finish enjoying the roasted *amuro*, any one among them stands in the middle of the *kerket* and gives news.

It is around 1pm when the present Chumo and Korongoro ask the mothers who have been cooking since morning on the fires around the *mboch* to bring the boiled tongue, lungs, hearts and fat. *Otupei!* Bring! An hour later, three of them, singing and ululating bring a huge trough, *otupo*, filled with this boiled meat. They put it on the floor in front of the Elder still sitting in the middle of the *kerket* and return to the *mboch*. The Elder cuts all the boiled tongue meat into tiny pieces and offers it to the Chumo and Korongoro around the *kerket* while the Kaplelach, children and guests stand again in line to receive one by one a delicious piece of meat.

After enjoying the boiled meat, everybody shares news again, waiting for the third and last food—*musar*, a porridge cooked very slowly with the tongue meat stock. As soon as the men shout again «*Otupei! Otupei!*» to the mothers, they are already singing and dancing *adongo* dances in the previous day's *ruvei*. It is around 3:30 to 4pm when they return, beautiful, singing and ululating. They

carry three large troughs, *otupo*, filled with the steaming porridge, *musar*. The Elder drinks the porridge straight from the trough before everybody comes with a vegetable spoon to enjoy this delicious porridge. It is about 6pm when everybody leaves the place to join the *adongo* dances for a while before leaving and returning home. The days after *akidung amuro* are common days: everyone returns to their normal routine, talking about the last and next *sapana* ceremonies.

Fourth day after *sapana*: *munian nko muten*, the colours and the stomachs

According to my observations, I would say the fourth day is ‘the coming out ceremony’ according to Van Gennep’s definition (1909). From *sapana* morning, which can be considered as the ‘coming-in ceremony’, followed by three days as the liminal-marge period, the initiates are not allowed to wear any kind of ornaments on their head, arms or legs. They are not allowed to wash themselves since they were smeared with the chyme. They just wear a piece of material around the waist and the mud-cap on their head. On the fourth day, they will wear a new coloured mud-cap; they are allowed to wash and to cover their body with jewellery and ornaments. It is ‘the colours and the stomachs day’, *munian nko muten*.

It starts at about 10 o’clock when the initiates are going along the river with other Kaplelach, a few Korongoro and a Chumo. There, they will have their *sapana* day mud-cap (*siolup*) removed and another thicker one put on and coloured by their generation-class friends. They first remove the mud with water so it is less painful and they do it easily. Then the new one is made with thicker mud and carefully put on the initiates’ head. When the mud cap is properly put on, the mud is smoothed with a special wooden comb. Then three metal cylinders are pushed into the mud vertically, two others are put on each side. Two smaller holes without any metal rings are placed between. The cylinders and holes will be used to hold all kinds of feathers and other decorations. Then with the reverse part of the comb, they rank the level of the three colours: the white line (*nyimur*) separates the blue colour (*blue*), on the upper part of the mud-cap, *siolup* from the red (*akunyuk*) on the external part all around it. It is interesting to note that the names of the three colours are not the common Pokot names of these colours. They are named as follows:

white: *reel* ≠ *yimur*; red: *pirir* ≠ *akunyuk*; blue: *orus* ≠ *blue*.

Nyimur is the name of the Rocks *sapana*-class as we know and its members wear red (copper) and black ornaments only while the *Ngetei* (Gazelles)

members wear white or yellow (brass) ornaments. Here *nyimur* is the white colour and I still wonder why such an inversion appears. The space of each colour is riddled with hundreds of little holes made with the comb so the other deeply penetrates the mud. A Chumo and a Korongoro are present. They certify the conformity of the mud-cap and correct it if necessary, giving the proper round shape of the mud cap on each head, or correct other wrong details. Now the coloured mud-cap is made, the hair shaved around it and the initiates go to the river to have a good wash and get ready for the celebration of the stomachs.

Some Chumo and Korongoro relatives of the initiate and neighbours reach the initiates' father's homestead where they enjoy *kumin*. It is 5 o'clock when the Kaplelach join them. The homestead has been cleaned and organised in a special way by the women. The Chumo and the Korongoro are sitting inside and around the cattle's night kraal, *kwego*, while the women sit further up behind the ready troughs with boiled (cattle) stomachs. The porridge is still boiling slowly on the fires just beside the troughs. The initiates have put on ornaments and stand at the entrance of the *kwego*. The singing and ululating mothers bring three troughs: two are filled with a pink porridge. One is brought inside the *kwego* for the Chumo and the Korongoro, while the second one is offered by the present Kaplelach who sit outside. The third trough is filled with boiled stomachs of the speared cattle and brought inside the *kwego*. The final stage of the *rite de passage* now takes place. A Chumo Elder sits in front of the trough filled with the boiled stomachs. The initiates kneel in front of him. The Elder, after blessings, takes a few pieces of meat straight with his mouth and teeth, chews it and spits it on his own chest, and smears it on his body. Then he stops and a long silence follows. It is the last intense moment and we are impressed again by the religious and contemplative atmosphere. The Elder offers pieces of boiled stomachs in his hands to the initiate facing him. The initiate takes some meat with his teeth, chews, spits it on his chest and smears it. Each initiate in turn faces the Elder to perform the last initiation rite and leaves the *kwego*. Then the Chumo and Korongoro, inside the *kwego*, along with the Kaplelach outside, taste and enjoy the boiled stomachs and the pink sugared porridge cooked with the boiled stomachs' stock. The mothers cooked a special white and sugared porridge for themselves and drink it during this time. While women and men are talking and enjoying the daily food, the last *adongo* songs and dances of *sapana* begin a little farther up. It is after 6pm and the *sapana* ceremony ends tonight with *adongo* dances under the round and bright moon.

Conclusion

From mid-September to mid-November 1994, *sapana* ceremonies graced Nginyang daily life. People talk a lot about the ceremonies they attended, the announcement of the new ones, push the initiates, relatives and neighbours to do their best so that there is plenty of milk and it sometimes appears like neighbourhood competitions. New initiates are now recognised as members of the Pokot community, as Loreng says the day after he celebrated his *sapana*. “*I am now recognised as an older person. What is very important is to belong to a sapana sub-class, to take care of the Elders, and also to protect the community from outsiders’ attacks. Now I can speak anywhere. Today, if I am going to Kampi to meet a leader, an MP or a Counsellor, I am ready to organise a campaign for him. I am above all, free to speak.*” In Baringo District, a new *sapana* sub-class is born, the 1994 one is called *Chereel Korka*: *che*, feminine prefix, *reel*, white, *korka*, woman: the White Woman, or how to get into the Pokot history through the big gate of the *sapana* sub-classes organisation. *Sapana* ceremony time is a very important period in the east pastoral Pokot daily life during the good rainy seasons and one can only be impressed by the deep strength of it among all generations and both sexes. It appears to be a real stage for all Pokot men to belong to the Pokot community, and to be recognised as one of its members. It is the moment when the different neighbourhoods can show what they are like; a moment during which the mothers are really appreciated in their specific woman singularity, and all of them do their best to keep their cow, goat or camel milk in the most beautiful *muko*, ceremonial calabashes, and bring it inside the *kerket*. In this time, it is very difficult to buy even a single *mbalam*, cup of any kind of milk, they always say “*I keep it for such and such sapana.*”

To give a complete picture about *sapana* among the Pokot people, we must outline what it is like among the eastern pastoral Pokot living in the Masöl plains, the west pastoral Pokot from Kacheliba to Alale, and the Pokot living in Uganda. At Chepareria Andrea, a Kipsigis Elder (the name given to the Korongoro there) explains that *sapana* is not completely out of order in the mountains when he says, “*In sapana they do not group them. Some people are simply celebrating sapana, they can be ten of them, but they are not given a special name*”. In the same way, he reinforces the rule mentioned before that a circumcision-class is closed and recognised when its name is given by the Elders, after the members of the third circumcision sub-class, have been circumcised.

Among the East pastoral Pokot, the *sapana*-classes and sub-classes organisation is still very present in the Elders’ mind and more or less for the

youngest generations who can tell their fathers' circumcision-generation, *sapana*-class, and *sapana* sub-classes. *Sapana* celebrations, which could appear to be an outside graft is, in reality, completely integrated and interpreted through the dynamic of the circumcision-classes organisation. Their very sophisticated socio-political organisation is the necessary background to understand what they are playing on the stage of their *sapana* ceremony. One must understand the positions of the generations, the way they change it, the status of each of them and how the organisation uses both references to the circumcision-classes and the borrowed *sapana*-classes. Among the main rules we must point out:

- The rule that governs the belonging to a generation: a son never belongs to the same circumcision-class and the same *sapana*-class as his father. A son always belongs to his grandfather's *sapana*-class and to one or two circumcision-classes after his father's.
- The condition of the recurrence of each circumcision-class name: the name of each class can be opened if and only if all the sons of the members of this circumcision-class are dead.
- The opening and closing of a circumcision-class among the east pastoral Pokot, the main and most meaningful ceremony which closes every circumcision-class is when the Elders give this class its generation name after the third sub-class, the Nerkau have been circumcised. A new circumcision-class cannot be opened as long as the preceding one has not been closed by giving it its name.
- The age of circumcision: there is a great variability, from 10 to 20 years old.
- The age of *sapana*: it is celebrated between circumcision and marriage, and most of the time between 20 and 25 years old.
- The background authorisation for both rites: before going to circumcision and before his *sapana*, the young man must be authorised by his father.
- The stock ties: *sapana* leads stock ties between the initiate and the donor of his *sapana* animal through the heifer the donor received from the initiate's father.
- Both circumcision and *sapana* weaves the alliance: a man is not allowed to marry the daughter of any of his circumcision-class companions, a man is not allowed to marry the daughter of any of his *sapana* sub-class companions.

- The changing of position of the generations: with *amuro* ceremony, the east pastoral Pokot introduced a handing-over rule for the circumcision-classes organisation, which was missing, as far as we know.
- This handing-over ceremony rule moves according to the adaptation of the different Pokot communities: the changing of the generations' position is variable between the east pastoral Pokot, the west pastoral Pokot on the Masöl plains, the west pastoral Pokot in Alale Division and the mountains Pokot.
- The Pokot socio-political organisation with its original circumcision-classes between the Turkana and the Karimojong *sapana*-classes system: the east pastoral Pokot *sapana*-classes organisation is nearer the Turkana's, the west pastoral Pokot *sapana* is made on the Karimojong pattern, and the mountains Pokot are still the holder of the traditional circumcision-classes organisation.

Bibliography

- Akong'a, Joshua (1986). *Baringo District socio-cultural profile, Nairobi, (BDSCP)*. Nairobi: Government of Kenya, Ministry of Planning and National Development.
- Barton, Juxton (1921). Notes on the Suk tribe of Kenya Colony, *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* Tome LI, 82–89.
- Beech, M.W.H. (1911). *The Suk, their language and folklore*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Bollig, Michael (1990). An outline of pre-colonial Pokot history, *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 115, 73–90.
- Bollig, Michael (1998). Moral economy and self-interest: Kinship, friendship, and exchange among the Pokot (NW Kenya). In T. Schweizer & D.R. White (Eds.), *Kinship, networks and exchange* (pp. 137–157). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Conant, Francis P. (1965). Korok: a variable unit of physical and social space among the Pokot of East Africa. *American Anthropologist*, 67, 429–434.
- Dietz, Ton (1987). Pastoralists in dire straits, Survival strategies and external interventions in a semi-region at the Kenya/Uganda border: Western Pokot, 1900–1986. *Nederlandse Geografische Studies*, 49.
- Dyson-Hudson, Neville (1958). The Karimojong and the Suk. *Uganda Journal*, XXII–2, 73–180.

- Dyson-Hudson, Neville (1966). The Karimojong age system. *Ethnology*, 2(3), 353–401.
- Edgerton, Robert B. (1965). ‘Cultural’ vs. ‘Ecological’ factors in the expression of values, attitudes, and personality characteristics. *American Anthropologist* 67, 442–447.
- Erhet, Christopher (1968). Cushites and the Highland and Plains Nilotes. In B.A. Ogot & J.A. Kiern (Eds.), *A Survey of East African History* (pp. 158–176). Nairobi: Zamani.
- Gulliver, Philip (1958). The Turkana age-set organisation. *American Anthropologist*, 60, 900–922.
- Huntingford, G.W.B. (1953). *The Nandi of Kenya*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.
- Kipkorir, Benjamin (1985). People of the Rift Valley, Kalenjin. In *Canvas People*. Nairobi: Evans Brothers.
- Langley, Myrtie S. (1979). *The land of Kenya*. London: C. Hurst & Company.
- Meyerhoff, Elizabeth (1981). The Socio-economic and ritual roles of Pokot women, Cambridge, Dissertation submitted for the PhD degree.
- Murdock, George Peter (1959). *Africa: its people and their culture history*. Toronto-London: Mc Graw and Book Company.
- Peatrik, Anne-Marie (1995a). Introduction. *L’Homme*, 134, 7–12.
- Peatrik, Anne-Marie (1995b). La régie et le nombre et les systèmes d’âge et de génération d’Afrique orientale, *L’Homme*, 134, 13–49.
- Peristiany, John (1951a). The age-set system of the pastoral Pokot. The Sapana initiation ceremony, 3, 188–206.
- Peristiany, John (1951b). Mechanism, function and post-sapana ceremonies, 3, 279–302.
- Porter, Philip W. (1965). Environmental potentials and economic opportunities—a background for cultural adaptation, *American Anthropologist*, 67, 409–420.
- Schneider, Harold K. (1957). The subsistence role of the cattle. *American Anthropologist*, 59, 278–300.
- Sutton, J.E.G. [1976] (1986). *The Kalenjin, in Kenya before 1900*. Nairobi: East African Publishing House Ltd, and General Printers.
- Tornay, Serge (1979). Générations, classes d’âge et superstructures: à propos de l’étude d’une ethnie du cercle karimojong, Afrique orientale. In l’Equipe Ecologie et Anthropologie des sociétés pastorales (Ed.), *Prédilection pastorale*

et société (pp. 307–327). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press / Paris: Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.

Van Gennep Arnold [1909] (1981). *Les Rites de passage*, Paris: Edition Picard.