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The Kipsigis Identity and History in the Trans-Mara District in Kenya, 1940s – 2013

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Abstract
This paper examines the emergence of the Kipsigis ethnic group and their ensuing ethnic identity in Trans-Mara District in Kenya. It relies on secondary, archival and oral sources collected in Kenya and Tanzania between October 2012 and December 2013. Based on those sources, the paper shows that the Kipsigis who are sometimes called the 'Lumbwa' are part of a large group of people called the Kelenjin which have been in Kenya for more than seven centuries. It further shows that the Kipsigis have stayed in Trans-Mara District for less than seven centuries; they have actually been there for about seventy-five years only. The paper argues that the emergence of Kipsigis ethnic group and identity is a result of the influence of both the colonial and post-colonial states as well as the politics that have been taking place in the area. The Kipsigis identity and consciousness manifested itself in political violence and division of the Trans-Mara District into two ethnically based districts: East for the Kipsigis and West for the Maasai. The paper concludes that ethnic identity, consciousness and sentiments are increasing tremendously in Trans-Mara as is the case in other parts of Kenya. This state of affairs threatens the unity of Kenya as a nation.

Keywords: Kenya, Kipsigis, Maasai, identity, Trans-Mara District

Introduction

Identity is a multifaceted concept commonly used in social sciences and psychological discourse. As such, it is hard to have a single statement to express its meaning in various discourses. For example, James Fearon cited fourteen different scholars each of them giving a different meaning of the concept (Fearon, 1999:5). Following that difficulty, Fearon proposed a new definition which considered identity to have two senses - social and

personal senses. By social sense, Fearon thought identity was a social category, a set of persons marked by a label and distinguished by rules and certain characteristic features accepted by members of a group. By personal sense, Fearon thought identity was all about formulation of dignity, pride, honour or any distinguishable characteristics that a person takes or views as being consequential to him or her (Fearon, 1999). In similar veins, Husamettin Inac and Feyzullah Unal saw identity as a social phenomenon which starts with the process of interaction with or against others (Inac and Unal, 2013:223). Furthermore, Inac and Unal (2013) argued that the formation and definition of social identity should be based on 'objective' and 'subjective' elements. According to Inac and Unal, objective elements include properties shared by all members of the social group, such as symbols, myths, language, religion, ethnicity, geography, common history, values and traditions. The subjective elements are defined as the relative indication of the extent to which an individual internalizes the objective elements (Inac and Unal, 2013:225).

A clear reflection on definitions of identity given by Fearon (1999) and, Inac and Unal (2013) shows that those authors had a binary construction of the concept of identity. Such construction somehow creates confusion in understanding the term. The confusion comes because it is a bit hard to separate the personal sense from the social sense, and the subjective elements from the objective elements. For the purpose of this paper, and in order to avoid confusion created by scholars cited above, I would shortly state that identity is all about how individuals or groups see and define themselves, and how other individuals or groups see and define them. In other words, identity is used in this paper to describe the way individuals and groups define themselves and the way they are defined by others on the basis of ethnicity. In this regard, the paper explores the emergence of an ethnic group and the processes involved in forming its respective ethnic identity. It builds on Michalopoulos and Papaioannou's (2014:5) view that ethnic identification in Africa is driven by a variety of factors, which range from linguistic diversities, income differences between ethnic groups, national politics, to colonial influences.

As I have hinted above, identity which will be discussed in this paper is directly connected to the concept of ethnicity. But ethnicity itself is also a complex phenomenon with diverse meanings. For instance, Ndanga Ndyoo

indicates that ethnicity can be defined based on its two major strands which are instrumental and symbolic ethnicity. Instrumental ethnicity emanates from material deprivation while symbolic ethnicity is based on the anxiety to preserve one's cultural identity (Ndyoo, 2000:57). According to Ndyoo, ethnicity thrives in chaotic social and political environment; and in the extreme situation, the two strands of ethnicity can combine and serve as a motive for struggle for state formation (Ndyoo, 2000). Viewing ethnicity as symbolic is also reflected in the work of Ann Morning (2005:3-4). Unlike Ndyoo, Morning sees symbolic ethnicity as an optional choice of individuals – that is, individuals can choose the ethnic group(s) which they mostly identify with and are affiliated to base on superficial behaviour such as clothing or food (Morning, 2005:4). Morning also differs from Ndyoo by stressing that ethnicity is associated with cultural commonality (shared beliefs, values and practice).

Nevertheless, Isajiw (1992) distinguishes four major approaches used in defining ethnicity. First, ethnicity is conceived as a primordial phenomenon meaning that ethnicity is something given, ascribed at birth, deriving its characteristics from the kin-and clan- structure of a human society. Second, ethnicity is conceived as epiphenomenon. In this approach, ethnicity is defined based on the impact of colonialism and cultural division of labour. It is something created and maintained by uneven economy, or a product of economic exploitation. Third, ethnicity is defined as a situational phenomenon, implying that it is based on rational choice; it is something which may be relevant in some situations but not in others. Individuals may choose to be regarded as members of an ethnic group if they find it to their advantage. On the basis of this approach, Isajiw argues that ethnicity is a group option in which resources are mobilized for the purpose of pressuring the political system to allocate public goods for the benefit of the members of a self-differentiating collectivity. Last, ethnicity is considered as a purely subjective phenomenon, implying that it is a social-psychological reality or a matter of perception of 'us' and 'them'. According to Isajiw, symbolic ethnicity, and constructivist approach which believe that ethnicity is negotiated and constructed in the everyday life, are all inclusive aspects of the subjective approach (Isajiw, 1992: 1-5).

A reflection on Isajiw's definitions indicates that there is nothing different from what Ndyoo (2000) and Morning (2005) described. What Isajiw calls primordial aspect of ethnicity is similar to what Morning calls 'cultural commonality'. The epiphenomenon and subjective aspects of ethnicity given by Isajiw are similar to instrumental and symbolic aspects of ethnicity propounded by Ndyoo (2000) and Morning (2005). Observation from the above descriptions also indicates that Ndyoo (2000), Morning (2005) and Isajiw (1992) are confusing approaches for studying ethnicity with definitions of the concept 'ethnicity'. Instrumentalism, primordial, and constructivist which are mentioned by those scholars are basically approaches of studying ethnicity, not definitions of ethnicity. Nevertheless, some scholars define ethnicity as consciousness about belonging to a particular social group which distinguishes itself and is identified by others as being distinct in terms of language, ancestral history, religious beliefs, traditions and customs (Young, 2002: 4-6; Young, 1982:74; Bath, 1969: 10-15; Du Toit, 1978:1-4). This definition, though it sounds good, it has several elements which fall under the concept of 'cultural commonality' given by Morning (2005), and the concept of 'distinctive culture' given by Isajiw (1992:5). This would also imply that the difference in defining ethnicity is embedded in word choice.

In African context, ethnicity is treated as equivalent to 'tribalism' which is derived from the word 'tribe' (Jerman, 1997:52-57; Young, 2002:1- 4; Gulliver, 1959: 61- 65; Mpangala, 2000:4- 5). According to Gulliver, the term 'tribe' refers to a group of people who possess a common name and recognize themselves to be relatively distinct and different from their neighbours in their traditions, their way of life, their social system, culture and values, and their language (Gulliver, 1959:61). The concept of 'tribe' was popularly used throughout the colonial period up to the 1960s and it was associated with primitive and barbarous mystique peculiar to African people. The concept also represented a fairly established unit with its own recognized boundaries and indigenous political system. When African countries gained their independence, the word 'tribe' and its derivative 'tribalism' was gradually replaced by terms 'ethnic' and 'ethnicity' respectively (Mpangala, 2000:5; Young, 2002:3-4). The replacement was done as a means of avoiding the use of the term 'tribe' which was considered to represent a colonial negative attitude towards African communities. Being aware of such transitions, the terms 'ethnic' and

'ethnicity' are used in this paper to avoid the negative connotation attached to the terms 'tribe' and 'tribalism'. The terms 'ethnic' and 'ethnicity' are also used in this paper to refer to a group of people and how members of that group develop a sense of belonging to it on the basis of common language, history and ancestral relationships. As I have mentioned earlier, ethnic identification is also shaped by various factors such as income differentials, national politics and state influences (Michalopoulos and Papaioannou, 2014:5; Berman, 2010:6; Hoffmeye – Zlotnik and Warner, 2010: 107). These fall into the constructivist thinking, which I also subscribe to. However, I do not use ethnicity in this paper to mean it is symbolic as noted by Morning (2005) and Isajiw (1992) because such rational choice they talk about did not apply in my area of study.

The emergence of ethnicity and the formation of ethnic identities in Africa also have been a subject of debate. While some scholars (Ranger, 1989; Hobsbawn and Ranger, 1983; Vail, 1989; Little, 1998; UNESCO, 1974; Mafeje, 1971)) believe that ethnicity was invented in Africa by the colonialists, other scholars (Mpangala and Mwansasu, 2004; Osaghae, 1994; Gallagher, 1974) argue that ethnicity was not invented but it evolved out of pre-colonial African forms of community identification (Mpangala and Mwansasu, 2004; Osaghae, 1994; Gallagher, 1974). The supporters of invention tradition assume that before the coming of colonialists, Africans did not constitute clear-cut ethnic groups; their social units and forms of identifications were so fragile and flexible. According to these scholars, the colonial state and educated elites were responsible for formulating clear cut ethnic group and identities. On the contrary, exponents of evolution tradition postulate that Africans already had well developed systems of social groupings and identification, and that the colonialists only manipulated such systems to meet their own interest and needs.

This debate is also grounded on two dominant contending theoretical approaches used in the analysis of ethnic studies all over the world and Africa in particular. The two contending approaches are social construction (Yeros, 1999; Atkinson, 1999; Nagel, 1994; Bath, 1969; Ahluwalia and Zegeye, 2002) and primordial (Shils, 1957; Geertz, 1973) theories. The social construction theory (which encompasses invention, evolutionary and instrumentalism approaches) believes that ethnicity and ethnic identities are constructed as individuals interact and struggle for available resources

and access to power. On the contrary, the primordial theory postulates that ethnic identities are inborn characters of individuals based on congruent of blood - that is, kinsfolk's relationships and sharing ancestral history.

This article attempts to shed lights on the existing debate by showing how the community itself, the elites, and both the colonial and post-colonial states contributed to the emergency of Kipsigis identity in Trans-Mara district from the 1940s to the year 2013. The timeframe for the discussion begins in the 1940s because that was the time when the Kipsigis were first considered to have constituted an ethnic group in Trans-Mara. The study ends in 2013 because that was the last time when much of the information presented here was collected. In this paper, I argue that the emergence of Kipsigis ethnic identity was a product of combination of several forces and therefore, neither the primordial nor the constructivist propositions can stand alone to explain it. As regards the theories, the article departs from extreme emphasis of social construction and primordial theorists and adopts Schlee and Watson's integrative approach. According to Schlee and Watson, the best way of analyzing ethnicity is to take into account elements or aspects of both social construction and primordial theories (Schlee and Watson, 2009: 2). In this paper, aspects of social construction are represented by government policies and practices, specifically, the influence of political elites and colonial and post-colonial states. Descent and clan history, beliefs, language, and livelihood practices which the Kipsigis use to distinguish themselves from others constitute some of the primordial elements.

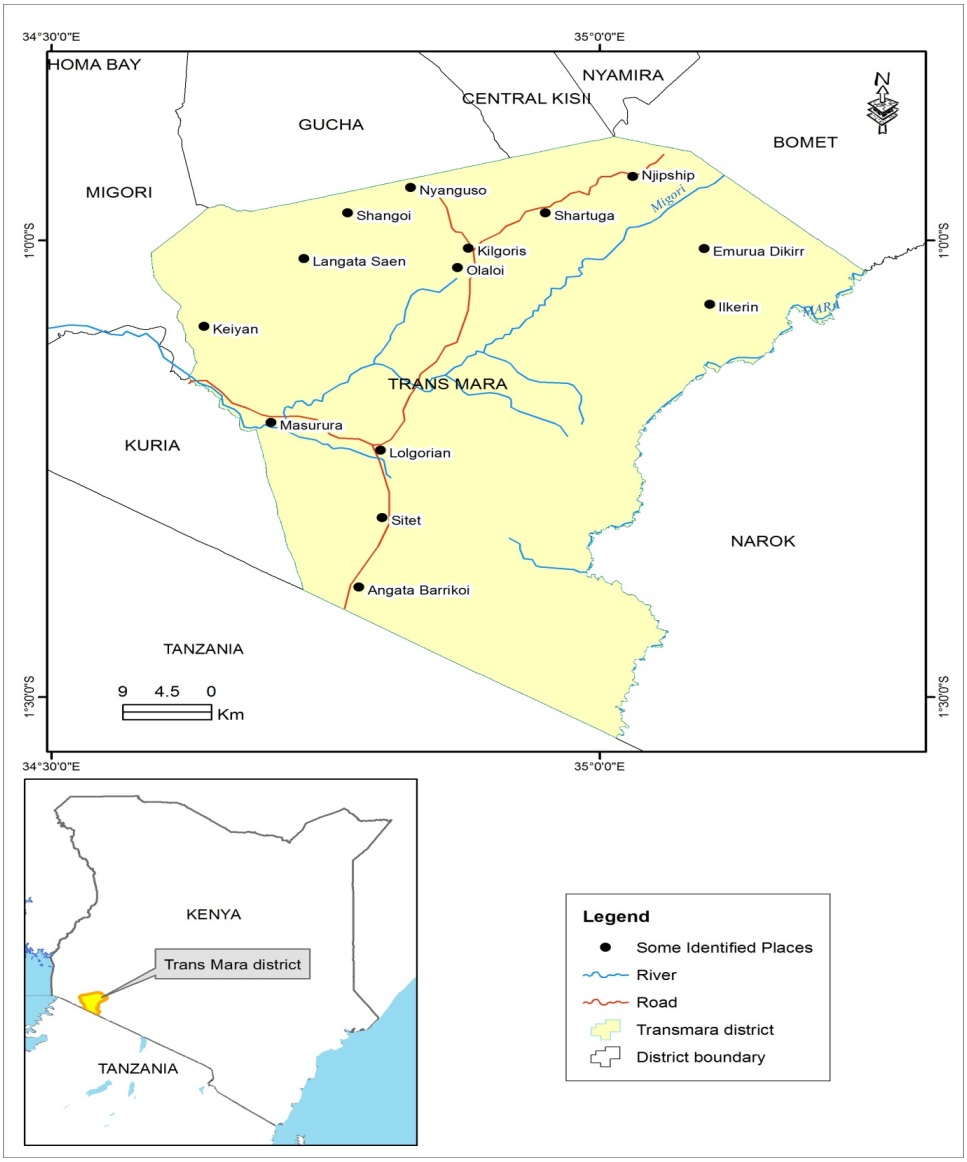
Historical Background of the Kipsigis

The Kipsigis are agro-pastoral people who belong to the large Nilo-Hamitic speaking group called Kalenjin. Other people who belong to the Kalenjin group are the Nandi, Tugen, Keyo, Marakwet, Terik, Pokot and Sebei. The Kipsigis, like other members of the Kalenjin group, trace their origin from northern Africa in southern Sudan and believe to have first settled in the northern part of Kenya around Mountain Elgon, Lake Rudolf and Lake Baringo. This took place many years ago, presumably between the 14th and early 18th centuries A.D. They also believe that until the second half of the 18th century, all groups mentioned above together with the Kipsigis themselves were still united as one ethnic group and they considered

themselves as one people who spoke the same language (Orchardson, 1961:4; Toweett, 1979:1; Mwanzi, 1977: 1 -11; Lynch, 2008: 542; Bulow, 1992: 524).

The division of the Kalenjin people into what today constitutes independent groups such as the Nandi, Tugen, Keyo or Kipsigis began in 1780 when water sources in their original areas of settlement in Kenya began to dry up. The Kipsigis moved southwards where they occupied three geographical locations, namely Belgut, Buret and Sotik. As the Kipsigis advanced to those three areas, they first interacted with the Maasai, Sirikwa and Kisii communities who lived there. In the course of time the Kipsigis ousted the latter communities from their moorings (Orchardson, 1961: 4-6; Mwanzi, 1977:3). Further movement continued southward and by 1900 the Kipsigis had finally settled at Bomet and Kericho highlands. In 1937, the population of Kipsigis in Kenya was estimated at 80,000, while by 1979 the figure had risen to about 300,000. In 1985 there were about 815,000 Kipsigis living in Kericho District alone and in the 1990s, the Kipsigis constituted 85 % of the total population of Kericho District. In 2009, the population of the Kalenjin stood at 4,967,328 people, of whom 1,916,317 were Kipsigis (Peristiany, 1939: xx; Toweett, 1979: 27; Bulow, 1992: 524). Today the majority of the Kipsigis live in Kericho District in the Rift Valley Province but the Kipsigis also occupy parts of Laikipia, Kitale, Nakuru, Narok, Eldoret, Trans- Mara Districts and Nandi Hills. Trans-Mara Districts which is the main focus of this paper is found in the Narok County. It borders Kuria and Migori Districts in the west, and Narok District in the East. In the north it borders Gucha, central Kisii, Nyamira and Bomet districts while in the south it borders the Kenya - Tanzania territorial border (Figure 1).

Figure 1: A Map showing the location of Trans-mara and its neighbouring districts



Source: Designed by the author in collaboration with Olipa Simon – Senior GIS Laboratory Scientist, University of Dar es Salaam (October 2016).

The Kipsigis are also called the *Lumbwa* or *Walumbwa.* The names *Lumbwa* and Kipsigis have been used interchangeably throughout the colonial and post-colonial periods. However, the genesis of these names is

debatable. It is commonly believed that *Lumbwa* is a pejorative name derived from the cutting of *mbwa* (a dog) in the early 1900s when a peace treaty was being conducted between the Kipsigis leaders and the British officials (Koskei, Interview, 18. 7. 2013; Busienei, Interview, 30. 7. 2013; Marwa, Interview, 17. 4. 2013). In his work, Taaitta Toweett shows that the Kipsigis were called *Lumbwa* after Lumbwa railway station which was located some kilometers east of Kisumu around Kaisugu and Kipkelyon areas, where the Kipsigis lived (Toweett, 1979: 11-12). H. A. Fosbrooke indicates that *Lumbwa* also referred to the *Kwavi* and expounds that the Maasai regarded themselves as having a common origin with the *Lumbwa,* only that the latter diverged from the Maasai ways of life and engaged in agriculture (Fosbrooke, 1948: 3-6). Although Fosbrooke is basically concerned with categorization of the Maasai between pure pastoralists and those who combined animal husbandry with agriculture (*Kwavi*), his use of the name *Lumbwa* echoes Mwanzi's argument that the Kipsigis were named *Lumbwa* by the Maasai because the latter considered them tillers of land or simply agriculturalists. It follows that *Lumbwa* was derived from the Maasai language and it is in that context that the Maasai despised the Kipsigis as eaters of grains (Mwanzi, 1977: 54; Orchardson, 1961: 9).

I am also convinced that the Kipsigis got the name *Lumbwa* from the Maasai. Two reasons can help to substantiate this. First, Toweett refers to Lumbwa as a place or simply a town but witnesses of the *mbwa* peace treaty testified that the ritual of cutting *mbwa* was done at *Lumbwa* town (Mwanzi, 1977: 53-54). This implies that the name *Lumbwa* existed even before the peace treaty. Then, a simple question can be asked – who named that town *Lumbwa*? I presume that it is the Maasai who named the place because, as Fosbrooke has shown, the Maasai had a term to distinguish agriculturalists from pastoralists. Since the inhabitants of the areas around *Lumbwa* railway station were Kipsigis who practiced agriculture, then it was likely to be nicknamed *Lumbwa.* Thus, it is the town which was named after the Kipsigis's nickname. But the most reliable evidence is the fact that when the Kipsigis moved southwards they first encountered the Maasai who were pure pastoralists and, although the Maasai were ousted from Belgut, later on they became the nearest neighbours to the Kipsigis when the latter moved further south to a place around Kaisugu and Kipkelyon, areas where Lumbwa town later evolved.

Nevertheless, the origin of the name Kipsigis itself is also viewed from different angles. For example, Orchardson suggests that the name Kipsigis is derived from two Kipsigis words: *kip* which is a prefix for male and *siget* or *sigisiet* which means finding or giving birth. But since biologically a male cannot give birth, Orchardson concluded that the word Kipsigis generally meant 'people of birth' (Orchardson, 1961: 1-2). Langat as cited by Henry Mwanzi indicates that the name Kipsigis was derived from the word *kesigis* which simply denotes one who helps at birth. This came into being because there was a male midwife who lived on a hill which was later named Tuluopsigis and eventually the whole ethnic group living there was called Kipsigis. However, Mwanzi rejects this view on the ground that in Kipsigis traditions, males were not supposed to be around when women gave birth. Instead, Mwanzi argues that by observing the traditions of the Kipsigis, the term Kipsigis may simply mean those who, by customary rites of passage, were born in the society (Mwanzi, 1977: 57 - 58).

Apart from viewing the name Kipsigis as originating from the concept of giving birth or helping to give birth, the name is also said to have originated from the processes of production, trade and social interaction. The Kipsigis used to grow *wimbi* (millet) and make containers in which they stored their *wimbi*. Those containers were called *kisgisik* or simply *kisiet.* When the Kipsigis lived at Tuluopsigis and later around Mau and Londian areas, they began to sell those baskets (*kisgisik/kisiet*) to their neighbours, especially the Sirikwa. In the course of such interaction, the Sirikwa nicknamed their neighbours 'Kipsigis', most probably a corruption of the word 'kisgisik'(Mwanzi, 1977: 59-60). In my view, both perspectives of viewing the origin of the name 'Kipsigis' have merit because naming as part of social identity is a matter of social construction. However, in the giving birth perspective, I would subscribe to Mwanzi's position because it is taboo in most of African societies for males not to attend women when in labour. Probably, we would also interpret Orchardson and Langat's meanings that they were referring to people who were related by blood and birth. Yet, the most important thing to note is that we now know how the name Kipsigis came into being. The two perspectives do not alter the term but assert its existence thereby offering us insights into our understanding of Kipsigis identity.

In terms of social organization, the Kipsgis society was divided into five units whose members overlapped and intertwined. Those units were the *puriet* (army group), *ipinda* (age –set), *oret* (clan), *kokwet* (social group/village) and the family. There was no central authority, and there were no chiefs or officers engaged permanently in the governance of the society. The social organization of the society was based on the principle of obedience to seniority and, therefore, all matters pertaining to the control of the society were vested in the senior group of the society. The *Kokwet* council performed judicial functions and was the overseer of all matters of the society in a given *Kokwet*. Socially, the Kipsigis were patriarchal and exogamous people who were highly reputed for their hospitality. Unlike some other African communities where hospitality was extended to males' sexual rights over wives or women of their relatives or friends, such rights and even sleeping accommodation among the Kipsigis were restricted by certain prohibitions. Intermarriage between members of the same clan and totem was strongly prohibited. No man could marry a daughter of a member of his own age-set; however, he could marry a daughter of a member of the previous or subsequent age-set. One could also sleep in a house of a man of one's own age-set but he could not sleep in a house of a member of the previous or subsequent age-set (Orchardson, 1961: 10-18, 39 -40; Toweett, 1979: 27-31; Bulow, 1992: 524 -525).

Economically, the Kipsigis were semi- nomadic people who were reputed for the production of *wimbi.* They also engaged in handicraft industries, such as the mining and processing of grinding stones (*Isiet*), iron smelting and basket making. They exchanged their products with their neighbours, who included the Sirikwa, Gusii, Maasai and Nandi (Mwanzi, 1977: 155-165). In a nutshell, the Kipsigis society has transformed. Much of their old days' characteristics are no longer viable. For example, the importance of *puriet* and, *kokwet* councils has almost declined. The society has transformed from semi- nomadic to almost pure agriculturalist. The traditional crop *wimbi* has been replaced by maize and wheat. There is high competition between modern and traditional values although the old generation would like to maintain their traditions, societal set up and structure.

State endeavours and the development of Kipsigis identity

The presence of the Kipsigis in the Trans-Mara District and their accompanying ethnic identity and consciousness is, to a larger extent, a result of the influence of the state and politics taking place within the community. Until the 1940s, there was no definable group of people called Kipsigis in the Trans- Mara District. The Kipsigis were confined to Kericho and Bomet areas. In 1911 the colonial government in Kenya designated Trans-Mara as a Maasai reserve. However, by that time a section of the Siria Maasai was already living there. Once the Maasai had moved into the established Trans-Mara reserve, especially after the exodus of the Uasin-Nkishu in 1935 and 1936, some people of the Kalenjin groups (especially Nandi and Kipsigis) who prior to that movement had already established a strong tie with the Maasai, started persuading their Maasai allies to allow them residence in the reserve (KNA, DC/NRK/2/2). Few people succeeded to enter the reserve through this process and those who entered the area were already familiar with the Maasai life style and lived there under Maasai patronage. By that time, the colonial state had already enacted an 'Outline Ordinance' which, among other things, restricted people from entering the Maasai reserve and introduced systems of controlling immigration into the area (KNA, DP/1/97).

When pressure from the Kalenjin immigrants increased in the 1950s, the colonial state decided to formalize the immigration by offering a special entrance permit. Initially, the permit consisted of 'a full list' on a designed sheet showing the name of the holder, place of residence, names of family members accompanying him and sometimes valuable property, such as number of cattle possessed by him. This was later replaced by a small printed permit. By relying on the pre-existed Maasai patronage, the colonial officials labelled the legalized immigrants as 'acceptees'(KNA, DC/NRK/2/2; Waller, 1993:231). Colonial officials assumed that the 'acceptees' would reside with their Maasai sponsors and eventually would adopt Maasai customs and dress and finally be assimilated into the Maasai community.

However, the 'acceptees' did not reside with their patrons; instead, they were concentrated in groups in different areas found in the three Maasai locations of the Trans-Mara District. For example, in the Moitanik section, the acceptees were concentrated in the Njipship valley, Olosaaiyet hill,

Romosha and Shartuga areas. In the Uasin-Nkishu location, they concentrated in Nyanguso, Lombonget, Shangoi, Langata Saen, Nduka, Keyan and Marti. In the Siria section, they settled at Angata Barikoi, Ilkerin and Busangi (KNA, DC/ NRK/2/2; Koskei, Interview, 18. 7. 2013). Figure No. 1 which is shown on the previous page, shows locations of some of those places. Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, the term "acceptees" was used to distinguish the Kipsigis from other groups of the population found in the Trans-Mara. Some people still recall this distinction even today. But through isolation and concentration in their specific areas, the Kipsigis were able to distance themselves from the Maasai, maintain their culture and finally develop their own identity within Maasailand.

In the 1950s, especially in 1954, the British colonial government in Kenya set out an operation called 'Ball and Chain' in which the Kikuyu, Lumbwa (Kipsigis), Kisii, Embu and Meru were forcefully transferred and settled in various places. While some members of those ethnic groups were repatriated from various places of Kenya back to their 'homelands', some moved into Tanganyika and Uganda after special arrangements made by the respective colonial governments (KNA, DP/1/111; KNA, DP/1/65; LZA-Mwanza, Acc. No. 1 - File R1/2). The movement of those ethnic groups which continued even in the early 1960s coincided with the transferring of about eighty Kipsigis families from Kericho and settling them at Angata Barrikoi in the Trans-Mara District in 1954. The objective of settling the Kipsigis at Angata was twofold. First, it aimed to form a buffer zone between the Maasai and Kuria who quarrelled frequently. Second, it aimed to establish a predominantly agricultural society in the area (KNA, DC/NRK/2/2; Koskei, Interview, 18. 7. 2013).

The establishment of that settlement constituted recognition of the Kipsigis as a separate entity. The assumption that the Kipsigis were 'acceptees' or assimilates of the Maasai was slowly declining. Instead, the Kipsigis were now known as cultivators and could be easily distinguished from the Maasai who were predominantly pastoralists. Furthermore, the Kipsigis were sometimes considered as warriors who were brought into the area to act as a buffer between the feuding Maasai and Kuria whose relations were characterized by perpetual tensions. It was hoped that the advent of the Kipsigis would engender a peaceful environment for all communities living in the area.

The Kikuyu, Kisii, Nandi and Kipsigis who moved into Tanganyika settled in various places such as Serengeti, Ukerewe, Mwanza, Tabora and Mpanda (LZA-Mwanza, Acc. No. 1 - File R1/2). Although some of them were, at that time, considered as refugees and some as registered citizens in Tanganyika, their settlement in the territory gave rise to the emergence of new ethnic groups in Tanganyika. In Mara region, in the then South Mara District, the Kipsigis, Nandi and Kisii concentrated at Nata, Ring'wani, Isenye and Ikoma in is the current Serengeti District; Busegwe in Uzanaki areas in what today is Butiama District; and Nyamuswa and Bisarie in today's Bunda District (Busienei, Interview, 30. 7. 2013).

When Julius Kambarage Nyerere, the first President of Tanzania, introduced 'The Arusha Declaration' and 'Ujamaa Policy' in Tanzania in the 1960s and 1970s, some people, including the Kipsigis misinterpreted the policy. The policy, among other things, aimed at nationalizing the major means of production and it stated categorically that privately owned industries or enterprises were to be nationalized (TANU National Executive Committee, 1967: 1-3; Boesen, 1979: 125). Due to this policy, some Kipsigis were worried that their properties would be confiscated. As a result, they decided to move back to Kenya in the early 1970s. Some of those people, of their own volition, continued to migrate back into Kenya until 1991 when the Tanzanian government forcefully repatriated the majority of them, especially the Nandi. The first destination of those Kipsigis who moved back to Kenya was Angata Barrikoi, but the majority finally settled at Sitet in Angata Division, Trans-Mara District. These people, numbering more than 200, were later evicted from Sitet in 1989 and today they are landless (Busienei, Interview, 30. 7. 2013).

The movement of those 'Kenyan immigrants' from Tanzania into Trans-Mara in Kenya culminated into a new construction of Kipsigis identity. Those immigrants have been nicknamed *Wa- TZ* meaning Tanzanian Kipsigis. At the same time, their eviction from Sitet rendered them landless. This has resulted into designating them as 'squatters'. The *Wa-TZ* consider themselves as land beggars and this has made them to develop a common consciousness of their identity which is reflected in the establishment of their groups called "Tutan Squatters" and "Keringani Squatters" (Busienei, Interview, 30. 7. 2013; Koskei, Interview, 18. 7. 2013).

Because of the severity of land problem which the *Wa- TZ* face, there has evolved mocking expressions by their fellow Kipsigis which require them to return to their places of origin in Tanzania.

Thus, at the broader level, the Trans-Mara Kipsigis are generally referred to as cultivators as distinguished from the Maasai. Sometimes, they call themselves '*Wakalee*' meaning the Kalenjin people. But Kelenjin refers to several groups of people- Nandi, Keiyo, Malakwet, Tugen and even the Kipsigis themselves. Sometimes, the Kipsigis neighbours such as Maasai and Kuria call them '*Walumbwa*'. Analytically, the Trans-Mara Kipsigis can be divided into four groups. The first group consists of those who encroached on Maasai land immediately after the establishment of Trans-Mara Maasai reserve and movement of the Uasin-Nkishu and Moitanik Maasai into that reserve. The second group comprises those who entered the reserve with special permit, commonly called 'acceptees'. The third group is those who were settled at Angata- Barrikoi to act as a buffer between Maasai and Kuria. The last group is that of the latest immigrants from Tanzania who are nicknamed *Wa-TZ*. Furthermore, the Trans-Mara Kipsigis distinguish themselves between the rightful and legal citizens, and the aliens, non-rightful citizens and landless people who arrived recently from Tanzania. The first three groups fall into the category of rightful and legal citizens. Those who encroached the Maasai land would fit into the category of non-rightful people but they were very few and have almost been absorbed into the 'acceptees' and the buffer zone categories, hence, takes the status of rightful citizens.

The Trans-Mara Politics and the Kipsigis identity

The Kipsigis ethnic consciousness and identity have been also shaped by the politics taking place in the Trans-Mara District. From 1954, when the Kipsigis settlement was officiated, until 1972, the Kipsigis did not have their own chief. They were all placed within the three Maasai sections- Siria, Moitanik and Uasin-Nkishu, and consequently, they were ruled by Maasai chiefs. In 1954, the colonial administrators appointed one Kipsigis called Kipkoskei Arap Maina who acted as a supporting staff at Angata Barrikoi area. His main role was to look after the established Kipsigis settlement and assist the chief who was a Maasai. Although chiefs were paid salaries, Kipkoskei was not paid any salary and did not receive any retirement benefits (KNA, DC/NRK/ 2/2; Koskei, Interview, 18. 7. 2013).

The appointment of Kipkoskei also evoked a considerable outcry from the Maasai because they did not want an 'alien' person to exercise any political power in their area. The Maasai, and even some colonial officials, had therefore, developed a stereotype which denied the Kipisgis the right to participate in political matters. Although the population of the 'acceptees' with the Kipsigis being the majority, constituted forty percent of the total population of Trans-Mara in late 1960, that section of the population did not have representatives in the African District Council. There were only two representatives from Siria, two from Moitanik and three from Uasin-Nkishu (KNA, DC/NRK/ 2/2; Koskei, Interview, 18. 7. 2013).

In the 1970s, the post-independence Kenyan government introduced the position of Assistant chief and in 1972, Kiplangat Arap Soi was appointed the first Kipsigis assistant chief responsible for the Kipsigis of Angata Barrikoi. Other Kipsigis areas, such as Njipship, Ilkerin and Olaloi got their assistant chiefs too. During that time, some assistant chiefs for the three Maasai locations were also appointed but the Kipsigis were still considered a section of people in the Maasai locations governed by Maasai chiefs. In 1983, Joseph Arap Mibei was appointed the first Kipsigis chief responsible for Angata. This marked the advent of veritable Kipsgis participation in Trans-Mara politics (Koskei, Interview, 18. 7. 2013).

Although the Kipsigis got their own chief in 1983, all members of parliament for the Trans-Mara constituency for the period from 1963 to 2012 were from the three Maasai sections. For example, John Ole Konchela (Uasin-Nkishu) was a Member of Parliament from1963 to 1968. From 1968 to 1974, Francis Ole Sombisha(Siria) became member of parliament but John Ole Konchela replaced him again from 1974 to 1979. Francis Ole Sombisha won the election again in 1979 and stayed in that post until 1997 when Julius Ole Sunkuli (Moitanik) became Member of Parliament up to 2007. Sombisha was a member of parliament for more than twenty years because he had the support of the Kipsigis whose population has grown tremendously relative to the population of the Maasai in each of the three Maasai sections (Koskei, interview, 18. 7. 2013; Mutua, Interview, 2. 10. 2013).

The Kipsigis political consciousness and agitation to have a representative from their own section was growing gradually. In the 2007 Kenya general election, the Kipsigis had their fellow, Johana Arap Ng'eno, contesting for a Parliamentary seat in the Trans-Mara constituency. However, the 2007 Kenya general election was characterized by violence which resulted in the death of more than 1,000 Kenyans and displacement of approximately 600,000 people (Manwelo, 2009:90; Zeleza, 2010:2; Lynch, 2008: 542). A large number of deaths and displacements occurred in the Rift Valley Province where members of the Kalenjin community reportedly emerged as the principal perpetrators of targeted attacks on Kikuyu and where the police are said to have shot a large number of protesters and innocent people (Lynch, 2008:542). At national level, violence was a result of disagreement between the Party of National Unity (PNU) whose presidential candidate was Mwai Kibaki and the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) whose candidate was Raila Odinga. Each of the two parties claimed that it had won the presidential election but finally Mwai Kibaki was declared the winner of the presidential post and a coalition government between PNU and ODM was formed after a mediation led by the former United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan.

In the Trans-Mara District, violence was a result of ethnic competition between the Maasai and Kipsigis. In the whole process of election and even at the vote counting stage, the Kipsgis candidate was leading. Of course, it is said that the Kipsigis candidate won the election. The 1960s stereotype was re-enacted. The Maasai did not want a Kipsigis to become their representative because they considered the Kipsigis aliens. Therefore, they manoeuvred through what we can call 'vote rigging' and, to the surprise of many, a Maasai candidate, Gideon S. Ole Konchela, was declared the winner. This triggered severe acts of ethnic violence and political instability in the area. To rescue the situation, a series of meetings to mitigate the post-election violence and restore peace in the whole of Kenya, including Trans-Mara District were conducted between 2008 and 2011. To avoid further ethnic conflict in the future elections, the government decided in 2009 to divide Trans-Mara District into two parts: East and West. Trans-Mara East is predominantly a Kipsigis area. Trans-Mara west remained a Maasai constituency although it has few Kipsgis living at Angata. In the 2012 Kenya general elections, Gideon S. Ole Konchela (Uasin-Nkishu) was elected Member of Parliament for Trans-

Mara West while Johana Arap Ng'eno won in the Trans-Mara East, a predominantly Kipsigis area. (Koskei, Interview, 18. 7. 2013; Mutua, Interview, 2. 10. 2013). Thus we, can generally say that Trans- Mara district was divided on ethnic lines to neutralize political tensions and conflicts between the Kipsigis and Maasai.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to show the origins and development of Kipsigis ethnic identity in the Trans-Mara District in Kenya. It has established that both the colonial and post-colonial states in Kenya influenced the development of Kipsigis ethnic group and identity in the Trans-Mara District. The paper has also shown that, to a limited extent, the Tanzanian government through its *Ujamaa* policy in the 1970s and the forceful repatriation of the Kipsigis in the 1990s shaped intra- Kipsigis consciousness and re-defined Kipsigis identity in Trans-Mara, especially at Angata Barrikoi. Although the colonial state in Kenya wanted to curb the problem of illegal migration of the Kipsigis into Trans-Mara Maasai reserve, mitigate the Maasai–Kuria conflicts and produce enough food for the Trans-Mara population; these processes sowed the seeds of a new problem which, in my view, has become too chronic and costly for the state to resolve. The new problem is the Kipsigis question in Trans-Mara which does not only affect the politics of the area but also influence the general developmental processes of the area. The political biases which seemed to favour the Maasai have worsened the situation leading to the division of Trans-Mara District along ethnic lines. I consider this an impediment to the unity of Kenya as a nation and to the realization of a veritable East African Community which we are propagating.

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