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Distributed Power: Climate Change, Elderhood, and Republicanism in the Grasslands of East Africa, c. 500 BCE to 1800 CE

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the *longue durée* political history of Ateker-speaking agro-pastoralists in the semi-arid plains of today's Uganda – Kenya – Ethiopia – South Sudan borderlands. Today's Ateker-speaking communities include the Karimojong, Teso, Turkana, Toposa, Dodos, Jie, Nyangatom, and Jiye.

Over the past millennium, Ateker-speaking communities developed a diversity of political institutions – including age-class governments (*asapan*) and neighborhood congresses (*etem*) – that enabled them to build durable polities and expand territorially while incorporating new groups. These Ateker political configurations were distinct from better-studied kingdoms and chieftaincies in the region because they were decentralized and accorded power to office-holders on the basis of factors other than lineage or kin affiliation. Highlighting these Ateker cases, this dissertation argues for the inclusion of an new paradigm of political "republicanism" in the historiography of precolonial Africa. African republicanism is contrasted with another dominant political paradigm, that of "Wealth-in-People." A distinction is drawn between the former, in which the government is a public good or *res publica*, and the latter, in which governance is constituted by networks of relationships that people both "belong in" and "belong to." The significance of this difference for broader historical study is elaborated in Chapter One.

Because documentary records are virtually non-existent for the setting under consideration, other historical sources are drawn upon to support the dissertation's argument. Chief among these is historical linguistics, but archaeology, paleoclimate science, comparative ethnography, and oral traditions also play a role. Strands of evidence from each of these methods are woven together to explore changes and continuities in Ateker politics, society, and economics between c. 500 BCE and 1800 CE.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation has been a long time in the making, and could not have been written without the generous support of innumerable colleagues, collaborators, institutions, family, and friends. Support comes in many forms. Institutional funding, intellectual guidance, and data collection, of course. But also dinners and drinks, emotional sustenance, and those fleeting conversations that offer the kinds of profound insights one only perceives with hindsight. It would be impossible to recognize all involved with the thanks they are due. To anyone overlooked, please accept my apologies and sincere gratitude.

Before arriving at Northwestern University, I benefited from the patience, kindness, and intellectual guidance of two excellent historians of Africa at Tufts University: Jeanne Penvenne and Elizabeth Foster. Both helped channel my enthusiasm for historical research towards productive outcomes that engaged with other scholars. They gave me the space to make and learn from mistakes, which I greatly appreciate. More than just an academic mentor, Jeanne Penvenne has remained a source of cheer and guidance for me and my family in the years since I graduated from Tufts.

My thanks are due also to my dissertation committee: David Schoenbrun, Jonathon Glassman, Sean Hanretta, and Rhiannon Stephens. I benefitted on countless occasions from David Schoenbrun's ability to ask just the right question that gets at the heart of the matter and pushes one's thinking and writing forward. His unending quest for diverse sources and methods that can be used to illuminate the deep past was inspirational. Jonathon Glassman's eye for detail and insistence on logical argument and clear prose served as a model; I found that imagining him as my reader was a productively disciplining writing technique when marshalling evidence to

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Thank you as well to my family in the United States, including Reid and Suzanne Fitzsimons, David Broadwin, Barbara Fisher, Mark Broadwin, Megan Broadwin, and Brian Samuels. Your care and advice over the years is dearly appreciated. I could never have completed this work without the unflagging support – in so many immeasurable ways – of my wife Becky Fitzsimons. Thank you Becky for your encouragement and time during long hours of writing and even longer trips away from home. Finally, thank you as well to my daughter Ayla Fitzsimons, who added so much joy to the final eighteen months of writing.

Any factual or analytical errors are, of course, entirely my own.

Notes on Orthography

This dissertation includes words in a variety of East African languages, many of which have variable spelling conventions. For the sake of consistency, I have avoided using special phonetic characters wherever possible. For example, the single phoneme /ng/ (as in the ending of the English word "sing") is rendered as "ng" throughout this dissertation, even though it is conventionally spelled with a /ŋ/ symbol in many Ateker languages. Similarly, /ɲ/ is rendered /ny/.

A second step towards simplification is the choice to remove affixes from major population names. For example, the language "Ateso," the place "Teso," and the people "Iteso (sg. Etesot)" are all rendered as "Teso" throughout this dissertation. This decision was made because more than a dozen such population names are discussed in the text, and including each languages' distinct affixes may prove bewildering to a reader unfamiliar with Nilotic languages. This method also follows conventions established by *The Journal of African History* and Cambridge University Press.

Notes on Sources

There are two special styles of citation in this dissertation.

The first is for data from reconstructed protolanguages. Protolanguage reconstructions are marked in the text with a * symbol, and cited in footnotes using the format "[Protolangauge Name] [Reconstruction Number]." For example, the reconstructed word for "Euphorbia Tree" is in the Proto Tung'a language is *-popong, and cited as "Tung'a 37," with the number 37 cross-referencing with the supporting evidence for the lexical reconstruction in Appendix IV.

The second special style of citation is for oral interviews I conducted during my fieldwork in Uganda, Kenya, and Ethiopia. These interviews covered a range of topics, and took place in numerous locations. Appendix VI is a record of interviews conducted, from which personal names of interlocuters are redacted in accordance with regulations from the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology. Appendix VI includes the target language, date, location, and topics discussed for each interview. These interviews are cited in the text using the format "[Language abbreviation], [Location], [Date]," and can be cross-referenced with Appendix VI. For example, an interview conduct with a Teso-speaker in the town of Mukongoro, Uganda, on February 13th, 2017, is cited in the footnotes as: "TE, Mukongoro, 13 February 2017."

The following abbreviations are used, and are also listed in Appendix VI:

DO: Dodos, **JI**: Jie, **KA**: Karimojong, **KK**: Kuku, **KW**: Kakwa, **LB**: Labwor, **ME**: Mening, **NY**: Nyangatom, **SO**: So, **TE**: Teso, **TO**: Toposa, **TU**: Turkana, & **TY**: Tesyo.

For Becky and Ayla

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Chapter One

Introduction: Republicanism, Wealth-in-People, and the "Personalized" in African Politics

Every five decades or so, the elder men of the Karimojong in northeastern Uganda gather at a sacred grove, or *akiriket* (pl. *ngakiriketa*), along the Apule River. The explicit purpose of the meeting is two-fold: first, to hand over political authority from an outgoing senior age-class to an incoming junior age-class; second, to initiate a new junior class to fill the vacancy thus created. Exact timing of the power transfer is a matter of debate and consensus-making that occurs in dozens of local *ngakiriketa* distributed throughout Karimojong territory, at which women also make their voices heard. As the ceremony closes, the outgoing elders retire completely from public office, handing responsibility for the overarching governance structure – called *asapan* – to the next generation. The former juniors collectively become Karamoja's new seniors, charged with maintaining a stable system of consensus-based age-class government at their local *ngakiriteta*. In theory, on one day in about fifty years' time, they should all gather to repeat the exercise. By then, the dwindling and infirm ranks of seniors will reach retirement and elevate the new class of juniors (many of whom had not yet been born during the previous meeting). *Asapan* government will continue. The last such meeting occurred around 2014, the first was likely centuries before written records were kept in the region.[1]

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[1] Recorded meetings occurred c. 1910, in 1956, and c. 2014. While conducting oral historical interviews, I was unable to pin down the exact year in which the last transfer occurred, but 2014 is most likely. These dates span both sides of effective colonial occupation. There is every reason to believe this rough schedule dates back centuries among the Karimojong. For a description of these ceremonies and their schedule, see Chapters 4 and 5 below, as well as N. Dyson-Hudson, *Karimojong Politics* (Oxford, 1966), 155-206. For the most recent handover, see KA, Lokitelakapis, 24 July 2017 & KA, Lobulepede, 27 August 2017.

The dominant approaches that scholars use to conceptualize indigenous African politics are not well-suited to understanding *asapan* and *ngakiriketa* in Karamoja. Whereas most precolonial scholarship highlights chiefs and kings, the Karimojong never had centralized rulers. Diplomacy, warfare, criminal cases, dispute resolution, foreign immigration, and public rituals were managed by councils of elders meeting in dispersed sacred groves, with discussion and ritual overseen by the eldest living local council member. (Unsurprisingly, this position had a high rate of turnover). Descent-based kinship likewise played little role in such matters. Political authority in Karamoja was distributed according to one's age and initiation history with little regard to lineage or clan. Membership in the Karimojong political community was delineated by one's association – through parentage, marriage, or initiation – with an *akiriket*, which is different from the better-studied model of communities constituted through metaphors of shared ancestry. Finally, the personalized patron-client networof credits and debits that lie at the heart of many analyses of African politics are not especially significant for understanding the constitution of Karimojong governance. Leaders seated inside sacred groves exercised *de jure* political authority without regard to economic status outside the grove, even if personal interests surely impinged on the dispensation of official duties in Karamoja, as they have everywhere in human history.

In contrast, kinship, personal networks, and social debt are intertwined themes that frame how scholars typically interpret African political history. In broad strokes, the historiography of indigenous African politics has been an exploration of how Africans responded to pervasive labor scarcity by prioritizing networks of people over holding property.[2] Debt was these

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[2] For an engaging and nuanced summary of the patterns described in this paragraph, see K. Smythe, *Africa's Past, Our Future* (Bloomington, IN, 2015), 101-154. For one of the governing classical statements of these patterns, see M. Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *African Political Systems* (London, 1940).

networks' glue; the exchange of goods now for labor later bound people together over time through reciprocities of obligation. Such networks of obligation created safety nets and opportunities for renegotiation, but they also produced the unequal power of patron-creditors who were able to command the labor of client-debtors. The language and logic of kinship helped Africans conceptualize these networks when they had grown beyond the ken of individuals.[3] Bodies politic were often imagined as metaphorical "families" or "houses" with political leaders routinely styled as the *pater familias* or head of household.[4] Even where large political communities were not explicitly conferred familial status, theories of kinship still underwrote the distribution of power in such settings. Lineal inheritance justified kings' or chiefs' claims to ownership of and responsibility for most of the machinery of government, while fictive kin-groups or "clans" became the fundamental political constituency of broader communities.[5] Spatially, governance was conducted in and through homes of leaders.[6] The anthropologist's term of art for this constellation of goods, power, and persons is "wealth in people."[7]

[3] I. Kopytoff, "The Internal African Frontier: The Making of African Political Culture," in I. Kopytoff (ed.), *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies* (Bloomington, IN, 1987), 40-53

[4] J. Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforest: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa* (Madison, WI, 1990), 71-100.

[5] One of the best-studied examples is the kingdom of Buganda. See H. Hanson, *Landed Obligation: The Practice of Power in Buganda* (Portsmouth, NH, 2003) & N. Kodesh, *Beyond the Royal Gaze: Clanship and Public Healing in Buganda* (Charlottesville, VA, 2010).

[6] M. Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (London, 2017), 187. For two excellent studies of this common pattern in Africa, see D. L. Schoenbrun, *A Green Place, A Good Place: Agrarian Change, Gender, and Social Identity in the Great Lakes Region to the 15th Century* (Portsmouth, NH, 1998) & I. Pikirayi, *The Zimbabwe Culture: Origins and Decline of Southern Zambezian States* (Walnut Creek, CA, 2001).

[7] J. Guyer & S. Belinga, "Wealth in People as Wealth in Knowledge: Accumulation and Composition in Equatorial Africa," *Journal of African History*, 36, 1 (1995), 91-120.

Highlighting the political primacy of individuals – rather than institutions – in this constellation, historian Ali Mazrui has called this the "personalized" nature of African politics.[8]

The misalignment between this dominant constellation of theories and historical practice that one can find in Karamoja is not unique. The Karimojong are but one of seven political communities speaking a language from the Northern Ateker family, each of which has maintained a version of *asapan* since long before the colonial era. Numerous linguistically unrelated neighbors also borrowed elements of *asapan* into their own precolonial governance practices. The nearby Teso of Uganda and Kenya are linguistic cousins of the Northern Ateker. They too maintained a territorial political system before colonialism that was not centralized, was not governed through patronage networks, and did not allocate authority according to lineage. As discussed below, similar dynamics can be found across the African continent, from the Igbo of Nigeria to the Maasai of Kenya and Tanzania. Current theoretical approaches are thus inadequate, leaving room for alternatives.

In this chapter, I argue that the clearest way to frame what is missing from precolonial African political historiography is a way to theorize an indigenous African tradition of "republicanism" with a small "r".[9] Karimojong *asapan* and similar institutions are distinctive,

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[8] A. Mazrui, "The Monarchal Tendency in African Political Culture," *British Journal of Sociology*, 18 (1967), 231-250. See also R. Jackson & C. Rosberg, *Personal Rule in Black Africa: Prince, Autocrat, Prophet, Tyrant* (Berkeley, CA, 1982).

[9] "Republicanism" in this context is discussed at length below. However, I want to pre-emptively address the potential criticism that the Roman concept of "republicanism" cannot or should not be exported to other parts of the premodern world. Three points can be made. First, I borrow the word "republicanism" directly from Ateker communities in Africa, who themselves use the English word to describe their local political traditions. Second, I am not the first to do this in an academic context. Other scholars have led the charge by using this term to describe premodern societies in Africa and South Asia. For example, see E. Nwaubani, "Igbo Political Systems," *Lagos Notes and Records*, 12 (2006), 1-27 & S. Muhlberger, "Republics and Quasi-Democratic Institutions in Ancient India," in B. Isakhan & S. Stockwell (eds.), *The Secret History of Democracy* (London, 2011), 49-59. I have also noticed a tendency amongst prominent Africanist historians studying plausibly republican settings to smuggle the word into their work by quoting early modern European travelers without refutation. For example, see D.

first, because they are effectively public property standing outside of personal networks and,

second, because they do no allocate authority according to kinship ideologies. Freestanding

polities built around the twinned republican practices of 1) government institutions not being the

property of a single person and 2) authority deriving from principles other than lineal

inheritance, have long existed in Africa.[10] These principles underlie the elections of non-

hereditary "kings" in Sudanese confederacies, for example.[11] They are also present in the

practices of secret societies such as the *ogboni* cult in Nigeria's Yorubaland, which provided an

unimpeachable check on royal power.[12] Age-set governments of pastoral East Africa, such as the

asapan system of the Karimojong, similarly avoided personalized or kin-based political

authority. They instead invested power in councils of elders whose qualifications rested on age,

wisdom, and proximity to a spiritual world, rather than lineage.

This "republican" framing departs from the more common division between

"decentralized" and "centralized," in which the former term labels the distinctively non-

pyramidal structure of many societies listed above. Indeed, the research project undergirding this

dissertation was first conceived in these terms. The Ateker people of East Africa have long

maintained various types of robust decentralized political systems. The longevity and dynamism

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Peterson, *Creative Writing: Translation, Bookkeeping, and the World of Imagination in Colonial Kenya* (Portsmouth, NH, 2004), 13 & Hawthorne 2003, 128. Third, I would only add the following observation: scholars have been using the Latin-derived political terms "patronage" and "clientship" unproblematically for decades to describe precolonial Africa, despite their origins in a specific Roman context.

[10] Of the Early Modern English, professor of English Zera Fink wrote: "When they spoke of a republic, they had in mind primarily a state which was not headed by a king and in which the hereditary principle did not prevail in whole or in part in determining headship." Z. Fink, *The Classical Republicans: An Essay in the Recover of a Pattern of Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (Evanston, IL, 1945), ix.

[11] S. Simonse, *Kings of Disaster: Dualism, Centralism, and the Scapegoat King in Southeastern Sudan* (Kampala, 2017).

[12] P. Morton-Williams, "The Yoruba Ogboni Cult," *Africa*, 30, 4 (1960), 362-374.

of such systems implicitly challenges neo-evolutionary ideas about state formation and centralization in African history. I first sought to study the early political history of the Ateker in order to explore this decentralized alternative, and discover how it remained durable. I hope that the ensuing chapters rise to this challenge. But I have come to see Ateker "decentralization" as a byproduct of a more fundamental dynamic – "republicanism" – which itself offers a more robust contribution to current theories of African political history.

The key here is thinking about how Ateker-speakers imagined their relationship to government. Dominant paradigms of African history, including especially the "wealth-in-people" model, conceive of precolonial Africans as actors embedded in personalized networks of social relationships through which power flows. Kingdoms, chieftaincies and other super-structural institutions, in this view, grow organically from these networks. Because kinship – "real" or "fictive" – is an essential feature of social networks, metaphorical kinship plays an important role in the ideological justification of power-wielding superstructures. The idea of kinship is thus also an idea of power, so that positions of political leadership are often inherited through lineages, and contests over belonging and authority often manifest as debates over kinship. Kinship is less of a political issue in republican contexts where leaders are officeholders wield power due to individual qualities ("meritocratic" or not) rather than because of their position as nodes near the center of a social network.

A central contention of this introductory chapter is that "wealth-in-people" in incapable of resolving critical questions about decentralized African politics for two connected reasons. First, "wealth-in-people" is virtually impossible to disentangle from kinship ideology, and the relative insignificance of kinship is an overlooked but critical feature of most truly decentralized African political systems. Second, "wealth-in-people" is inherently a centralizing model, reliant

upon the "centricity" of leaders within social networks. There is no such thing as a decentralized version of "wealth-in-people." Republicanism is the missing link. In order to understand the history of decentralized African politics, we therefore need to understand African republicanism. In order to understand African republicanism as an alternative, we need to define the idea in contrast to the currently dominant "wealth-in-people" model. In order to understand "wealth-in-people," we need to interrogate the interrelationship its two major components: patronage politics and kinship ideology.

There are important issues at stake here for numerous disciplines. Scholars' focus on kinship metaphors and patron-client reciprocity in the study of African politics has sublimated this alternative indigenous history of institutional independence and public sovereignty. So too has an inordinate focus on centralized states. A corrective is in order.[13] From the standpoint of comparative global history, it is important to recognize that ideas commonly glossed as "republican" - institutional independence, skepticism of hereditary rule, the possession of a degree of inalienable autonomy by individuals and families – do not have an exclusive provenance in European history. Centuries before the Enlightenment revitalized republican ideologies in Europe, many Africans were already skeptical of claims to power based on kinship ideologies, and constructing workable alternatives. Recognizing that these ideas were not recently bequeathed to Africa by colonialism has implications for the more recent history of global aid, intervention, and democratization between the Global North and Global South

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[13] This is not meant as a critique of the individual merits of existing scholarly works, countless of which are well-grounded in local evidence. The problem needing correction is that the field as a whole has overlooked counter-examples to dominant themes for a variety of reasons explored throughout this introductory chapter. As a result, syntheses of "African" precolonial politics tend to draw Equatorial and West Africa for their models. The precolonial history of the upper Nile region is a potentially rich source of alternative cases, of which the Ateker are but one.

today.[14] For the study of precolonial Africa, clearly identifying this republican tradition may

assist us with framing assertions of small-scale autonomy in large centralized states.[15] More

importantly for our purposes, republicanism can help us better reckon with the history of

Africa's so-called "decentralized societies," – the topic of the present dissertation.

Decentralization in African History

To write about decentralized politics in Africa, it is first necessary to carefully interrogate

and clearly define the term of "decentralized." "Decentralized Africa" is a concept at once

overlooked and shrouded in imprecision. So-called "decentralized societies" – also "stateless" or

"acephalous" in the literature – often appear as blank spaces on maps of precolonial Africa

otherwise populated by famous kingdoms and empires (Figure 1.1).[16] Their obscurity is

grounded in three major obstacles that scholarship on decentralized precolonial Africa has faced

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[14] For example, it introduces alternatives and complexities to the oft-repeated notion that African democratic politics are held back by "deeply rooted patterns of neopatrimonial 'big man' governance." For a discussion of these ideas, see R. Alence, "Political institutions and development governance in sub-Saharan Africa," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 42, 2 (2004), 163-187. The history of institutional politics conducted outside kinship metaphors may also help scholars and development experts identify another version of what political scientist Rene Lemarchand has famously called (in the case of "clientelism") a conceptual "missing link" connecting "traditional" and "modern" African political patterns. R. Lemarchand, "Political Clientelism and Ethnicity in Tropic Africa: Competing Solidarities in Nation-Building," *American Political Science Review*, 66, 1 (1972), 68-90. An exclusively modernist version of this question was recently raised by the political scientist Lisa Mueller. See L. Mueller, "Personal Politics without Clientalism? Interpreting Citizen-Politician Contact in Africa," *African Studies Review*, 61, 2 (2018), 28-54.

[15] What I have in mind here is the potential for re-evaluating the critiques of individual patron-leaders made "from below" by clients, minority groups, women, or the poor. Criticisms often couched through invocations of public well-being and spiritual stewardship may also be read as containing elements of a rejection of the "wealth-in-people" mode of governance. This, in explicit contrasts to Fortes' and Evans-Pritchards' claim that "(Africans) will overthrow a bad king, but the kingship is never questioned." Fortes & Evans-Pritchard 1962, 18. This thread is not taken up in the current dissertation.

[16] Note that each of these terms implicitly defines such political systems by their "lack" of something – namely a centralized head. Examples of maps with "blank spaces" between centralized states can be found throughout most introductory textbooks on African history. This is much less common in premodern textbooks on Europe or Asia.

in recent decades.[17] The first derives from the politics of knowledge in the field. Historians of early Africa labored to simultaneously do the reconstructive and interpretive work of historians while also contesting the enduring Hegelian fallacy that Africa was a place without true history.[18] The rich history of Africa's kingdoms and empires served as a useful bludgeon against this notion, and thus received the lion's share of attention from the first generation of early Africanist historians.[19] The second obstacle is a relative paucity of sources. Research on precolonial Africa is always a challenge because of limited documentation, but this is doubly true in decentralized contexts.[20] Decentralized societies lack the types of royal genealogies and traditions that have many times proven invaluable to historians of centralized states, and they were often ignored by early European explorers who wrote a disproportionate number of pages about African kingdoms. As discussed in Chapter 2, this dissertation navigates this challenge by using the method of historical linguistics, alongside analysis of archaeology, paleoclimatology, genetics, oral traditions, and comparative ethnography. In other words, my approach analyzes the linguistic, material, environmental, oral, and cultural remnants of the deep past in order to write the history of a people who left behind no documents.

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[17] There are, of course, other reasons for obscurity as well. These include an enduring bias favoring scholarship on centralized states across the entire historical discipline, a desire to simplify textbook illustrations, and a general decline in scholarship on the precolonial period across the field of African history. For a lament of this decline, see R. Reid "Past and Presentism: The 'Precolonial" and the Foreshortening of African History," *Journal of African History*, 52, 2 (2011), 135-155.

[18] H. Trevor-Roper, "The Past and Present: History and Sociology," *Past and Present*, 42 (1969), 3-17; M. Crowder, *West Africa under Colonial Rule* (London, 1968), 13.

[19] F. Fuglestad, "The Trevor-Roper Trap or the Imperialism of History. An Essay," *History in Africa*, 19 (1992), 309-326.

[20] R. Collins (ed.), *Problems in African History: The Precolonial Centuries* (Princeton, 1994), xi-xvi.
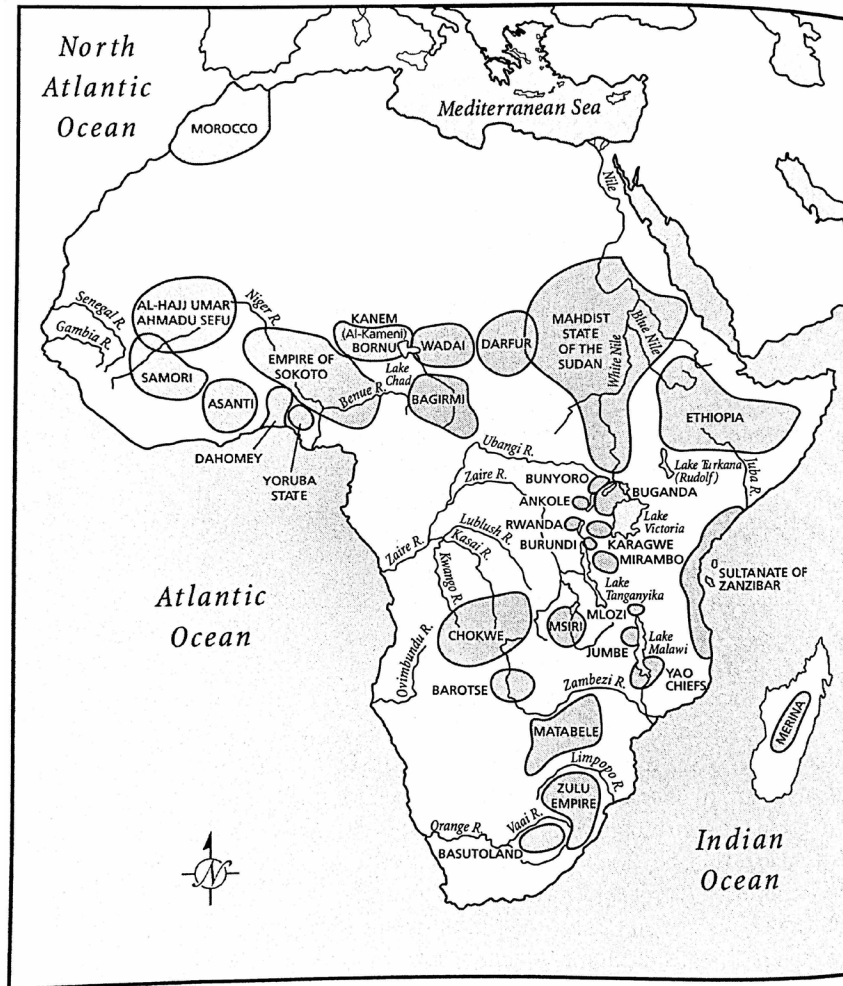
Map 18.1 *African states on the eve of the partition.*

Figure 1.1. Map of late precolonial African "states" with decentralized societies left blank, as produced in R. Collins & J. Burns, *A History of Sub-Saharan Africa* (Cambridge, 2007), 266.

The third obstacle, discussed in greater depth here, is a poverty of theory. In the past, historical analysis of decentralized politics suffered from "neo-evolutionary" paradigms that understood political change to occur according to a roughly predictable sequence leading from smaller to bigger concentric circles around central nodes, from "big men" to kings.[21] In this view, political history truly began when societies embarked on (or were forced into) projects of

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[21] J. Vansina, "Pathways of political development in equatorial Africa and neo-evolutionary theory," in S. McIntosh (ed.), *Beyond Chiefdoms: Pathways to Complexity in Africa* (Cambridge, 1999), 166-172.

centralization; decentralized societies then were simply settings where centralization had not yet occurred.[22] "Neo-evolutionary" thought continues to cast a long shadow over the field, but it is no longer explicitly endorsed by historians.[23] Yet, while most scholars now agree that the political histories of decentralized societies are worth studying in their own right, little progress has been made.[24] We lack a shared definition of what decentralized societies actually are, which is why we resort to negating terms such as "stateless" and "decentralized."[25] This terminological confusion exposes the difficulties historians have had constructing a robust conceptualization of how political power is accumulated and deployed over time absent central nodes.[26]

The term "decentralized" contains two senses, which are often conflated. In the first instance, it is used interchangeably with "small-scale," "stateless," "heterarchical," and "acephalous" to name societies without kings or other "centralized" rulers.[27] In this usage, the term denotes a type of political topography: one without a clearly defined center. But like any matter of topography, scale and boundaries can radically alter perception. The pertinent question

[22] This once-widespread assumption can be seen as a motivation for Robin Horton's influential 1971 essay arguing for the validity of indigenous African theories of state formation from "stateless" societies. R. Horton, "Stateless Societies in the History of West Africa," in J. F. A. Ajayi & M. Crowder (eds.), *History of West Africa, Vol. 1* (New York, 1972), 78-119.

[23] J. Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton, 2014), 45.

[24] Susan McIntosh observed in 1999 (following Richard Dillon) that "although studies of elaborate non-centralized systems have a long tradition in Africa… the literature reflects little agreement on how these systems are to be understood. Consequently, they tend to be overlooked in general accounts of cultural evolution." This sentiment remains roughly accurate more than two decades later. McIntosh 1999, 9.

[25] For a discussion of questions of terminology, see W. Hawthorne, "States and Statelessness," in J. Parker & R. Reid (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern African History* (Oxford, 2013), 77-80.

[26] My point here is confined to the actual creation and deployment of instrumental power via governmental authority.

[27] For a worthwhile digression on these terms' pragmatic interchangeability, see M. Klein, "The Slave Trade and Decentralized Societies," *Journal of African History*, 42, (2001), 51-52.

is how one demarcates the political community. On Lake Victoria's northern shore in the

nineteenth century, the area inhabited by the Soga people was ruled by dozens of small

autonomous kingdoms.[28] Farther north, various groups of Southern Lwo-speakers maintained

different degrees of political "centralization."[29] Some had self-styled "kings" ruling even smaller

territories than their Soga counterparts, and others maintained governance at such a localized

level so as to become classic anthropological examples of statelessness.[30] These have all at times

been described as "decentralized." Yet in most if not all of these cases, the work of politics – the

exercise of extending legitimate authority beyond one's immediate ken by durable means[31] –

took on a similar centralized shape at the ground level: individual leaders as personalized central

nodes in networks of reciprocal obligation. In the realm of symbols, the Lwo political model

often invoked "one man standing above the people and symbolizing their unity."[32]

    The problem with this first approach to decentralized history is that it is ripe for category

error. When the label "decentralization" is purely derived from topographical resolution and

boundary-making, one can often in fact find a form of "centralization" with a close enough

resolution. In order to not be arbitrary, this usage must then be based on some other non-political

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[28] D. W. Cohen, "The Cultural Topography of a 'Bantu Borderland': Busoga, 1500-1850," *Journal of African History*, 29, 1 (1988), 57-79.

[29] Historian Laurence Schiller's comparative work integrating more and less centralized Lwo political systems is especially instructive here. L. Schiller, *Gem and Kano: A Comparative Study of Two Luo Political Systems under Stress* (PhD Dissertation, Northwestern University, 1982), 67-119.

[30] A. Southall, *Alur Society: A Study in Processes and Types of Domination* (Cambridge, 1957).

[31] Weber's explanation of "legitimate authority" as that which is viewed as "justifiable" by the ruler and ruled alike, and is backed up with a monopoly on the "right" to use coercive violence, is sufficient for our purposes. M. Weber, "Politics as Vocation" in T. Waters & D. Waters (trans. & eds.), *Weber's Rationalism and Modern Society: New Translations on Politics, Bureaucracy, and Social Stratification* (New York, 2015), 129-198.

[32] R. Herring, "Centralization, Stratification, and Incorporations: Case Studies from Northeastern Uganda," *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 7, 3 (1973), 497-514. As Herring points out in this same article, the picture could be messier on the ground.

categorization in order to demarcate relevant boundaries. Usually, that category is the "ethnolinguistic group," or its conceptual antecedent, the "tribe." If all, or most, members of a particular "ethnolinguistic group" recognize a single leader (or perhaps a small handful of competing leaders), then that is what is generally meant by "centralized." But we know that categories such as "ethnolinguistic group," to the extent they cohere at all, are neither pre-political nor apolitical.[33] Hence, to speak of the "decentralization" of an "ethnolinguistic group" that is itself divided into small constituencies of centralized nodes is a question-begging exercise. My point is not that studies of such structures are futile; there are significant questions to ask about the means and motives of those who successfully resist continuous political agglomeration through small-scale centralization.[34] I have elsewhere labelled those questions as the study of "political smallness."[35] But this is not the same thing as the study of decentralization *per se*. This distinction needs to be made clear in order to advance our historical understanding of the "blank spaces" referenced above.

A second, better, way of locating political "decentralization" in precolonial Africa is to look at the *shape* of political structures rather than their *scale*. Are power structures composed of networks connecting to a central node or not? If not, what form of governance exists? If so, who, or what, is at the center? A consideration of politics among the precolonial Igbo in today's

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[33] Unsurprisingly, scholars of Lwo precolonial history have been especially prominent in making this point. See for example R. Atkinson, *The Roots of Ethnicity: The Origins of the Acholi of Uganda before 1800* (Philadelphia, 1994) & A. Southall, "The Illusion of Tribe," *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 5, 1/2 (1970), 28-50.

[34] S. McIntosh, 1999 is worth reading more than once on this exact question.

[35] W. Fitzsimons, "Warfare, Competition, and the Durability of 'Political Smallness' in Busoga," *Journal of African History*, 59, 1 (2018), 45-67. The argument for "republicanism" in this dissertation represents a re-framing of the issue that departs from this earlier work. My contribution to the definitional debate is to suggest simply "politically small" or "small-scale" to denote political formations other than kingdoms/states/empires. This avoids the problem of oppositional definitions while reserving "decentralized" for that which is truly decentralized, regardless of scale.

southern Nigeria can help illustrate the range of possible answers. The Igbo – who organized themselves into autonomous townships before colonialism – are often referred to as a "decentralized" society, but they are also famously the inheritors of an ancient kingship tradition.[36] The devil is in the details. Taken as a whole, "the Igbo" had no central government and were thus "decentralized" if considered as a single "ethnolinguistic group." But each township maintained its own institutions of governance. Some had kings (*eze*), others were led by "big men," and more still were governed according to the will of a permanent assembly of notables.[37] The last of these is closest to a "decentralized" model of politics, because there was no central figure who ruled. If there was a central node it was an institution (e.g. the township itself, or the permanent assembly), and not one person. Thus, in many parts of precolonial Igboland, politics not only took on a decentralized shape, but it was also not "personalized" in Mazrui's sense.

Finally, it is important to note that decentralization is not a function of scale – indeed, this is a reason to avoid using the term as a synonym for "small scale."[38] In his study of the Balanta in today's Guinea-Bissau, Walther Hawthorne traces a historical progression from a model of "big man" politics to one resembling the assembly method of Igbo township governance. Dispersed small-scale communities run by individual hereditary "big men" combined into larger

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[36] For a more recent discussion of Igbo "statelessness" see O. Eze, P. Omeje, & U. Chinweuba, "The Igbo: A Stateless Society," *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5, 27 (2014), 1315-1321. For the kingship tradition, see T. Shaw, *Unearthing Igbo-Ukwu: Archaeological Discoveries in Eastern Nigeria* (Oxford, 1977), 94-102 & M. Onwuejeogwu, *An Igbo Civilization: Nri Kingdom & Hegemony* (London, 1981).

[37] G. Uzoigwe, "Evolution and Relevance of Autonomous Communities in Precolonial Igboland," *Journal of Third World Studies*, 21, 1 (2004), 146-147.

[38] The fact that "statelessness" and size are not necessarily linked was noted by Fortes and Evans-Pritchard as early as 1940. M. Fortes & E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *African Political Systems* (London, 1962), 7.

fortified towns as a response to the growing slave trade during the 17th and 18th centuries.[39]

These new towns were governed by voting assemblies, with social cohesion (and military capacity) bolstered by leaderless age-grades that cut across lineage or clan identity. Hence, an increase in the scale of political units did not give politics a more centralized shape, quite the opposite. Likewise, Roderick and Susan McIntosh's excavations in Jenne-Jeno famously revealed a densely populated "heterarchical" urban settlement segregated into occupational-specialist and other quarters with no apical ruler.[40] And, as explored in Chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation, the Northern Ateker of East Africa innovated a system of age-class government that integrated thousands of square miles of territory into single political communities without a central ruler.

Treating the term "decentralization" with semantic precision brings at least two important historical questions to the fore. First, conceptually separating decentralization from socio-political typology ("stateless," "acephalous," etc.), makes it easier to integrate an analysis of decentralized political forms with all kinds of social organizations. A hierarchical monarchy can have decentralized elements, just as a dispersed government without an inherent political center can temporarily deputize individuals or groups to serve as a central node when necessary.[41] In

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[39] W. Hawthorne, *Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves: Transformations along the Guinea-Bissau Coast, 1400-1900* (Portsmouth, NH, 2003), 119-128.

[40] Whether Jenne-Jeno was decentralized down to the level of the diverse corporate groups who cooperated through a heterarchical model is not known. They may have been internally hierarchical. It is for this reason that I insist on distinguishing between a "heterarchical" society, which has no single peak but may be comprised of multiple pyramidal structures, and "political decentralization," which has no central political node. See R. McIntosh, *The Peoples of the Middle Niger* (Malden, MA, 1998), 5-10.

[41] An example of the former may be the distribution of semi-autonomous shrines that constituted but also restrained the famously hierarchical Buganda kingdom. Examples of the latter would be both the "leopard skin chiefs" whom the Nuer enlist to arbitrate disputes between lineage segments and the neighborhood congress "speakers" elected by the Iteso. See, respectively, Kodesh 2010, E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer: A Description of the modes of livelihood and political institutions of a Nilotic people* (Oxford, 1971), 163-164 & Chapter 6.

other words, this framing helps us think about how to examine when the decentralized and the centralized worked in concert.[42] Second, the assertion of structural decentralization raises profound questions about the nature of governance in precolonial Africa. Without a center, who ruled? Where did ultimate authority reside? What was the locus of "legitimate authority," in the Weberian sense? How were decisions reached and enforced?

To put all these questions another way: who "owned" the mechanisms of government in a decentralized context, and by what right? Currently dominant paradigms of precolonial African political history hinder our ability to answer these questions because they assume social infrastructures shaped like concentric circles. Taking stock of Africa's rich and diverse history of creative political decentralization requires two theoretical moves. The first defines centralization. The second theorizes the politics animating such forms. I argue that "republicanism" is preferable to the currently reigning "wealth-in-people" model for this purpose. To understand why, it is necessary to first make the case for why "wealth-in-people" cannot account for decentralized politics.

Centricity and "Wealth-in-People": The Pater as Owner, Creditor, and Leader

"Wealth-in-people" (hereafter WIP) is a term used by anthropologists and other scholars to name a basic fact about the orientation of the political economy in many parts of precolonial Africa: wealth (and therefore power) was more a function of one's relationships with people than

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[42] For example, Steven Feierman shows how decentralized knowledge of political ritual, with no one person knowing or seeing all aspects, can undergird the construction of royal power. S. Feierman, "On Socially Composed Knowledge: Reconstructing a Shambaa Royal Ritual," in G. Maddox & J. Giblin (eds.), *In Search of a Nation: Histories of Authority and Dissidence in Tanzania* (Athens, OH, 2005),14-32.

one's control over goods or land.[43] Structurally, this orientation is linked to the relative scarcity

of labor and relative abundance of land in precolonial Africa, which made access to the former a

more important measure of wealth. Political contestation between African leaders was thus

driven by competition for the allegiance of followers rather than over control of territory. To

entice followers, leaders needed to offer followers tangible benefits (food, land, security, etc.) in

exchange for loyalty. Though unequal, these relationships were reciprocal – beneficial in some

way for both parties. Kinship provided a ready metaphor for discussing and justifying these

relationships. Ideologically, patrons were "parents" who directed but also protected and provided

for their client "children," while wider political communities were commonly understood to be

extended families (more on all this below).

Although many of the model's underlying assumptions had been discussed for decades

prior, WIP came to the forefront of Africanist scholarship in the 1970s and 1980s first as a way

to understand the impact of slavery and the slave trade on the continent through an indigenous

framework.[44] Since then, scholars have deployed the model across time and space, all the while

continuously refining it through nuanced consideration of the ways kinship, gender, emotion,

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[43] This is often posited as a contrast to Europe, where political power was allegedly defined by landed boundaries rather human connections, although to draw make this comparison too neatly requires a gross oversimplification of European history.

[44] The most influential articulations were I. Kopytoff & S. Miers (eds.), *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison, WI, 1977) & J. Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade: 1730-1830* (Madison, WI, 1988), 1-172. To these, I would add David William Cohen's micro-historical study *Womunafu's Bunafu* as a critical (if less discussed) early contribution to this literature, for his work captures all the most important dynamics of WIP while also presaging many later refinements. See D. W. Cohen, *Womunafu's Bunafu: A Study of Authority in a Nineteenth-Century African Community* (Princeton, 1977). These historical innovations received theoretical support the 1970s from the anthropologists Claude Meillassoux's and Jack Goody's influential works on the intertwined origins of kinship, wealth, and political authority in Africa, framed around questions of social reproduction. Although neither engaged directly with the historical topics addressed by Kopytoff and Miers, their elaborate theoretical examinations of similar questions yielded similar conclusions with regard to the basic mechanics of WIP, thereby reinforcing the model. See C. Meillassoux, *Maidens, Meal and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community* (Cambridge, 1981), 1-88 & J. Goody, *Production and Reproduction: A Comparative Study of the Domestic Domain* (Cambridge, 1976).

spirituality, and status shaped how the structure was experienced in daily life.[45] WIP underwent a singularly significant revision in 1995, when Jane Guyer and Samuel Belinga argued that classic WIP formulations were reductionist for focusing too much on the *quantity* of people that aspiring leaders "accumulated" rather than *qualities* individuals possessed, such as unique specialized knowledge.[46] While Guyer and Belinga's intervention forced a re-evaluation of leaders' strategic considerations and inspired new scholars to embrace the true complexity of WIP politics, it did not change the model's basic calculus.[47] Today, scholars generally agree that the basic tenets of WIP are "a specifically African mode of accumulation" and "appl(y) broadly across Africa."[48]

    There is a plain reason WIP has proven so analytically productive and endured for decades as a dominant paradigm. The model is not merely a tool of armchair historians and anthropologists; it also captures they ways many Africans actually discussed questions of political economy.[49] The concept of accumulating personal relationships – often drawing on

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[45] An early extender of the model was Kopytoff himself, who drew on WIP to reason through how African societies reproduced themselves at frontiers. See I. Kopytoff (ed.), *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies* (Bloomington, IN, 1987). Dozens of monographs have since added nuance and complexity to WIP based on local histories. Examples include Vansina 1990, 268-279, E. Bay, *Wives of the Leopard: Gender, Politics, and Culture in the Kingdom of Dahomey* (Charlottesville, VA, 1998); D. L. Schoenbrun, *A Green Place, A Good Place: Agrarian Change, Gender, and Social Identity in the Great Lakes Region to the 15th Century* (Portsmouth, NH, 1998), K. Klieman, *"The Pygmies were our Compass": Bantu and Batwa in the History of West Central Africa, Early Times to c. 1900 C.E.* (Portsmouth, NH, 2003), H. Hanson, *Landed Obligation: The Practice of Power in Buganda* (Portsmouth, NH, 2003), R. Stephens, "Lineage and Society in Precolonial Uganda," *Journal of African History*, 50, 2 (2009), 203-221, & D. L. Schoenbrun, "A Mask of Calm: Emotion and Founding the Kingdom of Bunyoro in the Sixteenth Century," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 55, 3 (2013), 634-664.

[46] Guyer & Belinga, 1995.

[47] An important work that built on Guyer and Belinga's revision is Kodesh, 2010.

[48] J. Guyer, "Wealth in People, Wealth in Things - Introduction," *Journal of African History*, 36 (1995), 84; S. McIntosh 1999, 19.

[49] Kopytoff and Miers are essentially correct in noting: "Concepts of rights-in-persons… are widespread in Africa and constitute some of the basic elements of which kinship systems are constructed. While all social systems in the world can be analyzed in terms of such rights, Africa stands out *par excellence* in the legal precision, the multiplicity of detail and variation, and the degree of cultural explicitness in handling such rights. They are a formal

idioms of kinship – undergirds etymological histories of countless precolonial lexicons for categories like "wealth," "poverty," "leader," "king," and "political community" across the continent.[50] The notion that political authority grows from kinship-inflected and "personalized" networks has also been prevalent in elite and commoner discourse since the colonial period.[51]

Recent iterations of this discussion by academics tend to contrast the salubrious "reciprocity" and "accountability" of indigenous WIP patronage models with a meaner form of post-colonial "paternalism."[52] But this angle hides dissent. With the sharper resolution offered by twentieth century sources, we can also see disputes over the terms and justice of WIP between those who claim wealth in people and those who constitute such wealth. It is elites who most stidently emphasize the kinship aspect, content with a metaphor that naturalizes hierarchies of the postcolonial state as "parent-child" relationships. As anthropologist Kristin Phillips notes of the CCM party in Tanzania, leaders draw upon kinship ideologies to transform political contests into cultural facts, which are thus (she follows Gramsci) "reformulated as insoluble."[53] Those lower-ranked, on the other hand, are apt to find less nurturing metaphors for power – "eating"

part of African concepts of kinship relations – and not merely an analytical artifact created by outside observers examining those relations." Kopytoff & Miers 1977, 11. For a critical review of the historicity of many specific WIP claims, but not an effective rejection of the basic model, see W. Macgaffey, "Changing Representations in Central African History," *Journal of African History*, 46, 2 (2005), 189-207.

[50] J. Vansina 1990, 268-279; C. Ehret, *An African Classical Age: Eastern and Southern African in World History, 1000 BC to AD 400* (Charlottesville, VA, 1998), 150-151; D. L. Schoenbrun, *The Historical Reconstruction of Great Lakes Bantu Cultural Vocabulary: Etymologies and Distributions* (Cologne, 1997); J. Iliffe, *The African poor: a history* (Cambridge, 1987), 7.

[51] M. Schatzberg, *Political Legitimacy in Middle Africa: Father, Family, Food* (Bloomington, IN, 2001); M. Karlström, "Civil Society and its Presuppositions: Lessons from Uganda," in J. L. & J Comaroff (eds.), *Civil Society and the Political Imagination in Africa* (Chicago, 1999), 107-109.

[52] G. Goodell *et al.*, "Paternalism, Patronage, and Potlach: The Dynamics of Giving and Being Given to," *Current Anthropology*, 26, 2 (1985), 253.

[53] K. Phillips, "Pater Rules Best: Political Kinship and Party Politics in Tanzania's Presidential Election," *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, 33, 1 (2010), 111.

rather than "parenting" – that may impeach the legitimacy of the entire arrangement.[54]

Philosophical critiques of the rules of the WIP game, separate from but usually in addition to criticism of individuals' failures to play the game fairly, animate much of modern African history.[55] *Prima facie*, we can assume such critiques imply the likely existence of precolonial parallels. Unfortunately, the details of earlier debates are nearly impossible to recover without documentary sources.[56] But the solution is not to discount their existence. It is instead to examine precolonial settings where WIP was not the governing framework, and ask "why not?"

There are then two severe limitations that inhere in the WIP model of politics: one from the perspective of precolonial Africanist scholars, and the other from precolonial Africans themselves. For scholars, because WIP is deeply intertwined with both centralized politics and kinship ideology (which are themselves unavoidably linked, as discussed below), it is incapable of capturing certain elements in the history of decentralized structures and non-kinship politics. Given the model's status as the virtually default framework for understanding early African political relations, this incapacity produces an opacity of theory that keeps important alternative political formations out of scholars' sight. For precolonial Africans themselves, WIP may have provided a (notional, at least) safety net for network members, but the constellation of kinship

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[54] J. Fabian, *Power and Performance: ethnographic explorations through proverbial wisdom and theater in Shaba, Zaire* (Madison, WI, 1990), 25; J. Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (Malden, MA, 2009), 60-86. Cultural elites have also formulated such critiques, as in Chinua Achebe's novel *A Man of the People* (New York, 1967). As Steven Feierman among others shows us, critiques "from below" can take other forms as well, including operating through discourses of "public healing" with clear pre-colonial roots. S. Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and History in Tanzania* (Madison, WI, 1990).

[55] Perhaps the most thoughtful treatment of both these strands of critique is to be found in John Lonsdale's masterful study of Mau Mau moral economy. See J. Lonsdale, "The Moral Economy of Mau Mau," in B. Berman & J. Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya & Africa* (Athens, OH, 1992), 265-467.

[56] Attempts to reconstruct ancient critiques of WIP "from below" have, because of evidentiary constraints, been limited to discursive redeployments of existing WIP logics, rather than outright rejection of these logics. See, for example, Schoenbrun 1998, 105-106 & 256-258.

politics, property hierarchies, and political centralization supporting the model also inhibited the development of individual and family autonomy, economic equality, and inclusive or publicly-owned political institutions. It should not come as a surprise, therefore, that many groups adopted alternative models of governance. Indeed, that is what this dissertation is about.

In the preceding paragraphs, I have treated the following ideas as sort of a "WIP package": personal networks, kinship ideology, reciprocity of debt, centralization, economic inequality, and political hierarchy. It is routine for scholarship on precolonial Africa to move seamlessly across these conceptual domains, assuming their interconnectedness. However, WIP literature never definitively asserts that these different phenomena form a package, nor does it offer a robust theory for explaining why they are bundled together time and again across the continent. This vagueness helps account for WIP's longevity as *the* commanding paradigm of early African history. Most scholars recognize that early Africa did, as a matter of fact, contain political systems that had no identifiable center, did not privilege certain lineages politically, or accorded authority to office-holders without regard to their personal networks. One might expect recognition of such cases to potentially challenge a WIP interpretation of power in any given setting. But so far it has not. This because WIP is understood (albeit vaguely) as a set of discrete and (maybe) severable practices that happen to nearly always coincide, rather than as an overarching theory of government that includes each of the above factors as a *necessary* component. Therefore, any particular deviation does not provide probable cause to question the entire paradigm. The situation is made all the more confusing by the fact that WIP social

dynamics undeniably exist throughout Africa (as they do everywhere) outside of the political

realm, and that these dynamics where they exist can easily bleed into politics in any context.[57]

If, however, WIP as a model of government can only exist in conjunction with

centralization, debt, and kinship politics– or if exceptions are rare and transitory – then instances

where these dynamics do not occur in tandem ought therefore to call for a new theory of politics.

Decentralized forms of government, as defined in the preceding section, must then be examples

of a governing ideology other than WIP. Two implications follow. First, scholars ought to be on

the lookout for alternatives to governance through WIP; politically decentralized societies where

kinship claims were devalued would be a good place to start. Second, since we know from

linguistic evidence that precolonial Africans maintained a running discourse about how the

accumulation of wealth-in-people could be translated to political power and governmental

authority, deviations from that practice can well be read as either tacit or intentional rejections of

WIP when it was constituted as a political ideology. To push this analysis further, what is needed

is a heretofore absent accounting of WIP and its constituent parts as both praxis and idea. To

imagine WIP as a contested theory of government against which alternatives could emerge,

rather than simply as an explication of how things were in sub-Saharan Africa, it is critical to

articulate both the central idea of WIP and its practical implications. That central idea, I argue, is

pater **as owner**. The following paragraphs analyze *pater* **as owner** as something like a unified

theory of WIP, while keeping in mind reasons why precolonial Africans might have been

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[57] One can make a plausible WIP interpretation of family power dynamics in virtually any society, and the same is true for private groups or commercial relations. An elderly matriarch receiving gifts from her extended family in Italy, a party official distributing largesse to loyalists in China, or American scientists allocating article authorships and postdoctoral fellowships to a personal network of junior researchers are all examples of WIP dynamics.

skeptical of this model as their theory of governance. The next section will contemplate an alternative, namely "republicanism".

"Africans" (but really, west-central Africans), Kopytoff and Miers wrote, simultaneously "belonged in" and "belonged to" their extended networks of kin relations.[58] In other words, as members of a kin group they could claim certain rights from membership – the right to assistance in the matter of basic subsistence, the right to protection against out-group threats, the right to social rank based on their relative in-group standing – but they and their labor also constituted the "wealth" of the kin-group, and as such they were liable to be sold, traded, or pawned by those of higher rank. For far too many, this latent liability was transformed from hypothetical possibility to existential threat during the violent disruption of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, intensified by European merchants who had a decidedly unnuanced view of central African politics.[59] But the liability had always been there, the opposite side of the bargain through which they otherwise received security by association with an extended kin group. The biggest losers in this arrangement were those who could not make effective claims to kinship with those whom they relied upon or resided amongst in daily life, and thus suffered "dependence without recourse."[60] The picture that emerges is one in which all except those at the very top of pyramidal kinship structures reckoned power as a question of the degree, rather than the fact, of their social subordination.

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[58] Kopytoff & Miers 1977, 10.

[59] L. Heywood, "Slavery and Its Transformation in the Kingdom of Kongo, 1491-1800," *Journal of African History*, 50 (2009), 1-22.

[60] Miller 1988, 51.

Slavery and pawning tended to arise in moments of severe scarcity or external shock and in the margins of society.[61] But these phenomena are really only extreme manifestations of a logic always embedded in WIP, which is that leaders assert a right of ownership not only over followers' vague attestations of political loyalty or a portion of their wealth, but over their labor. More specifically their future labor. The accumulation of "wealth" in a setting with limited material options for storing value was reckoned in unequal human relationships. In the words of historian Joseph Miller, these relationships constituted "'capital' in the sense of being an investment in future human productivity, consumption foregone now in the expectation of a return later."[62] Time is the essence here. Those with more wealth could afford the short-term losses incurred by bestowing/imposing gifts on the less well-to-do in exchange for rights to the fruits of followers' future labor.[63] When material debts were not promptly repaid – because the debtor was unable to repay or chose not to do so, or because payment in kind was disallowed in the initial contract – this turned into debt not just of one's goods but of one's self. As time elapsed, unpaid debts could turn into custom and then into a durable hierarchy.[64] This is how wealth connects to power in a WIP setting: a truly wealthy person was one who possessed a surfeit of unbalanced social ledgers that granted him or her a moral claim on another's' activity, and thus on another's agency. Wealth, so construed, was a "fund of power" inextricable from

[61] J. Miller, *The Problem of Slavery as History: A Global Approach* (New Haven, 2012), 124; Feierman 1990, 53-64.

[62] Miller 1988, 51.

[63] The argument that a "gift" imposes an obligation of reciprocation on the receiver has been well-established in anthropology since the early twentieth-century writings of Marcel Mauss. See M. Mauss (J. Guyer trans. & ed.), *The Gift* (Chicago, 2016). The essential sameness of gifts and debt was also recognized by Northern Ateker-speakers, who derived the word *-mic "debt" from a Lwo borrowing meaning "gift." PNA 26.

[64] D. Graeber, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (Brooklyn, 2014), 89-126.

domination.[65] Some individuals, to be sure, could refashion their own situation by gaining

followers of their own or choosing to exit one reciprocal relationship for another on better

terms.[66] But both choices only reinforced the overarching structure of the political economy.

Some could not, and they were simply stuck.

Kinship enters the equation at two different points, and for both it does so as a

conservative ideology. The first is as a foundational structure for power relations. Anthropologist

Beatrix Heintze is almost correct when she writes:

> Kin-based groups are amongst the oldest informal and formal mutual protection
> associations known to man. Ties based on kinship provide relative security in the face of
> external enemies and other dangers, as well as solidarity with weaker members of the
> community in the event of illness, natural disaster and in other times of crisis… Groups
> that were bound to each other through kinship were able to secure political, economic and
> other opportunities which put them at an advantage vis-à-vis groups joined by association
> along other lines.[67]

"Almost correct" because, as argued in this dissertation, "groups joined by association along

other lines" can indeed compete with neighbors structured along kinship lines. Nevertheless,

Heintze efficiently identifies a salient point about the role of kinship in group construction: it

works. Experiences of kinship are the experiences of social reproduction: parents raising children

(biological or adopted), wives living with husbands, cousins playing together in youth, in-laws

building relationships, siblings variably fighting and supporting one another, grandparents

dispensing wisdom and caring for infants. Kinship can be and often is extended to close non-kin

through rites such as blood brotherhood, membership in fraternal or sororal organizations, or

[65] B. Malinowski, "The Primitive Economics of the Trobriand Islanders," *Economic Journal*, 31, 121 (1921), 1-16.

[66] Kopytoff 1987, 23.

[67] B. Heintze, "Translocal 'Kinship' Relations in Central African Politics of the 19th Century," in U. Freitag & A. von Oppen (eds.), *Translocality: The Study of Globalizing Processes from a Southern Perspective* (Leiden, 2010), 179.

simply stating that a friend is like a family member.[68] These experiences, laden with emotion,

provide fertile ground for conceptualizing the self in relation to others and delineating ingroups

from outgroups. In small-scale societies, frontier settlements of family and friends, or societies in

the midst of traumatic disruption, lived kinship experiences have provided an invaluable source

of social material for building communities.

At its core is the parent-child relationship, one that begins with utter dependence.

Inhering in this relationship – the lineage relationship – is a hierarchy constituted through gift

(and therefore debt), economic dependence, and hierarchical authority. Where men exercised

power as head-of-household, as was common in Africa, the leader was the oldest, most

genealogically senior father, who by virtue of his age was indebted to no other.[69] This *pater*

occupied an apex position atop the webs of reciprocal obligation that constituted an extended

family. That position – that authority – could be inherited through culturally-specific principles

of succession like other property. The *pater* "owned" the extended kin group as a political unit,

both in the sense that members "belonged to" the kin group (to use Kopytoff and Mier's phrase),

but also because he was positioned atop a web of reciprocal obligations that funneled their way

to him. The *pater*, therefore, was also the ultimate creditor. To the extent that political

communities defined by WIP dynamics grew from lived experiences of extended families, WIP

conserved and elaborated upon real, immediate, and personal experiences of hierarchy, gift, and

dependence.

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[68] L. Ehrisman, "Intimate Bonds, Healthy Communities: Blood-Brotherhoods as Technologies of Community Building Between the Great Lakes, c. 500 BCE-1500 CE," Conference Paper, African Studies Association, 2015.

[69] Meillassoux 1981, 46-49

WIP is historically significant because it also describes larger-scale politics, beyond the reach of lived kinship experiences. Here, scarcity of labor and abundance of land served as aspiring leaders' instrumental motivation for building political communities out of people rather than territory. Kinship dynamics provided both a ready model for how to build such a community and a metaphor that could explain and justify the community's coherence and a leader's authority within it. Marshall Sahlins has described the seemingly common-sense way that a large political community could be built on a theoretical foundation of kinship:

> Kinship-residential groupings… comprise ever-widening co-membership spheres: the household, the local lineage, perhaps the village, the subtribe, the tribe.[70]

For Sahlins, power appears as "a series of concentric circles," with the strength of kinship ties attenuated by distance from the central kinship head. Sahlins is correct that authority in this scenario is derived from what Karl Polanyi calls "centricity."[71] A leader's political authority can be roughly measured by calculating how many links of reciprocal obligation feed into, rather than away from, the leader's node. But it is not so simple, because as a matter of both history and logic, the *pater* cannot himself generate an extensive centralized government. As the geographer E. A. Hammel notes, a politics based on a pyramidical structure of reckoned kinship is limited by the fact that, though its network can in theory become extremely wide, it's top node can only ever be perhaps three for four generations deep.[72] The *pater* must soon vanish, structurally.

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[70] Sahlins 2017, 180.

[71] *Ibid.*, 170 & K. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston, 2001), 51.

[72] E. Hammel, "Kinship-based politics and the optimal size of kin group," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 102, 33 (2005), 11951-11956. Hammel primarily targets population growth as the reason networks will expand, while allowing that other forms of expansion (conquest, incorporation, slave exchange, etc.) may also contribute.

This disequilibrium forces political creativity, in a process that has likely played out thousands of times in the African past. For actors constructing political complexity, there are a limited range of basic options (albeit with infinite minor variations) for moving past this point. Historians of precolonial Africa have tended to focus on two. The first is for kinship structures to "segment." In the segmentary lineage system, the political community is still reckoned through claims of "real" descent, with authority vested in a living *pater*. Here, a series of distantly related but now distinct lineages exist side-by-side, each managing its own day-to-day affairs.[73] "Segmentary" societies often fall under the umbrella term "decentralized" discussed in the previous section, but this is not quite right. Polanyi's "centricity" is still very much in play, with broader political communities still defined by a single putative ancestor, often invoked in times of crisis.[74] The second option is the WIP polity. Here, an enterprising person – probably an especially successful or charismatic *pater* – manages to construct a polity by enlisting others to recognize his or her claim to central authority. This Big Man (an anthropological term – she may be a woman) thus shifts the central locus of authority from the top of an alleged "family tree" to the middle of a web of relationships and interactions. As in the segmentary lineage, "centricity" is preserved, if nonetheless relocated.

How exactly is the WIP polity constituted? Nearly always, kinship remains in play; this is the second gate through which kinship enters into WIP. The crucial point is this: virtually all of the theoretical foundations underpinning WIP in the extended polity have parallels with WIP in

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[73] The Nuer are a classic example. See especially M. Sahlins, "The Segmentary Lineage: An Organization of Predatory Expansion," *American Anthropologist*, 63, 2 (1961), 322-345 & Evans-Pritchard 1940, 144.

[74] Hammel usefully invokes an alleged "Arab proverb" to describe how this plays out: "Myself against my brother, my brother and I against my cousin, my cousin and I against a stranger." Hammel 2005, 11954. As Aidan Southall notes, the mechanics of uniting segmented lineages through the mobilization of a common ancestor may well not be executed by a pater figure, but is often the work of spiritual specialists who stand outside lineage structures of daily government. Southall, 1988.

the extended family. To elaborate, the power that one node exercises over another in a WIP

network is congruent with the power that a parent exercises over a child, and dependence is the

key factor for both. They are not exactly the same. The parent's power is based on something he

or she holds intrinsically – the experience of conceiving and parenting that particular child. In

contrast, sociologist Richard Emerson persuasively argues that social power is not an "attribute

of (the power-holding) person or group," but rather "power resides implicitly in the other's

dependency."[75] Nevertheless, dependency is always operative. Like anyone who succeeds by

clearly recognizing and targeting the needs of others, the aspiring WIP leader gains power by

implicating others in a state of dependency that mirrors senior-junior family relations.[76]

WIP at the extended polity level also parallels smaller-scale kinship politics in the way

that political membership is defined. Being born into or marrying into a family with "accredited"

membership in a polity are almost universally the most straightforward ways to earn rights of

belonging. But for immigrants, captured persons, and other outsiders petitioning for affiliation,

the theoretical barrier to entry can vary widely. For WIP polities, the path to full belonging

usually resembles that of a consanguineous family: one doesn't typically just apply to join a WIP

polity. Rather, one is adopted into it. Adoption has been a strategy of incorporation used by the

powerful to target desired additions to their "networks of knowledge" as much as by indigent

outsiders seeking security.[77] As is true for many adoptions cross-culturally, (fading) memory and

time are important factors in measuring the extent to which claims of belonging carry full

[75] R. Emerson, "Power-Dependence Relations," *American Sociological Review*, 27, 1 (1962), 31-41.

[76] Even in cases where junior-senior status relations are unstable or become inverted, as is often the case, the basic WIP groundwork remains in place, with a common language of ancestorship, siblinghood, and dependence. For an excellent discussion of these complexities, see P. Landau, *Popular Politics in the History of South Africa, 1400-1948* (Cambridge, UK, 2010), 42-73.

[77] Bay 1998, 71-80.

force.[78] A common pattern for WIP polities was that adoptees did not immediately gain

unmitigated access to all political rights – they were more liable than the native-born to be traded

as slaves, for instance, or could be required to "eat last."[79] This should not be surprising, given

that WIP polities were defined by the reciprocal flow of a finite amount of wealth, and those with

greater "centricity" were thus incentivized to drag their feet on the full incorporation of

newcomers to whose labor they already had access. However, at some point between two and

four generations, an adopted outsider's descendants could usually gain full recognition

(although, if additional considerations were in play, memories could be shortened or elongated as

needed).[80]

In both defining the nature of power (i.e. dependency) and delineating members from

non-members (through descent or its proxies), WIP polities reproduced as metaphor that which

had been simply "fact" in the context of literal kinship politics. Nearly always, it seems, these

borrowings from kinship practice were reinforced by some form of explicit kinship ideology. It

is easy to see why. Invoking the *pater* as well as the household or extended family enabled

leaders to efficiently conjure familiar mental maps of power that simultaneously explained and

justified (or perhaps naturalized) arrangements that were in fact the contingent outcomes of

political contests.

The exact contours and uses of kinship ideology varied from place to place. Nearly

ubiquitous in WIP polities was the deployment of kinship metaphors to differentiate between

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[78] J. Carsten (ed.), *Ghosts of Memory: Essays on Remembrance and Relatedness* (Malden, MA, 2007).

[79] Miers & Kopytoff 1977, 14-49; T. Getz & L. Clarke, *Abina and the Important Men: A Graphic History* (Oxford, 2012), 29.

[80] Miers & Kopytoff *op cit*., Klieman 2003, 78-88; for the flexibility of memory with regard to assertions of lineal belonging, see MacGaffey 2000, 72.

ingroups and outgroups. Indeed, much of the history of ethnicization involves the attempted

reification as a question of "blood ties" what were actually, following Barth, struggles for

political power framed against "otherness," imprecisely defined.[81] The attempt to construct

identities through "blood ties" is of course not unique to WIP, although the paradigm's

underlying assumptions are especially conducive to such projects.[82] When resources such as

good land were seen as scarce, kin-based constructions of insider status could become

heightened. Leaders who managed to convince others of their right to distribute plots of land as

if a household *pater* had pulled off a major coup.[83] Finally, denying membership in a political

community by the outright rejection of kin relations has long been seen as the *sine qua non* of the

indigenous mode of slave production in west-central Africa.[84] What remains constant is the use

of kinship metaphors by the powerful to propagate political inclusion or exclusion.

Ideologies of kinship were almost as ubiquitous as strategies for articulating and

justifying increasingly greater scales of hierarchy in WIP contexts, though such strategies were

diverse and highly localized. Often, kinship frameworks were directly mimicked by ruling elites.

Some central African kingdoms, for example, continued to draw linguistically on the *pater* figure

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[81] As Jonathon Glassman argues, ethnic assertions around "blood ties" are not easily distinguishable from what one might call "racialization" in a different context. J. Glassman, "Slower than a Massacre: The Multiple Sources of Racial Thought in Colonial Africa," *American Historical Review*, 109, 3 (2004), 727-728. See also F. Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (Boston, 1969).

[82] For non-WIP examples, see C. Salmon, "The Evocative Nature of Kin Terminology in Political Rhetoric," *Politics and the Life Sciences*, 17, 1 (1998), 51-57.

[83] Schoenbrun 1998, 142. As Schoenbrun and others point out, the politics of land distribution were often made more complex by the presence of autochthonous groups that held enduring spiritual claims to certain pieces of land. See also Klieman 2003 & C. Lentz, *Land, Mobility and Belonging in West Africa* (Bloomington, IN, 2013), 18-20.

[84] Miller, 1988; P. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge, 2012), 13.

to justify authority, such as the Tio kingdom whose ruler was styled as "grandfather."[85] Kings of

Dahomey, in contrast, were not titled as *pater*, but nonetheless undertook significant efforts to

literally become senior kin relations of their kingdom, collecting perhaps thousands of wives

from a cross-section of old and newly conquered Dahomean families in the royal palace.[86]

Rulers of the Lunda empire instead derived their authority from their apex position in a complex

web of kin relationships, and attempted to solve the problem of flattening described by Hammel

above by claiming that imperial succession involved the metaphysical combination of all

previous rulers in a single person embodied by the living incumbent.[87] The Lunda ruler, it was

claimed, did as a matter of fact maintain every single kinship relationship of his predecessors

simultaneously, making him a sort of *pater* figure to all.

Leaders around the Great Lakes more often revised the *pater* role of WIP through an

ideology of noble lineage rather than replicating kinship claims directly. Here, the ruler was no

longer the metaphorical "father" to all. Right to rule was instead based on descent from a noble

lineage that made one heir to both a special ontological status and a privileged position of

"centricity" *vis-à-vis* the various clans constituting the polity. Founding rulers of the small Soga

kingdoms began their rise to power by fashioning dominant positions of reciprocal obligation

over people with whom they had no claim of shared ancestry, or even shared language.[88] Over

time, a royalist ideology emerged asserting that lineage bestowed upon princes an inborn "fitness

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[85] Vansina 1990, 156.

[86] These women were not cloistered, and therefore helped maintain a personal connection between Dahomean families and the royal lineage by traveling between their homes and the palace. They also performed important administrative duties. See Bay 1998, 142-145.

[87] Heintze 2010, 183-185.

[88] D. W. Cohen, *The Historical Tradition of Busoga: Mukama and Kintu* (Oxford, 1972).

to rule."[89] The kings of Buganda based their rule on multiple positionalities within overlapping networks. They served as patron and adjudicator, but not necessarily *pater*, to both clans constituted along more traditional kinship lines and to managers of public healing shrines.[90] Historian Holly Hanson shows how kings and clan chiefs in Buganda also bolstered their leadership by reconstituting affective dimensions of "real" kinship, discussing (unequal) reciprocal obligations with a language of love.[91] Further east, ruling elites on the Swahili coast carried kinship ideology in an entirely different and paradoxical direction. They constructed fictive lineages hailing from Shirazi, Iran to exclude members of the economic underclass from political power, but also engaged in such lavish displays of WIP gifting that some were bankrupted.[92] In all of these cases, the tactic of justifying power using a universalized *pater* status was abandoned. But it was replaced by a more circumscribed element of kinship thought – lineage ideology – that nevertheless supported the same fundamental WIP strategy of finding centricity in networks of reciprocal obligation.[93] Though only *pater* of a privileged lineage, these rulers extended their influence through such networks.

Thus, in the realms of governance, authority, and the construction of polities, WIP in precolonial Africa did not appear as a grab-bag of discrete practices that aspiring leaders picked and chose from. It appeared as complex and coherent system. This was, at least in part, a result

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[89] L. Fallers, *Bantu Bureaucracy: A Century of Political Evolution Among the Basoga of Uganda* (Chicago, 1970), 141.

[90] Kodesh, 2010.

[91] Hanson 2003, 61-72.

[92] J. Glassman, *Feasts and Riot: Revelry, Rebellion, and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast, 1856-1888* (Portsmouth, NH, 1995), 4; J. Prestholdt, *Domesticating the World: African Consumerism and the Genealogies of Globalization* (Berkeley, CA, 2008), 49-50.

[93] Schoenbrun, 1998.

of constraints inherent in the theories and metaphors upon which WIP was built, described above. It may have also been partly the product of a particular history in central Africa. Jan Vansina persuasively argued that this region hosted a longstanding and deep-rooted "political tradition" of rule through Houses and Big Men, which is nearly synonymous with WIP.[94] Given that the foundational texts of WIP are also all grounded in scholarship on Bantu-speaking central Africa, and that the most obvious and well-known deviations from WIP (Igbo townships, East African pastoralists) fall outside of this broad cultural and linguistic zone, it is fair to ask whether a historically-specific paradigm has been inappropriately exported throughout the continent.[95] Regardless, it is clear that WIP was in most cases instituted as a package, and that the elements of this package could be parsed separately and fit together in ways that would be familiar to scholars of African history and precolonial Africans themselves.

WIP is, I therefore argue, closer to a coherent political ideology than a disjointed collection of practices. As such, it is and was subject to comprehensive critique. Critique from scholars concerned about its blind spots, or the potential that its near-hegemonic gravitational pull distorts our vision of distinct alternatives. Critique also from precolonial Africans who, though most likely familiar with the arguments undergirding WIP, chose not to subscribe to it as their model of government. Specific criticisms from below are not difficult to imagine. WIP, by its very nature, subordinates individuals. It subordinates them economically, for any model of reciprocal debt obligation that is capable of producing longstanding power differentials logically requires continued economic inequality. It also subordinates them politically, for any model of

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[94] Vansina 1990, 249-266.

[95] Although, as in the case of Dahomey cited above, WIP polities clearly were constructed outside of this zone too. Wyatt MacGaffey has elsewhere worried about the perils of "lumping" together explanations that emerge in particular regional contexts with distant parts of the continent. See MacGaffey 2000, 7.

hierarchy that exchanges goods now for labor later cannot avoid limiting agency of action (scholars such John and Jean Comaroff may be too quick to dismiss the possibility of a the notion of a "free individual" in precolonial Africa out of hand).[96] Additionally, for some women, too often subordinated in kin relations while also bearing the brunt of agricultural labor burdens, a model of politics designed around mortgaging their future labor on the basis of kinship ideology may certainly have been less than appealing.[97]

Some Africans said no. A perennially overlooked portion of precolonial Africans did not organize their governments around the WIP model. This rejection was either explicit or implicit at different times and different locations. Many of the decentralized/stateless/acephalous societies occupying Africa's "blank spaces" fit into this category. But concepts such as "decentralization" will not take us far in theorizing such choices. "Centricity" may have been an inextricable component of WIP (I suspect there is no such thing as truly decentralized society that is also governed by the WIP model), and it was certainly important for leaders who occupied central positions. But it is unlikely that the abstract and negatively defined structural concept of "de-centricity" was an aspiration that animated political innovators elsewhere. To develop a positively-construed alternative theory of government, we must think from the vantage point of those located at middling and distant positions in WIP networks. It strikes me that the overarching question was one of property and ownership. Marginal individuals "belonged to" the WIP governmental system just as much as they "belonged in" it; the WIP polity was literally

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[96] J. L. & J. Comaroff 1999, 18.

[97] For differing interpretations of women's labor and kinship burdens in precolonial Africa, see I. Berger & E. F. White, *Women in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Bloomington, IN, 1999) & J. Guyer, "Female Farming in Anthropology and African History," in M. di Leonardo (ed.), *Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge: Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern Era* (Berkeley, CA, 1991), 257-277.

constituted by central figures' holding unbalanced ledgers of debt over their labor. The two most salient questions to ask are then: 1) from what (or whom) is the government constructed? and 2) who owns that government, or at least the unbalanced ledgers that undergird it? Under WIP, the answer is clear: the *pater* is the owner, for the *pater* is the creditor, and the people are his or her wealth. To imagine an alternative we only need reverse this formula. The people are the owner, and what they own are the mechanisms of governance themselves. As anthropologist Victor Uchendu wrote with regard to Igbo political culture, "sovereign power (was) everybody's business."[98] Rather than being a person's thing, the government is a public thing. In other words, it is a *res publica*.

The Res Publica *in Precolonial African History*

An inexorable component of modern world history is the Enlightenment-era replacement of "irrational" bloodline politics – "irrational" both in regard to the legitimization of inherited rule and the definition of political communities as natal – by constitutional republics that deputized authorities and defined citizenship according to impersonal mechanizations.[99] Enlightenment thinkers and politicians drew explicitly on classical western thought to understand and describe public sovereignty, highlighting Greco-Roman historical examples. Noting an apparent paradox, historians have long observed that the same period that saw the emergence of a republican France and United States also ushered innovations in ideologies of race and ethnicity that were more, rather than less, tied to claims of consanguinity. Indeed, the Early Modern period can be

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[98] V. Uchendu, "Ezi Na Ulo: The Extended Family in Igbo Civilization," *Dialectical Anthropology*, 31, 1/3 (2007), 218.

[99] "Republics" here should be broadly construed to include *de facto*, if not *de jure*, republican governments such as the United Kingdom's.

simultaneously characterized by the co-enabling growth of both "legal-rational" governments and pseudo-scientific racial theory.[100] Yet, the irredeemable horrors of slavery, world war, genocide, and oppression produced through this simultaneity have also spawned contested attempts to articulate a purer "legal-rational" conception of political community purged of kinship, or "bloodlines," as a vital feature.[101] American writers on the left and right have continued to mine the western classical tradition to both promote non kin-based visions of belonging and authority that are essentially republican, and to fret their suspected decline.[102] These writers assume past manifestations of these ideas are to be found in Europe, or perhaps Asia. Though they are misguided, writers do not look to premodern Africa for examples of creative political exits from the "insoluble" hegemony of patrimonial politics. Africa is instead where people look to interrogate, celebrate, or decry the resonances of kinship-based politics in a modern nation-state world.[103] We are missing African examples of republicanism in global history.

The word "republic" is derived from the Latin term *res publica*, literally "public thing." The "thing" was the Roman machinery of government, and the defining feature of the Roman

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[100] F. Cooper & J. Burbank, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, 2010); I. Armour, *A History of Eastern Europe, 1740-1918: Empires, Nations, and Modernization* (New York, 2012), 36-39; E. Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1994).

[101] This concept underpins most post-war celebrations of "political liberalism" – but not without dissent. For a particularly influence example, see J. Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York, 1993) & especially M. Friedman, "John Rawls and the Political Coercion of Unreasonable People," in V. Davion & C. Wolf (eds.), *The Idea of Political Liberalism: Essays on Rawls* (New York, 2000), 16-33.

[102] P. Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford, 1997); J. Butler, *Antigone's Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death* (New York, 2000); J. Goldberg, *Suicide of the West: How the Rebirth of Tribalism, Populism, Nationalism, and Identity Politics is Destroying American Democracy* (New York, 2018).

[103] R. Joseph, *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria* (Cambridge, 1987); Bayart, 2009; W. Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States* (Boulder, CO, 1998). For early post-independence celebrations, see: W. Friedland & C. Rosberg (eds.), *African Socialism: A general survey of African socialism with detailed studies of Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Senegal, and Tanzania* (Stanford, 1964).

Republic was that this "thing" was "owned" by the public, rather than by any individual such as a king. Other contemporary usages of the word *res* confirm that the word evoked a sense of ownership. In ancient Roman law, a *res mancipi* was "property" – a plot of land, a slave, and ox – deemed too valuable to be exchanged without a formal conveyance ceremony called a *mancipi*, or 'taking in hand." Less valuable property was *res nec mancipi*, while inherently unowned things (e.g. wild animals) were *res nullius*, "property of nobody."[104] To simultaneously conceptualize ownership as well as the authority imputed to owners, Romans often made recourse to kinship metaphors, especially the *pater* or "father." Roman law granted strong rights to the *pater familias* over his family, including even the right to sell children as slaves. The metaphor of kinship/ownership was sometimes extended to the whole body politic. In the pre-republican era, a king was *pater*; in the post-republican era, the emperor was *pater*.[105] What distinguished the Republic was that, except for during temporary exigent circumstances, there was no one *pater patraie*, or "father of the country." The machinery of government was a thing of the public, not the property of an individual ruler in a patriarchal role. So too, was formal patrimonialism limited. The government was not something which could be part of a *patrimonium*, or "inheritance."

Although the English word "republican" is etymologically related to this Roman history, it captures a phenomenon – public ownership of government – that transcends the ancient Mediterranean.[106] Stripped of millennia of contingently accreted connotations, republican

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[104] C. Letourneau, *Property: Its Origin and Development* (London, 1892), 264.

[105] R. Starr, "Augustus as 'Pater patriae" and Patronage Decrees," *Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 172 (2010), 296-298; D. Favro, "'Pater urbis': Augustus as City Father of Rome," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 51, 1 (1992), 61-84.

[106] See, for example: S. Muhlberger, "Republics and Quasi-Democratic Institutions in Ancient India," in B. Isakhan & S. Stockwell (eds.), *The Secret History of Democracy* (London, 2011), 49-59.

politics are still fundamentally those rejecting the virtually inseverable notions that 1) a

government is the property of an individual, and 2) that this property can be inherited and

therefore justified in perpetuity as either "belonging" to a single lineage or comprising a fictive

extended family.[107] In a republic, the government is owned, or better yet leased, by members of a

civic body. Rules for membership in the civic body can be relatively constricted or liberal, and

this depends on the composition of the "public" (often male, often elite – but not always).[108]

What is essential is that the government be an *institution*, distinct from its ruler and leasable by

those with a rightful claim. For Weber, this question of who owns the mechanism of government

was the most critical means of distinguishing between "patrimonial domination (and) Sultanist

despotism" on one hand, and the "modern state" on the other.[109] For precolonial Africans, this

question determined whether they "belonged to" or simply "belonged in" the polity.

This dissertation attempts to excavate an African model of republicanism from the history

of Proto Ateker-speaking communities and their linguistic and cultural descendants, the Northern

Ateker and the Teso. Ateker-speakers have long lived in quintessentially "decentralized"

societies, maintaining non-personalized institutions. It is not a coincidence that many Ateker

communities are also famous among anthropologists for evincing almost no interest in the details

or histories of kinship and lineage. In search of a paradigmatic alternative to WIP, I am interested

not only in the political institutions Ateker-speakers created, but also in their discursive approach

to questions of leadership, debt, and ownership. Chapter Three examines the centuries preceding

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[107] For accreted connotations, see: R. Hammersley, "Introduction: The Historiography of Republicanism and Republican Exchanges," *History of European Ideas*, 38, 3 (2012), 323-337.

[108] For a classic treatment of how this composition can change, see: J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, MA, 1989).

[109] Weber 2015, 129-198.

900 CE, when Proto Ateker-speakers devised new ways to speak about power and leadership that did not align with the contemporaneous WIP-inflected innovations of their neighbors. At the same time that some Nilotic- and Bantu-speaking neighbors were describing political leadership in kinship terms such as "fatherhood" or with coercive – even dehumanizing – etymologies such as "tying up animals," "taming animals" or "jerking" and "imprisoning," Proto Ateker speakers defined a leader with the word *-puk, from the verb "to open, to uncover, to uncork."[110] While political entrepreneurs in WIP settings employed strategies to integrate the concept of ownership with that of social belonging, Proto Ateker-speakers innovated a new term *-lope "owner," from a morphologically complex root word meaning "a man or woman who stands alone."[111] As outstanding social debt was elsewhere being heralded as a means for claiming access to and membership in supportive WIP networks, Proto Ateker speakers created a new term for "happiness," *-lakara, which literally meant "to free oneself of debt."[112]

Drawing on this shared political tradition, the Northern Ateker and Teso-speaking descendants of the Proto-Ateker engineered distinct and robust sociopolitical deviations from WIP; two instances where politics was not "personalized" in Mazrui's sense, cited above. In particular, this dissertation tells the story of these two East African political communities who, after weathering centuries of disruptive climate change, established resilient, flexible, and dispersed territorial political structures. Rather than deriving government organically from leadership within kin-networks, they created durable and independent political institutions in

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[110] Ateker 130. For non-Ateker glosses, consider: Bari *monye* "lord, master, owner," & "parent"; Acholi *loc* "governance, rule" & "peg fixed in the ground for tying a goat"; Shilluk *jak* "to govern" & "to jerk, as when fishing with a pole a line"; Dinka *mac* "to rule a country" & "to imprison"; Luganda *kufuga* "to rule, control" & "to tame an animal"; Runyoro *lema* "to govern" & "to tame". All lexical sources are listed separately in Appendix IV.

[111] Ateker 87 and Chapter 3.

[112] Ateker 77 and Chapter 3.

which leaders were promoted according to non-lineage considerations such as age and merit. One institution was an age-class governance system called *asapan* that vested power in initiated elders imbued with spiritual authority (Chapters 4 & 5). The other was a series of intercultural neighborhood congresses, named *etem* from the word "hearth," led by temporary elected "speakers" (Chapter 6). *Asapan* and *etem* were not just ideas but also physical institutions; they had a continuous existence as sacred groves owned and protected by the public, set aside for government use, and managed by appointed ruling authorities.[113] These groves were the spatial and material dimension of the "public sphere" that developed in Ateker societies as the existence of a political "public" became more important in Ateker life.[114]

The choice to adopt republicanism in lieu of WIP came at a cost, however, especially for the poorest and most vulnerable who did not have access to the WIP safety nets that scholars such as John Iliffe have fingered as the greatest traditional bulwark against true "destitution."[115] Freedom from debt may have brought "happiness," but it also enhanced vulnerability. Debt, after all, not only produces social superiors. It also gives those superiors an incentive to root for and contribute to your sustenance.[116] For the Teso, maintaining a republican order meant that inequality and extreme poverty became central topics for debate and discussion with no easy

[113] Interestingly and contrastively, "wealth-in-people" power structures that tended not to emphasize political control over territory on a large scale offered complex means for claiming smaller scale spaces of power and production by virtue of ancestral "ownership." See, for two examples from among many, S. Greene, *Sacred Sites and the Colonial Encounter: A History of Meaning in Ghana* (Bloomington, IN, 2002), 64-69 & P. Shipton, *Mortgaging the Ancestors: Ideologies of Attachment in Africa* (New Haven, CT, 2009), 23-108.

[114] I find most useful here Gerard Hauser's definition of a public sphere as "a discursive space in which individuals and groups associate to discuss matters of mutual interest and, where possible, to reach a common judgment about them." G. Hauser, *Vernacular Voices: The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres* (New York, 1999), 61.

[115] Iliffe 1987, 1-8. For a summary of relevant literature, see R. Stephens, "Poverty's Pasts: A Case for Longue Durée Studies," *Journal of African History*, 59, 3 (2018), 399-409.

[116] Graeber 2014, 124-126.

answers. Inequality was unavoidably a challenge to republican government, and as such became a contested matter of civic virtue. Etymologically, a good person in the Teso language was one who "provided water to others" while a bad person was one who "boasted" and likely worse ivory bangles signaling wealth.[117] No fewer than seven new terms were innovated to denote various shades of "greed" in Teso, most of them derived from words describing the antisocial act of not volunteering to share food. A new concept of "prosperity" was developed from the verb "to make equal," while a term for "becoming very wealthy" invoked the image of a poisonous invasive plant.[118] Teso-speakers wrestled with the unfortunate fact that republican ideals of political autonomy are undermined by economic inequality, which tends to blend into debt, and then wealth-in-people. As explored in Chapter 6, this paradox was likely never resolved, but only redirected by the abrupt onset of colonial rule.

For the truly destitute among the Northern Ateker, on the other hand, exit may have provided the best option. So many of the Northern Ateker poor migrated to Teso that the latter developed a word meaning "to beg sorrowfully" from a Northern Ateker root.[119] Others joined a wide range of other neighbors, marrying into more prosperous families. Finally some agreed to become pawns of better-off Northern Ateker families, tending cattle and cultivating sorghum. Notably, because the Ateker did not practice a politics of kinship-defined ingroup/outgroup distinctions, the children of pawns integrated into Northern Ateker political communities, as did so many of their counterparts in west-central Africa.

Republicanism, then, had its own problems and was vulnerable to its own critiques. My aim is not to disparage an old model and celebrate a new one, but rather to insist that we must

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[117] Teso 22; Teso 25.
[118] Teso 10 & Chapter 6.
[119] PNA 12.

not let one crowd out the other. Ateker institutions and the people who created them are historically noteworthy in their own right. *Asapan* age-classes were the brainchild of the Northern Ateker, a group that, by 1800, controlled an area exceeding 20,000 square miles including of seven territorial polities governed by variations of *asapan*. The influence of *asapan* extended even beyond the juridical reach of the Northern Ateker, for the institution was adopted to different degrees by many neighbors before the twentieth century (Chapter 5). Further south, the Teso who engineered *etem* neighborhood congresses drew on centuries of experience migrating into new territories and incorporating foreign peoples to build a territorial governance system that balanced the autonomy of diverse constituencies with the need for localized political cooperation. *Etem* congresses dispersed throughout 3,000 square miles of today's eastern Uganda stood as the political backbone of a densely populated, prosperous, and militarily powerful society by the end of the nineteenth century. But *asapan* and *etem* are also important because of what they represent for African and world history. As institutions of government structurally divorced from kinship, led by temporary office-holders rather than patrons, and operated out of public spaces, they are part of an unwritten history of African republicanism.

The Ateker World and its Historiography: Widening the Lens

The Ateker people are agro-pastoralists who live today in the borderlands of Uganda, South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Kenya. The Ateker-speaking population divides into two broad cultural and linguistic groups.[120] One, known as Teso, comprises those people who speak a range of Teso

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[120] Each Ateker language has a distinct morphology for naming peoples, places, and languages. For example, the Iteso people speak the Ateso language and live in Teso, while the Ngakarimojong (sometimes stylized just Karimojong), speak Ngakarimojong, and live in Karamoja. Rather than require the reader to learn each set of prefixes and suffixes for each of the Ateker groups, I use just the basic root word to describe the language, the population, and the territory.

dialects and primarily live in eastern Uganda, with a small community also found in western Kenya. In the late precolonial era, the Teso were primarily sedentary farmers, growing finger millet, sorghum, and groundnuts. Most also kept some livestock near their homes. Increasing urbanization has recently become a major demographic factor in Teso, and the largest Teso-speaking cities are Soroti, Tororo, and Kumi. The group called "Teso" today has historical roots in a community that has been called variously the "Agricultural Paranilotes" and Ngikatapa ("Bread People") because of their proclivity for cereal cultivation.[121] In this dissertation, the direct linguistic and cultural ancestors of today's Teso are referred to as the "Proto Teso," while the broader Ngikatapa group is called the "Pre-Teso,"

The second group, whom I call the "Northern Ateker," are more pastoralist, more mobile, and today more rural. This group includes the Karimojong, Jie, and Dodos of Uganda, the Toposa and Jiye of South Sudan, the Nyangatom of Ethiopia, and the Turkana of Kenya. Although most Northern Ateker practice a combination of both transhumant pastoralism and sorghum cultivation, the balance between the two differs from group to group. For example, many Dodos are mostly sedentary cultivators, while the Turkana are mostly semi-nomadic herders. The Northern Ateker are sometimes dismissed by urbanites in Uganda, Kenya, and Ethiopia as "backward" and "dangerous," while western visitors who visit Northern Ateker lands often view them as "tribal," "traditional," and untouched by modernity.[122] This mirage of "traditional Africa" has been fueled in part by British colonial policies of enforced neglect

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[121] J. Lamphear, *The Traditional History of the Jie of Uganda* (Oxford, 1976).

[122] The description of urban attitudes toward the Northern Ateker is based on my own experience in the region. One need only to conduct a cursory internet search for any Ateker group's name to find a slew of content about "traditional Africa," "tribal violence," and an "unchanging way of life."

towards these regions. They were cordoned off from colonial economies until the 1950s and still

mostly lack infrastructure such as highways, electrical grids, or public sanitation.[123]

The patina of pre-modernity observers often notice in the Northern Ateker world (and to

a lesser extent in Teso) is of course a fiction.[124] But it nonetheless makes the Ateker world a

prime candidate for that oldest and laziest of tropes about precolonial Africa – that it is a "place

without history." Needless to say, this dissertation's reconstruction of thousands of years of

robust and creative political change in Ateker society quickly dismantles such an assertion. The

point is not worth belaboring.[125] What is more interesting is that the political history uncovered

in the dissertation is not a variation on that common theme in African history: "big men"

collecting followers through reciprocal obligation, legitimized through metaphors of kinship,

until they build a state. Instead, it is a history of durable polities built upon impersonal self-

replicating institutions, where rank in the political sphere was accorded to men (mostly men) on

the basis of initiation into their position within institutions, rather than their lineage or clan. And,

these institutions diffused power between multiple non-overlapping nodes. There was never any

person who could plausibly claim to be an Ateker "chief" or "king," but Ateker populations

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[123] J. Barber, *Imperial Frontier: A Study of Relations Between the British and the Pastoral Tribes of North East Uganda* (Nairobi, 1968); R. Baker, "'Development' and the pastoral peoples of Karamoja, North-Eastern Uganda: an example of the treatment of symptoms," in Theodore Monod (ed.) *Pastoralism in Tropical Africa: Studies presented and discussed at the XIIIth International African Seminar, Niamey, December 1972* (London, 1975), 187-205. The Northern Ateker district of Karamoja in Uganda was designated by British colonial officials as so remote as to be the target for "deportations" of anti-colonial dissidents during the ironically-named "Operation Cold Storage," according to secret colonial archival documents I encountered during my fieldwork.

[124] For the problematic history of such fictions in East Africa – and their obvious invalidity – see Prestholdt 2008, 147-176.

[125] Not because the problematic ideas have been killed off; they were famously repeated by French President Nicolas Sarkozy's during a speech in Dakar as late as 2007. Rather, because those holding such views are unlikely to read this dissertation, anyway. See "Le discours de Dakar de Nicolas Sarkozy," *Le Monde*, 9 Nov 2007,

nonetheless built extensive, clearly-defined, and cohesive political communities. How they did

so is one of the key questions this dissertation seeks to answer.

Until now, very little has been written on the precolonial history of any Ateker peoples.

There are two book-length treatments of the subject: *The Traditional History of the Jie of*

Uganda published by John Lamphear in 1976, and *The Iteso During the Asonya*, published in

1973 by J. B. Webster and his co-authors, C. P. Emudong, D. H. Okalany, and N. Egimu-

Okuda.[126] Since the 1950s, a relatively small coterie of researchers – nine anthropologists, six

historians, a few colonial officials and missionaries, three linguists, and one literary scholar –

have produced work (much of it unpublished) that touches on Ateker precolonial history in some

way, usually trivially.[127]

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[126] Lamphear, 1976 & J. B. Webster *et al.*, *The Iteso During the Asonya* (Nairobi, 1973).

[127] I. Karp, *Fields of Change among the Iteso* (London, 1978); J. C. D. Lawrance, *The Iteso: Fifty Years of Change in a Nilo-Hamitic Tribe* (London, 1957); J. Vincent, *Teso in Transformation: The Political Economy of Peasant and Class in Eastern Africa* (Berkeley, 1982), 161-189; N. Dyson-Hudson, *Karimojong Politics* (Oxford, 1966); P. H. Gulliver, *The Family Herds: A Study of Two Pastoral Tribes in East Africa, The Jie and Turkana* (London, 1955); M. Odada, "The Kumam during the Asonya, c. 1000 – 1908 AD" (Master's Thesis, Makerere University, 1977); D. Okalany, "The Western Migration of the Iteso During the Pre-Colonial Period," (Seminar Paper, Makerere University, 1971); M. Odada, "The Kumam: Langi or Iteso?" (Seminar Paper, Canon Lawrence College, 1969); M. Odada, "The Fusion of the Lwo and Ateker – The Kumam," (Seminar Paper, Canon Lawrence College, 1972); D. Okalany, *The Pre-Colonial History of the Iteso, c.1490-1910* (Master's Thesis, Makerere University, 1980); N. Nagashima, "Two Extinct Age Systems Among the Iteso," in E. Kurimoto & S. Simonse (eds.) *Conflict, Age and Power in North East* Africa (Athens, OH, 1998), 229; P. Spencer, "The Jie Generation Paradox," in P. T. W. Baxter & U. Almagor (eds.) *Age, Generation, and Time: Some Features of East African Age Organizations* (London, 1978), 131-150; R. Vossen, *The Eastern Nilotes: Linguistic and Historical Reconstructions* (Berlin, 1982), 87-96; B. Knighton, *The Vitality of Karamojong Religion: Dying Tradition or Living Faith?* (Burlington, VT, 2005); M. Mirzeler, *Remembering Nayeche and the Gray Bull Engiro: African Storytellers of the Karamoja Plateau and the Plains of Turkana* (Toronto, 2014); A. Pazzaglia, *The Karimojong: Some Aspects* (Bolonga, 1982); O. Emunyu, "Teso: A Hundred Years of Cultural Change (From 1884-1984)," (MAWAZO Workshop Seminar Paper, Makerere University, 1985); C. Ehret, "Population movement and culture contact in the Southern Sudan, c. 3000 BCE to AD 1000: a preliminary linguistic overview," in J. Mack & P. Robertshaw (eds.), *Culture History in the Southern Sudan: Archaeology, Linguistics, and Ethnohistory* (Nairobi, 1982); S. Tornay, "The Nyangatom: An Outline of their Ecology and Social Organization," in L. Bender (ed.), *Peoples and Cultures of the Ethio-Sudan Borderlands* (East Lansing, MI, 1981); H. Müller-Dempf, *Changing Generations: Dynamics of Generation and Age-Sets in Southeastern Sudan (Toposa) and Northwestern Kenya (Turkana)* (Fort Lauderdale, 1989); M. Schroeder, "Nyekimwomor: an Age-Set Ceremony Among the Toposa of Sudan," *Notes on Anthropology*, 9 (1987), 29-39; G. Verswijver, *The Jiye of South Sudan* (Geneva, 2015).

A major limitation of the secondary literature this dissertation builds upon is that, with few exceptions, past researchers have taken as their object of study only single Ateker societies – the Teso, the Turkana, the Jie, etc.– rather than studying the Ateker people as a whole.[128] Two problems arise from this atomized approach to Ateker history. First, it is inadequate for conceptualizing the history of societies that are comprised of highly mobile communities who routinely interact with one another. Today's distinct Ateker societies were in many ways produced through Ateker-speakers' long-distance interactions with one another (see Chapters 5 and 6). Second, the shortcomings of atomization are compounded by the nature of the limited source material researchers have drawn upon. With two exceptions (Vossen and Ehret, neither of whom focused on the Ateker), virtually all current historiography rests on an evidentiary base of oral traditions and ethnography. Both oral traditions and ethnography are weakened as sources when used to study only a single historical community, because it is more difficult to identify changes that may have occurred in the sources during the years intervening between the period one wishes to study and the moment the source is recorded.[129] Major errors in historical reconstruction have been the result. For example, current historical reconstructions of Ateker migration directly contradict one another (Chapter 5), while an age-class system that was borrowed in fairly recent times has been uncritically projected into the deep past (Chapter 6). To minimize this problem, this dissertation relies on comparison between different Ateker groups –

[128] The exceptions are S. Tornay, "Structure et événement: le systèm générationnel des peoples du cercle Karimojong," *L'Homme*, 134 (1995), 51-80; P. H. Gulliver, "The Teso and Karamojong Cluster," *Uganda Journal*, 20 (1956), 213-215; H. Müller-Dempf, "Ateker Generation-Set System Revisited: Field Facts and Findings, and a Systematisation," *Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Papers*, no. 183 (2017); N. Nagashima, "Historical Relations among the Central Nilo-Hamites: An Analysis of Historical Traditions," University of East Africa Social Science Council Conference: *Sociology Papers*, 2, (1968) 338-77. Lamphear, 1976 should also be credited with attempting a robust comparative analysis.

[129] Archaeologist Ann Stahl does an excellent job interrogating the complexities of this problem of "upstreaming" in her *Making History in Banda* (Cambridge, 2001).

their lexicons, their oral traditions, their material cultures, their rituals – to reconstruct a broader Ateker history. Chapter 2 explores this methodology in greater detail.

Political and Environmental History in Dialogue

Aridity and periodic drought are unifying themes of almost all environments inhabited by Ateker-speakers, but underneath this umbrella there exist diverse landscapes, rainfall regimes, and ecozones. Teso is generally the wettest region, receiving on average enough rainfall (> 800mm per annum) to reliably grow finger millet, and hosting a number of permanent lakes and rivers. The Karamoja Plateau in northeastern Uganda, on the other hand, receives less rain (500-600mm per annum), and has a number of riverbeds which only flow during wet seasons. The plateau slowly rises to over 4000 ft. above-sea-level on the northeastern corner of Uganda. To the east, the land then sharply descends down the Rift Valley into the low-lying Turkana plains of northwestern Kenya. These plains stretch out to Lake Turkana and the Omo River and are extremely arid, frequently receiving less than 200mm per annum of rain. To the north, the Karamoja Plateau descends through rocky forested mountains into the semi-arid plains of South Sudan and southwest Ethiopia. The entire Ateker landscape is dotted with protruding rocky mountains ranging in elevation from 500 to 6000 ft. above-ground-level.

This concise description of the climate and topography of the Ateker world is included as an introductory matter because the environment in which Ateker-speakers live has played a significant role in shaping Ateker history. The dissertation's narrative arc is structured around three major climate events. The first is the retreat of the African Humid Period, during which the eastern Sahara dried into a desert, driving the agro-pastoralist ancestors of the Ateker to migrate toward wetter areas (Chapters 2 and 3). The second is the onset of a severe arid period coinciding

with the global Medieval Warm Period. This spurred the divergence of the Proto Ateker

language community as some of its members left their homeland for regions with more

consistent rain while others adopted a new subsistence practice centered on long-distance cattle

herding (Chapters 4 & 6). The third is the return of higher rainfall levels once the Medieval

Warm Period ended, enabling the geographical expansion of communities who had acquired

specialist herding knowledge in the preceding arid centuries (Chapter 5).

The narrative structure laid out above immediately raises a question of agency – if

climate change is the "doer" of historical change, then what role is left for humans? The dangers

in asserting straight-forward causal links between climate change and human history have been

well-described by historian James McCann, who worries that such links have been approached

by historians of Africa in an especially slipshod manner.[130] It is better to think of climate change

as constraining or opening – rather than causing – human action. Climate change rarely dictates

which possible action people will take; it rather changes the calculus they apply when making

decisions.

Using an example from above, the onset of aridity during the Medieval Warm Period

changed the way historical actors weighed different factors while managing subsistence

economies. As years of aridity turned into decades, it must have become increasingly obvious to

Proto Ateker-speakers that the mixed economy of cereal cultivation and localized livestock-

tending they had inherited could no longer be sustained. Some decided that life in their

traditional homeland was no longer for them, so they picked up their belongings, stuffed a few

gourds with seeds, corralled their herds, and moved south towards areas with more predictable

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[130] J. McCann, "Climate and Causation in African History," *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 32, 2/3 (1999), 261-279.

rains. Others decided to stick it out. They modified their subsistence practices to meet new climate realities, splitting their society into two parts for half of every year to take cattle on long treks searching for meager grazing fodder. The fact that different members of the same language community chose divergent paths through climate change is itself a powerful illustration of how people's decisions interact with but are not dictated by their climate.

If the heart of historical cause is human choices, however constrained by environmental and other factors such choices may be, this raises the further question of how historians can access moments of decision and the desires, fears, hopes, and dreams that produce those decisions. Choices are not made by individuals in a vacuum, but are the result of deliberations, exercises of power, and compromises within webs of sociability and structures of control. Decisions are therefore inherently political. Teasing out such questions is always a challenge for scholars, of course. But doing so in a setting without contemporary documents is an extra challenge, and calls for innovative approaches tailored to whatever evidence is available.

Historians of precolonial Africa have been at the leading edge of such innovation. In 1990, Jan Vansina sought to reconstruct an underlying "political tradition" in Equatorial Africa that was used by historical actors to frame their social and political choices, and was maintained over centuries through active re-investment.[131] In 1998, David Schoenbrun identified two ways that Great Lakes Bantu communities conceptualized power – as "creative" or "instrumental" – to understand how those communities reckoned with the ability of people occupying influential social categories to impact the decisions of others.[132] More recently, Kathryn de Luna (2016) offered a methodology for thinking about the role of prominent individuals in a relatively

[131] Vansina 1990.

[132] Schoenbrun 1998.

decentralized political structure by focusing attention on affective means by which social entrepreneurs built and maintained reputations.[133]

One thing these rich and persuasive studies have in common is that they address social contexts in which prominent individuals collected followers through a variety of means.[134] In each case, politics was downstream from the personal reputation of aspiring patrons and/or their reciprocal ties of obligation with clients. Such relationships were often discussed using metaphors of kinship, with certain lineages holding privileged positions.[135] For a leader, political influence in most instances was derived from the accumulation of "wealth-in-people," so that the question of power was fundamentally a question of patronage and clientship. Politics was "personalized," to once again repeat Ali Mazrui's term.

The Ateker case is somewhat different. For the precolonial Northern Ateker, political power was wielded by a council of structurally equal older men comprised of the senior members of whichever age-class was in power. Legitimate authority was derived from position within the age-class institution, and not contingent on factors like lineage, wealth, or charisma (although people were surely not blind to such factors in practice). For the Proto Teso, political power was located in neighborhood assemblies directed by non-hereditary elected speakers. Meanwhile, people strove to limit the accumulation of debt obligations between lineages or individuals that could serve as potential grounds for the emergence of patron-client politics. For all, government functioned as a public thing, or *res publica*.

[133] K. de Luna, *Collecting Food, Cultivating People: Subsistence and Society in Central Africa* (New Haven, CT, 2016).

[134] Perhaps not coincidentally, they are also all studies of Bantu-speaking societies harboring a complicated but undeniable historical connection to the "political tradition" of equatorial Africa described by Vansina in 1990.

[135] For a nuanced discussion and critique of this summary of the equatorial African political tradition, see W. MacGaffey 2005.

Held in common by both of these Ateker-descended societies was the importance of institutionalized assemblies convened at carefully curated sacred groves that served as public spaces. How people gained access to these groves and the deliberations that occurred within them is therefore one of two key questions for understanding Ateker political history.[136] The second asks what other sources of power impinged upon these groves from the outside, or else stood entirely apart from them. In other words, who constituted the political public? In order to write human agency into an environmental history of the Ateker, this dissertation takes as its object of study these political institutions themselves. Why were they created? What problems did they allow people to solve? Why did people participate in them, and when were they challenged? These three questions feature prominently throughout the dissertation. A focus on the history of these political institutions and the spaces in which they existed provides a framework for imagining the debates, questions, and motivations surrounding central political and social questions of the day. In other words, it helps us understand how people made the decisions they did.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 2 introduces the methodological suite supporting the arguments of the dissertation. It begins by discussing the theory underpinning the use of comparative historical linguistics and comparative ethnography as historical sources, drawing on the fraught history of Nilotic linguistics to walk the reader through this dissertation's approach to these questions. Chapter 2

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[136] Gérard Chouin similarly employs an analysis of sacred groves to reconstruct the precolonial history Eguafo in southern Ghana. G. Chouin, "Forests of Power and Memory: An Archaeology of Sacred Groves in the Eguafo Polity, Southern Ghana (c.500-1900 A.D.)" (PhD Dissertation, Syracuse University, 2009). Chouin's work at sacred groves in Ghana would serve as an excellent model for a much-needed archaeological study of Ateker sacred groves.

then offers the first comprehensive linguistic classification of the Ateker family of languages, constructing a "family tree" of Ateker that serves as a scaffolding for writing Ateker history. The chapter ends by outlining the settlement and migration history of Ateker-speakers beginning c. 1000 BCE, after their ancestors had fled a Sahara desiccated by the end of the African Humid Period.

Chapter 3 covers the period 500 BCE to 900 CE, during which the early Ateker established a sedentary agropastoral and clan-based society amidst diverse groups similarly relocated by climate change. The chapter reconstructs the broad contours of the Proto Ateker world. It shows how Proto Ateker-speakers settling in a hilly region marked by diverse ecosystems borrowed techniques for gathering, hunting, and farming from new neighbors while retaining specialized livestock-keeping practices inherited from their linguistic ancestors. Chapter 3 identifies increases in trade, new forms of material culture, and the adoption of iron tools. The chapter then examines the family and political structures that defined Proto Ateker society. The chapter ends at the onset of the Medieval Warm Period, when severe aridity disrupted the Proto Ateker subsistence system, forcing people to choose between adopting a new economy based on mobile herding or migrating south to wetter climes. Chapter 3 is the first scholarly attempt to reconstruct the Proto Ateker world at this level of detail.

Chapters 4 focuses on those who stayed behind, the Northern Ateker. By interpreting oral literatures and ethnographic research through the lenses of linguistics, paleoclimatology, and archaeology, I show how a shift to long distance pastoralism produced anxieties among elder male cattle owners while simultaneously introducing a sense of cross-clan generational identity amongst youthful herders. These twin threads underpinned the growth of an overarching age-class governance system, called *asapan*, in which authority was invested in elders' councils.

Chapter 4 represents the first-ever chapter-length reconstruction of the emergence of an age-class system based on contemporaneous historical evidence – something previous scholars have dismissed as impossible.

Chapter 5 continues a focus on the Northern Ateker. When rains returned after c. 1250 CE, *asapan* was central to the extension of sprawling age-class polities into parts of Uganda, Kenya, and Ethiopia. This chapter traces the movement of Northern Ateker populations across this vast region, examining how *asapan* underwent structural changes among differing Northern Ateker communities in response to localized challenges. Chapter 5 ends by asking how *asapan* became a dominant political influence in the wider region by examining ways that it was borrowed and domesticated by numerous non-Ateker neighbors. This chapter includes sections of ethnographic detail on minority populations in the region based on my own fieldwork and not published elsewhere. It also critically analyzes oral traditions to argue against the current historiography of Northern Ateker migration history, claiming that the highland and lowland Northern Ateker populations diverged earlier than is usually assumed.

Finally, Chapter 6 begins with the establishment of the Proto Teso language community in eastern Uganda, comprised to a large degree by descendants of the cereal farmers who had emigrated south from the Proto Ateker homeland after c. 1000 CE. This chapter traces the migration of early Teso-speakers across today's northeastern Uganda by identifying loan-words from communities along their migratory route with whom they must have interacted. It discusses the ways key Teso social institutions and cultural norms were shaped by increasing population density and the cultural routinization of migration on multiple scales. Most prominent were the clan-based rituals of marriage and childbirth called *etal* and territorial governance assemblies called *etem*. Over time, however, changes to Teso spiritual practices and beliefs empowered a

new political class of diviners, called *imurok*. These diviners stood outside traditional political structures and presented an effective third pole in Teso's political life, further contributing to a durably republican and decentralized form of government.

Chapter Two

Classification and Settlement Chronology, from Proto Ateker to the Present

For parts of sub-Saharan Africa where writing was either not known or not practiced before the colonial era, scholars of the early past are limited by a scarcity of written documents of the kind that historians of earlier periods in Europe, China or the Middle East can take for granted.[1] Historians of Africa, and elsewhere, have met this methodological challenge by turning to alternative sources of different types. Chief among these is archaeology. Pyramids, castles, and tombs of the elite have traditionally drawn the lion's share of excavational attention, but archaeologists have also found success combing the detritus of everyday life to recover the untold histories of regular people.[2] Other common alternative sources for early African history include accounts by early travelers from Europe and the Arabic-speaking world, as well as canons of state-sponsored oral traditions such as those passed down through generations and recounted by the *griots* of West Africa or courtiers of East Africa's Buganda kingdom.[3] In the

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[1] The distinction between ignorance of literacy and choosing not to make use of it is especially important in the context of Ateker-speakers, whose linguistic ancestors were in regular contact with the literate societies of Meroë, and probably ancient Egypt, without finding a convincing reason to adopt writing. M. Brass, "Interactions and Pastoralism Along the Southern and Southeastern Frontiers of the Meroitic State, Sudan," *Journal of World Prehistory*, 28 (2015), 255-288 & C. Ehret, *Sudanic Civilization* (Washington, DC, 2003).

[2] For a good overview of recent changes in archaeological attention, see C. Robin, *Everyday Life Matters: Maya Farmers at Chan* (Gainesville, FL, 2013), especially Part I; for an enlightened treatment of non-elite archaeology on the African continent, see A. Stahl, *Making History in Banda: Anthropological Visions of Africa's Past* (Cambridge, 2001); for excellent treatments of "elite" archaeological sites that shed light on non-elite histories in Africa, see: I. Pikirayi, *The Zimbabwe culture: origins and decline of southern Zambezian states* (Walnut Creek, CA, 2001) & J. C. Monroe & A. Ogundiran (eds.), *Power and Landscape in Atlantic West Africa* (Cambridge, 2012).

[3] The early significant examples from the Greek- and Arabic-speaking worlds are: Unknown Author, *The Peripulus of the Erythraean Sea* (trans. & ed. G. W. B Huntingford) (London, 1980) & Ibn Battuta, *Ibn Battuta in Black Africa* (trans. & eds. S. Hamdun & N. King) (Princeton: Markus Weiner, 2005). Accounts by mid-nineteenth century European travelers have been extremely helpful in reconstructing the history of the Kongo kingdom in west-central Africa; see M. Newitt (ed.), *The Portuguese in West Africa, 1415-1670: A documentary history* (Cambridge, 2010). I am referring here to a specific type of oral tradition common in non-literate centralized states such as those recorded in D. T. Niane, *Sundiata: an epic of old Mali* (Harlow, UK, 1994) & A. Kaggwa, *The kings of Buganda* (trans.

past five decades, a growing number of Africanist historians have embraced yet another source,

historical linguistics. These scholars construct windows unto the past using the histories of words

to trace long-term historical change on the continent. [4] At its best, this method is combined with

other types of evidence, including all those mentioned above (when available), as well as

findings from fields such as paleoclimatology. This dissertation represents one such effort, and in

the present chapter I describe the methodological principles and frameworks undergirding my

reconstruction of the history of the Ateker language communities of eastern Africa.

Ateker-speakers were non-literate in the precolonial era, so they produced no

documentary sources to examine. Unfortunately, archaeological evidence is almost as scarce:

being mobile agro-pastoralists, Ateker-speakers never engaged in large permanent building

projects such as Great Zimbabwe or the Munsa earthworks in Uganda. [5] Although mobile agro-

pastoralists can leave physical traces of herding economies through deposits of domesticated

animal bones and, sometimes, of cereal cultivation, virtually no sustained archaeological

research relevant to periods and places of likely Ateker occupation has been conducted. [6]

& ed. M. S. M. Kiwanuka) (Nairobi, 1971). For a pioneering theoretical treatise on the use of these kinds of sources, see J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison, WI, 1985).

[4] Prominent examples include: C. Ehret, "Southern Nilotic history: linguistic approaches to the study of the past" (Evanston, IL, 1971); J. Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforest: toward a history of political tradition in equatorial Africa* (Madison, WI, 1990); D. L. Schoenbrun, *A green place, a good place: agrarian change, gender, and social identity in the Great Lakes region to the 15th century* (Portsmouth, NH, 1998); C. Ehret, *An African Classical Age: Eastern and Southern Africa in World History* (Charlottesville, VA, 1998); R. Stephens, *A history of African motherhood: the case of Uganda, 700-1900* (Cambridge, 2013); K. de Luna, *Collecting food, cultivating people: subsistence and society in Central Africa* (New Haven, 2016). All of these works contain extensive methodology chapters which can be referred to for further information on the application of historical linguistics.

[5] Pikirayi, 2001; P. Robertshaw, Archaeological survey, ceramic analysis, and state formation in western Uganda," *African Archaeological Review*, 12, 1 (1994), 105-131.

[6] Significant archaeological exploration has occurred in areas occupied today by Ateker-speakers, but few (if any) findings are direct attestations of Ateker communities. The most famous example is the early Pleistocene skeleton of "Turkana Boy" discovered by Richard Leakey's team in 1984. Others include early Holocene occupations of Lake Turkana's shoreline and, of more relevance to the present topic, rock art sites in Teso and Turkana and sites near

Moreover, while Ateker-speakers maintain a strong repertoire of folklore and oral traditions,

these stories are questionable historical sources beyond a time-depth of 100-200 years. As

literary scholar Mustafa Mirzeler shows, they are commonly subject to rhetorical reshaping by

speakers deploying them for strategic purposes.[7] They also tend to lack the sort of poetic

structures, memory-aid formulas, or genealogical lists often found in court-sponsored royal

traditions. Finally, although a coterie of traveling European missionaries, explorers, and soldiers

documented their interactions with a variety of Eastern Nilotic-speaking communities throughout

the nineteenth century, their paths did not cross with those of Ateker-speakers until late in the

nineteenth-century, often after imperial "rule" had already been established on paper.[8]

Lake Turkana likely occupied by close predecessors of the Ateker in the region. R. Leakey & A Walker (eds.), *The Nariokotome Homo erectus skeleton* (Cambridge, MA, 1993); A. Beyin *et al.*, "New radiocarbon dates for terminal Pleistocene and early Holocene settlements in West Turkana, northern Kenya" *Quaternary Science Reviews*, 168 (2017), 208-215; N. David, "The Archaeological Context of Nilotic Expansion: A Survey of the Holocene Archaeology of East Africa and Southern Sudan," in R. Vossen & M. Bechaus-Gerst (eds.) *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Language and History of the Nilotic Peoples, Cologne, January 4-6, 1982* (Berlin, 1983), 37-107; C. Namono "Dumbbells and Circles: Symbolism of Pygmy rock art of Uganda," *Journal of Social Archaeology*, 12, 3 (2012), 404-425. Lynch and Robbins suggest a correlation between "Turkwell ware" pottery and Eastern Nilotes, but this is rejected in the current dissertation in favor of Ambrose's identification of Lanet Ware with Eastern Nilotes (see below). In any case, the dating is too early to have been Turkana or another Ateker group, and if Turkwell ware is associated with an Eastern Nilotic group, it is probably early Maa-speakers. See B. M. Lynch & L. H Robbins, "Cushitic and Nilotic Prehistory: New Archaeological Evidence from North-West Kenya," *The Journal of African History*, 20, 3 (1979), 323-328. Only two preliminary excavations have been completed in Ateker-occupied regions at time-depths corresponding to Ateker occupation. The first, by a Michigan State University team in 1970, was at the southern edge of the Ateker-speaking region in a site likely occupied by a non-Ateker So (Tepeth) group and was apparently not followed up because of the onset of the Idi Amin regime. A second promising preliminary survey of a series of Karimojong sacred groves in 2009-2010 by the British Institute in East Africa yielded potentially interesting results but has not yet led to further research. L. H. Robbins *et al.*, "Rangi: A Late Stone Age Site in Karamoja District, Uganda," *Azania: Archaeological Research in Africa*, 12, 1 (1977), 209-233; M. Davies, "Landscape, environment, and settlement of Karamoja, Eastern Uganda c. 2000 BP to present: Preliminary report on first season of fieldwork" (Nairobi, 2010).

[7] M. K. Mirzeler, *Remembering Nayeche and the gray bull Engiro: African storytellers of the Karamoja Plateau and the Plains of Turkana* (Toronto, 2014).

[8] For a survey of early European encounters with Eastern Nilotes, see O. Köhler, "The early study of the Nilotic languages of the Sudan, 1812-1900 – Part I," *Sudan Notes and Records*, 51 (1970), 85-94. The earliest dates of sustained European encounters with Ateker groups include: Turkana (1888), Karimojong (1898), and Teso (1900). See also P. J. Imperato, *Quest for the Jade Sea: Colonial Competition Around an East African Lake* (Boulder, CO, 1998).

Yet, while Ateker-speakers from long ago left little in the way of physical evidence for historians, they did pass down something else: their language. Ateker-speaking communities inherited a complete package of phonetics, grammar, and vocabulary from their Eastern Nilotic-speaking forebears, but over many centuries they collectively modified this package for their own purposes to meet ever-changing circumstances. Individual speakers found new names for new concepts, either innovating words from their existing lexicon or borrowing them from neighbors. Words that caught on became a permanent part of the language, just as words denoting obsolete concepts were often eventually forgotten. In the background of this conscious process of lexicon adjustment, another unconscious process slowly changed how the language sounded. We know this because it is a universal law of human language that 1) any given language community will – slowly, imperceptibly, but inevitably – change the pronunciation of certain phonemes, and 2) that change will be both unpredictable (or, arbitrary) and regular.[9] Linguist Rainer Vossen has done much to reconstruct the contours of these regular phonological changes within the Eastern Nilotic language family (Appendix III).

The value of language as a historical source is found at the nexus of these conscious and unconscious processes. The unintentional, random, impersonal, regular nature of sound change provides a solid framework for reconstructing words from the past. Words themselves index individual moments of linguistic creativity that were valued and adopted by entire language

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[9] Sound changes are arbitrary and unpredictable in the sense that there is no particular reason why one sound change should occur as opposed to another, even though there are certain commonly-occurring patterns that account for the majority of changes. A familiar example of the regularity of sound change is the word-initial Indo-European phoneme /p/, which was retained in Latin but shifted to /f/ in English and all other Germanic languages, and thereby produced not just the correspondence of 'father/pater', but also 'fish/pisci', and 'foot/ped'. For a broader introduction to the topic, see L. Campbell, *Historical linguistics: an introduction 3rd ed.* (Cambridge, MA, 2013) & G. Dimmendaal, *Historical Linguistics and the Comparative Study of African Languages* (Philadelphia, 2011).

communities, a process which reflects contexts of the use of language in these communities.

Some words have natural referents that remain virtually constant over millennia – "elephant" and

"moon" are good examples. However, some words have referents that are cultural constructs and

thus cannot be assumed to have remained unchanged over time. A language family's shared

word for "house," for example, may stay in a lexicon for centuries, while the physical structure

to which the word refers changes with new materials and building techniques. Often the trickiest

meanings to adduce from the past are immaterial concepts such as "freedom" or "ownership."

For all words that have referents which are culturally constructed, it is the historian's duty to ask

how those referents may have changed or not, and what that change means for understanding the

context in which words were produced. Moreover, word histories can never divulge the names of

significant individuals nor recount their specific deeds. But all types of sources have limitations

of one kind or another. Listening to a *griot's* ballad or reading an archived document, for

example, tells us little about whether the majority of regular people found that ballad or

document convincing and useful, or even if they were even aware of it. Words, on the other

hand, can only enter a language and be retained across generations if large swaths of a language

community know about it and find it worthwhile. There is something democratic about word

histories.

Of the historical sources available for Ateker history, language provides the best means

for accessing ideas from the deep past. But there are avenues, in addition to the archaeology, oral

traditions, and travelers' accounts discussed above, that can lead to more nuanced context for

understanding linguistic changes and the histories they represent. The first is paleoclimatology.

Most Ateker communities live today, as they did long ago, in places where rainfall is

unpredictable and consistent access to water and food remains an open question for both

livestock and people. Research on various physical proxies for earlier climates found in core samples of lake sediments, for example, can provide estimated dates for past climate events such as long wet- or dry-spells. This information, when combined with other chronological evidence, can provide an environmental context which helps explain broad social choices to migrate, adopt a new type of grain, or develop a novel herding technique.

The second, which should only be approached with great methodological care, is comparative ethnography. At its core, comparative historical ethnography rests on the assumption that, if a certain socio-cultural practice exists with many similar components in two or more communities known to be linguistically related, then the practice may date to the period before those different communities underwent a linguistic divergence.[10] The principal danger of this approach arises from the fact that socio-cultural practices, unlike phonemes, are not arbitrary. It would be highly questionable, for example, to note that two linguistically-related communities use the same building materials and assume this was true in the past, when the reason might very well be that those building materials have some practical benefit, which led them to be adopted later by both groups separately, either through borrowing or independent innovation (i.e., 'convergence'). The more complex and specific a correlation is, the stronger chance it has of being inherited from an earlier past. Take for example two Ateker language communities: the Nyangatom of Ethiopia and the Teso of Uganda. They live hundreds of miles apart and had little to no direct contact in the late precolonial era. Both groups have a tradition of ritual community punishment towards violators of exogamy rules. By itself, this fact has little historical significance, because most human groups have some sort of strictures against

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[10] The first person to make this point using robust scholarly techniques was E. Sapir, *Language: an Introduction to the Study of Speech* (New York, 1921).

endogamy. But after adding more specific detail – in this case, the punishment in both communities is for the offenders to be stripped naked, put in a house which is set on fire, and then beaten by a line of community members as they flee the conflagration – the odds favoring this particular practice's antiquity increase.

If practices can be tied to reconstructed vocabulary, the odds become all the better that the two practices have a common origin in an earlier cultural context.[11] Staying with the Nyangatom/Teso example, elder men from both groups drew strikingly similar diagrams when I asked them about tactical procedures for offensive military operations. Alone, this may just be a coincidence based on the efficacy of these tactics, but the fact that many vocabulary items related to warfare, such as versions of the Proto Ateker root *-kodet "flank of an army," appeared in both discussions supports the hypothesis that such tactics date to an earlier period.[12] Current practices must not be projected into an unchanging "ethnographic past." But, it would also be a disservice to risk semantically flattening vocabularies by ignoring comparative ethnographic data that can enrich our understanding of language by illuminating contexts of use. It is ultimately the responsibility of both the historian and reader to evaluate the strength of appeals to comparative ethnography on a case-by-case basis. To aid the reader in making such an evaluation, the historian must also candidly assess the quality of (and politics surrounding) the production of any ethnographic data, which can vary with the observer and setting.

This wide array of sources lies beneath the broad outlines of Ateker history over the past two millennia presented below. The where, when, and who in this story emerges primarily from

[11] TE, Kibale, 27 April 2017; NY, Jinka, 30 March – 05 April, 2017; Ateker 61.

[12] TE, Mukongoro, 13 February, 2017; NY, Jinka, 30 March – 05 April, 2017.

a linguistic classification of the Ateker language family into sub-groups. This classification is the first attempted for the entire family. It provides an essential framework for the remainder of the dissertation, because writing a history based on reconstructed vocabulary requires one to have a well-developed linguistic "family tree" in order to know which lines of linguistic descent specific lexical items should be traced through. In addition to being a technical linguistic tool indispensable for verifying accurate word reconstructions, a linguistic classification is also a historical argument in its own right. Asserting that Proto Ateker once existed as a single language family that later diverged into various linguistic sub-groups also asserts the physical existence of past communities of people who lived, spoke, and worked together – and whom can thus be located in time and space.

Studying the Eastern Nilotic Languages: Past and Present

Nine Ateker languages are today spoken in four east African countries: Uganda (Karimojong, Teso, Jie, Dodos), Kenya (Turkana, Tesyo – a dialect of Teso), South Sudan (Toposa, Jiye) and Ethiopia (Nyangatom).[13] Just as today's various dialects of Arabic are related to Hebrew and

[13] The distinction between a "language" and a "dialect" is at once politically contentious and linguistically almost meaningless. Norwegian and Swedish, for example, have high degrees of mutual intelligibility but are considered by many to be different "languages" while variations of global English can be very difficult for outsiders to comprehend but are the same "language." Based on a standard of mutual intelligibility, it could plausibly be argued that there are only two or three Ateker "languages" (Teso, Karimojong, and perhaps separately Turkana) while all others are dialectal variations. Because there is no difference in how the methodology of historical linguistics is applied to a "dialect" vs. a "language" it would be equally analytically valid to consistently adopt either term. I choose the term "language" for two reasons. First, there is a toxic legacy in western scholarship of referring to African languages as "dialects" in a pejorative sense, as somehow less than "real" languages, and I want to push back against that (J. Glassman, personal communication, 2015). Second, drawing on the Scandinavian standard, I use the term "language" because, with the exception of Teso, Ateker speechways generally map onto discrete precolonial political entities. To avoid any confusion on this point, it must be noted that despite clear differences in pronunciation a Turkana-speaker can easily converse with a Toposa-speaker, and when speaking slowly a Karimojong-speaker can make himself understood to the same Turkana-speaker. See C. Gooskens, "Linguistic and extra-linguistic predictors of inter-Scandinavian intelligibility," *Linguistics in the Netherlands* (2006), 101-113.

Phoenician because of common descent from their ancestral language Proto Semitic, the various Ateker languages find linguistic "cousins" in two other African language families: Lotuxo-Maa (including prominently Maasai and Ongamo from Kenya and Tanzania, and Lotuxo from South Sudan) and, a bit more distantly, Bari-Kakwa-Mondari (including prominently Bari and Mondari from South Sudan, and Kakwa from northwestern Uganda). All of these languages are descended from one single language called Proto Eastern Nilotic – itself part of the even older Nilotic language group and then more ancient still, the grand Nilo-Saharan language phylum spread across much of central and northern Africa.[14] The linguistic integrity of a separate Eastern Nilotic language family was definitively proven in 1982 by Rainer Vossen, who identified two primary branches, Bari-Kakwa-Mondari on one hand, and Teso-Lotuxo-Maa (called "Tung'a" here) on the other, along with a later divergence between Teso-Northern Ateker (called "Ateker" here) and Lotuxo-Maa. Vossen did his fieldwork in the 1970s. Because of the hostile research climate engendered by Idi Amin's regime in Uganda, he only developed a compelling classification of the Lotuxo-Maa subgroup, leaving a parallel project in the Ateker languages to later research (Figure 2.1).[15] This chapter may be seen in part as an attempt to complete his work. But before doing so it is important to briefly review the history of linguistic scholarship in Eastern Nilotic languages and describe its current state.

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[14] For the best current argument in favor of Nilo-Saharan as a distinct language phylum as well as a complete classification of Nilo-Saharan, see: C. Ehret, *A historical comparative reconstruction of Nilo-Saharan* (Cologne, 2001).

[15] R. Vossen, *The Eastern Nilotes: linguistic and historical reconstructions* (Berlin: D. Reimer, 1982), 114.
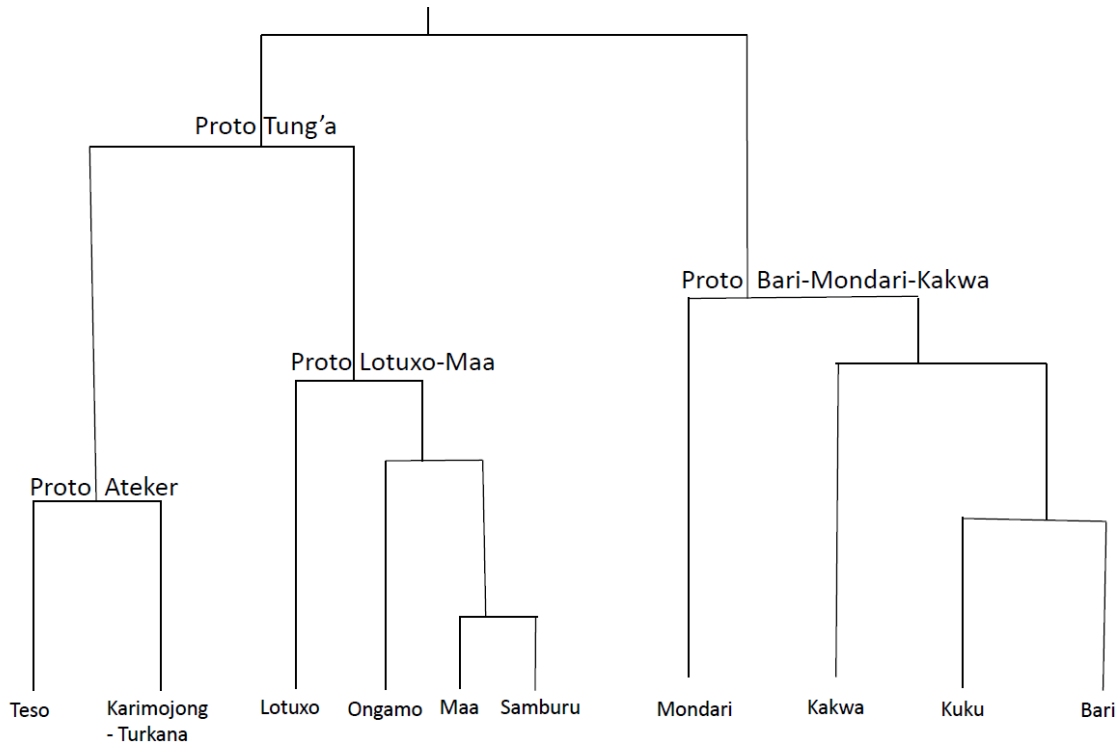
Figure 2.1 – Linguistic Tree of Selected EN Languages, Adapted from Vossen (1982)

Any study of the Tung'a language family (i.e. Teso, Karimojong, Maasai, Lotuxo, etc.) must contend with a theory that might be the original sin of African historical linguistics: namely, the "Nilo-Hamite" hypothesis. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, an assortment of Europeans acting as (mostly) amateur linguists noticed a series of vocabulary correspondences between the Cushitic languages of the Afro-Asiatic and Tung'a languages. A mistaken conception of Cushitic as a sub-division of a hypothesized, and later disproven, larger "Hamitic" branch of the Afro-Asiatic phylum led many observers to assert a common ancestry of Tung'a and Hamitic.[16] They quickly jumped from these apparent similarities to the conclusion that speakers of Tung'a languages represented a linguistic and racial admixture of "Hamitic" and

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[16] E. Sanders, "The Hamitic Hypothesis: Its Origin and Functions in Time Perspective," *Journal of African History*, 10, 4 (1969), 521-532.

Nilotic peoples – *ergo*, the "Nilo-Hamites" (also, "Half-Hamites").[17] Because Cushitic languages

are related to Hebrew within the broader Afro-Asiatic phylum, many colonial figures assumed

that "Nilo-Hamites" were descendants of Noah's son Ham from the Book of Genesis, famously

cursed for revealing his father's nakedness.[18] A conglomeration of unsupported racist theories

linking either Nilotes or "Nilo-Hamites" to any manifestations of socio-political complexity in

East Africa informed much European scholarship in the early twentieth century, and the term

"Nilo-Hamite" is still retained in local historical discourse today.[19] Despite being based solely on

a small set of what are clearly Cushitic loanwords into Tung'a, the "Nilo-Hamitic" myth

maintained dominance in linguistic circles throughout the early twentieth century. Its dismantling

was begun by the famed linguist Joseph Greenberg in the late 1950s, who demonstrated beyond a

reasonable doubt that Tung'a languages are – morphologically, phonologically, and lexically –

entirely within the Nilotic family of the broader Nilo-Saharan language phylum.[20]

The "Nilo-Hamite" myth notwithstanding, some early twentieth-century writers did

recognize linguistic similarities between Tung'a-speakers and Bari-Mondari-Kakwa speakers

from southwestern Sudan and northwestern Uganda. Sir Harry Hamilton Johnston, a colonial

official who did much to establish formal British control over Uganda in 1900, published

[17] For "Half-Hamite," see G. W. B. Huntingford, "On the Classification of the Half-Hamites of East Africa," *Man*, 39 (1939), 187-190.

[18] Köhler, 1970; J. Burton, "Nilotic Studies: Some Past Problems and Prospects," *Anthropos*, 83, 4/6 (1988), 453-468; *The Book of Genesis*, 9:20-27.

[19] For a mid-colonial academic account of "Hamites" see C. G. Seligman, *Races of Africa* (London, 1930) & This myth persists today within Africa, for example the forward to a recent clan list compiled by the Iteso Cultural Union based in Soroti, Uganda provides a historical overview that includes a description of Teso's early history in Egypt.

[20] J. Greenberg, "Nilotic, 'Nilo-Hamitic', and Hamito-Semitic: A Reply," *Africa*, 27, 4 (1957), 364-378. The debate lasted a bit longer, though. See J. Hohenberger, "Some Notes on Nilotic, 'Nilo-Hamitic', and Hamito-Semitic, by Joseph H. Greenberg," *Africa*, 28, 1 (1958), 37.

wordlists comparing Turkana, Maasai, Karimojong, and Bari (along with the "Hamitic" Somali

language among others) in 1902.[21] Later in 1926 the enigmatic Lord Raglan, a colonial official

in in Sudan, noticed a series of vocabulary correspondences between Turkana, Lotuxo, and Bari.

He published the first attempt to reconstruct root words in the protolanguage known today as

Eastern Nilotic.[22] Following his rejection of the "Nilo-Hamitic" category in the 1950s,

Greenburg published his seminal work *The Languages of Africa* in 1963. With assistance from

German linguist Oswin Köhler, Greenburg divided Nilotic into three primary branches – Eastern

Nilotic (Teso, Maasai, Bari, etc.), Western Nilotic (Lwo, Nuer, Shilluk, etc.), and Southern

Nilotic (Kalenjin, Okiek, etc.) – which remain essentially valid today.[23] With the term "Nilo-

Hamitic" having been rejected, scholars from different disciplines adopted a bewildering array of

labels to denote the larger Teso-Lotuxo-Maa group and its more restricted descendent family,

Teso-Northern Ateker. Only in the 1990s did the terms "Tung'a" for the former group (because

of the common root for "person" in all member languages) and "Ateker" for the latter (because

of a meaning roughly akin to "our people" in all member languages) gain permanent footholds

across disciplines.[24]

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[21] H. H. Johnston, *The Uganda Protectorate* (London, 1902), 903-932.

[22] (Lord) Raglan, "Some roots common to the Turkana, Lotuko, and Bari Languages," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, 4 (1926), 427-428.

[23] J. Greenberg, *The Languages of Africa* (Bloomington, IN, 1963).

[24] "Ateker" has a range of meanings in different Ateker languages, but all semantically overlap with a vague notion of "our people," which is not found in Lotuxo-Maa. This title was originally proposed by historian J. B. Webster in 1973. Following the same principle that generates the language family name "Bantu" from the common root *-ntu "entity/person," Ehret and others have adapted colonial official A. C. A. Wright's nomenclature Tung'a to designate the group including both Teso and Maasai. See J. B. Webster, "Usuku: The Homeland of the Iteso," in J. B. Webster *et al.*, *Iteso During the Asonya* (Nairobi, 1973), xxi. Another common term the reader may encounter as a replacement for "Nilo-Hamite" is "Paranilote."

The current definitive work on Eastern Nilotic historical linguistics is Vossen's 1982 book, *The Eastern Nilotes*, which expands upon Greenberg's earlier broad classification in two important ways. First, Vossen (himself a protégé of Greenberg's collaborator Köhler) attempts a more fine-grained classification that drills down to smaller sub-groups of Eastern Nilotic, including Proto Tung'a and Proto Ateker, much in the same way that I attempt in the section below to further refine the Ateker family into even smaller sub-groups. More importantly, Vossen employs the "comparative method" to improve the accuracy of his classification over that offered by Greenberg. Its anodyne appellation notwithstanding, the comparative method is a powerful tool developed by many generations of linguists in order to reconstruct the sounds and meaning of words in languages which no longer exist. Its utility and accuracy have been proven in dramatic instances when predictions about the sounds, lexicons, and even existence of unknown Proto Indo-European language communities were later proven correct by documentary discoveries.[25] Because the comparative method provides the theoretical foundation for much of my current Ateker classification, it is worth taking the time to explore how Vossen's use of it improved Greenberg's earlier language classification.

Greenberg tackled the gargantuan task of classifying *every* African language family without the benefit of modern computing and in the face of pernicious myths such as the "Nilo-Hamitic" hypothesis. He utilized a quick but imprecise method he called "mass comparison" to develop his classification. He began by creating lists of English meanings for which he sought translations in various languages, and then took note of obvious phonological similarities between languages. Greenberg then proposed that African languages held a degree of

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[25] C. Renfew, *Archaeology and Language: The Puzzle of Indo-European Origins* (Cambridge, UK, 1987), 42-74.

relatedness with one another as a function of the rate of shared similarities. For example, the fact that nearly every Eastern Nilotic language has a word similar to *-kolong denoting "the sun" would be a point in favor of Eastern Nilotic as a distinct family. In case of the Nilotic languages, "mass comparison" worked well enough to identify the three primary branches (Eastern, Western, Southern) that are still accepted by linguists today.

However, there are significant limitations to this method stemming from its inattention to phonological change and word histories that make it susceptible to both over- and under-counting cognates (i.e. words held in common by related languages because they have been retained from an earlier period). Probably the biggest risk lays in misidentifying recently borrowed words as evidence of an early relationship. In East Africa many languages share words borrowed from Swahili [Ateso & Karimojong: *esaapali (*Swahili: *safari)* "journey", and Ateso, Karimojong & Luganda: *edini* (Swahili: *dini*) "religion"] or from English (Ateso & Karimojong: *emotoka* "motorcar") but these late borrowings have no bearing on earlier relationships. If we think about the English language, this problem is easily recognized: Greenberg's "mass comparison," if applied to English would probably erroneously declare a genetic relationship with French on the basis of shared vocabulary. However, these sharings are a result of French lexicons that accompanied the Norman conquest of 1066, and English and French are in fact no more genetically related than either is to Russian. A second concern, leading in this case to under-estimating relatedness, is that true cognates can be missed because of regular phonological changes that make related words appear unrelated because they are pronounced differently. Thinking again about English, Latin *ped* and English "foot" *are* in fact cognate and evidence of a common Indo-European heritage, even if the two words share no phonemes today. Finally, there is always the risk of false cognates due to pure coincidence, such as the Proto Ateker word *-rot

"road" and English "road" or Spanish "mucho" and English "much." By just looking at superficial similarities, all of the above words could be miscounted.

Working at Greenberg's macro-scale these counting errors may be statistically acceptable, but in a lower-level classification of individual families they can prove fatal. Both Vossen and I have applied a set of tactics developed by earlier linguists to avoid such missteps. The first, famously promulgated by linguist Morris Swadesh, is to only search for cognates within so-called "core vocabularies," or lists of words that signify near-universal elements of human experience and, because of their universality, are less likely to be borrowed by speakers seeking to name new concepts.[26] By counting only translations for concepts like "sun," "head", and "sleep" one can minimize interference related to borrowing of foreign concepts, like "religion" or "motorcar."[27] Over time, languages still do replace a number of these core vocabulary items, either through borrowing from neighbors or attaching new meanings to extant words, but such changes tend to accumulate slowly in a statistically randomized fashion. To construct his core vocabulary list, Vossen modified a version Swadesh's original list, removing irrelevant concepts such as "snow," and eventually arrived at 157 items which he translated into eighteen Eastern Nilotic languages.

Before commencing my own fieldwork, I further reduced the list to 150 items by removing words I found semantically confusing, such as Vossen's distinction between "river"

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[26] M. Swadesh, "Lexicostatistic Dating of Prehistoric Ethnic Contacts." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 96 (1952), 452–463.

[27] To be fair to Greenberg, he never included obviously unproductive concepts like "motorcar" in his wordlists, although he did include socially-loaded terms such as "to marry" which would normally be excluded from any core vocabulary. For a critique of Greenberg's methods, see E. Westphal, "Review: The Languages of Africa by Joseph Greenberg," *American Anthropologist*, 66 (1964), 1446.

and "lake" on the grounds that it fails to adequately capture the topographical nuances of slow-moving swamps and dry riverbeds common in the Ateker world. About halfway through my fieldwork I eliminated another fifteen words on the grounds that they were either semantically confusing to interlocuters (for example, if one takes a napkin to remove crumbs from a table has she "wiped" or "swept" the table?) or routinely encountered extreme idiolectal variation in pronunciation between individual speakers (often the case of most pronouns and numbers). Although I used twenty-two fewer items than Vossen, I refrained from adding any items not on his list in order to allow statistical comparison between my list and his. The other significant difference between our lists was that, because I focused only on Ateker, I was able to collect words in eight of nine Ateker languages (excluding Jiye, speakers of which were unavailable to me because of civil war in South Sudan), whereas Vossen, being restricted from entering Uganda, only collected full datasets on Karimojong (by proxy), Turkana, and Teso – the latter of which was the unrepresentative Tesyo dialect spoken in western Kenya.[28] Finally, although Vossen included "Teso" as only one language, I have followed up on anthropologist Nobuhiro Nagashima's observation of Teso's internal dialectal variation by undertaking a comprehensive dialect study of the Teso region.[29] This yielded four distinct dialect regions, including Kenyan Tesyo (Vossen's "Teso") as the greatest outlier.

The next step in language classification after compiling translations for a core vocabulary wordlist is simply to count the number of translations each language shares in common, and convert that number to a percentage. One can then look for clusters of higher percentages certain

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[28] Vossen also utilized an incomplete dataset of the Nyangatom language but ultimately excluded it from his own classification. Vossen, 1982, 115.

[29] N. Nagashima, "Two Extinct Age-Set Systems Among the Iteso," in E. Kurimoto & S. Simonse (eds.), *Conflict, Age & Power in North East* Africa (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1998), 229.

groups of language hold in common to determine likely linguistic subgroups. During this step, Vossen found that three Ateker languages shared between 75-85% of core vocabulary with one another, but only ~31% of the same vocabulary with various Maa languages, and ~26% with Bari-Mondari-Kakwa languages (Figure 2.2). This same pattern held between each subgroup, leading Vossen to produce the below "family tree" of Eastern Nilotic.[30]

Teso									
76.4	Turkna								
75.5	85.6	Karimj							
31.2	32.5	33.8	Maasai						
32.0	32.0	33.3	89.7	Sambu					
40.1	38.6	37.8	60.0	59.8	Ongam				
28.7	29.3	27.8	36.3	35.3	34.8	Lotuxo			
29.3	28.0	29.1	34.3	34.0	30.8	29.9	Bari		
23.2	21.8	21.8	27.8	27.3	37.9	27.1	73.5	Kakwa	
26.6	26.0	26.6	31.2	31.4	33.3	27.3	71.4	61.1	Monda

Figure 2.2 – Selected Shared Cognate Percentages, as calculated by Vossen (1982)

Vossen's classification aids in reconstructing historical vocabulary. It is also a historical argument for the existence of a Proto Tung'a community that separated from the early Proto

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[30] For an excellent applied study of this method, see C. Ehret, "Bantu Expansions: Re-Envisioning a Central Problem of Early African History," *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 34, 1 (2001), 5-41, esp. 13-14.

Bari-Mondari-Kakwa language community at some point in the past, and then a later Proto
Ongamo-Maa community that lived separate from the early Proto Ateker community. The
presentation of a linguistic classification in "family tree" form is apt, but its sharp lines and
abrupt bifurcations can obscure the fact that these developments took place over millennia. Once
a given protolanguage community became separated from its nearest cousin, the mixture of
conscious and unconscious changes discussed above would begin their slow and sure work.
Innovative speakers refashioned new words from old, technologies borrowed from neighbors
spurred the incorporation of foreign terms, and all the while the process of phonological change
would alter how words sounded in unpredictable but regular ways. All this change can be
expected to leave a linguistic trace, of course, and finding evidence of these new words and
shifting sounds helps confirm that a postulated protolanguage community did in fact exist in real
life. The tedious but necessary work of the "comparative method" is to reconstruct the lexical
and phonological innovations which occurred at each stage of a language family in order to
guard against false or unrecognized cognates of the sort to which Greenberg's "mass
comparison" method is vulnerable. While Vossen completed this work for Proto Lotuxo-Maa, he
did not for Proto Ateker or any of its later sub-groups. In order to write an Ateker history from
language evidence, then, the first step is to undertake just such a classification.

Classifying the Ateker Family of Languages

While this dissertation represents the first attempt to classify the entire Ateker family of
languages on the basis of comparative linguistic evidence, two previous publications have
released the results of core vocabulary surveys of Ateker languages including cognate counts
converted to percentages. The first, already mentioned, is Vossen, who included data on Teso
(really Kenyan Tesyo), Karimojong, and Turkana in his classification. The second is from a team

of researchers led by renowned linguist Peter Ladefoged, which studied only languages present in Uganda, but included three dialectal variations of Teso. Ladefoged's team included Tesyo, which straddles either side of the Kenya-Uganda border near the city of Tororo, as well as the Ngora and Pallisa dialects of Teso, plus Karimojong, Jie, and Dodos (Figure 2.3).[31] Unfortunately Ladefoged's team did not publish data supporting their classification and they appear to have severely undercounted cognates between Kakwa and Ateker languages, thereby undermining confidence in their findings.[32]

Teso

76.4   Turkana

75.5   85.4   Karimojong

Vossen, *Eastern Nilotes* (1982)

Teso (Ngora)					
90	Teso (Pallisa)				
87	89	Teso (Tororo)			
73	73	75	Karimojong		
73	72	75	95	Jie	
71	72	73	88	90	Dodos

Ladefoged *et al.*, *Languages of Uganda* (1972)

Figure 2.3 – Shared cognate percentages among Ateker languages in past publications

[31] P. Ladefoged, R. Glick & C. Criper, *Language in Uganda* (London, 1972), 81-83.

[32] Both Vossen and I arrive at cognate percentages between 20-30% when comparing Kakwa to various Ateker languages, while Ladefoged's team arrives at 10-14%. Their error is most likely a result of failing to recognize cognates affected by phonological change, but without the raw data it is impossible to know for sure. Because of the overall scarcity of scholarship on these languages, I make reference to their work here, but do not rely on it to exclusively support any hypothesis.

Two points immediately stand out in the above datasets. Compared to Vossen's classification of the greater Eastern Nilotic family, the overall rates of shared cognates are much higher and the margin of difference separating potential sub-groups much smaller within the Ateker family. Indeed, all Ateker languages are fairly closely related and, with the exception of Teso, generally mutually intelligible. Whereas one could have safely postulated the integrity of Ateker as a sub-group of Eastern Nilotic separate from Lotuxo-Maa without using the comparative method because of drastically different shared cognate percentage between the two groups, this would not work within the Ateker family. The second point is that in both datasets Teso stands out from the other languages as sharing fewer cognates with any other languages than those languages share with one another. Both of these observations are confirmed from my own fieldwork, which yielded the following dataset (Figure 2.4).[33]

Turkana						
91	Toposa					
90	89	Nyangatom				
86	93	88	Dodos			
85	88	87	92	Karimojong		
86	87	85	94	93	Jie	
74	76	75	78	78	83	Teso
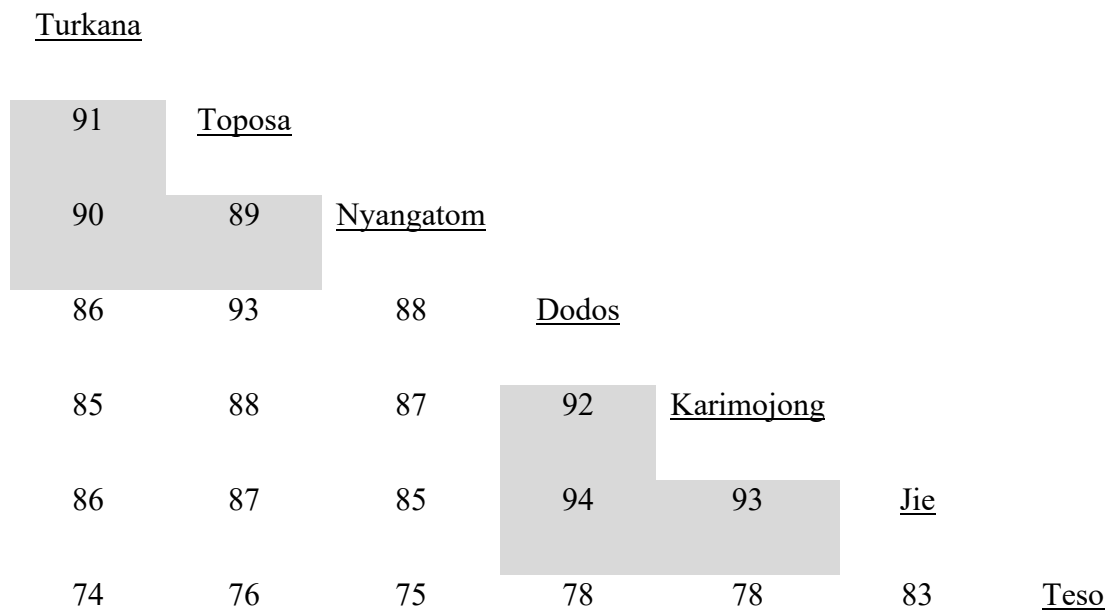
[33] Note that the Jiye of South Sudan are not included in this dataset because I was unable to reach them during my fieldwork due to security concerns. It would certainly be interesting, given the similarity in names between Jie and Jiye, to compare datasets between the two languages.

Figure 2.4 - Table of shared cognate percentages among Ateker languages. See Appendix II for complete wordlist.

My results correlate fairly well with Vossen and Ladefoged. Teso's correspondence rate with both Karimojong, Turkana, and Dodos is in the mid-high 70's in all cases, indicating that the Teso dialects stand apart as a distinct group. The group comprising all but the Teso dialects is what I refer to as "Proto Northern Ateker" (PNA) throughout this dissertation. Second, after putting Teso aside, two other subgroups emerge from the data, albeit with a weaker signal. Turkana, Toposa, and Nyangatom all share 89-91% of their core vocabulary with each other and (with one exception) a lower percentage with all other groups. Similarly, Jie, Karimojong, and Dodos share a higher percentage with each other than with any other group.

The above data generally support three distinct subgroupings - 1) Turkana-Toposa-Nyangatom, 2) Dodos-Karimjong-Jie, and 3) Teso. But two outliers remain. The first is the notably higher percentage Teso shares with Jie compared to any other language. Because Jie rests in a tight subgroup with Karimojong and Dodos, one can hypothesize that this outlying number is best explained by some specific historical circumstance that spurred borrowing between Teso and Jie. In fact, historian John Lamphear convincingly argues that elements of an early iteration of the Teso language community were absorbed as a significant minority group by the Jie within the past 400 hundred years (Chapters 5 and 6).[34] The second outlying figure is the shared cognate rate of 93% between Dodos and Toposa. It poses a greater challenge to the sub-

[34] Lamphear's contention that Teso-linked populations formed the basis of the Rengen group of Jie is also strongly supported by a variety of comparative ethnographic data. J. Lamphear, *The traditional history of the Jie of Uganda* (Oxford, 1976), 80-81.

groupings proposed above. Postulating a fourth sub-group comprised of just these two languages

is untenable, because neither language shares similar percentages with adjacent languages. Given

their close geographic proximity, long-standing military alliance, shared oral traditions, and an

apparent tradition of Toposa-speakers seeking shelter from droughts in the wetter mountains of

Dodos, it is certainly possible that borrowing is the explanation.[35] However, another factor to

consider is that I found such a high degree of internal idiolectal variation while conducting

research in Dodos that I may have simply failed to capture the "true" Dodos dialect, if such a

thing even exists. Because application of the comparative method indicates that their northern

neighbors the Toposa are indeed in a sub-group with the Turkana and Nyangatom, I have chosen

to tentatively include Dodos in a sub-group with Karimojong and Jie for the purposes of

classification, but only with a moderate level of confidence. Drawing from their contrasting

topographies, I label the Toposa-Nyangatom-Turkana group "Lowland Northern Ateker" and the

Karimojong-Jie-Dodos group "Highland Northern Ateker" throughout the dissertation.

Because of the overall similarity of shared cognate percentages, especially excluding

Teso, it would be dangerous to posit the historical reality of the linguistic sub-groups based

purely on lexicostatistical analysis. Only the comparative method can confirm or deny the

existence of hypothesized past language communities by uncovering—or failing to uncover—

lexical and phonological changes that occurred during the period when that hypothetical

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[35] E. Marshall, *Warrior Herdsmen: The absorbing chronicle of an expedition to the tribesmen of northern Uganda* (New York, 1981); DO, Kaabong Town, 03 October, 2017; TO, Kaabong Town, 03 November, 2017.

language would have been shared by an intact community of people.[36] To qualify as evidence for my study, I determined that these changes must meet the following criteria:

> 1) be confined to descendent members of the hypothesized sub-group, and not found in any adjacent languages;

> 2) in the case of new vocabulary items, be confirmed as true innovations by the reconstruction of earlier meanings which were ultimately replaced;

> 3) in the case of phonological change, be confirmed as true innovations by the reconstruction of earlier phonemes which were ultimately replaced (whether phonetically conditioned or not);

> 4) in the case of phonological changes, they must occur in every constituent member of the sub-group;

> 5) Any lexical data point must appear in every constituent member of a posited subgroup, and not in any other subgroup.

If a linguistic change meets all these requirements, the most parsimonious explanation is that it occurred during a period of time when the hypothesized sub-group existed as a historic community of speakers, and thus the change counts as evidence for that community's existence. It must finally be noted, with special reference to requirement #2, that in cases where a hypothesized sub-group diverged into only two primary branches, there is an extra burden placed on the comparative method. For example, when seeking to confirm sub-groups created by the initial Ateker divergence into the Teso group and Northern Ateker group, it is impossible to determine purely by comparison which of two differing lexemes was the innovation and which has passed unchanged from an earlier, ancestral form. Here, I addressed this challenge by searching for cognates in other Eastern Nilotic branches. If one of the two words in question has

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[36] For an accessible primer on the sequence of steps constituting the comparative method, see D. Nurse, "The Contributions of Linguistics to the Study of History in Africa," *Journal of African History*, 38, 3 (1997), 361-363.

a cognate in a different branch of Eastern Nilotic, then we can assume the word with the cognate

is the original word, and the other is the innovation.

Appendix I contains the lexical and phonological innovations which confirm the

following hypothesized sub-groups as protolanguages: Proto Ateker, Proto Teso, Proto Northern

Ateker, Proto Highland Northern Ateker, Proto Lowland Northern Ateker. Two necessary

caveats are first, a reminder that this classification does not include Jiye because of a lack of data

and second, that one of the phonological changes in Karimojong-Jie-(Dodos), a generalized /s/ >

/Θ/, has a number of idiolectal exceptions in Dodos, further raising questions about the proper

placement of that language. At this point, based on arguments from lexicostatistics and the

comparative method, we can safely determine the following classificatory "family tree" for

Ateker (Figure 2.5).
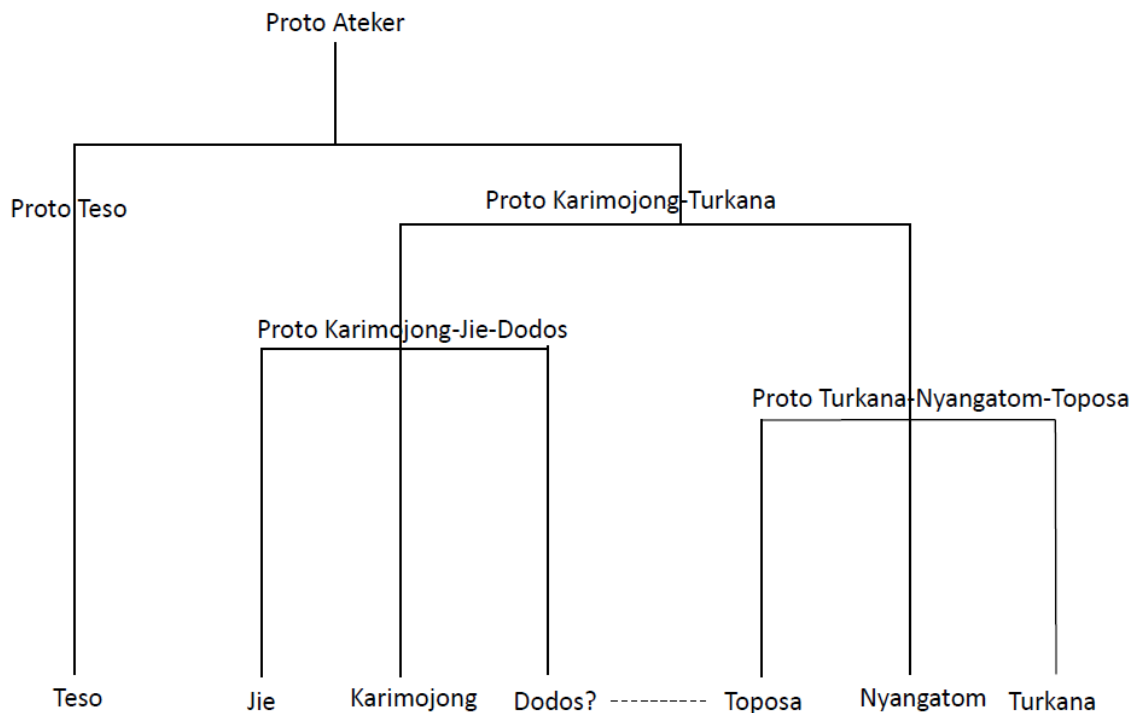
Figure 2.5 – Proto Ateker linguistic tree with all Northern Ateker languages, except Jiye

Having worked through the lexicostatistical data on languages outside of Teso, we can now turn our attention to the Teso dialect cluster. This is an internally diverse dialect cluster, with phonology and vocabulary often varying from sub-county to sub-county. A number of native Ateso-speakers from the Nuclear Ateso dialect region near Ngora, Uganda have told me that they find it difficult to understand the Tesyo dialect spoken at the Kenya-Uganda border. Indeed, the Ladefoged cognation percentage chart suggests that various Teso "dialects" are less closely related than other Ateker "languages." Currently, there is little scholarly consensus regarding where or how boundaries between dialects should be drawn – or indeed, how many Teso dialects even exist. However, a dialect classification of Teso is essential for reconstructing migrations and the development of social institutions in Teso the period following the initial bifurcation of the Ateker speech community. To begin such a classification, I undertook a geographically extensive survey of core vocabularies in thirty separate Teso locales. The results of the dialect classification based on these survey results are presented below.

Ladefoged *et al.* identify the three Teso dialects as Ngora, Pallisa, and Tororo, based on major towns in the dialects' central locations. Etesot linguist Loyola Ignatius Apuda divided his 2007 dictionary into the four groups of Usuku, Serere, Tororo, and "standard" Teso (the Ngora of Ladefoged), while the linguist David Barasa accepts the tripartite division of Pallisa, Ngora, and Tororo.[37] Linguists Carol Meyers-Scotton and John Ekeju emphasize differences between "standard" (Ngora) and Tororo Teso, while also providing lexical evidence that the version of Teso spoken in Kenya is closely related with that of neighboring Tororo, Uganda, the two having

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[37] L. Apuda, *Bi-lingual Ateso Dictionary* (Entebbe, 2007); D. Barasa, *Ateso grammar: a descriptive account of an Eastern Nilotic language* (Munich, 2017).

diverged recently as a result of Kenya's greater national affiliation with Kiswahili.[38] The one

clear division made in all scholarship is between "standard" Ugandan Teso and the

geographically disconnected dialect spoken both in Tororo, Uganda and across the Malaba

border checkpoint in Busia County, Kenya often called "Tesyo." The most immediately obvious

difference between these two dialects is that Tororo retains the unvoiced velar /k/ in infinitive

verb prefixes (e.g. "to eat," *akinyam* vs. *ainyam*). Although this leads many speakers of

"standard" Teso to remark that people in Tororo "sound like the Karimojong," the presence of

many lexical innovations found in common between the two Teso dialects confirms that the two

dialects form a distinct subgroup apart from PNA. Because the geographical and linguistic

separation of Tesyo has already been well-defined, I conducted only two core vocabulary

elicitations in this dialect, and the other twenty-eight were conducted in the major area of Teso

settlement in Uganda, including the following modern districts: Katakwi (KA), Amuria (AM),

Soroti (SO), Serere (SE), Pallisa (PL), Bukedea (BU), Ngora (NG), and Kumi (KM).

　　　To analyze this data, I loaded word-lists into a computer program designed to count

cognates and produce subgroups. The computer program, named Cog and created by the

Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), uses the Blair methodology for counting cognates, which

relies on matches between recognizable phonological "segments" – rather than whole words – to

evaluate cognate similarity.[39] I set the computer program to a strict threshold which limited items

counted as cognates to only those with matching series of segments that varied by no more than

one phonological feature. In other words, /kir/ and /gir/ would count as a cognate, because they

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[38] C. Myers-Scotton & J. Ekeju, "Loan Word Integration in Ateso," *Anthropological Linguistics*, 14, 9 (1972), 368-382.

[39] https://github.com/sillsdev/cog/wiki/Blair-Method-Settings (accessed 9 July, 2018)

differ only in that the initial velar stop is either voiced or unvoiced. Similarly, /kir/ and /ker/

would count because /i/ and /e/ are front vowels adjacent to one another and differentiated only

by height. Following this same example, /kir/ and /ger/ would not be counted as cognate, because

there are two variations within the segment, and similarly neither /kir/ and /pir/ nor /kir/ and /kor/

would count, because their respective phonetic variants are too distant from one another in the

mouth. The computer program produced the following dendrogram, which is discussed further

below (Figure 2.6). To confirm the sub-groupings produced by Cog, I took two additional steps.

First, I compared randomly selected vocabulary lists from each of the political districts in which

I did elicitation work and counted cognates between each, yielding the same basic groupings as

Cog. Second, I identified regular sound correspondences between these sub-groups, and found

them to fit neatly with Cog.
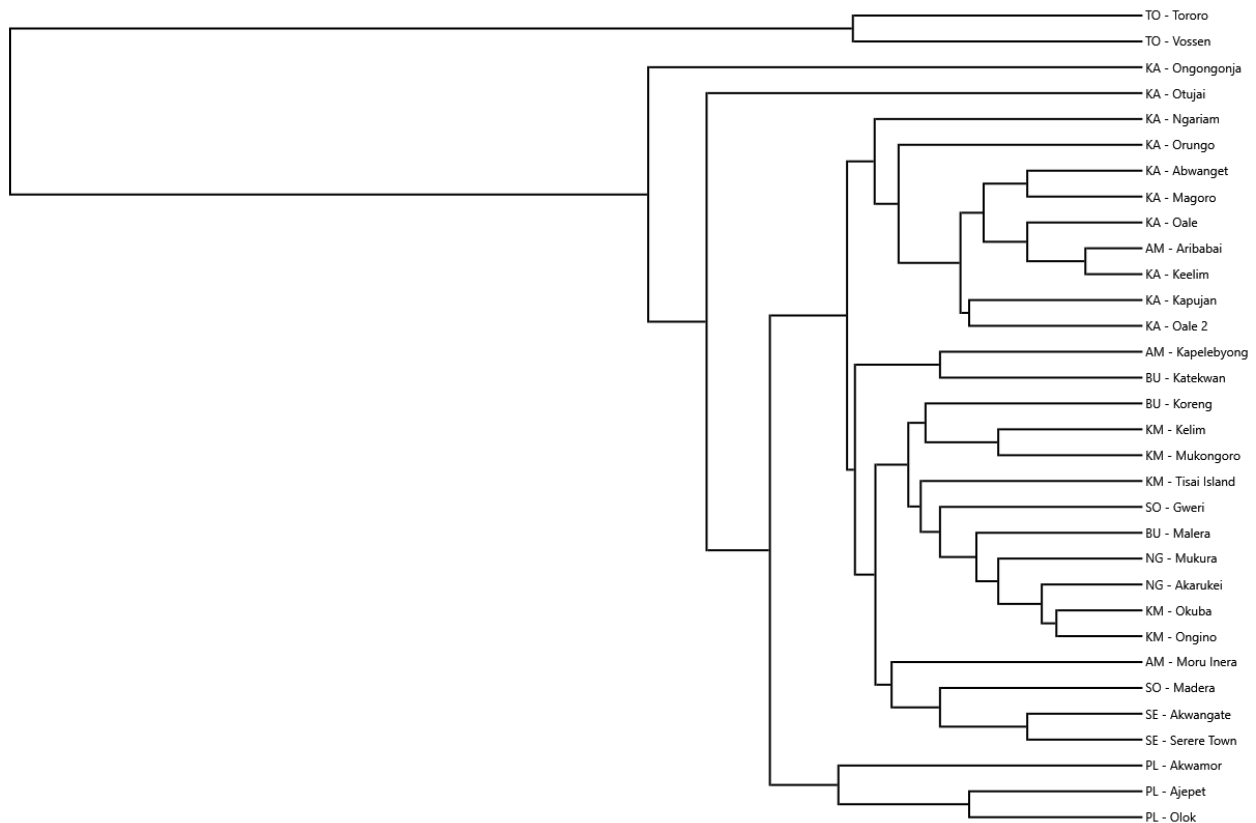
Figure 2.6 – Dendrogram generated by Cog software computations for all Teso dialects

Four major subgroups appear. The first and most distinct is, as predicted, the geographically isolated Tesyo/Tororo (TO). After Tesyo, there are two outliers, KA – Ongongonja and KA – Otujai, which do not fit neatly into any other branches. These lists were both elicited on the far northeastern borders of Katakwi district in an area heavily influenced by Karimojong, and their status as outliers is a result of the presence of Karimojong loan words in their core vocabulary. The remaining core vocabulary lists fit into three distinct subgroups.

The most distinct are the three elicited in Pallisa district, which sits on the southwestern edge of the Teso region and borders the North Nyanza Bantu speech community of Lugwere. Aside from Pallisa, there is a single larger subgroup, comprised of the two major dialects of the

"core" Teso region. The first is the Usuku dialect, spoken throughout the Katakwi district on Karamoja's southeastern border. The Usuku region (part of today's Katakwi district) is physically separated from the rest of the Teso region by the Bisina and Opeta lakes and Kokoro river. It is described by Webster as the original "homeland" of Teso based on his, and others', analyses of oral traditions.[40] Within Katakwi District, there are a number of minor, but uniform, geographic speech variations. For example, in the far northeast, the loss of /k/ in the infinitive verb prefix /aki-/ found across most of Teso also incorporates nouns with similar phonetic environments, so "water" *akipi* becomes *aipi* here and "cattle" *akituk* becomes *aituk*. This internal diversity within the speech community of the Katakwi dialect area can be taken to support Webster's contention of this region as an historic "homeland" of Teso because of the linguistic principle of greatest diversity. This principle states that areas with the most linguistic diversity in any given language family are likely the longest-inhabited by speakers of that language, because speech is always changing, and the areas of longest continuous settlement will therefore contain the most change.[41] A linguistic innovation found throughout all of the Usuku dialect defined by a tendency to re-analyze the irregular infinitive verb "to fight" *ejie* by applying a regular /ai/ prefix, leading to the verb form *aitijie*/*aijie* helps confirm Usuku Teso as a distinct sub-group.

The final dialect for consideration is that which I call Ngora, following Ladefoged, Glick & Criper. It is the most geographically extensive dialect, including the modern districts of Ngora, Soroti, Kumi, Bukedea, and Amuria, and has by far the most speakers. Phonologically, this

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[40] Webster *et al.*, 1973, xvii-xxiii.

[41] Ehret 2001, 10.

dialect has a vowel-shift from /o/ > /u/ in numerous phonetic environments, although I have had

difficulty establishing a clear set of rules for this change that is not violated somewhere in the

region. Lexical innovations that define this dialect include the replacement of Proto Ateker

"root" *-tagor- with *aliasit*, and Proto Ateker "feather" *-kopir with *ajulot*.

There remains a question of how to sequence the splits of Teso subgroups. This question

can be partially resolved by analyzing sound changes. Because the /aki-/ verb prefix is shared by

Tesyo and PNA, it is likely that it was originally present in Proto Ateker, and was shortened to

/ai-/ only after the early Tesyo dialect diverged from the rest of the Teso group. The Pallisa

dialect, found at the extreme southwest of the Ateker world, forms part of a wider Teso sub-

group, which I call Kyoga-Bisina, from which the Nuclear Teso dialect (comprised of Usuku and

Ngora) later diverged. Directionality (seriation is the technical term) of change can be seen by

following the reconstructed sound change /w/ > /gw/, which occurred within all of Kyoga-Bisina

Teso after it split from pre-Tesyo, and is found in words like *egwapet* "eland," which replaces

ewapet elsewhere in Ateker languages. A later conditioned sound change /gw/ > /bw/ occurring

adjacent to /o/ is found only in Nuclear Teso. This sound change also did not affect the

southwestern tip of the Serere peninsula, which indicates that the southwestern extremity of the

Teso region was settled by Teso-speakers in a period prior to the later emergence of Nuclear

Teso as a separate dialect. Additional evidence supporting this sequencing is the retention of

Proto Ateker -*iyar* "to hear" in Pallisa, which was replaced by -*pupun* in Nuclear Teso.

Although the Usuku and Ngora dialects have linguistic trends roughly dividing them into two

dialects, there is too much overlap – perhaps as a result of exogamous patrilocal marriage

practices – to definitively describe them as two separate speech communities. In the end, the

series of sound changes and lexical innovations listed in Appendix I corroborate the results of the

Cog computer program, and suggest the following sequence of Teso dialect divergences (Figure

2.7).
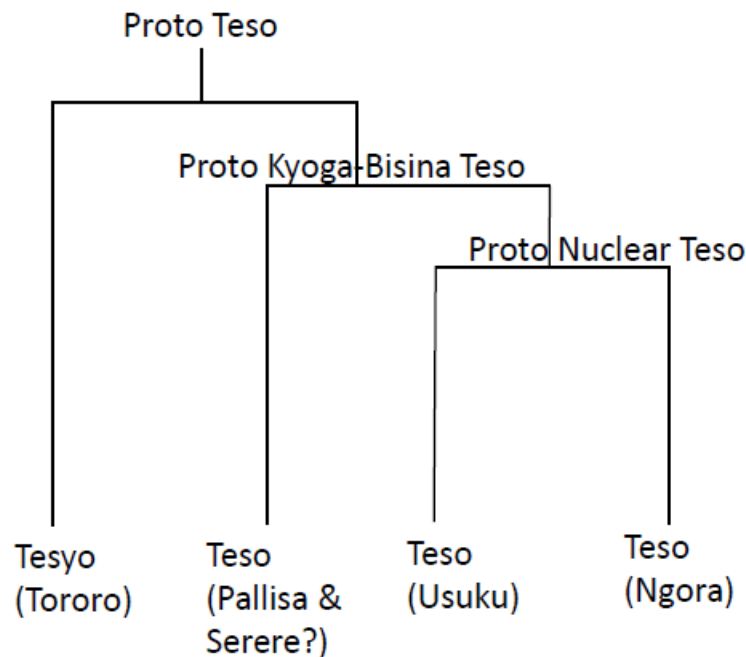
Figure 2.7 – Teso family language classification

The final step is to combine the Teso classification with the remainder of the Ateker

languages. As discussed above, I began this classification using a "standard" Teso list produced

from the Ngora dialect, and determined that Teso formed a distinct sub-group within Ateker. To

confirm that the four Teso dialects stand together as a distinct branch, I compared a

geographically central vocabulary list from each of the four dialects to the other Ateker

languages. These dialects formed a distinct group from the rest of Ateker, confirming the Teso

dialect cluster's status as a separate branch of Ateker. On this basis, we can then combine this

dialect classification with broader Ateker classification above and arrive at the following

comprehensive linguistic classification of Ateker (Figure 2.8)

Proto Ateker

Proto Teso

Proto Karimojong-Turkana

Proto Kyoga-Bisina Teso

Proto Karimojong-Jie-Dodos

Proto Nuclear Teso

Proto Turkana-Nyangatom-Toposa

Tesyo
(Tororo)

Teso
(Pallisa &
Serere?)

Teso
(Usuku)

Teso
(Ngora)

Jie

Karimojong

Dodos? ---------

Toposa

Nyangatom

Turkana
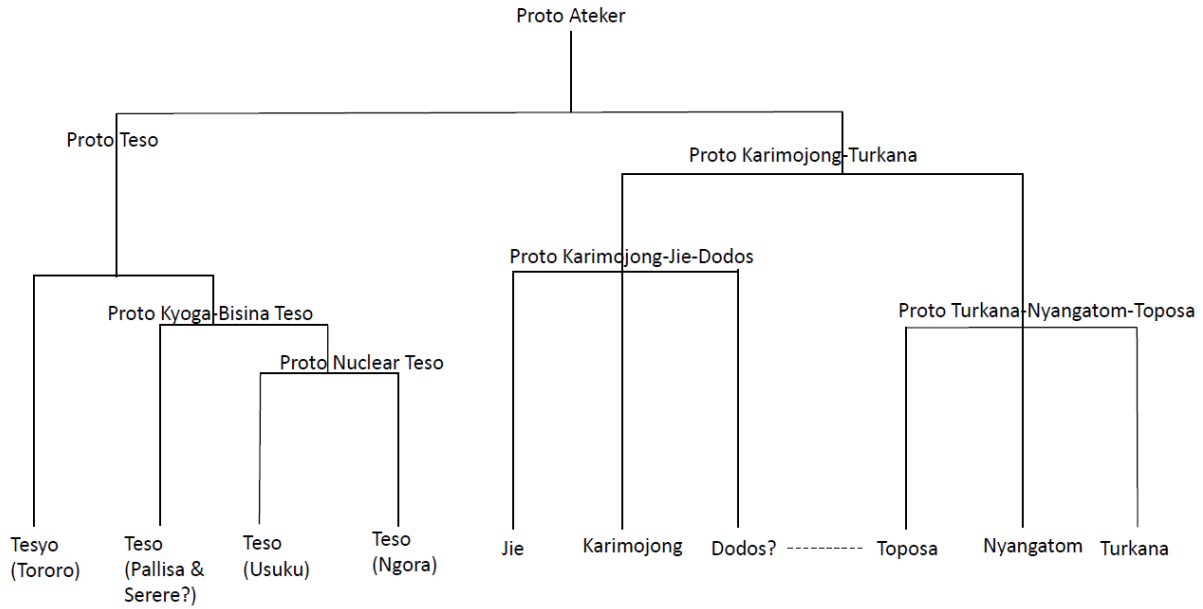
Figure 2.8 – Complete Ateker language family classification

Locating Ateker Language Communities in Geographic Space

Having used linguistic evidence to establish the historical reality of sequential language communities in the past, the questions of when and where these communities lived is immediately raised. We can begin with the question of where.

Map 2.1 – Modern-day locations of Ateker languages

The starting point for any enquiry into the geographical "homeland" of a language family or its constituent sub-groups is the principle of fewest moves, which follows Occam's Razor in assuming that one should postulate a homeland that would require the fewest (and shortest) population movements in order to explain current language distribution.[42] According to this principle alone, the Ateker homeland would have been somewhere in northeastern Uganda, in the area today occupied by the Karimojong. This hypothesis must be rejected, however, for a number of reasons. First, oral traditions from all the southernmost groups (i.e. Teso, Karimojong,

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[42] C. Ehret, *History and the Testimony of Language* (Berkeley, 2010), 46-47.

and Jie) uniformly claim an origin somewhere to the north – either Sudan or Ethiopia. [43] Second,

if we pull our lens back to the Proto Eastern Nilotic period, we can see that while linguistic

descendants of Eastern Nilotic currently inhabit six modern nations, only South Sudan is

represented in all of the three major families of Eastern Nilotic (i.e. Bari-Mondari-Kakwa,

Ateker, and Lotuxo-Maa).[44] This fact strongly suggests that the original Eastern Nilotic

homeland was in South Sudan, and makes an Ateker homeland in South Sudan more plausible.

Third and most dispositive, reconstructions of Proto Ateker vocabulary show significant

influence from early Nuer-Dinka and Surmic languages spoken in South Sudan. Meanwhile,

lexical borrowings from languages of southern Uganda, such as Southern Lwo and Bantu, are

imbalanced between Proto Teso (with many) and Proto Northern Ateker (with few), indicating

that these language contacts occurred only after the divergence of Proto Ateker. [45]

However, even if evidence from linguistics and oral traditions agree with an Ateker (and

Nilotic) homeland in South Sudan, the question of why descendant language groups exist almost

entirely south of their proposed homeland remains.[46] This same southern pattern holds across

Eastern Nilotic languages, which are found in many places south of South Sudan, while none are

located north of this posited homeland. The best answer lies in palaeoclimatological studies

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[43] Lamphear 1976, 74; A. Lochul, "The Traditional History of the Toposa," in A. Lochul & C. G. Peter, *Toposa Traditional History and Rites* (Khartoum, 1995), 14.

[44] Representatives from each family include: Toposa and Jiye (Ateker), Lotuxo and Lopit (Lotuxo-Maa), & Bari and Mondari (Bari-Mondari-Kakwa).

[45] For example, Proto Ateker *-yek- "to shake a gourd rattle" borrowed from Nuer-Dinka and Proto Ateker *-morok "haft," from Murle-Didinga, but Proto Kyoga-Bisina Teso *elibo "graveyard" borrowed from North Nyanza Bantu and Proto Northern Ateker *-lyel "grave" borrowed from Southern Lwo. Ateker 167; Ateker 103; KBT 4; PNA 25.

[46] A similar question exists for Bantu languages, which are distributed generally south of their Proto-Bantu homeland in today's Cameroon.

demonstrating a steady southward shift of isohyetal lines (marking annual rainfall averages) at

the close of the mid-Holocene African Humid Period (AHP) beginning earlier than 2000 BCE,

which effectively created the Sahara desert we know today.[47] An effort to escape permanently

lower rainfall levels following c. 2000 BCE in South Sudan provides a plausible historical

explanation for the exclusively southward migration of Eastern Nilotic populations, and helps

makes sense of other datapoints indicating a northern origin of the Ateker world.[48]

After establishing the South Sudanese homeland of Proto Ateker speakers, the next steps

are to identify the homelands of the two major Ateker linguistic branches – Proto Teso and Proto

Northern Ateker – and then their various descendant sub-groups. Given the current location of

the Teso group on the southern extremity of the broader Ateker world, farthest from South

Sudan, it is likely the initial Ateker divergence resulted from the southward migration of Proto

Teso speakers, possibly fleeing an increasingly arid northern environment. This southward

movement was not restricted to Proto Teso speakers, who were actually among the last Nilotic-

speakers to leave South Sudan. Based on cognate percentages and oral traditions, Ehret, Ogot,

and Vossen convincingly argue that the first southern migration was undertaken by early

Southern Nilotic speakers (Kalenjin, Dodgo, Okiek), followed by Maa-speaking Eastern Nilotes,

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[47] T. Shanahan *et al*., "The time-transgressive termination of the African Humid Period," *Nature Geoscience*, 8 (2015), 140-144; M. Berke *et al*., "A mid-Holocene thermal maximum at the end of the African Humid Period," *Earth and Planetary Science Letters*, 351-352 (2012), 95-104; S. Kröpelin et al., "Climate-Driven Ecosystem Succession in the Sahara: The Past 6000 Years," *Science*, 320 (2008), 765-768.

[48] Nicholas David a similar point in the broader Central Sudanic context: "I challenge… the least moves principle on the grounds of the effects of the progressive desiccation and southwards retreat of the vegetation belt…" N. David, "The BIEA Southern Sudan Expedition of 1979: interpretation of the archaeological data," in J. Mack and P. Robertshaw (eds.), *Culture History in the Southern Sudan: Archaeology, Linguistics and Ethnohistory* (Nairobi: British Institute in East Africa, 1982), 49-57.

followed by Western Nilotic Southern Lwo speakers (Acholi, Luo), then and, finally, the Ateker vanguard of the pre-Teso.[49]

A handful of clues shed light on the route of pre-Teso migration. There were probably two different groups of Ateker-speakers who migrated out of South Sudan during the early break-up of Proto Ateker. The first, ancestors of today's Lango language community in Uganda, migrated in fairly small numbers simultaneously with or shortly after Ogot's Southern Lwo groups and came to adopt many aspects of Southern Lwo speech while retaining some specialized vocabulary and certain clan names attesting their Ateker origin. The second, the Proto Teso, migrated south in larger numbers which enabled them to retain their fundamentally Eastern Nilotic language, notwithstanding numerous borrowings from Southern Lwo and Bantu languages. Taken together, both groups form what Northern Ateker speakers would collectively remember as the *ngikatapa*, or "bread people," likely reflecting their social commitment to growing cereal crops even as drier climatic conditions required them to move south in order to maintain a grain-centered subsistence economy.[50]

After they left South Sudan, the Proto Teso must have travelled in the vicinity of people speaking an early version of today's endangered So language (part of the greater Rub family), currently extant only in very small communities in the peaks and slopes of the roughly-10,000 ft. mountains of Moroto, Kadam, and Napak in northeastern Uganda.[51] We know this because a number of culturally significant words - including *-kere "all", *-tenus "drum", and *-tes

[49] Ehret, 1971; Vossen, 1982, B. Ogot, *History of the Southern Luo, Vol I: Migration and Settlement* (Nairobi, 1967).

[50] Lamphear 1976, 80-81.

[51] B. Heine & E. Carlin, *Draft Dictionary of So* (Unpublished MS, 2010), 1. No speakers are left today in Napak.

"grave" – were borrowed from pre-So during the Proto Teso period and do not exist in any other Ateker languages. A straight line drawn between the postulated Ateker homeland and the Moroto, Kadam, and Napak mountains near which Proto Teso speakers must have dwelt cuts through the dry savannah currently occupied by the Jie. Low annual rainfall levels (400-600 mm per annum today) limit this land's agricultural potential but also restrict vegetation, making it easily passable by migrating populations. Smaller numbers of the travelling pre-Teso group may have remained behind to try their luck in this arid but lightly populated area. Following both Lamphear's analysis of oral traditions and my own comparative ethnographic and linguistic fieldwork, it seems likely that such pre-Teso populations have historical connections the especially to the minority populations among the Jie, discussed in Chapters 5 & 6. For now, it is notable that this may also explain the surprisingly high shared cognate percentage for core vocabulary between Jie and Teso discussed above.

It is most likely that the core Proto Teso group ultimately settled to the southwest of So-speaking Mt. Napak, in today's Usuku dialect region. There are a number of reasons to consider this region as the most probable Proto Teso homeland. As mentioned above, the Usuku dialect cluster includes the greatest internal linguistic diversity, indicating relative antiquity according to the principle of greatest diversity. Additionally, if the early Teso were indeed fleeing a southerly retreat of average annual rainfall, the Usuku region is the first location along their probable migration path that would have had high enough annual rainfall to ensure a predictable return on the cultivation of finger millet.[52] Usuku is adjacent to multiple lakes and rivers. It would have been the first rich source of fish encountered by the Proto Teso, who retained linguistic elements

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[52] The term for "finger millet" - *-kima - is unique among Eastern Nilotic cereals in its reconstructability to the PEN period.

of an Eastern Nilotic fishing culture (Chapters 3 and 6). This may have been another reason to settle there. There is also a root word of unclear origin exclusive to Proto Teso, *-magoro, which means "wilderness, bush, forest" and also forms the name of the Magoro region of Usuku. This is the specific area Webster identifies as the "gateway" of Teso migration based on the frequency with which migratory traditions elsewhere in Teso identify Magoro as a point of origin.[53] Whether the word is derived from a now-unrecoverable indigenous "Magoro" group who was overwhelmed by the Teso influx or it was otherwise first innovated in Proto Teso and then applied to a mostly depopulated region is impossible to sort out. However, the semantic overlap between the name of this traditional Teso "homeland" and conceptualizations of uninhabited wilderness – implying fertile hunting alongside probably favorable conditions for fishing and finger millet cultivation – suggests that this was an attractive early settlement location because it was unencumbered by environmental deprivation or overpopulation.

The first Teso group to diverge from its larger speech community encompassed the linguistic ancestors of today's Tesyo-speakers on the Kenya-Uganda border near Tororo. The Tesyo are geographically isolated from all other Ateker-speakers, and there was likely a period of independent linguistic evolution in Tesyo occurring between the initial divergence with Proto Kyoga-Bisina Teso speakers and the later re-establishment of communication between linguistic descendants of the two groups by the late nineteenth-century.[54] After pre-Tesyo emigration, the early Teso language and culture continued to spread through today's eastern Uganda. At some point Teso speakers living in close social proximity to North Nyanza Bantu-speakers in the Teso

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[53] Webster *et al.* 1973, 1.

[54] I. Karp, *Fields of Change among the Iteso* (London, 1978), 17.

region's far southwest of Pallisa and Serere slowly developed a distinct dialect which did not participate in a later series of sound changes that would come to define Nuclear Teso. Simultaneously, the Usuku and Ngora dialect communities constituting Nuclear Teso underwent a series of uniform phonological changes even as they became culturally differentiated zones demarcated by the Bisina-Opeta-Kokoro line of water bodies. Those who stayed in the generally more arid homeland of Usuku continued to split linguistically into microdialects and eventually came under the cultural and economic influence of their later-arriving Ateker compatriots, the Karimojong, to the immediate northeast. Even as they maintained a linguistic relationship with Usuku, Ngora Teso-speakers came to dominate the triangle formed between Lake Bisina, Lake Kyoga, and Mt. Elgon where they presently reside.

The Proto Northern Ateker language community was comprised of those who stayed in South Sudan after the onset of aridity c. 900 CE. An approximately 10% higher rate of shared cognates amongst Northern Ateker languages than between any of them and Teso (with Jie being an exception), suggests that Proto Northern Ateker speakers remained linguistically and culturally integrated for a period of time after the Teso departure. They eventually did split apart, however, forming two primary branches divided by terrain, with one protolanguage developing in the highlands of northeastern Uganda (HNA) and another in the low-lying plains of northwest Kenya, southeast South Sudan, and the banks of the lower Omo River in southwest Ethiopia (LNA). These two linguistic groups roughly coincided with distinct material cultures and subsistence economies: communities in the wetter highlands build more permanent homesteads and focused more on cereal cultivation than those in the drier lowlands (Chapter 5). The preceding interpretation, derived initially from my linguistic classification, departs from the scholarly consensus achieved by the later twentieth century on one important point. Namely,

current historiography asserts that all Northern Ateker-speakers abandoned the Ateker homeland of South Sudan by the fifteenth century, only to later return in the seventeenth century. This consensus – which is based entirely on analysis of oral traditions – unnecessarily posits an unlikely migration/counter-migration that is contradicted by my linguistic classification and the "fewest moves principle." I grapple with the implications of the revisions – and my evidentiary grounds for reinterpreting oral traditions – in Chapter 5 of this dissertation, but the point is worth flagging here.

To recap the preceding discussion, we can confidently assert four geographical stages of Ateker history. In the first, Proto Ateker speakers lived in a single language community in South Sudan. In the second, communities who would eventually speak the Proto Teso language migrated south, passing by the mountains occupied by early So-speakers and eventually arriving in Usuku, Uganda. The group left behind was the PNA. In the third stage, the Highland Northern Ateker language community migrated south into the Koten-Magos/Apule region of eastern Uganda, leaving the rest of the Northern Ateker group still residing in South Sudan. During this same third stage, speakers of pre-Tesyo broke away from the rest of the Proto Kyoga-Bisina Teso language community and moved further south occupying today's Kenya-Uganda borderlands near Tororo. In the fourth stage, Pallisa/Serere Teso speakers had extended so far to the southwest of their Usuku homeland that they became cut off from linguistic innovations occurring in the Nuclear Teso language, which was roughly shared by a group of locally diverse dialects spoken around Usuku and Ngora. Finally, during this same fourth stage, the Karimojong, Jie, and perhaps Dodos solidified into recognizably distinct dialects, while early speakers of Nyangatom and Turkana broke away from the Toposa, travelling northeast and southeast respectively, and ultimately developed their own differentiated but mutually intelligible dialects.

Dating the Ateker Past

The final step in reconstructing the basic outlines of Ateker history is to assign absolute dates to linguistic events which have, until now, only been discussed in terms of relative chronologies derived from calendrically unmoored "family trees." The quest for absolute dates has long challenged historical linguists and occupied a controversial place in their academic subfield. A variety of dating methods and their applicability to Ateker history is assessed below. The available evidence from radiocarbon dating with any direct applicability to the question is, unfortunately, too sparse to make a significant contribution except for special cases discussed in Chapter 4.

The first potential linguistic dating technique, known as "glottochronology," is a strictly internal method which relies on the mathematical manipulation of linguistic data to estimate calendar dates for the divergence of protolanguages into late sub-groups. This method, initially promulgated by the same Morris Swadesh credited with developing the first comparative "core vocabulary" wordlist, is based on correspondences found between core vocabulary cognate percentages of numerous Indo-European languages and the dates of their protolanguage divergences as attested in historical documents. From this data Swadesh calculated a mathematically regular "glottochronological constant" for the replacement of core vocabulary items, somewhat analogous to a constant rate of radioactive decay, and then argued for its universal application to date protolanguage divergences across human history. However, in the intervening decades glottochronology has been roundly criticized for implying that a phenomenon as complex as linguistic change could be subject to a rule of mathematical regularity, while others have pointed to examples where glottochronological calculations do not match known historical records.

Historical linguist Christopher Ehret is one of today's leading proponents of glottochronology, arguing that the question at stake is not the *regularity* of language change, but rather its demonstrable *randomness*. Over time, the accumulation of individually random changes to a given set of languages' core vocabularies can very often be plotted as a bell-curve, indicating randomness, and the centers of these bell curves do generally correspond to Swadesh's "glottochronological constant." Such a bell-curve can be drawn based on Vossen's work on Eastern Nilotic. For example, if one plots the cognation rates Vossen calculates between all of the Ateker languages and all of the Bari-Mondari-Kakwa languages together on one bar graph, a neat bell-curve emerges, suggesting a mathematically random process of core vocabulary replacement within each individual language over time. [55] As Ehret notes, it is neither surprising nor problematic from the standpoint of the social sciences that a human phenomenon like lexical replacement with clearly non-arbitrary causation in the short term may, when extrapolated over centuries or millennia, reveal a mathematically random pattern that holds certain predictive powers. In the case of many African language families including Lotuxo-Maa, Ehret has demonstrated that glottochronology can indeed provide estimated calendar dates for protolanguage divergences that correspond to independent estimations based available archaeological and other records.[56] If these random patterns can help illuminate an early African past about which scholars are deeply ignorant, they ought to be taken advantage of to the extent to which the method can be considered reliable, and for this reason I use glottochronology here. After conducting initial glottochronological estimates, I discovered that my findings accorded well with

[55] The major exception is the consistently higher rates shared by Ongamo with Ateker as compared to Ateker and other Ongamo-Maa languages.

[56] C. Ehret, "Testing the expectations of glottochronology against the correlations of language and archaeology in Africa," in C. Renfew *et al.* (eds.), *Time Depth in Historical Linguistics* (Cambridge, 2000), 373-399.

estimates produced in a 2011 paper dating world languages through glottochronological computer models.[57]

Rough median dating	Median common retention rate
500 BP	86%
1000 BP	74%
1500 BP	64%
2000 BP	55%
2500 BP	47%
3000 BP	40%
4000 BP	30%
5000 BP	22%
6000 BP	16%
7000 BP	12%
8000 BP	9%
9000 BP	7%
10,000 BP	5%

Figure 2.9 – Rough dating guide for shared cognate percentages, from Ehret (2000)

 Glottochronology relies on the measurement of shared core vocabulary cognate percentages between single languages or sub-groups already proved through the comparative method to be genetically related in order to estimate the length of time which has passed since they diverged from a shared protolanguage. While glottochronology is, in my view, a valid dating technique, it should still be compared to other forms of evidence when they are available. For early Ateker history, there are three additional sources for chronology. Archaeology is so sparse in the region that there is no datable, direct evidence of any Ateker occupation, although archaeological data does provide some information on earlier Eastern Nilotic relationships. The second, paleoclimatology, is slightly more robust. Although paleoclimatic data does not provide any direct evidence of human activity, the reconstructions of particularly wet or dry periods can provide greater context to broad trends. If major historical events reconstructed in the linguistic or archaeological record can be correlated chronologically with significant climatic changes, then

[57] E. Holman *et al*., "Automated Dating of the World's Language Families Based on Lexical Similarity," *Current Anthropology*, 52, 6 (2011), 841-875.

absolute dates produced by paleoclimate records can buttress calculations made using glottochronology.

Finally, there is a third dating technique, "generation-counting," which is a special feature of studying societies like the Northern Ateker who organize political authority through named age-groups. The question of how many years a "generation" constitutes is a contentious one across precolonial African history. Historians such as Roland Oliver, Jan Vansina, and David William Cohen, using king-lists to estimate chronologies through royal family histories, have tended to assume an average of 27-28 years per generation, while scholars of more gerontocratic, polygamous age-grading societies usually adopt longer estimates, sometimes in excess of 50 years.[58] Most scholars of the Ateker past have relied upon generation-counting as their primary tool for dating the origins of various language communities. Lamphear, for instance, assumed 40-year generations, and on this basis reconstructed seven named generations preceding the well-documented initiation of the Ngitome (Elephants) generation in 1963, to estimate that the first Jie generation was initiated around 1680. He therefore dates the Jie genesis to about this time.[59]

One pitfall of this method is obvious. Individual recollections of generational names and their sequential order vary quite a bit, inspiring little confidence in the accuracy of such reconstructions. In the current dissertation, I have taken most seriously generational data confirmed by both my own fieldwork and multiple scholars. Because generation lists reach at the

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[58] D. W. Cohen, "A Survey of Interlacustrine Chronology," *Journal of African History*, 11, 2 (1970), 192; H. Müller-Dempf, "The Ngibokoi Dilemma: Generation-Sets and Social System Engineering in Times of Stress – an Example from the Toposa of Southern Sudan," *Zietshrift fur Ethnologie*, 134, 2 (2009), 189-211; Lamphear 1976, 45-51; P. Spencer, "The Jie Generation Paradox," in P. T. W. Baxter & U. Almagor (eds.), *Age, Generation and Time: Some Features of East African Age Organizations* (New York, 1978), 138-139.

[59] Lamphear 1976, 36-37.

heart of an important question - who rules? - collection of this data can yield conflicting results, especially with regard to more recent generational names. During my fieldwork in Karamoja, for example, I was told by some members of the Mountain age-class that their generation was the current ruling group even as others explained that the Gazelles had taken power three years earlier. As a result, generation lists elicited in different settings can be less uniform for more recent periods. The farther into the past one looks, however, the less contested generational orderings become, and there is a striking degree of uniformity in early lists which lends them greater evidentiary value.

As a method for dating the origin of any particular language community, this technique is dangerous because it can only reach as far back as the beginning of the generational system rather than the beginning of a distinct protolanguage. David Anderson, for example, locates the origin of the Maasai age system during a period of significant climate disruption in the late eighteenth century, but surely some Maa-speaking language community existed prior to this period.[60] Moreover, some amount of time may elapse between when a language community first exists as a distinct entity and when it inaugurates an age-system, so we should expect that the first Ateker-speaking group to have developed age-groups would pre-date the "first" generation. Indeed, this latter point is likely a primary reason that chronological reconstructions based on other sources tend to provide earlier dates than those based on generation-counting.

Finally, personal generational histories can also be used outside of the rubric of named age-groups to provisionally date settlement in regions where age-set systems are not remembered, including most of Teso. For example, Emudong counts the number of generations

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[60] D. Anderson, "The beginning of time? Evidence for catastrophic drought in Baringo in the early nineteenth century," *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 10, 1 (2016), 54-57.

(i.e. the number of "greats") included in individual family traditions to contend that Teso-speakers first settled the Kumi region of Uganda around 1770.[61] Because this data category represents a unique and independent source for the Ateker past, I use it for my own reconstructions in chapter 5, but only after warning the reader about its unavoidable limitations.

Having surveyed available dating methods, the next step is to assign estimated calendrical dates to various Ateker protolanguages for which we have so far established likely geographical homelands but only an internal relative chronology. There is no methodological "silver bullet" for this effort, and each Ateker language community must be questioned in the context of all relevant evidence.

Unsurprisingly, the earliest community – Proto Ateker itself – is the most difficult to date. Given the large difference in rates of shared core vocabulary between Ateker languages and their closest linguistic relative, Proto Lotuxo-Maa (with which Ateker shares roughly 30-40%), as well as the fairly high rate of similarity within the Ateker group (roughly 75-80%), we can assume that the Proto Ateker remained a distinct and closely integrated language community for a very long time. Glottochronological calculations require nearly 2000 years to have passed for Proto Ateker to develop this linguistic signature. The proximate cause of Proto Ateker's divergence from its ancestor Proto Tung'a into a separate language community would have been the emergence of some kind of either social or geographical separation between them and speakers of Proto Lotuxo-Maa. This may have occurred around 900 BCE or shortly thereafter. Because the linguistic descendants of this latter group live today on either side of the Ateker

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[61] C. P. Emudong, "The Settlement and Organization of Kumi During the Asonya," in J. B. Webster *et al., Iteso During the Asonya* (Nairobi, 1973), 87. Emudong assumes a 27-year generational span, which is more likely to be too short than it is too long, thereby giving his estimates a slightly too recent date.

world (Lotuxo-speakers to the northwest and Maa-speakers to the southeast), it is difficult to determine where in South Sudan these two protolanguages may have lived in relation to one another. However, referring again to glottochronology, we can assume that after a period of less than 500 years, Proto Lotuxo-Maa split into two sub-groups when the linguistic ancestors of today's Maasai, the Proto Ongamo-Maa, began a long trek southeast into Kenya and ultimately northern Tanzania as well. Based on radiocarbon dates collected at a central-Kenyan "Lanet ware" site that Ambrose links to Proto Ongamo-Maa on the basis of similarities with Maasai pottery design, as well as evidence for meat-feasts reminiscent of historical Maasai practice, it is likely that this group had occupied Kenya by c. 850 CE, and therefore probably left South Sudan many centuries before that.[62]

Scholars working primarily with oral traditions have estimated dates as late as c. 1500 CE for the divergence of Proto Ateker.[63] However, there are no candidates for an "original" generation shared by all Ateker speakers and no oral traditions exist which can be convincingly linked to specific externally-datable events, so standard methods of oral tradition analysis cannot provide any reliable date at all for the initial emergence of Proto Ateker. Current estimations based on oral traditions tend to underestimate the antiquity of Proto Ateker's initial emergence as a distinct language. However, the most careful reconstructions, including that offered by Lamphear, agree with glottochronological estimates in asserting an initial split between Proto Teso and Proto Northern Ateker in the centuries leading up to 1500. The sheer length of time,

[62] S. Ambrose, "Archaeology and Linguistic Reconstructions of History in East Africa," in C. Ehret & M. Posnansky (eds.), *The Archaeological and Linguistic Reconstruction of African History* (Berkeley, CA, 1982), 104-146 & R. Gramly, "Meat-feasting Sites and Cattle Brands: Patterns of Rock-shelter Utilization in East Africa," *Azania*, 10, 1 (1975), 107-121.

[63] B. Knighton, *The Vitality of Karimojong Religion: Dying tradition or living faith?* (Burlington, VT, 2005), 51.

well exceeding 1,000 years, during which Proto Ateker must have remained an intact language community helps reconcile evidence for an early Proto Tung'a divergence with later estimates for the emergence of Proto Teso and Proto Northern Ateker.

Both historical linguistic and comparative ethnographic data suggest that Proto Tung'a speakers privileged stock-herding to a greater degree than had their Proto Eastern Nilotic or Proto Nilotic-speaking ancestors. But the percentages of shared cognation between Proto Ateker and Proto Lotuxo-Maa are only about 10% higher than those between either of these groups and descendants of Proto Bari-Mondari-Kakwa, suggesting that Proto Tung'a only existed as a distinct community for a relatively short period of time – probably less than 500 years. What might have caused this nascent group to definitively split apart? The answer may lie in the paleoclimate record. The Proto Tung'a period of the late second millennium BCE coincided with the large-scale retreat of the African Human Period (AHP) that had lasted since 8,000 BCE, during which much of what is now the arid Sudanese Sahara and Sahel was significantly moister.[64] Southeastern South Sudan's fairly rapid desiccation by the end of this climate change was undoubtedly a cause for concern among Proto Tung'a speakers. The divergence of Proto Ateker and Proto Lotuxo-Maa likely coincided with the permanent retreat in water levels of the region's two largest water bodies, Lake Turkana and the Omo River, which occurred no later than c. 870 BCE.[65] Early Lotuxo speakers moved west towards the better-watered banks of the Nile, while Proto Ongamo-Maa speakers soon thereafter began migrating southeast towards Kenya. On the basis of glottochronological calculations and the most plausible interpretation of

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[64] Shanahan, 2015.

[65] K. Butzer, "The Holocene Plain of North Rudolph, East Africa," *Physical Geography*, 1, 1 (1980), 52; M. Mohammed *et al*., "Pollen and isotopic records in Late Holocene sediments from Lake Turkana, Kenya," *Palaeogeography, Palaeoclimatology, Palaeoecology*, 119 (1995), 380.

historical climate data, we can thus point to sometime in the mid-first millennium BCE as the beginning of the Proto Ateker language community.

As stated above, Proto Ateker was spoken by a single linguistically-integrated community for more than one thousand years while the language underwent numerous phonological and lexical changes partially influenced by contact with an array of linguistically diverse neighbors, described in Chapter 3. This linguistic integration finally came to an end, however, with the divergence of Proto Ateker into its two primary branches, Proto Teso and PNA, most likely as a result of southward migration by pre-Teso speakers (see above). Colonial-era theories derived from reciprocal origin traditions specifically linking the Teso and their Karimojong "uncles" with a homeland in today's Karamoja c. 1500 have, following Lamphear's groundbreaking 1976 work, have been definitively replaced by a narrative of separate and earlier migration of Teso speakers directly from South Sudan.[66] But when this migration occurred is still an open question.

With an average shared core cognation rate between Teso and Northern Ateker languages in the mid-high 70s, glottochronology would suggest an initial divergence approximately 900 years ago, c. 1000 CE. Why would large-scale southward migration begin c. 1000 CE? For an answer, we can again turn to the paleoclimatic record. Beginning c. 900 CE and lasting until c. 1250 CE, eastern Africa underwent a long dry period roughly corresponding with the Medieval Warm Period in Europe.[67] Environmental pressures on cereal agriculture – especially the Proto

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[66] The most prominent colonial-era voice in favor of the Karamoja-origin hypothesis was J. C. D Lawrance, 1957, and Webster maintained this theory with revisions in 1973. See J. C. D. Lawrance, *The Iteso: Fifty Years of Change in a Nilo-Hamitic Tribe of Uganda* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957) & Webster *et al.*, 1973, 1. Lamphear's reconstruction was published in Lamphear, 1976.

[67] V. Gelorini & D. Verschuren, "Historical climate-human-ecosystem interaction in East Africa: a review," *African Journal of Ecology*, 51 (2012), 413. This general timeline corresponds with Ralph Herring's climate reconstruction

Ateker staple finger millet – may have driven the early pre-Teso group, tellingly named the

ngikatapa "bread people" in oral traditions, south to the generally wetter climes found in east-

central Uganda. An ecological interpretation of the initial Proto Ateker divergence is further

supported by linguistic evidence. Innovated flora vocabularies exclusive to Proto Teso generally

refer to species requiring 600-1000mm of annual rainfall, while flora vocabularies exclusive to

Northern Ateker are for species requiring 200-400mm per annum - including the drought-

resistant cereal pearl millet (*Pennisetum glaucum*), which was borrowed by Northern Ateker

speakers, probably from the early Shilluk, around this time (Chapter 4). Drawn together, multiple

sources of evidence therefore strongly suggest an initial Proto Ateker divergence caused by the

southward migration of early Proto Teso speakers fleeing widespread aridity c. 900-1000 CE

(Chapters 4 & 6).

If the so-called *ngikatapa*, or pre-Teso, group exited South Sudan by around 1000 CE,

this still does not tell us when their linguistic descendants had fully occupied the Usuku-Magoro

area postulated as their "homeland" above. Moreover Jie oral traditions imply that some

members of this migrating group remained behind at various points along the South Sudan-to-

Usuku migration route before ultimately being incorporated by later-arriving descendants of

Proto HNA-speakers. Nevertheless, at some point in the following centuries a significant portion

of the Proto Teso language community settled in Usuku.

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based on the Rodah Nilometer, which was used by Egyptians throughout this period to measure Nile water levels which are themselves an approximate index for rainfall in Uganda. See R. Herring, "Hydrology and Chronology: The Rodah Nilometer as an Aid to Dating Interlacustrine History," in J. B. Webster (ed.), *Chronology, Migration, and Drought in Interlacustrine Africa* (London, 1979, 39-86 & T. de Putter *et al.*, "Decadal periodicities of Nile River historical discharge (A.D. 622-1470) and climatic implications," *Geophysical Research Letters*, 25, 16 (1998), 3193-3196.

The next event of significance for the classification of Ateker was the divergence of Proto Teso into pre-Tesyo and Proto Kyoga-Bisina Teso. By averaging the percentage of cognates shared between Tesyo-Tororo and Teso-Ngora calculated by Ladefoged *et al.* (87%) and myself (91%), we arrive at rate of 89% - or roughly 400 years ago, c. 1600, after conversion to glottochronological dates. Presumably Teso-speakers inhabited Usuku-Magoro sometime before 1600, although there is no way to know how long Proto Teso remained intact there before diverging. Webster and others argue that the gradual expansion of Teso settlement out of the Usuku-Magoro nucleus and into today's broader Teso region began in either the late sixteenth- or early seventeenth-centuries and continued, with ebbs and flows, until the colonial period. Webster describes this process as primarily one of small-scale migration into mostly "open" lands akin to the expansion of the western American frontier, but the frequency of Teso "clan" names signaling non-Ateker origins and the much higher rate of the sickle cell genetic trait among Teso-speakers compared to Northern Ateker-speakers suggest that this was as much a story of social incorporation and intermarriage as it was open-veld trekking.[68] Nevertheless, there is no reason to dispute Webster's overall model of a generally slow and uneven expansion as opposed to singular migratory events. The details of this migratory period are dealt with at greater length in Chapter 6.

We can now turn to the various Teso dialects and sub-groups. Assuming an initial divergence of Tesyo after 1600, it is probable that by c. 1700 early Tesyo was spoken in the vicinity of Tororo, where it is spoken today. This cluster was probably already geographically isolated from the rest of the Teso world. This timeline generally comports with oral traditions

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[68] Lehmann & Raper, 1949 & Okwi *et al.*, 2010.

found amongst neighboring groups, although credible accounts of later migrations undertaken by Teso-speakers from Ngora to Tororo in the nineteenth century complicate any efforts to identify a temporal "origin" of the Tesyo group in Kenya.[69] After the first divergence, the Teso language spread southwest to at least Pallisa and then across the Serere Peninsula, and must have done so early enough to allow for the later separation between the Pallisa-Serere dialect and Nuclear Teso. Oral traditions from the eastern border of the Bantu-speaking Busoga region that describe both military conflicts and intermarriages with the Teso can be reliably dated to the early nineteenth century.[70] Any definitive split between the Usuku and Ngora dialect communities is virtually impossible to date on the basis of linguistic evidence. However, the colonial official A. C. A. Wright, writing in 1942, did clearly delineate the two regions as being culturally and dialectally distinct as well as maintaining two completely different historical age-set organizations, indicating that the distinction has at least a late precolonial origin.[71]

The final questions of dating concern those Northern Ateker-speakers who remained in South Sudan during the c. 950 – 1250 CE dry period. On the basis of glottochronology, shared cognate rates in the mid-high 80s suggest a linguistic divergence no later than c. 1500. Paleoclimatic drought reconstructions, which can also be connected to famine events recorded in

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[69] This latter migration is that said to have been led by the famous Teso leader Oguti who is now buried in Tororo town, but it is often confused with a separate and earlier occupation of Tororo c. 1600-1700. TY, Bunabwana, 14 October, 2017; also see the novel based on Oguti's legend, L. Erapu, *Restless Feet* (Nairobi, 1969). G. S. Were captures the ambivalence inherent in dating these traditions in his work on the history of the neighboring Abaluyia group, where he first asserts that the Teso population of Tororo stems from population expansions of the early nineteenth century only to declare in the following page that Teso settlement in western Kenya (the same group as Tororo by all measures) dates to "c. 1706-1787." The case could thus be made that both interpretations are correct. G. S. Were, *A History of the Abaluyia of Western Kenya* (Nairobi, 1967), 53-54.

[70] Y. K. Lubogo, *A History of Busoga* (Jinja: East African Literature Bureau, 1960), 24; D. W. Cohen (ed.), *Selected Texts, Busoga Traditional History* (Chicago: Center for Research Libraries), Text #45.

[71] A. C. A. Wright, "Notes on the Iteso Social Organisation," *Uganda Journal*, 9 (1942), 59-79.

various oral traditions, describe a short dry spell on either side of c. 1400 and then a longer one c. 1550-1600.[72] Neither matches directly with linguistic dating evidence, and we ought not insist on fitting the two lines of evidence together to generate a causal *deus ex machina* from fairly short climate episodes to explain broad historical change. Regardless, at some point between roughly c.1400-1700, Proto Northern Ateker diverged into the Proto HNA and Proto LNA language communities. With both Northern Ateker sub-groups sharing cognate percentages in the low 90s, glottochronological dates for later divergences into the languages spoken today can be dated to sometime around 1700 CE (Chapter 5).

Named age-groups can be of some assistance in gaining further resolution on these divergences. The only historical age-group shared by the Jie and Karimojong is Ngipalajam (those of uncured hides – a unique name unlikely to be coincidental), which Lamphear reckons to have been the leading Jie group from c.1720-1760, and Dorothy Clark listed in 1950 as one of the extinct age-groups distantly remembered by the Karimojong.[73] However, as Spencer persuasively argues in his critique of Lamphear, it is likely that the 40-year standard generation length Lamphear assumes is an underestimate, and a more accurate number would be between 55 and 60 years per generation. Spencer's dating matches my own observation of Karimojong generations in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. With Spencer's corrective applied to Lamphear's carefully constructed generations list, the Ngipalajam generation more likely existed in the mid-seventeenth century. This, then, would have been the last time that the early Karimojong and Jie groups held a generation in common before definitively splitting into distinct

[72] Gelorini & Verschuren, 2012.

[73] Lamphear 1976, 36 & 110; D. Clark, "Karimojong Age-groups and Clans," *Uganda Journal*, 15 (1950), 217.

socio-political identities. This date coincides with the onset of an acute dry period which may have had the effect of further fragmenting groups already in motion as people sought more open land to reduce the relative scarcity of farming and grazing land. Therefore, I propose as a working hypothesis that the Karimojong and Jie divergence occurred sometime around 1650 CE.

Turning to the Lowland Northern Ateker, there is generally more uniformity in age-groups names, suggesting either that these dialect communities remained in close contact for a longer period of time, or that they at least maintained a broad political system in common even as they expanded into their present-day locations. One name in particular that stands out is Ngipyei or the "wild dogs," because this group holds an important place among ancestral age-groups in every available list for the Turkana, Nyangatom, Toposa, and Jiye, but it is not found anywhere else in the Ateker world.[74] Müller-Dempf asserts that this group was among the foundational groups of Turkana and, based on a generation-counting computer algorithm, dates their reign to c. 1730-1780. Aside from age-groups bearing the name Ngimoru "mountains" – a name which is ubiquitous in every Ateker community and so of little value in dating – Ngipyei is the last-named age-group clearly held in common by all the Lowland Northern Ateker. Another two or three generation names are held in common by the Toposa, Nyangatom, and Jiye before each group diverges into its own unique naming conventions. Like the Ngipalajam of the Karimojong and Jie, the Ngipyei generation may be the last generation shared by the Turkana, Nyangatom and Toposa together. If Müller's dating model is correct, the final divergence between the Turkana and these other groups may be dated to the mid-late eighteen century.

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[74] Müller-Dempf 2009, 196; H. Müller-Dempf, *Changing Generations: Dynamics of Generation and Age-Sets in Southeastern Sudan* (Toposa) and Northwestern Kenya (Turkana) (Fort Lauderdale, 1989), 134; S. Tornay, "Structure et événement: le système générationnel des peuples du cercle karimojong," *L'Homme*, 35, 134 (1995), 72; G. Verswijver, *The Jiye of South Sudan* (Geneva, 2015), 97.

Summary

Reconstructing even the basic outlines of early Ateker-speaking history presents a significant methodological challenge absent conventional sources, such as documents or even major archaeological sites, that historians often take for granted. Given the vagaries of source material, it is only possible to establish the existence of actual historical communities using the imperfect proxy of the languages that they spoke. And even after building a language classification, it is difficult to determine where or when these communities lived with precision. However, by drawing upon multiple sources including historical linguistics, archaeology, oral traditions and paleoclimatic data, a fairly consistent historical image does slowly emerge. This admittedly fuzzy image can be used as a framework to tell more interesting stories based on similar lines of evidence about how Ateker-speaking communities of the past lived, worked, ate, and organized themselves culturally, socially, and politically. Having finally established this initial framework – represented for ease of reference in the below chart showing a classification of Ateker language communities along with proposed locations and estimated dates – we can now move to these other stories. Below is the final classification (Figure 2.10).

Proto Ateker
c. 500 BCE – 900 CE
SE South Sudan

Proto Teso
c. 900 - 1700 CE
Usuku, Uganda

Proto Northern Ateker
c. 900 – 1550 CE
SE South Sudan

Proto Kyoga-Bisina Teso
c. 1700
Usuku, Uganda

Proto Highland Northern Ateker
c. 1550 CE
Koten-Magos/Apule, Uganda

Proto Lowland Northern Ateker
c. 1550 CE
SE South Sudan & NW Kenya

Proto Nuclear Teso
c. 1800
Kyoga-Bisina, Uganda

Tesyo
(Tororo)

Teso
(Pallisa &
Serere?)

Teso
(Usuku)

Teso
(Ngora)

Jie

Karimojong

Dodos?

Toposa

Nyangatom

Turkana

Figure 2.10 – Classification of Ateker Language family, including proposed dates and homelands

Chapter Three

Creating the Proto Ateker World: Climate Change, Cultural Exchange, and Social Organization, c. 500 BCE to 900 CE

The termination of the African Humid Period no later than 1500 BCE, discussed in the previous chapter, coincided with a steady depopulation of today's Sudan/South-Sudan border region. Diverse communities followed southward-retreating isohyetal lines in order to continue a subsistence economy focused on growing cereal crops and keeping cows and goats.[1] The majority of these climate refugees spoke various dialects of the Nilotic language family, and it is likely that their migratory choices spurred the final divergence of Proto Nilotic into three primary branches – Eastern, Western, and Southern. The early Southern Nilotes moved the farthest south, well in advance of shifting rainfall patterns. They had occupied large swaths of central and western Kenya down through Tanzania by the beginning of the Christian era.[2] The timing of their movement proves that climate change was not the only prompt for mobility. Nearly all Nilotic-speakers mimicked this southward trend, with the exception of those who clung to banks of major rivers such as the Nile and Bahr el Ghazal. They formed the nascent Northern Lwo language community, prominently including the ancestors of the mid-Common Era Shilluk kingdom. For the most part, however, the desiccation of the southeastern Sahara concentrated an

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[1] C. Ehret, "Population movement and culture contact in the Southern Sudan, c. 3000 BC to AD 1000: a preliminary linguistic overview," in J. Mack & P. Robertshaw (eds.), *Culture History in the Southern Sudan: Archaeology, Linguistics, and Ethnohistory* (Nairobi, 1982), 19-39. For climate, see Chapter 2, and specifically: K. Butzer, "The Holocene Plain of North Rudolph, East Africa," *Physical Geography*, 1, 1 (1980), 52; M. Mohammed *et al.*, "Pollen and isotopic records in Late Holocene sediments from Lake Turkana, Kenya," *Palaeogeography, Palaeoclimatology, Palaeoecology*, 119 (1995), 380.

[2] One group of Southern Nilotes in central Kenya, Ehret's "Kenya-Kadam" people, probably had the least population density, evidenced by the total disappearance of their language from the region (aside from remnant linguistic artifacts). C. Ehret, "The Southern Nilotes to 1600 A. D.: A Linguistic Approach to East African History" (PhD Dissertation, Northwestern University, 1970), 67-77.

array of Nilotic-speaking groups along a belt roughly matching today's South Sudan-Uganda border, where they came into sustained contact with a variety of unrelated speech communities, including Moru-Madi, Surmic, Rub, and East Cushitic (Fig. 1).
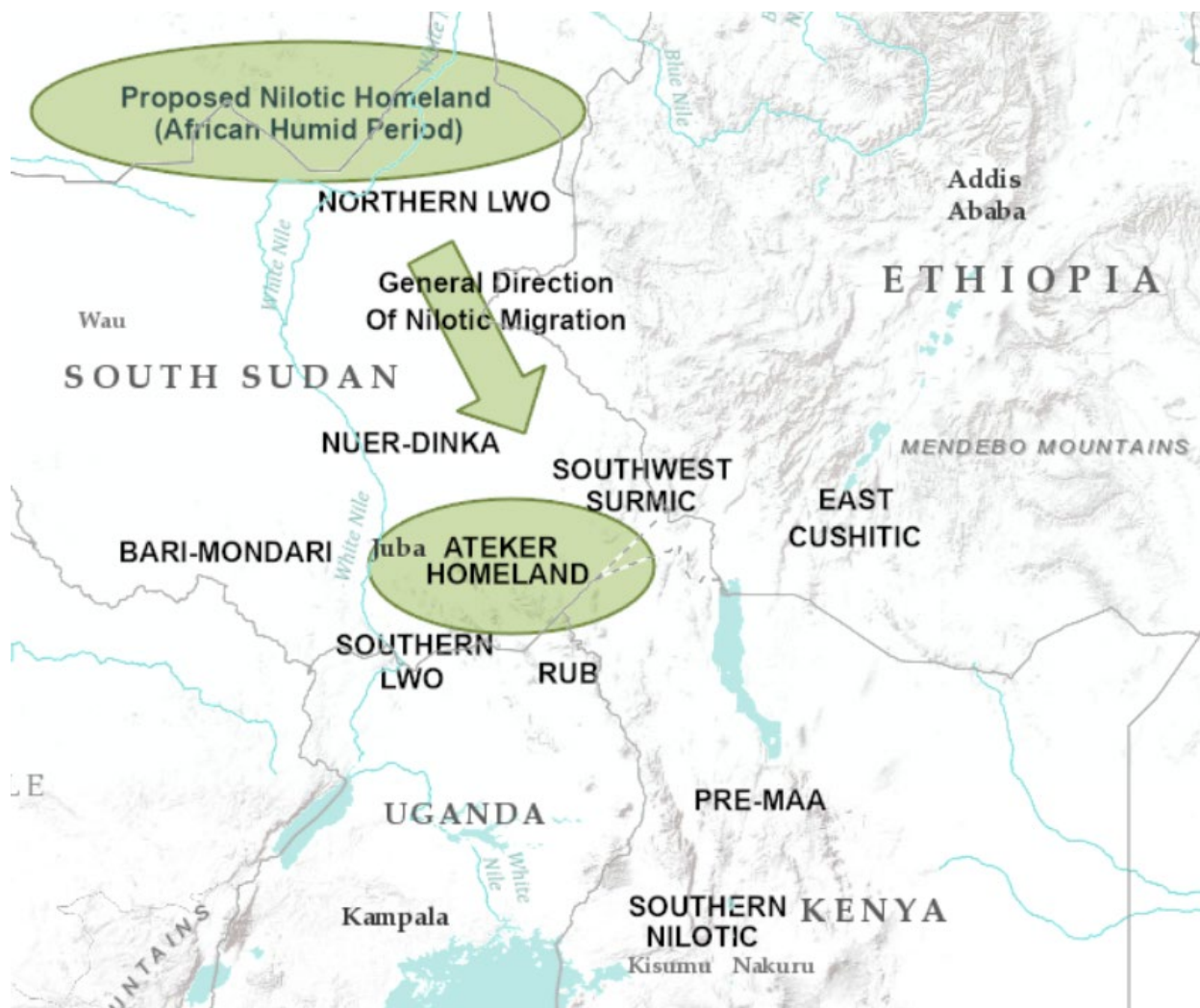
Map 3.1 – Estimated protolanguage locations during Proto Ateker period (c. 500 BCE – 900 CE)

Stress from population concentration in and of itself likely produced social changes in Nilotic-speaking communities who, for example, independently innovated a new term for

"territorial boundary" in both Eastern and Western Nilotic: *-kor and *keu, respectively.[3] More

profound still was the impact of cross-cultural exchange. Proto Ateker-speakers were introduced

to pack animals, new fishing techniques, and socio-religious concepts, while they in turn shared

knowledge of stock-herding and war tactics, the latter perhaps not always voluntarily. Moreover,

the advent of a widespread Pastoral Iron Age across greater East Africa arose from contact

between mobile stone-using Nilotic groups and communities they encountered with access to

small-scale, localized iron production.[4] Exchanges also extended beyond Africa. Linguist Kay

Williamson, for example, makes a persuasive argument that the Eastern Nilotes were most

responsible for the spread of domestic chickens, originally hailing from India, across a belt

stretching from the Red Sea to the Atlantic coast, while others have pointed to the introduction of

certain domesticated African cereals into India around the same period.[5]

Migration and cultural exchange was thus the historical context, c. 1000 BCE, in which

the ancestral Proto Eastern Nilotic language community disintegrated at a relatively fast rate,

initially diverging into the two primary branches of Proto Bari-Mondari and Proto Tung'a,

followed fewer than five hundred years later by the divergence of Proto Tung'a into Proto

Lotuxo-Maa and Proto Ateker (see Chapter 2 & Figure 3.1 below). These linguistic divergences

tended to coincide with variable climate resilience strategies. Proto Bari-Mondari speakers and

their descendants moved west, occupying riverbanks in South Sudan and more arable farmland

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[3] R. Vossen, *The Eastern Nilotes: Linguistic and Historical Reconstructions* (Berlin, 1982), 357-8 & Proto Western Nilotic Reconstruction #1 (Appendix IV).

[4] Ehret 1982, 35-37.

[5] K. Williamson, "Did chickens go west?" in R. Blench & K. MacDonald (eds.), *The origins and development of African livestock: Archaeology, genetics, linguistics, and ethnography* (New York, 2000), 368-448; K. W. Hilu & J. M. J. de Wet, "Domestication of Eleusine coracana," *Economic Botany*, 30, 3 (1976), 206-207; N. Boivin *et al.*, "East Africa and Madagascar in the Indian Ocean World," *Journal of World Prehistory*, 26, 3 (2013), 215.

in northwestern Uganda, where they developed sedentary economies centered on intensive crop production supplemented by livestock. Ancestors of today's Maa-speakers migrated to central Kenya, following the route of earlier Southern Nilotes, where they found better grazing and farming opportunities in the cooler and wetter Kenyan highlands. Proto Ateker-speakers moved the least, choosing to remain in South Sudan, where they settled near the Didinga hills north of the Ugandan border.[6] In this mountainous homeland, Proto Ateker-speakers, over a long period from c. 500 BCE to c. 900 CE, developed practices of subsistence and exchange which allowed them to exploit the locally variable climate characterized by sharp elevation changes. If the Bari-Mondari went west and the pre-Maasai went south, in other words, the early Ateker went up.
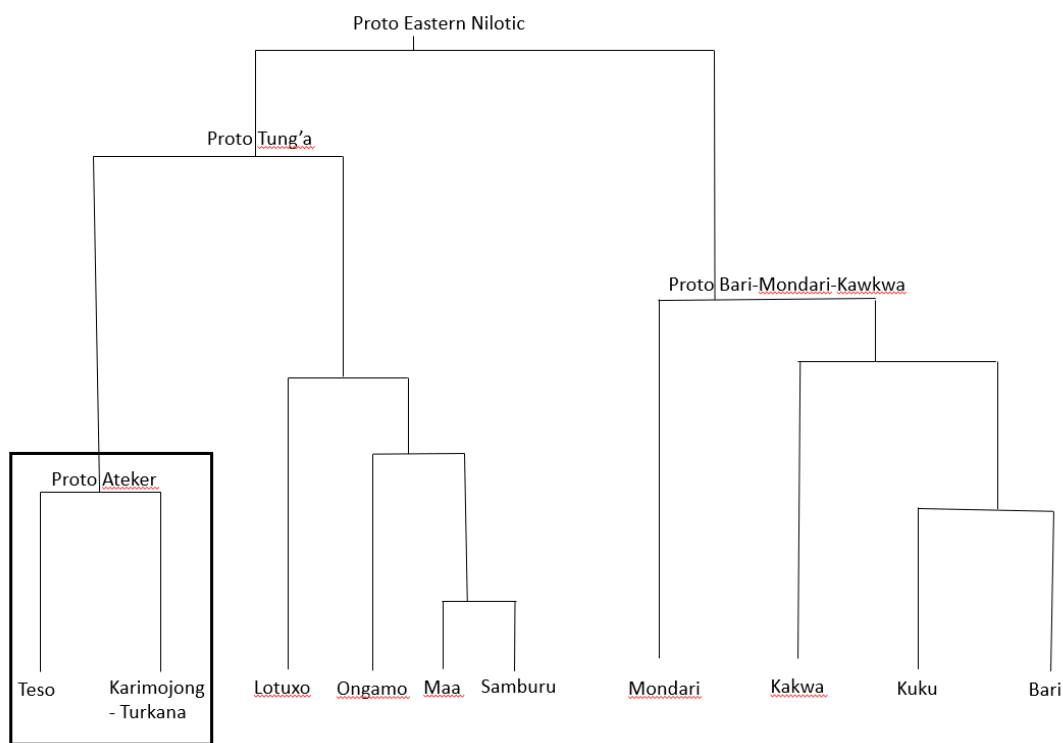
Figure 3.1 - A "family tree" of Eastern Nilotic languages

[6] For a physical description of these hills, see J. K. Jackson, "Mount Lotuke, Didinga Hills," *Sudan Notes and Records*, 32, 2 (1951), 339-341.

The Ateker oral traditions analyzed by Lamphear and others support the claim made in Chapter 2 on linguistic grounds, that their ancestors lived near the Didinga Hills in today's South Sudan.[7] Most significant, however, is clear evidence of frequent and sustained linguistic exchange between Proto Ateker and two other language communities in this region. Agro-pastoralist Southwest Surmic-speakers had migrated into the region not long before the Ateker, and Rub-speakers had long occupied higher elevations more conducive to a food collection-based economy.[8] The totality of words exchanged among these groups during this period of regional population upheavals covers wide-ranging fields of meaning. However, one general trend is that words transferred between Ateker and Surmic languages were mostly confined to material culture, subsistence, and warfare. Ateker-speakers developed an iron-using culture because of input from Surmic-speakers, reflected in heavy Ateker borrowing of Surmic words for iron implements. By contrast, Rub loan words into Ateker tended towards the ethereal, and included abstract verbs, intimate nouns for kinship, and descriptions of natural phenomena, possibly indicating an outsize Rub influence in Ateker ideology or philosophy.[9] Aside from

[7] J. Lamphear, *The Traditional History of the Jie of Uganda* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976).

[8] Western Rub is basically identical to what is also called the Kuliak language family. There are only two existing Rub-speaking communities today: the Ik (also called Teuso), and So (also called Tepeth), both living in mountainous parts of northeast Uganda. Because many external names for these communities, including "Kuliak," have locally derogatory connotations, I join Ehret in using the term Rub. Southwest Surmic migratory origins are poorly understood, but linguistic evidence and oral traditions generally point to a migration into South Sudan from Ethiopia in the first millennium BCE. For the term "Rub" see: C. Ehret, *An African Classical Age* (Charlottesville, VA: 1998); for Surmic origins see: G. Dimmendaal, "Contacts between Eastern Nilotic and Surma groups: linguistic evidence," in J. Mack and P. Robertshow (eds.), *Culture History in the Southern Sudan: Archaeology, Linguistics, and Ethnohistory* (Nairobi, 1982), 105 & Ehret 1982, 37.

[9] It is impossible in many cases to determine the antiquity of loans from Ateker into Western Rub because all extant Rub-speakers live completely surrounded by much larger Ateker-speaking populations from whom they continue to borrow words (in fact, there are only a few thousand fluent Rub-speakers currently living, and younger generations have tended to adopt Ateker languages as their native tongue). However, the directionality of borrowing can usually be determined morphologically through the presence, or lack thereof, of Ateker gender prefixes in Rub roots. The relative age of borrowings into Ateker can be hypothesized on the basis of distributions in Ateker communities not in proximity to Rub-speakers – e.g., if a Rub borrowing is found in Teso some 200 km from its source as well as other Ateker languages, the borrowing must date to the Proto Ateker period. H. Fleming,

Southwestern Surmic and Rub, Proto Ateker-speakers borrowed words from every other nearby

language group – especially Western Nilotic, but also Southern Nilotic, Moru-Madi, and

Cushitic – in addition to innovating words on their own by modifying pre-existing Eastern

Nilotic roots.

These words unlock the history of sustained cultural interaction and innovation which

molded the Proto Ateker world over a period nearly 1,500 years.[10] The rest of this chapter uses

such linguistic data to reconstruct the history of the interactions which shaped vocabularies for

cattle herding and cereal cultivation, and vocabularies for new knowledge about geography and

material culture. Taken together, these investigations provide spatial and economic context for

understanding more abstract theories of power, group identity, and collective politics which

animated social life in the Proto-Ateker world. Reconstructing social structures in the Proto

Ateker period will then set the stage for exploring the later historical development of

decentralized Ateker political institutions, discussed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Ateker Food Production

"Kuliak External Relations: Step One" in R. Vossen & M. Bechaus-Gerst (eds.), *Nilotic Studies: Proceedings of the International Symposium on Languages and History of the Nilotic Peoples, Cologne, January 4-6, 1982* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1983), 425-429;

[10] The periodization of linguistic developments within a single protolanguage is often impossible to determine on the basis of language evidence itself. Reconstructions for a given protolanguage only capture the language as it was spoken immediately prior to its divergence into later branches. While historical linguistics can tell us, for example, that a certain concept was named by root X in Proto Tung'a, but that it changed to root Y in Proto Ateker, thus revealing something about the long-term development of Ateker history, internal evidence alone cannot determine whether that new root Y was innovated in 300 BCE or 700 CE. We can only know it took place some time during the period when Proto Ateker was spoken. Therefore, except where otherwise stated, readers should assume that innovations discussed in Proto Ateker are date only to *sometime* within the very long period of c. 500 BCE to 900 CE. Although this can be frustratingly imprecise for historians, it is nonetheless essential for setting to groundwork to explain later changes which can be tracked with more precision for the period after 900 CE.

The earliest Ateker-speakers inherited a broad slate of agricultural, pastoral, and pottery practices that define what scholars have broadly labelled the East African "pastoral neolithic."[11] Having migrated south in order to maintain a certain subsistence economy, Ateker-speakers retained many aspects of their traditional cereal production even as they adopted new ideas and practices in many other domains. As a prime example, the earliest and most important of Nilotic domesticates, Finger millet (*Eleusine coracana*), was called *-kima- in Proto Ateker just as it had been in Proto Tung'a and Proto Eastern Nilotic before that.[12] Although finger millet is a durable and exceptionally nutritious staple crop, its moderate rainfall requirement of at least 500mm – 1000mm per annum creates a disadvantage in settings with sparse or inconsistent rain.[13] Perhaps as a hedge against finger millet failure, Ateker-speakers also began to cultivate sorghum (*Sorghum bicolor*), another East African domesticate stemming from domesticated during the African Humid Period which requires a lower annual rainfall average of 400mm – 600mm, for which they adopted the word *-momw- from an unknown source.[14]

As Ateker-speakers arrived in the Didinga hills area, one of the first foreign language communities they encountered was Southwest Surmic-speakers who also engaged in cereal agriculture and reared livestock. Ateker- and Southwest Surmic-speakers appear to have agreed on at least some degree of shared lexicon for agricultural land tenure, because both groups used

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[11] J. Bower, "The Pastoral Neolithic of East Africa," *Journal of World Prehistory*, 5, 1 (1991), 49-82.
[12] Ateker 53; Vossen 1982, 451; finger millet was initially domesticated from a wild relative in eastern Africa during the African Humid Period, and was a dominant cereal throughout the region. Hilu & de Wet 1976, 199-208.

[13] M. M. Dida & K. M. Devos, "Finger Millet," in C. Kole (ed.), *Genome Mapping and Molecular Breeding in Plants, Vol 1: Cereals and Millets* (New York, 2006), 335; D. Chandra *et al*., "Review of Finger millet (Eleusine coracana): A power house of health benefiting nutrients," *Food Science and Human Wellness*, 4 (2016), 149-155.

[14] Ateker 99; H. P. Singh & H. C. Lohithaswa, "Sorghum," in Kole 2006, 258. For early domestication, see: F. Winchell *et al*., "Evidence for Sorghum Domestication in Fourth Millennium BC Eastern Sudan," *Current Anthropology*, 58, 5 (2017), 673-683.

the word *-mana, probably of Surmic origin, to refer to a garden or farm.[15] Southwest Surmic-

and Western Rub-speakers also borrowed the word *-kinyom- "grain seed" from Ateker,

possibly indicating the adoption of a new finger millet seed variant brought from the north.[16] If

this is the case, it may have helped Ateker newcomers attain a level of mutually beneficial

consideration with neighboring groups in their new homeland.

A number of steps in the cultivation process for both finger millet and sorghum can be

reconstructed to Proto Ateker language community. Seeds were sown with the assistance of a

straight digging stick called *-kut- innovated from Proto Tung'a "to make a hole.[17] The verb *-

butun- "to undress" described the emergence of a grain head from its leafy covering, and the

activity of *-lem "to take, to collect a harvest" was followed by threshing in a designated area

called *-los.[18] From neighboring Proto Luo speakers, Ateker-speakers borrowed a verb, *-pyet

for winnowing chaff from grain.[19] Another important external borrowing was for a new type of

granary, *edula, which must have been adopted from Moru-Madi speakers at a very early point

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[15] Ateker, 99. Dimmendaal notes that *-mana may have Eastern Nilotic origins, pointing to the related Lotuxo word *namana* "crops," but this could easily be one of a number of borrowings from Ateker or Surmic into Lotuxo, and in either case it would be morphologically similar. I suspect a Surmic origin both because of the lack of fossilized prefixes in Surmic reflexes which usually occur in Ateker to Surmic borrowings, and because there no conceivable etymological history to be found among Eastern Nilotic languages. Dimmendaal urges caution on this question on the grounds of scanty data. Dimmendaal 1982, 104.

[16] Ateker 55; Fleming 1982, 461; Dimmendaal, 104-105. It remains an open question whether finger millet was first introduced to Southwest Surmic-speakers by Ateker-speakers. Evidence favoring the hypothesis that the Southwest Surmic borrowing of the generic word for "seed", *-kinyom, indexes an introduction of finger millet includes the fact that finger millet requires a heavier threshing club (the seed hull being some twenty times thicker than sorghum), which was also borrowed, and that finger millet was the primary Ateker staple. Dimmendaal dismisses this theory based on his reconstruction of Proto Southwest Surmic *labi "millet," but available evidence indicates this root referred to sorghum, not finger millet. However, since there is no other linguistic evidence to support this hypothesis, it must remaining an open question for the moment.

[17] Ateker 73.

[18] Ateker 10; Ateker 82; Ateker 88.

[19] Ateker 134.

in Ateker migration history, given the distance between the Didinga hills and the nearest Moru-

Madi speech community.[20] Both finger millet and sorghum could be turned into flour, denoted

by the Ateker word *-ki-r(i)ya- derived from the inherited Proto Tung'a root *-r(i)ya- "grinding

stone."[21] The most common form of cereal consumption was a bread or thick porridge, which the

Ateker called *-tap- from the Proto Tung'a root for any generic cereal, perhaps followed in

importance by a brewed alcohol.[22]

Next to cereal cultivation, the other major Ateker subsistence activity was rearing

livestock for meat, milk, and blood. Ateker-speakers inherited a robust livestock complex from

their Proto Eastern Nilotic and Proto Tung'a forebears. The Proto Eastern Nilotic words *-kiteng

"cow," *-(ko)-kor "chicken," *-tagw- "calf, heifer," *-ki-ne(j) "goat," *-woro "cow dung," *-

kyok- "to herd livestock," and *-dong- "to castrate by pounding," all have widespread Proto

Ateker reflexes, as do the Proto Tung'a words *-mong "ox," *-gelem- "to castrate by cutting," *-

lep "to milk," *-kori "he-goat," *-muro "meaty hind leg," *-da(k)- "to graze (of animals)," and

possibly *-merek-(ek) "sheep (of the fat-tailed, East African variety)."[23] As they pursued a

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[20] Ateker 24.

[21] Ateker 27; Tung'a 35.

[22] Ateker 150. Proto Tung'a and Proto Eastern Nilotic speakers had words for alcohol, and all Ateker groups today brew sorghum or millet beer, the latter being of great cultural importance in Teso. However, aside from *-mer "drunkenness" there are no shared reflexes directly attesting an alcoholic beverage in Proto Ateker. In Teso, millet beer is most common and is called *ajon*, but this was word was clearly innovated only in Teso. The generic word for sorghum beer in Northern Ateker is *-ngag(w)e*, and does have a reflex in Teso meaning "first millet crop," perhaps reflecting an earlier practice of using the first grain crop to brew alcohol. However, given the lack of reconstructable alcohol words in Proto Ateker, it is not possible to definitively describe an early Ateker drinking culture. Vossen 1982, 454; I. Karp, "Beer-Drinking among the Iteso," Seminar Paper, University College, Nairobi, 1970.

[23] Ateker 60; Ateker 63; Ateker 151; Ateker 166; Tunga 16; Tung'a 3; Ateker 100; Ateker 30; Ateker 84; Ateker 60; Tung'a 26; Tung'a 2; Ateker 17; Vossen 1982, 450-458 & Ehret PNS #360. *-merek-(ek) "sheep (originally ram)" may have been borrowed separately into Proto Ateker and Pre-Maa from one or more Southern Nilotic sub-

balanced agro-pastoral economy, capable of rolling with the punches of uncertain rainfall regimes, Ateker-speakers specialized further in herding techniques. They drew fine-grained distinctions between domestic animals according to factors such as sex, age, and reproductive status, producing internal innovations including *-manangit "very young calf," and *-masanik "bull (not castrated)."[24] New vocabulary items for objects and concepts related to herding also appeared, such as *-dongot "cow-bell," *-lepit "milking can," *-kere-t "gourd for churning milk," *-doot "salt lick," *-bela "herding stick" (borrowed into Surmic), *-gum- "to bleed cattle," (accomplished by shooting a blocked arrow from a bow, *-k-awuo-, inherited from Proto Tung'a), *-coto "cow urine," and *-tub(w)a "watering trough."[25] Thus in regards to both cultivation and herding, Proto Ateker-speakers for the most part continued already intact practices, albeit with some innovation or specialization, which would have been made impossible farther north in their forebears' homeland because of climate change. This evidence comports with the hypothesis that Proto Ateker-speakers very likely moved south in order to maintain these essential practices.

Food collection - hunting, fishing, and gathering - underwent a more far-ranging transformation than other components of Ateker subsistence during the Proto Ateker period. Having left behind a flat savanna with intermittent swamps and rivers, Ateker-speakers settled in an area of great ecological diversity caused by altitude changes and marked by hot low-lying plains tapering off into scrub land to the drier north and, to the south, cooler forested mountains

groups, although either way sheep were a longstanding part of Ateker-speakers' livestock inventory. See: Ehret PNS #114.

[24] Ateker 191; Ateker 94.

[25] Ateker 21; Ateker 85; Ateker 49; Ateker 22; Ateker 3; Ateker 33; Tung'a 10; Ateker 15; Ateker 161.

reaching over 6,000 feet above sea level. Ateker-speakers looked to those mountains' Rub-speaking inhabitants, along with other neighbors, to learn how to exploit natural resources in this diverse environment. The breadth of this shift registers in the linguistic record. Whereas much of the essential lexicon for cultivation and herding was inherited from Ateker's parent languages, virtually all words related to hunting, fishing, or gathering were borrowed anew into Proto Ateker. The only clear exceptions are the Proto Eastern Nilotic verb, *-lok-, meaning "to trap small animals or catch fish," and noun *-kong- "white ants," insects trapped and eaten when in season, along with a handful of big game from Proto Tung'a including *amur "duiker," and *-potir "warthog."[26]

While hunting is often deemed a low-status occupation among pastoralists, including many in today's Karimojong and Turkana communities, the practice certainly formed a part of the early Ateker economy. The root *riɣ, borrowed from the nearby Proto Nuer-Dinka language with the meaning "to encircle and compress" gave the Proto-Ateker verb *-ri(g)(k)a "to hunt in a group," as well as the noun for the *-ri(g)(k)ak "hunting party" that used this tactic.[27] Aside from the inherited *-lok "to trap, to catch fish" mentioned above, the only other word related to trapping reconstructed to Proto Ateker is *-pok- "to ensare in a trap," borrowed from Western

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[26] Ateker 86; Ateker 66; Ateker 107; Ateker 133.

[27] Ateker 139. This is an etymologically complicated word, because the Nuer-Dinka borrowing is genetically cognate with an older Nilo-Saharan root meaning "to tie together," which also has inherited Ateker reflexes pertaining to leading someone (perhaps a blind elder) by a stick or rope which "ties" the two parties together. This sense of leadership was picked up on in the Maasai language, where the root -rik- connotes generic "leadership." However, the two should be considered distinct because, first, the PEN root *-rik has nothing to do with hunting, and second, a borrowing from Nuer-Dinka *-riɣ explains the phonetic ambiguity regarding the voicing of the medial velar stop in the modern reflex erika/eriga "to hunt" between Karimojong-Turkana and Teso, because there is no fricative velar /ɣ/ in Ateker. This same root informs the Ateker word akiriket (Karimojong-Turkana) and airiget (Teso-Usuku) "circle of men in a sacred grove," which would prove to be politically significant in later years.

Rub.[28] Proto Ateker-speakers were ecumenical in borrowing fishing technologies, adopting *-kol- "fish, generic" from Western Rub, *-biti "small fishing spear" from Nuer-Dinka, and *-golo "fish-hook" from Surmic.[29] Although Proto Ateker-speakers retained a Nilo Saharan root *-(y)u for "honey," they may have been shown how to use a honeyguide bird (*Indicator indicator*) to locate sources of honey by Western Rub speakers from whom they borrowed the word *-jeje "honeyguide."[30]   Other gathering activities cannot be reconstructed to Proto Ateker, apart from the knowledge of two edible mushrooms, *-maru-(k) inherited from Proto Eastern Nilotic, and *-baale, borrowed from Northern Lwo.[31]

Ateker Natural World

Once settled near the Didinga mountains, Proto Ateker-speakers sought to describe their new environs. Following a common Nilo-Sarahan polysemantic tradition of equating mountains and rocks, they adopted a masculine form *emoru of the Eastern Nilotic root *-mor- for "mountain" while also constricting the feminine *amoru to mean "stone."[32] The massive pythons inhabiting these rocky mountains were subsequently dubbed *-moru-toto, or "mother of the mountain."[33] To denote thick montane forests – possibly the first ever encountered by this culture – Proto Ateker-speakers innovated the term *-moni, of unknown provenance.[34] Having

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[28] Ateker 125.

[29] Ateker 65; Ateker 5; Ateker 32.

[30] Ateker 170; Ateker 38.

[31] Ateker 93; Ateker 1.

[32] Ateker 104. One can find many examples of this long-standing semantic tradition in Ehret, 2001.

[33] Ateker 105.

[34] Ateker 101.

fled dry conditions, Proto Ateker-speakers were undoubtedly interested in finding various water

sources for cattle and crops. Inherited terms were retained for familiar sources occurring in

flatlands, such as *-ngolol "riverbed," *-cor "well," *-tapar "rainwater collection point," and *-

(k)-ar-e "river."[35] Terms for unfamiliar high-elevation water sources, such as *-bur

"mountainous water pool," and *ecoa "rocky ground spring," were newly innovated, the former

from an indeterminate areal spread and the latter from an unknown origin.[36]

Groundwater sources notwithstanding, however, the key to successful farming and

pasturing two thousand years ago in East Africa was rainfall, and Proto Ateker-speakers would

have paid great attention to water falling from the sky. Here, drastic elevation changes in the

Proto Ateker homeland played a crucial role. In a region where temperatures in low-lying plains

routinely exceed 100 degrees Fahrenheit, the moist air from the Indian Ocean which blew in

during annual wet seasons, warms and rises rapidly after encountering physical barriers such as

the Didinga hills or other, even higher, mountain complexes elsewhere in northeastern Uganda.

As moist rising air begins to cool after reaching elevations between 15,000-20,000 feet above sea

level, the tumultuous blend of falling icy precipitation and rising hot air creates static charges

which frequently cause powerful thunderstorms and heavy precipitation around mountains. It

was, perhaps, after witnessing this entirely new weather pattern that the Proto Ateker language

underwent a semantic shift in which the Proto Eastern Nilotic root *-kudyu "rain" (pronounced

*-kuju in Proto Ateker) came to denote the "sky" as a conceptually distinct entity, while a new

word for the noun "rain" was formed by attaching a verb prefix /aki-/ to the inherited root *-ru

[35] Ateker 113 & Ehret PNS #931; Ateker 14; Tung'a 38; Tung'a 9.

[36] Ateker 9; Ateker 13.

"to water plants/animals."[37] Whereas the Proto Eastern Nilotic language had described rain as a noun without agency – something that just happened – Proto Ateker-speakers spoke of rain, *akiru, as a transitive verb performed by a distinct actor, *-kuju "the sky," with the implied intention of watering plants and animals. Although a fully developed theory of *akuj* as the "high god" most likely did not enter Ateker philosophy on a widespread basis until the later Proto Northern Ateker period (Chapter 4), the Proto Ateker language community had already trained their thoughts upwards. Today, the names for certain cardinal directions in Ateker languages depend on language community's geographic position vis-à-vis the Didinga hills; *kuju* (lacking a noun prefix) means "south" for the Toposa who live directly north of the Didinga hills, while the same word means "north" for the Dodos living to their immediate south – in both cases *kuju* points "up" to these historically important highlands.

It is therefore unsurprising that the Proto Ateker period included numerous linguistic innovations with regard to skyward phenomena. Ateker-speakers retained inherited lexemes for the key nouns *-lap "moon," *-kolong "sun," *-kipy- "lightning bolt," and *-dou "cloud," but changed many others.[38] Rather than internally innovating to describe "thunder" in this region, Proto Ateker-speakers borrowed the word *-gir- from Western Rub-speakers inhabiting the mountains.[39] To describe some elements of the night sky they made the same choice, borrowing *-top "bright star, the morning star" from Western Rub.[40] Proto Ateker speakers called the

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[37] Ateker 69; Ateker 58.

[38] Ateker 81; Ateker 18; Ateker 56; Ateker 23.

[39] Ateker 31 & C. Ehret "Language Contacts in Nilo-Saharan Prehistory," in H. Andersen (ed.), *Language Contacts in Prehistory: Studies in Stratigraphy* (Philadelphia, 2003), 147.

[40] Ateker 157.

clustered stars of the Pleaides constellation *-merekek "the sheep" and probably tracked their position in the night sky in order to predict new seasonal variations just as they do today.[41]

Ecological parameters of the Ateker homeland come to us in words for various fauna and flora which can be safely reconstructed to this period. It is notable that, whereas reconstructed fauna roots for Proto Eastern Nilotic and Proto Tung'a exclusively reference savanna-dwellers, Proto Ateker reconstructions include species such as the vervet monkey, *-doko, and the crested porcupine, *ecec, who prefer hilly forested areas, further supporting an Ateker homeland in or near forests and mountains.[42] Reconstructed flora names can be even more informative. We already know that the presence of finger millet cultivation suggests fairly consistent annual rainfall amounts in excess of 500mm, although given the regional ubiquity and cultural significance of finger millet, this evidence alone is not dispositive. However, analysis of other Proto Ateker flora words further supports an average annual rainfall of at least 500mm. While some reconstructed shrubs, such as *epongai "*Grewia villosa*," and *elemait "*Ximenia caffra*," can live in drier conditions, other Proto Ateker grasses and trees including *-murya "*Cynodon dactylon*," *-kamuri- "*Carissa spinarum*," *epedurut "*Tamarindus spp*" all require annual rainfall in excess of 600mm to survive.[43] Taken together, the fact that certain fauna and flora requiring forested hills and annual rainfall of 600mm gained enough prominence among Proto Ateker-speakers to acquire appellations that can be reconstructed more than a millennium later suggests these ecological needs were consistently met in the Proto Ateker homeland.

[41] Ateker 98.

[42] Ateker 19; Ateker 12.

[43] Ateker 127; Ateker 79; Ateker 27; Ateker 44; Ateker 120.

Ateker Material Culture

The arrival of Proto Ateker-speakers in the Didinga hills region ushered in two related economic revolutions. First, the use of iron, and second, limited participation in what Ehret has elsewhere dubbed the "first commercial revolution."[44] Archaeological excavations indicate the Proto Nilotic culture that dominated the greater Sudan/South Sudan border region during the African Humid Period used stone tools and ceramics, and were unfamiliar with metal-working.[45] Iron technology was present during the mid-first millennium BCE in the Lake Victoria region, from where is gradually spread north to Nilotic language communities.[46] However, it is very unlikely that Eastern Nilotic-speakers or their Proto Tung'a descendants had access to iron technology, because words for iron tools reconstructed to Proto Bari-Mondari, Proto Lotuxo-Maa, and Proto Ateker are clearly borrowed from different sources.[47] It was not until they encountered Southwest Surmic-speakers that Ateker-speakers began utilizing the iron tools and weapons which would later have important historical repercussions (chapters 4 & 5). Lacking the

[44] C. Ehret, "Sudanic Civilization," in M. Adas (ed.), *Agricultural and Pastoral Societies in Ancient and Classical History* (Philadelphia, 2001), 256. "Limited" because there is no evidence of a "class of traders" emerging in Ateker society in this period, which is part of Ehret's definition for a "commercial revolution."

[45] N. David, "The BIEA Southern Sudan Expedition of 1979: interpretation of the archaeological data," in J. Mack & P. Robertshaw (eds.), *Culture History in the Southern Sudan: Archaeology, Linguistics, and Ethnohistory* (Nairobi, 1982), 52.

[46] Alternatively, iron may have been introduced from Meroë or Ethiopia, perhaps in combination with central African sources. In either case, Eastern Nilotic-speakers were likely late adopters. D. Miller & N. J. van der Merwe, "Early Metal Working in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Review of Recent Research," *Journal of African History*, 35, 1 (1994), 11; D. Killick, Invention and Innovation in African Iron-Smelting Technologies," *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 25, 1 (2015), 310-313

[47] Ehret 1982, 35. The fact that Eastern Nilotic iron words are uniformly borrowed from Sub-Saharan language groups – Moru-Madi, Southwest Surmic, Lowland East Cushitic, and, later, Bantu and Western Nilotic – supports a theory of independent Sub-Saharan invention of metallurgy. If one alternatively postulates that iron was introduced into eastern Africa from Anatolia, it would be necessary to explain both how a land-based introduction would have skipped over Pre Coptic-speaking Egyptians and how a Red Sea-based introduction would have passed through Nilotic-speaking communities without leaving a historical trace. Killick, 2015.

technology to smelt iron ore themselves, Proto Ateker-speakers would have relied on trade to acquire iron implements. Although there is no clear evidence for a money economy or commercial complexity, Proto Ateker-speakers did innovate the verb *-gwel- "to trade, to buy, to sell, to exchange" from a borrowing of a Western Nilotic verb meaning "to beckon to another person" and also "to speak in multiple languages, ," evoking the importance of intercultural exchange to the nascent trading economy of southern South Sudan following the African Humid Period.[48]

The dominant source of Proto Ateker iron-related vocabulary was Southwest Surmic-speakers, from whom the Ateker borrowed *-golo "fish-hook," *-melek "iron hoe," *-morok "spear haft," and *-kurar- "scabbard."[49] However, because there are no reconstructable words for smelting and smithing activities in the Surmic languages, it might be assumed that, though they acquired iron technology at an earlier date than Ateker-speakers, Surmic speakers also obtained their iron from another as yet undetermined source.

Proto Ateker-speakers appear to have been fairly late adopters of iron compared to other Nilotic groups. Within the Western Nilotic family, the Proto Dinka-Nuer language was the likely source for two other Ateker iron implements, *ebiti "fish spear" and *-jep "axe."[50] Later in

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[48] Ateker 34.

[49] Ateker 32; Ateker 97; Ateker 103; Ateker 72. See also Dimmendaal 1982, 106-108

[50] Ateker 9; Ateker 39. Note that Ehret suggests a PEN origin for *-biti based on a Bari reflex *-biti "fish spear" and a Southern Nilotic origin for *-jep based on a Kalenjin reflex -ep "to chop." I question the former on the grounds that Bari dictionaries I am aware of contain bidi "butt of spear," which with the voiced alveolar plosive is and unlikely cognate with Ateker /t/, and more probably borrowed from a WN language, and bitet "fish-hook," but no "fish spear" (which is petek in Bari). Furthermore, there is the question of how this iron implement could be reliably reconstructed to a Late Stone Age protolanguage. For the latter, Nuer-Dinka contains a word-initial palatal consonant not found in the Kalenjin reflex that better explains the Proto Ateker phonology, and the Nuer-Dinka reflex is semantically identical to the Proto Ateker reconstruction (being a noun rather than a verb). See Ehret PNS #17 & Ehret 2003, 149.

Ateker history, Southern Lwo-speakers from the same Western Nilotic family living in Uganda's Labwor mountains would develop mature smelting technology and provide a crucial source of Ateker iron products alongside additional iron vocabulary, especially for the Proto Northern Ateker population. Although they lacked smelting, Proto Ateker-speakers were familiar enough with processes for forging or repairing iron products to have innovated the term *-cuk- "to use bellows," related to the verb "to fan the flames (as in a heated conversation), to stamp one's feet to excite others."[51] Finally, two other important lexical innovations related to iron are *-kwara "spear," *-rokon "chisel, adze."[52] The latter probably played a crucial role in invigorating woodcarving, thus enabling the production of both wooden milking cans, *-lepit (see above), and the short single-legged wooden headrests/stools, *-kicolong, ubiquitous in pastoralist Ateker-speaking societies today, which are in all likelihood derived from a northeast African ur-headrest form dating to Pharaonic Egypt.[53]

Another Ateker semantic domain subjected to heavy innovation in this period was transportation. Whether stemming from the physical demands of large-scale migration, the necessities of increased trade, or mere convenience, a number of technologies enabling mobility appear to have been adopted by Proto Ateker-speakers. From their Surmic neighbors, the Ateker borrowed *-sigiria "donkey," used almost exclusively in the present day as a transport animal (rather than for meat), and also internally innovated *saaja-Vt "pack saddle," likely from the

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[51] Ateker 16.

[52] Ateker 75; Ateker 140.

[53] Ateker 50; J. Summers, "Pillows for a King: The Headrests of Ancient Egypt and Tomb Kv 62," *European Scientific Journal* (2016), 229-237; J. Mack "Material culture and ethnic identity in Southeastern Sudan," in J. Mack & P. Robertshaw (eds.), *Culture History in the Southeastern Sudan: Archaeology, Linguistics, and Ethnohistory* (Nairobi, 1982), 117. Although these items are widely considered "stools" today, the noun's derivation from a verb *akicolong* "to lay down" suggests that "headrest" is the better reconstructed gloss.

verb *-ja- "to collect and take away" to stabilize donkeys' loads[54] To carry water on long journeys, Ateker-speakers innovated the root *-tuo "gourd bottle" from an unknown source, and in addition added the meaning "boat" to the root *-tub(w)a, which also meant "watering trough."[55] Borrowing from Western Rub-speakers, the Ateker created a new term *-ikit derived from the Proto Rub root for "head" to denote the coiled pad used today primarily by Ateker women to carry heavy loads.[56] Overall, the Proto Ateker period witnessed a notable increase both the types of material items available for use and the number of ways they could be transported.

Ateker Politics, Society, and Ritual

Having addressed subsistence, environment, and material culture, it is now possible to consider the political, social, and ritual lifeways of Ateker-speakers within a fuller context. Proto Ateker-speakers undertook major conceptual innovations in the realm of politics indicating the beginnings of a shift to republican ideas. They created a new word for "government" itself, *apukan, derived from a polysemous Tung'a root *-puk- that generated both "to open, to uncork, to release" and "to cover, to close off, lid."[57] Other proto-language communities in the wider region were developing terms for "governance" that derived from terms for either tying people together and pulling them along or taming and controlling animals. Proto Ateker speakers

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[54] Ateker 147; Ateker 143. The donkey was domesticated in the wider region before the Proto Ateker period, even if it was probably not common among Ateker-speakers' ancestors. F. Marshall & L. Weissbrod, "Domestication Processes and Morphological Change: Through the Lens of the Donkey and African Pastoralism," *Current Anthropology*, 52, S4 (2011), S397-413.

[55] Ateker 160; Ateker 161.

[56] Ateker 36.

[57] Ateker 130.

thought of government as an inherently back-and-forth activity of "releasing" and "putting a lid on" people and ideas. We can get a sense of who was part of the civic body that was open and closed through government by considering the individuals who were considered "owners" of property and of themselves, called *e/alope.[58] The root *-lope can be reconstructed to Proto Tung'a times, when the concept of "ownership" underwent a major semantic innovation. Earlier Nilotic conceptions of "ownership" appear to be related to kinship ideology, and specifically patriarchy – the "owner" was the father. For Proto Tung'a-speakers, ownership was divorced from kinship, and a new term "owner" was derived by adding the masculine nominative *lo to the word *-pe(i), "one, alone". The *lope was literally a man who stood as one, or the man who stood alone.[59] Proto Ateker-speakers further elaborated on this concept by essentially fossilizing the nominative masculine marker and adding a second gender prefix a/e. A male "owner" was *elope and a female owner *alope. This semantic gender work enabled Proto Ateker-speakers to discuss female owners, which was necessary because women likely maintained outright ownership of products of cereal cultivation (see below).

A Proto Ateker leader was someone who could bring together a larger number of individual "owners." The semantically productive Proto Ateker root *-pol-, which underpins modern Ateker words such as *epol* "big" *apolou* "greatness, authority" and *ekapolon* "elder, leader, (government) chief," was an important innovation in the Proto Ateker era. People used a borrowed Western Nilotic root *-po(o)l meaning "many, numerous" to speak about standing and

[58] Ateker 87.

[59] This conceptual linkage between ownership and social separateness is not unique to the Ateker. Vansina notes almost an identical etymological pattern among Proto Njila-speakers in West Central Africa, for whom the word "owner" had the same root as "self to the exclusion of others." J. Vansina, *How Societies are Born: Governance in West Central Africa before 1600* (Charlottesville, VA, 2004), 46.

leadership.[60] Leadership here is the ability to corral a number of owners. We can also know at least one physical setting where political activity occurred. For the noun *akiriket* "sacred grove where elders meet," the phonology of the Teso (Usuku dialect) reflex *airiget* indicates a likely derivation from the same borrowed Nuer-Dinka root *riɣ- "to encircle and compress together" which produced "hunting group for large game".[61] There is no indication in Ateker ethnography that these sacred groves were "owned" by any particular person or lineage. Most likely, an early republican tradition was being elaborated by Proto Ateker-speakers. Governance occurred through the back-and-forth of individual "owners" in a public space – the sacred grove – which was no single person's property. An effective leader was one who utilized this public space to persuade, cajole, or otherwise convince many people to join his or her side.

The public was the basis of authority, rather than power being derived from lineage, divine right, sacral being, wealth, or any similar attribute. There are, in fact, no words that can be reconstructed in Proto Ateker, Proto Tung'a, or Proto Eastern Nilotic which describe political power otherwise. Although many Nilotic cultures, including Bari-Mondari speakers from Eastern Nilotic and, mostly prominently, Western Nilotic-speakers, did develop institutions of inherited and/or sacral kingship, such a practice was never adopted in the language communities descended from Proto Tung'a. This conception of power as something which arises through the back-and-forth of group work was fundamentally important to the variety of Ateker political institutions which arose after c. 900 CE (Chapters 4, 5 and 6).

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[60] Ateker 126. Had this ultimately Proto Nilotic root been inherited into Ateker from Eastern Nilotic, it would have a voiced initial bilabial stop, as in Bari *bulo* "strong, powerful, able." The voiceless /p-/ indicates WN borrowing, see Ehret PNS #583.

[61] Ateker 139.

To get a sense of how political power was actually distributed and how solutions to political questions were coordinated among Proto Ateker-speakers, it is necessary to discuss the social and ritual importance of cattle during this period. Some of this "cattle complex" is likely inherited, because cattle-centered behavior is so common among virtually all Nilotic-speaking cultures today, and the wider region includes archaeological evidence for this attitude's antiquity.[62] In every Ateker culture today the sacrifice of livestock – potentially goats or camels, but preferably cows – is a crucial component of any public ritual or political meeting, as is the proper distribution of meat amongst a group once the animal is slaughtered. The details of rites performed today differ between Ateker language communities. But a number of core practices have been retained by all Ateker groups, along with shared descriptive vocabularies. The innovated Proto Ateker root *-sub- "to create, to be a first cause, to convene a ritual feast," which produces modern reflexes for both "creation" and "(meat) feasting" inextricably links a general sense of "causality" or "productivity" with meat-feasting, suggesting the latter may have been seen as a route to achieving the former.[63] Another source highlighting the ritual significance of cattle for Proto Ateker-speakers emerges from comparative ethnographic data detailing prescribed techniques for slaughtering bulls within a ceremony called *-puny- designed

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[62] M. Herskovits, "The Cattle Complex in East Africa," *American Anthropologist*, 28 , 2 (1926), 361-388; F. Jesse *et al*., "I hope your cattle are well:" Archaeological evidence for cattle-centered behavior in the Eastern Sahara of Sudan and Chad," in M. Bollig et al (eds.), *Pastoralism in Africa: Past, Present, and Future* (New York, 2013), 66-103.

[63] Ateker 148. The etymology of this root is unclear. However, because the initial alveolar fricative /s-/ cannot be inherited from PEN and there are no plausible reflexes in Proto Tung'a, it is safe to assume an innovation originated in Proto Ateker. It may have arrived via an areal form *sub present in Western Rub as "to follow" and Southern Nilotic as "to stand behind, to come after, to follow," but without further evidence this remains speculative. Note that the social and political importance of meat-feasting in Africa is by no means limited to the Ateker case, see M. Dietler, "Theorizing the feast: Rituals of consumption, commensal politics, and power in African contexts," in M. Dietler & B. Hayden (eds.), *Feasts: Archaeological and ethnographic perspectives on food, politics, and power* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 64-114.

to memorialize (and perhaps engage the spirits of) the prominent departed.[64] Although specific burial practices cannot be dated to this period, on the grounds that all Ateker words related to the burial of human remains were separately borrowed into the subsequent branches of Proto Teso and Proto Northern Ateker (chapters 5 & 6), the reconstruction of *-puny- to Proto Ateker shines light on one ritual response to death.

The ritual slaughter of bulls was important enough that the personal title *-muron for a virtuous doctor-diviner (as opposed to *-kapil-an, an antisocial witch) is derived from the Proto Tung'a root *-muro "hindleg" because of the responsibility these doctor-diviners have (still today) across the Ateker world to oversee the proper butchering and distribution of this choicest piece of meat.[65] Also common to nearly all Ateker communities is this person's responsibility to search the sacrificed animal's entrails in order to foretell, *-dwar-, future events or conditions important to the wider community before exposing the chyme, *-kuj-it, which can be used by elders to smear on community members as a blessing.[66] These doctor-diviners may have also conducted personalized "home visits" during the Ateker period just as they do today, especially after borrowing the skill of practicing magic through shaking gourd rattles, called *-yek-, from Western Nilotic-speakers and conducting *-lam-(lam), or tossing sandals to prophesize for individual clients.[67] A more detailed slate of practices such as prayer in unison to beseech the High God, rituals of community renewal through building new fires, and widely coordinated

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[64] Ateker 131. TE, Oale, 22 February 2017; TO, Kaabong, 3 November 2017; NY, Kangaten, 6-8 April, 2017; N. Dyson-Hudson, *Karimojong Politics* (Oxford, 1966); A. Barret, *Dying and Death Among the Turkana* (Eldoret, Kenya, 1987), 53-56.

[65] Ateker 108; Ateker 45.

[66] Ateker 27; Ateker 70.

[67] Ateker 168; Ateker 80.

age-group initiation sacrifices which characterize many modern Ateker communities can only be reconstructed to the later Proto Northern Ateker period (after c. 900 CE). However, even in the Proto Ateker period we see lexical evidence for the public importance of ritual animal sacrifice.

The centrality of livestock sacrifice to certain public events must have, as a practical matter, enhanced the social power of individual Proto Ateker-speakers who controlled relatively larger herds – a role typically restricted to older, married men in Ateker societies today. Control over a large quantity of livestock may have enabled the herd-owner, *-lope, to build personal patron-client relationships with poorer neighbors through an arrangement called *-jok- in Proto Ateker through which stock-owners could lend cattle on a near-permanent basis to supplicants.[68] Although the root derives from a Proto Eastern Nilotic -dyok- "to freely give," comparative ethnographic evidence strongly suggests that by the Proto Ateker period certain strings were attached to such relationships.[69] As well, the linguistic record indicates that lending, debt, and obligation were topics of moral debate among Proto Ateker-speakers. They differentiated what is shared freely, or *-mor, from the type of "sharing" which generates expectations of reciprocity, called *-ngar. They also created a new word for "happiness" from an earlier root *-lak, meaning "to discharge a debt."[70] This is an early indication that discomfort with the social implications of indebtedness was a characteristic of Ateker society. Later, Proto Northern Ateker would continue embedding this discomfort in their language, explored in greater detail in Chapter 6.

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[68] Ateker 41. Note that there are four different routes to the morpheme -jok- in various in Ateker languages and different phonetic environments, including PEN /dy/, Tung'a /ky/, Tung'a /yy/, and /j/ borrowed from Western Nilotic.

[69] TE, Serere Town, 28 February 2017; P. H. Gulliver, *The Family Herds* (London: Routledge, 1955).

[70] Ateker 102; Ateker 28; Ateker 77.

Certainly, the idea that livestock could be a store for wealth (or indeed wealth itself) was present in Proto Ateker social discourse. Historian Rhiannon Stephens has usefully drawn attention to the polysemy between the shared Ateker root, *-bar-, for both "wealth" and "livestock (pl.)" to argue for the socio-economic importance of livestock as the foundation on which the concept of "wealth" was built in Ateker societies.[71] In fact, the etymological relationship was reversed in this case, perhaps to even stronger effect. The root *-bar- inherited from Proto Tung'a referred originally to "wealth" or "profit," and it was only later applied by Proto Ateker-speakers as an especially plural noun to describe one's entire stock holdings, including cows along with goats, sheep, etc.

Discussed above, the roots *-pol-, *-tuk-, and *-ri(k)(g)- suggest a shared concept of political power as something emanating from the circling or coming together of many people, or perhaps many groups. They further suggest that status in a group was likely accorded to those with advanced age or strong oratorical skills. Language evidence provides some clues as to where these groups might have met together and the bases on which they were constructed.

Important group meetings likely occurred in spaces designated by the noun *-tuk-ot "assembly place" (see above), and such meetings were often held around a fire.[72] The Proto Ateker noun *etem "fireplace, hearth" is derived from a Proto Tung'a root *-tem- "to consider an issue, to measure," suggesting that the word *etem developed from the discussions about various issues which often occurred around a fireplace. When I conducted elicitations for this word, speakers in every Ateker language insisted on the point that *etem reflexes referred not merely to

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[71] Tung'a 1; R. Stephens, "'Wealth,' 'Poverty' and the Question of Conceptual History in Oral Contexts: Uganda from c. 1000 CE," in A. Fleish & R. Stephens (eds.), *Doing Conceptual History in Africa* (New York, 2016), 38.

[72] Ateker 162.

a physical fire, but to a broader setting in which important discussions took place. A fire built in a neighborhood where elders from different families met to discussion a question of common concern would be *etem*, for instance, as would a nighttime warming fire around which a family sat as its patriarch issued instructions for various tasks to be completed the next day.[73] This same inflated meaning also existed in Proto-Ateker, which distinguished between the *etem "fireplace, hearth," on the one hand and a separate noun *-keno, referring only to the physical fireplace itself, on the other.[74] A second linguistic association between social gathering and fire is found in the Proto Ateker root *-pejV- "guest (especially from afar), to visit," which was derived from the Proto Tung'a root *-pej- "to roast (meat) over an open flame," retained in Proto Ateker as *-pe, attesting perhaps to a common social convention in which hosting and visiting required participants to roast and eat meat together.[75]

There appear to have been two overlapping senses of group identity in Proto Ateker, the first based on lineage relationship and made manifest through the practice of exogamy and the second based on geographical proximity. The word *ateker* itself, for which no clear etymological origin is yet determined, likely referred to the first sense of groupness through lineage relationship. Today the word has a wide range of meanings which all refer in some way to the concept "our people." In the Teso languages, *ateker* is usually translated as "clan, or sub-clan" and in this usage context one could accurately state that two people who share an *ateker* cannot marry. In the Northern Ateker languages, an exogamous group is called an *emacar*, meaning

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[73] Ateker 39. This word also produced a reflex in Proto Northern Ateker for a shaded area or shade-providing structure where people would gather to relax, sing songs, and discuss important issues.

[74] Ateker 48.

[75] Tung'a 32; Ateker 121.

"those who share the same cattle brand." *Ateker*, on the other hand, is applied liberally in Northern Ateker to denote a sense of "our people" with the scale of inclusion dependent on context but most often invoking at least a putative lineage relationship. In both the Teso languages, where each *ateker* "sub-clan" shares a distinctive style of marking the ears of their cattle, and in the Northern Ateker *emacar,* derived from the word "cattle-brand," there is a direct connection between the concept of lineage relationship and physical markings on livestock. By logical inference then, any marriage between members of different exogamous groups involving a transfer of bride-wealth would therefore have involved not only a mixing of two lineage groups, but the literal mixing of two cattle brands.[76] The term for anointing an *ateran "bride" as a member of a her *eteran "groom's" lineage group once cattle bearing his family brand had been mixed with those of her family, was *--nyonyo, borrowed from a Lwo root meaning "to anoint."[77]

The root *a/eteran "bride/groom" itself suggests that reproduction was conceptually linked to marriage partnering among the Proto Ateker, for the word derives from a causative prefix added to the verb *-ra "to produce fruit."[78] To be an *ateran or *eteran was literally to be "one who causes fruitfulness."[79] This meaning applied equally to men and women, but other lexical gender distinctions were innovated by Proto Ateker speakers outside the realm of reproduction. The generic word *ekile for "man" remained derived from the root *le "milk," as it

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[76] It must be noted that there is no reconstructable root for "bridewealth" or "marriage" in Proto Ateker.

[77] Ateker 116.

[78] Ateker 155.

[79] /a/ OR /e/ "gendered personal prefix" + /te/ "causal marker" + /ra/ "to produce fruit" + /n/ "singular noun suffix"

had been since Proto Tung'a times.[80] The Tung'a root *-ngor- was retained for the plural "women," but a new singular noun *aberu was innovated for "woman."[81] There are a number of possible etymologies for *aberu; most likely it is derived from an Ateker verb root *-ber- meaning "to be early, to display initiative." Either way, it was not related to reproduction, suggesting that the thing that made someone a "woman" was differed from what made her a "mother," or *toto.[82] To become an adult woman, a girl must first reach puberty, or *-dwar-un, which despite its obvious implications for reproduction was derived from a word meaning "to see well" or possibly "to be seen."[83] Potentially, reaching puberty was what allowed a girl to either attain the "vision" of an adult, or to be "seen" as a fully-fledged adult member of the community. Very likely, this root also serves as the origin for the *adwal "skin apron" worn by all Ateker women to mark their advancement to adulthood.[84]

Finally, a new word was innovated for an "old woman" as well: *akimat.[85] It is impossible to discern if this was derived from the root *-kim "flame" or *-kima "finger millet," but either way this likely harkened to the special position of older women in Ateker culture – continuing to this day – as managers of the homestead and farm. This is where the family's fire burns and where finger millet is harvested and produced. Ethnographies of Ateker women from the twentieth century clearly agree that women have unmitigated authority over the cultivation

[80] Ateker 52.

[81] Tung'a 29; Ateker 4.

[82] Ateker 159.

[83] Ateker 28.

[84] Ateker 26.

[85] Ateker 54.

and cooking of cereal crops, and this may well have been true in the Proto Ateker period as well. This distinction of women as managers of grain production would become important as Proto Northern Ateker-speakers shifted to an economy based on transhumant cattle pastoralism, as discussed in Chapter 4.

It is not possible to say for certain that the Proto Ateker word *ateker referred specifically to an exogamous group sharing a cattle mark. However, it can be proposed with confidence that such groups – often called "clans" – did exist in the Ateker period, probably as far back as Proto Eastern Nilotic was spoken, because each bears a proper name which can be reconstructed phonetically. Well-attested names of some such groups from the Proto Ateker period include: *-kadany-, *-karuwok-, *-katekok, *-nom(u), *-rarak, *-tengor, and *-toroi (Appendix V). A handful of names can also be reconstructed to Proto Tung'a or Proto Eastern Nilotic; *-ser, *-logir, *-moru, and *-goria are all exogamous group names which were inherited by Proto-Ateker speakers from an earlier period. In the more recent past, such groups have been created either through one subsection of an existing group breaking off to form a new group, or through the incorporation of a non-Ateker group into Ateker society (Chapters 5 & 6), and today there are many hundreds of named exogamous groups spread throughout the Ateker world. This process is discussed in more detail in later chapters, but for the moment the reconstruction of specific named groups is evidence that this method of group identification was recognized by Proto Ateker speakers.

For the second method of group identification – that based on shared geography – we have a reconstructed root *-ki-tel-, derived from the Proto Tung'a root *-tel- "open land."[86]

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[86] Ateker 153.

Reflexes in Ateker languages generate a dual semantic sense of both physical space, marked by recognizable boundaries (such as "a place between two streams"), and of a cohesive political unit. In the Northern Ateker languages *ekitela* has the specific meaning of "territorial section" which is a named, geographically contiguous, and politically cohesive unit sharing a single *akiriket*, or "sacred grove," at which age-group initiations and other communal events take place.[87] In the Teso languages, the political sense of the word *eitela* is a bit more amorphous, but also connotes a political identity created through geographical proximity which can be drawn upon for certain purposes – for example, to coordinate military operations.[88]

Coordinated military action was undoubtedly a part of Proto Ateker life and probably played a role in the history of Ateker settlement near the Didinga hills as well. The existence of offensive weapons is insufficient evidence for war technology in a language because of the multiplicity of uses that knives, spears, bows, and arrows have in other domains such as hunting, fishing, cutting meat, or bleeding cattle. In contrast, handheld shields have little utility outside of war, and the retention of the Eastern Nilotic root *-buku in Proto Ateker indicates that at least some war technology had a long history.[89] Another related inheritance was the word for "war" itself, *-jor-, inherited from Proto Tung'a where the word had already undergone a semantic innovation from Proto Eastern Nilotic *-dyor "to hunt in a large group." This word probably captured both "war" as a general concept and "raid" as a specific event in Proto Tung'a, but Proto Ateker-speakers restricted its use the former, while also forming a feminine noun *ajore

[87] Dyson-Hudson, 1966; Lamphear, 1976.

[88] J. B. Webster *et al.*, *The Iteso During the Asonya* (Nairobi, 1973).

[89] Although examples of shields being used for hunting do exist in world history, such instances tend to be cultural derivatives of practices already linked to warfare. Sean Belair (Assistant Conservator, Department of Arms and Armor, Metropolitan Museum of Art), Personal Communication, July 2020.

from this root to describe a physical army.[90] For "raid," Proto Ateker-speakers innovated *-ngat-,

possibly from a Proto Tung'a root meaning "to strike, to bruise," which in every modern reflex

holds the dual meaning of "military attack" and "to loot, to rob, to pillage."[91]

The polysemy of this *-ngat- root suggests that Proto Ateker-speakers viewed offensive

military operations as essentially acquisitive undertakings, and that warfare may have been

another inherited domain of social knowledge – in addition to cultivation, herding, and other

topics discussed above – from which this population drew to respond to economic pressures as

they migrated into a new land. These operations were well-planned rather than haphazard, as

evidenced by two other Proto Ateker linguistic innovations, *-rot- "to reconnoiter" and *-kod-et

"flank of an army."[92] The basic *-ngat- raiding tactic in which a scout would reconnoiter a

potential target, and then an army would divide into two attacking flanks while a center force

was held in reserve to be dispatched to speed raided livestock to the rear appears to have been

fairly stable over a long period of time. When asked about traditional raiding techniques in 2017,

interviewees from opposite ends of the Ateker worlds (Teso in Uganda and Nyangatom in

Ethiopia) diagrammed nearly identical tactical approaches while using cognate terms.[93] The

extent to which military conflict characterized relations between the Ateker and their Southwest

Surmic- or Western Rub-speaking neighbors is impossible to measure, although Southwest

Surmic communities certainly took notice of Ateker warfare, borrowing the word *-jor- "war"

into their own vocabulary. While historians can sometimes be tempted to understand military-

[90] Tung'a 7.

[91] Ateker 111.

[92] Ateker 141; Ateker 61.

[93] TE, Mukongoro, 13 February, 2017; NY, Jinka, 30 March – 05 April, 2017.

inflected migration in terms of "conquest," the lack of evidence for a centralized authority or standing army to implement an intentional program of conquering territory, combined with the fundamentally acquisitive and temporary nature of Ateker offensive operations, suggest such a model would not be fruitful here. To the degree that Ateker military prowess played a role in acquiring territory, it was more likely a slower process in which neighbors harassed by frequent small-scale Ateker raids gradually moved away from their harassers as a matter of cost-benefit analysis, in turn opening lands up for permanent Ateker occupation.[94]

Conclusion

Once the African Humid Period came to a permanent close by 1000 BCE, a diverse assortment of language communities converged along the southern border of today's South Sudan, with Proto Ateker-speakers occupying the southeastern portion of this region. Following a series of climatic fluctuations at the end of the AHP, the environment became generally stable in this area for a period of nearly 1,500 years, during which time Proto Ateker developed into a distinct language. This language community borrowed ideas and objects from an array of neighboring cultural groups in order to meet challenges and exploit opportunities in their new environment. Proto Ateker-speakers inherited an agro-pastoral economy that they elaborated, while in other semantic domains including food collection, mobility, politics, ritual, and material culture, Ateker linguistic innovation spurred wholesale renovations of lexicons. A basic concept of political power as something derived from the multitude, alongside overlapping ways of

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[94] Harold Fleming makes a similar point in his analysis of the long term retreat of Anywa-speakers in the face of interminable Nuer raids during the early 20th century. H. Fleming, "The Age-Grading Cultures of East Africa: An Historical Inquiry" (PhD thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1965), 544.

constructing group identity through both lineage relationships and geographical proximity would prove particularly important to later Ateker political history.

The Proto Ateker period drew to a close c. 900, with a period of aridity that would last for approximately three hundred years.[95] Forced by a drying climate to choose between remaining in their homeland and modifying their subsistence practices or migrating even further south to maintain a finger millet-based economy, some Ateker-speakers (the Proto Northern Ateker) chose to stay while others (the Proto Teso) chose to leave. In both cases, they drew on the same Proto Ateker traditions of deriving political power through group work and balancing lineage- and territory-based identities to create different styles of equally decentralized political institutions. The Proto Teso-speakers further elaborated on the concept of *etem* "fireplace, hearth" to manage political competition between neighboring lineage units. Proto Northern Ateker-speakers in contrast created a unique system of rule through "generational" age-groups by weaving together a number of Proto Ateker-era cultural threads including public feasting rituals, territorial identity, the nascent connection between the sky and a High God, and the concept of power derived from multitudes to create new methods for managing highly-mobile transhumant pastoralism practices that emerged as an essential subsistence tool in these drier centuries. They named this broad system *asapan, from the word roots *-sap- "to grow, to germinate" and *-sap-at "young man," and it is to this innovation which we will turn in Chapter 4.

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[95] D. Verschuren *et al*., "Rainfall and drought in equatorial east Africa during the past 1,100 years," *Nature*, 403 (2000), 410-414.

Chapter Four

"The Cattle of the Mountains": The Birth of *Asapan* among Proto Northern Ateker Speakers, c. 900-1250 CE

This chapter reconstructs the early history of an age-class governance system called *asapan*, developed at the end of the first millennium CE in southeastern South Sudan by the Proto Northern Ateker (PNA) language community. It is the first of two chapters offering an institutional history of *asapan*. Chapter 4 focuses on *asapan*'s origins between c. 900 and 1250. Chapter 5 discusses variations of *asapan* that emerged in the context of Northern Ateker migratory expansion from c. 1250 to 1900, as well as examining the numerous ways that political work was conducted through the *asapan* structure. Weaving together a wide array of sources – historical linguistics, paleoclimatology, oral traditions, archaeology, comparative ethnography – these chapters also mark the first effort to use contemporaneous evidence to narrate the origin story of an age-class government anywhere in Africa.

Although age-class systems can be found intermittently across the globe, they concentrate in eastern Africa.[1] Age-classes were often the primary source of authority on matters of public concern such as war and diplomacy, resolving judicial disputes, managing natural resources, or ensuring a community's spiritual well-being. In such settings, age-classes were the foundation of what might be called "age-class governments." Such governments can be counted as one of the leading manifestations of republican politics that flourished in Africa prior to the elevation, by colonial officials, of centralized chiefs and kingdoms based on metaphors of kinship as the

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[1] For a good overview of the region's age systems, see P.T. W Baxter & U. Almagor (eds.), *Age, Generation, and Time: Some Features of East African Age Organizations* (London, 1978).

indigenous African political models *de rigueur*.[2] In age-class governments, political power was held by councils of elders (usually men) who belonged to the most senior age-class. These elders exercised authority over both junior age-classes and others who had not been initiated into the age-class system at all. There is great variation between East African age-class systems.[3] *Asapan* stands out as an especially atypical version because it ranked initiates based on their filial relationships rather than their chronological age. However, all age-class governments grant authority of political office based on individual's age, initiation history, and other personal qualities. This can be held in contrast to settings that better fit the "wealth-in-people" model, where power accrues according to one's "centricity" in a web of social relations (Chapter 1).

Age-class governments mix democratic, meritocratic, gerontocratic, and patriarchal principles. There is a marked absence of noble families, inherited chiefships, royal lineages or other methods for elevating one bloodline above another. Age-class governments incorporated bodies politic on the basis of members' participation in initiation rituals rather than their clan or ethnicized identity. The inherently high turnover of individual ruling elders and egalitarianism between members of formal age-classes rendered the pursuit of patronage politics by aspiring "big men" ineffective, stymieing nascent attempts at personal consolidation of power of the sort that drove political histories in other precolonial African settings. In the Northern Ateker context, the actual practice of government was distributed across a geographic area, conducted through a dispersed network of sacred groves. The widespread persistence of age-class governments into the early colonial period therefore counters intractable Weberian assumptions about the

[2] J. Iliffe, *Africans: the history of a continent* (Cambridge, UK, 2007), 108-112 & 205-209.

[3] E. Kurimoto & S. Simonse, "Introduction" in E. Kurimoto & S. Simonse (eds.), *Conflict, Age & Power in North East Africa* (Athens, OH, 1998), 1-28.

inevitability of political evolution towards centralization that haunt models of lineage-based precolonial authority.[4]

Documentary evidence from societies with age-classes is scarce before the late nineteenth century, prompting anthropologist Paul Spencer to lament "(w)e cannot know, of course, the manner in which age systems originally came into being."[5] He echoes a sentiment widely shared by relevant scholars, whose historical inquiries have consequently paid attention to changes age systems underwent in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[6] This valuable work provides convincing arguments for how age-class governments proved to be malleable institutions that enabled "collective measures to adapt to pressing problems."[7] But this approach provides only *post hoc ergo propter hoc* explanations of age-classes' principles and mechanisms. For example,

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[4] For example, one currently prominent theorist writes of the decentralized precolonial Igbo in Nigeria: "The Ibo, and many other groups, were organized in such a decentralized manner because, in their areas, it was simply too costly to create polities with a larger geographic reach and because no other polity could reach far enough to extend formal authority over them." J. Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton, 2014), 45. This argument assumes that decentralization should exist only when conditions create a vacuum free of centralization – in other words, that decentralized modes of politics are essentially holding patterns preceding the inevitable installment of centralized polities once local conditions are overcome. The continued existence of robust alternatives to centralization over centuries without any notable hampering conditions serves to refute this all-too-common assumption. For an excellent summary of these issues, see J. Vansina, "Pathways of political development in equatorial Africa and neo-evolutionary theory," in S. K. McIntosh (ed.), *Beyond Chiefdoms: Pathways to Complexity in Africa* (Cambridge, UK, 1999), 166-172. See also W. Fitzsimons, "Warfare, Competition, and the Durability of 'Political Smallness' in Nineteenth-Century Busoga," *Journal of African History*, 59, 1 (2018), 45-67.

[5] P. Spencer, "Age Systems and Modes of Predatory Expansion" in E. Kurimoto & S. Simonse (eds.), *Conflict, Age & Power in North East Africa* (Athens, OH, 1998), 172.

[6] J. Shetler, "Interpreting Rupture in Oral Memory: The Regional Context for Changes in Western Serengeti Age Organization (1850-1895)," *Journal of African History*, 44, 3 (2003), 385-412; D. Anderson, "The beginning of time? Evidence for catastrophic drought in Baringo in the early nineteenth century," *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 10, 1 (2016), 52-59; N. Hunt, *A Colonial Lexicon: Of Birth Ritual, Medicalization, and Mobility in the Congo* (Durham, NC, 1999), 27-79; C. Brantley, "Gerontocratic Government: Age-Sets in Pre-Colonial Giriama," *Africa*, 48, 3 (1978), 248-264.

[7] B. Bernardi, *Age class systems: Social institutions and polities based on age* (Cambridge, 1985); S. N. Eisenstadt "African Age Groups: A Comparative Study," *Africa*, 24, 2 (1954), 100-113.

scholars who note the impressive military power wielded by societies with age-classes such as the Nuer, Maasai, and Turkana are prone to suggest that military capacity may explain the creation or durability of age-classes. This argument is unconvincing on its merits. The Nuer do not use age-classes to structure their military units, and the Turkana only shifted to a militarily effective style of age-classes in the middle to late nineteenth century.[8] *Asapan* itself is a particularly unwieldy system ill-suited for the efficient organization of warrior bands. But it is also a logically unsatisfying analysis of how age-classes came to exist in the first place, because it assumes that the functional outcomes of age-classes explain their origins. Functionalism truncates the historical significance of institutions through which individuals articulated social obligations and civic rights. Age-class governments were deeply embedded in every aspect of the cultures which bore them. A satisfying account of age-class governments must focus not only on what such institutions enabled initiates themselves to do, but must also explore the ways in which construction of age-classes interfaced with other social, environmental, and ritual contexts to provide a perceived benefit to the larger communities that shared in their practice.

Until now, source limitations have rendered these earlier contexts frustratingly opaque, trapping historical scholarship on early age-class governments in a prison of circular logic. This opacity led to a slow stagnation of research on the topic beginning in the 1980s and which continues today. At the same time, research on lineage-based precolonial political history has escaped the twin impediments of inadequate source material and scholarly inattention.[9] As a

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[8] M. Sahlins, "The Segmentary Lineage: An Organization of Predatory Expansion," *American Anthropologist,* 63, 2 (1961), 322-345; E. E. Evans-Pritchard, "The Nuer: Age-Sets," *Sudan Notes and Records*, 19, 2 (1936), 253; J. Lamphear, "Brothers in Arms: Military Aspects of East African Age-Class Systems in Historical Perspective," in E. Kurimoto & S. Simonse (eds.), *Conflict, Age & Power in North East Africa: Age Systems in Transition* (Athens, OH, 1998), 79-97.

[9] The transatlantic slave trade is a part of this history, because many of the greatest studies of centralized polities based on metaphors of kinship are informed by source material generated by Europeans during the slave trade.

result, major paradigm-changing advances for the modeling of precolonial political authority –

including prominently "wealth-in-people" – rest on case-studies drawn almost entirely from

among centralized and/or lineage-based polities.[10] These paradigms are valid for the societies

they describe, but their focus on political institutions based on metaphors of extended kinship

systematically overlooks societies that did not delineate power from individual headmen,

including age-class governments. As argued in Chapter 1, we are missing an account of the

political alternatives to wealth-in-people models that emerged in precolonial African history,

age-class governments being perhaps first among them.

Breaking free of this circular prison requires the injection of new source material in order

to investigate the origins of age-classes and grasp what they *meant* within the discursive context

of their creation rather than merely what they *did* around the time of European contact. As

discussed in Chapter 2, methodological advances in historical linguistics, paleoclimatology, and

archaeology, alongside a close reading of decades of accumulated ethnographic materials and

oral traditions, finally allow historians an entry point to this earlier history. Chapters 4 and 5 on

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For kinship and slavery, see I. Kopytoff & S. Miers, "African Slavery as an Institution of Marginality," in I. Kopytoff & S. Miers (eds.), *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison, WI, 1977), 3-84; for a centralized state built on slavery, see E. Bay, *Wives of the Leopard: Gender, Politics, and Culture in the Kingdom of Dahomey* (Charlottesville, VA, 1998). Additionally, the majority of studies using historical linguistics as a source have focused on Bantu-speaking societies in central Africa where the lineage/centralization model is well-applied, see J. Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforest: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa* (Madison, WI, 1990) & D. L. Schoenbrun, *A Green Place, A Good Place: Agrarian Change, Gender, and Social Identity in the Great Lakes Region to the 15th Century* (Portsmouth, NH, 1998), 139.

[10] "Wealth-in-People" is a central concept in precolonial African historiography arguing that, because Africa has a long history of abundant land with a shortage of labor, African polities were based on rulers' control over people rather than demarcated territory. This, in contrast to the political history of European states. Although the concept was first intended to describe Equatorial Africa, it has been extended (not always appropriately) across the continent. See first Chapter 1 of this dissertation, and also I. Kopytoff, "The Internal African Frontier: The Making of African Political Culture," in I. Kopytoff (ed.), *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies* (Bloomington, IN, 1987), 40-53; J. Guyer & S. Belinga, "Wealth in People as Wealth in Knowledge: Accumulation and Composition in Equatorial Africa," *Journal of African History*, 36, 1 (1995), 91-120.

the *asapan* system created by the Northern Ateker people should be considered only the beginning of a wider project to recover histories of non-lineage based, non-centralized, and republican forms of governance in precolonial Africa.

The history of *asapan* dates to the end of the first millennium CE, in the mountainous terrain of southeastern South Sudan first occupied by the Proto Ateker language community around 500 BCE (Chapter 3) once it diverged from its linguistic ancestors, Proto Tung'a and, before that, Proto Eastern Nilotic. After more than one thousand years of settlement, during which time Proto Ateker-speakers developed a distinct language and culture, their language community bifurcated when many of its members began to emigrate away from their homeland. Climate change provided the context for this movement. Between c. 900 and 1250, eastern Africa experienced the longest severe arid period of the Common Era, forcing Ateker-speakers previously reliant on a mixed economy of cereal cultivation and livestock-rearing to either migrate south to wetter regions or remain in place and adopt new subsistence practices.

People did both, showing that environmental change can drive history, but does not determine the paths through history people take. Ateker-speakers who migrated south did so in intermittent streams comprised of families and friends. As they coalesced around the Usuku region of today's eastern Uganda, they formed the nucleus of the Proto Teso language community, discussed in Chapter 6. The history of those who remained in South Sudan and formed the Proto Northern Ateker (PNA) language community is the topic of the current and next chapter. Figure 4.1 below shows a detailed classification of the Northern Ateker language family, while Map 4.1 shows the proposed PNA homeland and current distribution of PNA-descended languages – both are adapted from detailed evidence provided in Chapter 2.

Map 4.1 – Proposed PNA homeland and current distribution of Northern Ateker communities
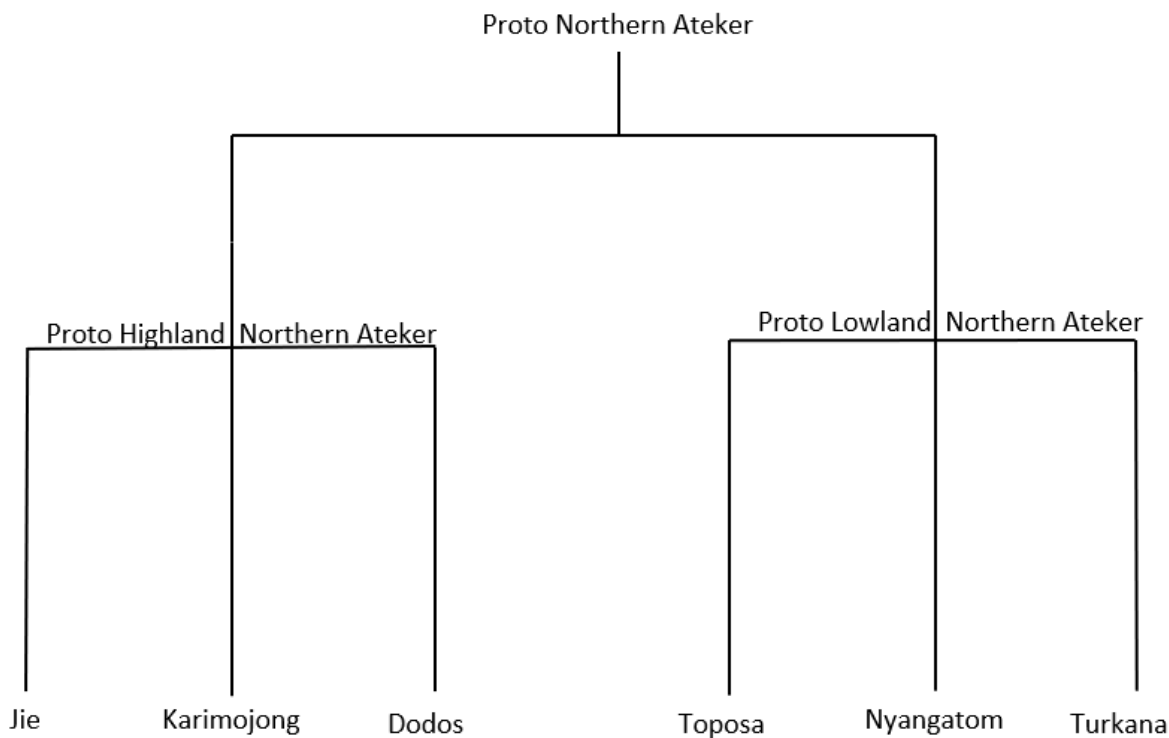
Figure 4.1 – Linguistic classification of Northern Ateker Languages

Those who chose to stay in a drying climate formed a new speech community which I have named Proto Northern Ateker (hereafter, PNA). Its speakers developed a new food system in order to thrive. They took advantage of the ecological diversity provided by elevation changes to continue cereal agriculture. They added more drought-resistant crops including sorghum and pearl millet to their diet, displacing their previous staple of finger millet. PNA-speakers also developed new herding techniques, called "transhumant pastoralism" by social scientists.[11] Young men and women responded to increased aridity by extending the available grazing area. They began to take livestock on months-long journeys in search of fodder and water when resources near home became depleted during the dry season.[12] This annual splitting of communities during dry seasons – a common practice until today – had not occurred in Ateker history before this time.

This new dispersed subsistence pattern threatened the spatial ideologies in an older, Ateker tradition which had emphasized "gathering together" as the foundation of effective political practice (Chapter 3). Transhumant pastoralism fundamentally restructured the everyday social experience of PNA-speakers. Clans and lineages were physically farther apart, while for half of each year PNA-speakers were separated according to their age.[13] The new practice

[11] For a concise comparative description of this practice in Africa, see J. Ellis & K. Galvin, "Climate Patterns and Land-Use Practices in the Dry Zones of Africa," *BioScience*, 44, 5 (1994), 340-349.

[12] Although young men are emphasized in Ateker scholarship, herding parties typically included young women as well. Happening upon a Turkana herding party in May of 1898, British Major H. H. Austin remarked, "There were only a few men conducting the operations, and they were assisted by several Turkana dames and damsels." H. H. Austin, *Among Swamps and Giants in Equatorial Africa* (London, 1902), 217; See also P. H. Gulliver, *The Family Herds: A Study of Two Pastoral Tribes in East Africa, The Jie and Turkana* (London, 1955), 40; N. Dyson-Hudson, *Karimojong Politics* (Oxford, 1966), 58; M. Schröder (ed.) "Toposa Traditional Texts" (Unpublished MS), 9.

[13] For more detailed analyses of interactions between sociopolitical structures and extended space in the context of transhumant pastoralism, see P. H. Gulliver, "Nomadic Movements: Causes and Implication," in T. Monod (ed.), *Pastoralism in Tropical Africa* (London, 1975), 369-384 & R. Dyson-Hudson & E. Smith, "Human Territoriality: An Ecological Reassessment," *American Anthropologist*, 80, 1 (1978), 21-41.

generated social anxiety among elders as families' primary sources of wealth, subsistence, and social reproduction – their herds – were entrusted to mobile youth for months at a time. In this context of ecological change and social anxiety, PNA-speakers created new political forms to meet specific spatial changes. The most important was *asapan*. In time, PNA-speakers made it their principal method for achieving political coordination and social cohesion between decentralized, far-flung communities.

Asapan is inextricably intertwined with and supported by two other defining features of Northern Ateker society – the sacred groves called *ngakiriketa* (sg. *akiriket*) which dot the Northern Ateker landscape, and the religious belief system built around the high deity *akuj*. People wove these three socio-political components into the fabric of Northern Ateker society over centuries. This complex represents a major historical innovation upon structures of governance that existed in the earlier Proto Ateker period between c. 500 BCE and 900 CE. To narrate this history, this chapter begins by considering paleoclimatological and linguistic evidence illuminating the social ramifications of a sustained ecological crisis beginning c. 900. It then offers reconstructions of the *akiriket* (sacred grove) and *akuj* (high deity) elements of PNA-speaking culture. Finally, it demonstrates how *asapan* was constructed atop both these latter elements to answer the ecological challenges wrought by climate change and a concomitant shift to transhumant pastoralism. The story begins, as does so much else in the Northern Ateker world, with the issue of aridity.

Aridity, Transhumant Pastoralism, and the Social Anxiety of Spatial Separation

Water – when it will come, where to find it, and how to allocate it - is the central question for Northern Ateker society today, as it was during the PNA era. The Turkana, one of the speech communities that formed after the dissolution of PNA, live today in northwestern Kenya and

herd livestock in extremely arid low-lying plains.[14] They have a hard-won expertise in the art of

living in arid conditions. Communities such as the Turkana, who rarely farm but supplement

their livestock-based diet with hunting, gathering, fishing, and food crops acquired through trade,

are not 'pure pastoralists'.[15] Nonetheless, all those who today speak languages descended from

Proto Northern Ateker derive a substantial portion of their caloric intake from livestock. These

calories rarely come in the form of meat. They come as secondary products such as milk and

blood, which is acquired by shooting a small blocked arrow at the jugular vein of a cow in a

practice called *akigum*, which dates to the earlier Proto Ateker period.[16]

Meat is usually consumed in a ritual setting or when animals die by natural causes or by

accident. Livestock are too valuable as replenishable and mobile food sources to be slaughtered

regularly. Transhumant pastoralists thus have an essentially symbiotic relationship with their

animals. Herders deploy their expert knowledge of grasslands and water sources to keep cows

nourished through the long dry season and safe from predators. And on those journeys cattle

sustain their caretakers by providing milk and blood. Cattle in this drier part of the larger region

represent both a hedge against crop failure and a means of subsistence in the dry season. It is no

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[14] Annual rainfall in Turkana can be as low as 200mm. A harrowing 1898 dispatch from British officer H. Austin, who led a patrol into Turkana during which two thirds of his animals died from starvation while the Turkana communities around him maintained herds with thousands of fairly healthy animals, offers a compelling example of how important pastoral expertise is to surviving in this climate. "Captain H. Austin to Sir A. Hardinge," 16 November 1898, British Parliamentary Papers, 1850-1908, Vol. 60. See also S. Levine, "An unromantic look at pastoralism in Karamoja: How hard-hearted economics shows that pastoral systems remain the solution, and not the problem," *Nomadic Peoples*, 14, 2 (2010), 147-153 & M. Little & P. Leslie (eds.), *Turkana Herders of the Dry Savanna: Ecology and biobehavioral response of nomads to an uncertain environment* (Oxford, 1999).

[15] K. Galvin & M. Little, "Dietary intake and nutritional status," in M. Little & P. Leslie (eds.), *Turkana Herders of the Dry Savanna: Ecology and biobehavioral response of nomads to an uncertain environment* (Oxford, 1999), 133; D. Johnson & D. Anderson, "Introduction: Ecology and Society in northeast African history," in D. Johnson & D. Anderson (eds.), *The Ecology of Survival: Case Studies from Northeast African History* (Boulder, 1988), 6-11.

[16] Ateker 33.

wonder that they occupy a central place in the ritual, social, and ultimately, political life of these societies. Bridewealth transactions, sacrificial prayers, and public blessings all revolve around livestock, and cattle consequently merit praise songs, specialized naming conventions, and pride of place in the Ateker aesthetic. A satisfying history of PNA-speakers and their linguistic descendants begins with a discussion of water and livestock.

What can we know about the availability of water during the period under consideration? Water scarcity creates a challenge for the reconstruction of local climate histories, because the best tropical paleoclimatological sources are found at the bottom of standing lakes, which are not common in the Proto Ateker homeland.[17] Bodies of standing water contain piled lake sediments that hold a sequenced history of climatic detritus which can be analyzed to determine the nature of past environments. Types of pollen or the photosynthetic material embedded in stromatoliths found in datable sedimentary layers can index varying climatic conditions at the time of their stratigraphic formation, as can the chemical compositions of lake sediment soils. Throughout the northern Ateker world, there is only one standing water body – Lake Turkana – that paleoclimatologists have studied, and it stands 150 miles away from the PNA homeland. Called the "Jade Sea" for its haunting blue-green color, Lake Turkana is an impressive natural feature.[18] It is currently the world's largest desert lake, and was once connected to the larger Nile riverine system before being permanently cut off by the end of the African Humid Period (Chapter 2).[19]

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[17] F. Gasse, "Hydrological changes in the African tropics since the Last Glacial Maximum," *Quaternary Science Reviews*, 19 (2000), 189-211.

[18] N. Pavitt, *Turkana: Kenya's Nomads of the Jade Sea* (London, 1997).

[19] A. Morrissey & C. Scholz, "Paleohydrology of Lake Turkana and its influence on the Nile river system," *Palaeogeography, Palaeoclimatology, Palaeoecology*, 403 (2014), 88-100 & Y. Garcin *et al*., "East African mid-Holocene wet-dry transition recorded in paleo-shoreline of Lake Turkana, northern Kenya Rift," *Earth and*

It is fed by three sources: the Omo River, which runs off from the Ethiopian highlands and provides most of Lake Turkana's water, the Turkwell river, which runs only seasonally from Mount Elgon in Uganda and is otherwise a dry riverbed, and finally, sporadic minimal rainfall. Lake Turkana routinely reaches daytime air temperatures in excess of 110 degrees Fahrenheit, and loses the vast majority of its water volume through evaporation.

Although recent paleoclimatological studies have focused only on the lake's more recent past, a series of studies in the 1990s shed light on its earlier history, which can be considered a proxy for the regional environment.[20] Halfmann *et al.* measured ratios of fine-grained carbonite isotopes in Lake Turkana sediments as a proxy for water levels, with the assumption that lower ratios would indicate higher overall water volumes. Using this evidence, they conclude that Lake Turkana experienced overall low water levels in the period c. 900-1100 CE.[21] In contrast, Mohammed *et al.* studied pollen samples in northern Lake Turkana sediments and determined that during this same period pollen entering the lake contained a relatively high percentage from trees compared to grasses, indicating that the lake was affected by a fairly rainfall-rich environment. However, as Mohammed *et al.* acknowledge, the Omo River which originates in the Ethiopian highlands is the northernmost source of Lake Turkana's water, so these pollens can be explained by postulating a wet period in Ethiopia which does not reach into the lowlands around Lake Turkana itself. Looking throughout the wider region affected by the same monsoon-

Planetary Science Letters, 331-332 (2012), 322-334. Interestingly, the massive fish species Nile Perch which is invasive in Lake Victoria is indigenous to Lake Turkana, dating to the AHP.

[20] C. Bloszies & S. Forman, "Potential relation between equatorial sea surface temperatures and historic water level variability in Lake Turkana, Kenya," *Journal of Hydrology*, 520 (2015), 489-501.

[21] J. Halfmann, T. C. Johnson & B. Finney, "New AMS dates, stratigraphic correlations and decadal climatic cycles for the past 4 ka at Lake Turkana, Kenya," *Paleogeography, Paleoclimatology, Paleoecology*, 111 (1994), 94.

derived seasonal rains, Verschuren *et al.* combine evidence from Lake Naivasha in Kenya and

Lake Tanganyika in Tanzania with Halfmann's study from Lake Turkana to suggest a regional

period of aridity on either side of c. 1000 CE that stretched from Tanzania to Northern Kenya.[22]

A final unique source for climatic conditions is the "Nilometer" on Rhoda island in Cairo, which

has been used to document annual Nile flood levels since the seventh century CE. Because the

lower Nile is partially fed by rainfall in northern Uganda, Nile flood levels can be considered an

imprecise proxy for climate conditions in this region. The Rhoda Nilometer matches

paleoclimatological studies, indicating periodic severe droughts amid overall low water levels

from CE 900-1250 CE.[23]

There is thus convincing evidence for regional aridity in eastern Africa at the turn of the

first millennium CE, the same period in which Proto Northern Ateker was formed. This turn to

aridity affected early PNA-speakers living in southeastern Sudan during this period in a variety

of ways beyond prompting them to develop transhumant pastoralism. Some of the ways that

PNA-speakers interacted with a more arid environment left linguistic traces. Among these are

PNA names for arid flora species, evidence for the adoption of a new drought-resistant cereal,

and lexical innovations demonstrating a shift to a transhumant pastoral economy.

[22] D. Verschuren, K. Laird & B. Cumming, "Rainfall and Drought in Equatorial east Africa during the past 1,100 years," *Nature*, 403 (2000), 410-414.

[23] T. de Putter *et al.*, "Decadal periodicities of Nile River historical discharge (A.D. 622-1470) and climatic implications," *Geophysical Research Letters*, 25, 16 (1998), 3193-3196; R. Herring, "Hydrology & Chronology: The Rodah Nilometer as an aid in dating,"(Unpublished Conference Paper, Makerere University, 1974).

When a local climate dries, thirstier tree and shrub species die out except near consistent water sources, giving way to new species content with less rainfall.[24] We can see evidence of this process playing out in the PNA linguistic record. The flora lexicon in Proto Ateker contains words for many trees, such as *Carissa spinarum*, *Tamarindus indica* (Tamarind), and *Flueggea virosa* (White Berry Bush), that require annual rainfall in excess of 600mm per annum (Chapter 3). While these species remained known to PNA speakers, who perhaps continued to encounter them in areas of higher elevation receiving greater rainfall, all words for flora innovated by PNA-speakers refer to species with minimum annual requirements of 200-450mm – some of which do not tolerate high rain budgets.[25] These include *Commiphora africana* (250-800mm), *Hyphaene compressa* (300-900mm), *Salvadora persica* (300-800mm), and the fodder grass *Bothriochloa insculpta* (450-1500mm).[26]

The most economically significant lexical borrowing for a plant in PNA was *erau "pearl millet," borrowed from a Northern Lwo speech community – possibly the early Shilluk.[27] Pearl millet is not as nutritious as the old Ateker staple of finger millet, but it has the advantage of being farmable in areas receiving an average of 400-650mm per annum of rainfall, as opposed to finger millet's minimum requirement of 600mm.[28] Pearl millet (*Pennisetum glaucum*, genetically

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[24] The methodological approach of tracing climate change through linguistic traces of changing tree species is informed by the model used in P. Friedrich, *Proto-Indo-European Trees: The Arboreal System of a Prehistoric People* (Chicago, 1970).

[25] For higher rainfall in higher elevations in South Sudan, see J. K. Jackson, "The Vegetation of the Imatong Mountains, Sudan," *Journal of Ecology*, 44, 2 (1956), 343.

[26] "*C. africana*" *ekadeli; "*H. compressa*" *-kVngol; "*S. persica*" *es(i)ekon; "*B. insculpta*" *elet.

[27] PNA 8.

[28] M. M. Dida & K. M. Devos, "Finger Millet," in C. Kole (ed.), *Genome Mapping and Molecular Breeding in Plants, Vol 1: Cereals and Millets* (New York, 2006), 335.

unrelated to finger millet, or *Eleusine coracana*) was first domesticated in West Africa by the

third millennium BCE but was either unknown to Proto Ateker speakers before c. 900 or at least

not significant enough to leave a linguistic trace.[29] Pearl millet supplemented the continued

cultivation of sorghum (*Sorghum bicolor*, 300-700mm rain per annum), another cereal famous

for thriving in dry conditions, in the PNA agricultural repertoire.[30]

More importantly for our purposes, PNA-speakers adapted to their new environment

mainly by learning transhumant pastoralism. All of today's PNA linguistic descendants practice

mobile herding of some kind, ranging from the single-month seasonal excursions of the Dodos in

the fairly well-watered highlands of far northeastern Uganda to the true nomadism of the

Turkana on the arid plains of northwestern Kenya. Throughout the twentieth century, however,

most Northern Ateker speakers including the Karimojong (Uganda), Jie (Uganda) Toposa (South

Sudan), and Nyangatom (Ethiopia) have pursued a balanced approach. They live all together in

permanent homesteads for half the year, and then as the dry season arrives young men and

women are sent with the main family herds to search for grazing land far away. Young calves

unable to make the journey remain at home, with older men and women and enough milch cows

to provide dairy products during the main herds' absence. Archeological excavations from South

Sudan indicate that what were once permanent homesteads on low-lying plains were abandoned

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[29] K. Manning *et al.*, "4500-year old domesticated pearl millet (*Pennisetum glaucum*) from the Tilemsi Valley, Mali: new insights into an alternative cereal domestication pathway," *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 38, 2 (2011), 312-322; F. Winchell *et al.*, "Evidence for Sorghum Domestication in Fourth Millennium BC Eastern Sudan," *Current Anthropology*, 58, 5 (2017), 673-683.

[30] H. P. Singh & H. C. Lohithaswa, "Sorghum," in Kole 2006, 258; F. Winchell *et al.*, "On the Origins and Dissemination of Domesticated Sorghum and Pearl Millet across Africa and into India: a View from the Butana Group of the Far Eastern Sahel," *African Archaeological Review*, 35 (2018), 483-505.

for year-round living and converted to temporary cattle camps c. 1000 CE.[31] Linguistic evidence

likewise suggests that elements of this annual practice date to the PNA period.

Lexical innovations in PNA encompass the full range of spatial activities related to

transhumant pastoralism. To inaugurate a dry season, PNA-speakers gathered cattle together at

an assembly called *ud-akin from the Proto Ateker verb *ud "to prod, to push together."[32] Cattle

were then "released" from this prayerful assembly, probably in a ceremony led by elders as it is

today, and began their journeys. Upon reaching suitable grazing lands, herding parties

established temporary camps, called *-bor-, derived a Proto Eastern Nilotic root meaning "to

depart, to break away from," which they could use to sleep in and protect their livestock at

night.[33] These camps were ideally situated near watering sources, which included plains water

sources already named by the Proto Ateker (Chapter 3), but also *-nam "lake, permanent water

body such as the Omo River," borrowed from Lwo, and *-tanit "ground spring," an internal

innovation from the Proto Ateker word for "source of flow."[34] Lands containing cracked vertisol

soil sufficient for grazing but not cultivation, called *-ro-, became so important to the PNA that

the scholar Ben Knighton has (incorrectly, but understandably) argued that the word root *ro* was

an early ethnonym for the entire PNA group.[35] For truly remote lands of dubious grazing value

and hosting potential threats from hostile neighbors or wild animals, PNA-speakers innovated

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[31] P. Robertshaw & A. Siiriainen, "Excavations in Lakes Province, Southern Sudan," *Azania: Archaeological Research in Africa*, 20, 1 (2010), 89-161.

[32] PNA 39.

[33] PNA 3.

[34] PNA 28; PNA 34.

[35] PNA 31; B. Knighton, *The Vitality of Karimojong Religion: Living Tradition or Dying Faith?* (Burlington, VT, 2005). 65-66.

the term *-long-is "wilderness, desert, desolate place" from a Proto Tung'a word referencing

isolated areas.[36]

As they moved with their cattle, PNA-speakers differentiated between a generic word *-ram "to drive cattle" (from the Proto Ateker verb meaning "to beat with a stick) and a directionally specific word *-twar ("to drive cattle *away*"), derived from a Proto Eastern Nilotic root meaning "to go away, to leave."[37] Most of the basic lexicon of the Ateker pastoral system dates to the Proto Ateker period, such as *-a(w)uyy- "main kraal."[38] There does seem to have been a greater overall level of specificity in PNA vocabulary related to cattle kraal construction, however, with two new words introduced for "kraal gate": *-ki-dor- for larger entrances and *-puke for smaller gates, possibly reserved for sheep and goats.[39] Other words for mobile pastoral technologies were innovated during the PNA era, including *-ku-wos(i) "gourd for carrying cow urine" (used for cleaning).[40] Finally, PNA-speakers innovated a specialized whisk, called *-gec-, suited to stirring viscous food such as the pastoral staple of milk, butter, and cow's blood mixed together.[41] The above evidence strongly suggests that the formative moment of the PNA language was a drier one than Proto-Ateker times, in which mobile pastoralism provided a solution to subsistence challenges created by climate change.

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[36] PNA 23.

[37] PNA 30; PNA 38.

[38] Ateker 167.

[39] PNA 16; PNA 29.

[40] PNA 20.

[41] PNA 5.

Transhumant pastoralism solved a climate problem but challenged long-standing Ateker social ideals. PNA-speakers inherited from their Proto Ateker ancestors a sense that effective political communities were formed through spatial proximity, an idea seen in political leadership vocabulary derived from roots for concepts such as "multitudes" "heaping" "gathering together" and "encircling," discussed in Chapter 3. Transhumant pastoralism dispersed people, challenging the ideal political community for many PNA-speakers. This social anxiety especially affected elder men and women who, left at home with children and young or enfeebled livestock, saw their life-giving livestock leave home every year under the control of youthful herders. If PNA-speakers practiced a gendered division of labor and rights of access to resources similar to that which was widespread in the twentieth century, these transhumant periods may have been especially concerning to older men. That is because the remaining economic resources – cereal fields and milch cows – would have been under the control of women. Ethnographers have noted that Northern Ateker women "own (their) garden land absolutely and in no way at the discretion of (their) husband(s)," while women have rights of use to milch cows allocated to them and their young children – the only cattle left behind during the dry season.[42]

Probably reflecting this anxiety, conflict between herd-owning patriarchs and mobile youth became a central theme in the Northern Ateker oral literature that emerged in this period.[43]

[42] Gulliver 1955, 60.

[43] Lamphear succinctly captures this idea: "The departure of the young men with the herds each year for dry-season cattle camps was viewed as a moment of potential crisis, when repressed fissiparous tendencies might surface. Therefore, important rituals, in which the elders would admonish the young men to return with the animals at the proper time, and threaten them with supernatural sanctions if they did not, were a feature of every Central Paranilotic (Northern Ateker) community." J. Lamphear, "Some Thoughts on the Interpretation of Oral Traditions among the Central Paranilotes," in R. Vossen & M. Bechaus-Gerst (eds.), *Nilotic Studies: Proceedings of the International Symposium on Language and History of the Nilotic Peoples, Cologne, January 4-6, 1982* (Berlin, 1983), 114. For a discussion of methods for periodizing oral folklore, see W. Fitzsimons, "African Oral Fiction as a

Some PNA-speakers innovated a new word for "male youth," *-dya-, derived from an earlier

root meaning "to err, to miss the mark," perhaps capturing an element of debates regarding age

and competence.[44] Meanwhile, stories such as the widespread founding myth "Nayece and her

Grey Bull Engiro" included scenes where young men "gathered all the cattle together before the

sun rose and set off" only to refuse entreaties of "old men and women" who "demanded the

cattle" be returned.[45] These plot devices capture the social anxiety produced by a situation where

the political ideal of gathering together was challenged by subsistence practices necessitating

spatial separation of different age groups. PNA-speakers innovated a new word for "leader," *-

ka-tuk-on, derived from a Proto Ateker word meaning "to heap together," arguing implicitly that

a leader kept people united.[46] For elder men, the challenge of dispersal coincided with a loss of

direct control over economic resources.

Even with their far-flung herding journeys and months-long spatial separations, Proto

Northern Ateker-speakers found meaningful ways to belong in a large and cohesive socio-

political community. They did so through group-making social institutions. For example, PNA-

speakers created the annual *-ud-ak-in ceremony discussed above to entangle the interests of

both youth and elders in cattle-keeping. As is the practice today, this ancient ceremony likely

involved elders blessing youths through smearing with chyme from a slaughtered ox. The word

for such a blessing, *-wos, was originally derived from a Proto Ateker word meaning "to let go."

Precolonial Historical Source: A Chimera or the Next Step?" (Unpublished Seminar Paper, Northwestern University, 2015).

[44] PNA 6.

[45] M. Mirzeler, *Remembering Nayeche and the Gray Bull Engiro: African Storytellers of the Karamoja Plateau and the Plains of Turkana* (Toronto, 2014), 277.

[46] PNA 35.

In PNA, it was transformed into both a transitive verb meaning "to smear and anoint" and into

the noun *-wos-it meaning "cattle drive (of some distance)."[47] Another innovated noun, *-sepic,

(from an unknown source), denoted groups of people working together on a common goal,

including a group of young people herding together.[48]

The greatest PNA group-making innovation from this period was the establishment of a

formal age-class system called *asapan.[49] Age-classes spoke to the specific anxieties generated

by transhumant pastoralism. By cutting across other identities based on lineage and land, age-

classes produced a centripetal force that could unify increasingly diffuse populations.[50]

Additionally, age-classes re-oriented lines of social control in ways that explicitly asserted

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[47] PNA 41.

[48] PNA 32.

[49] PNA 2. The following is a list of selected publications that deal extensively with the ethnography of *asapan*, organized by modern political community. These sources, in addition to 12 months of fieldwork funded by the Social Science Research Council in 2017, inform my analysis of *asapan* throughout this paper. Karimojong: N. Dyson-Hudson, *Karimojong Politics*, 155-206; N. Dyson-Hudson, "The Karimojong Age System," *Ethnology*, 2, 3 (1963), 353-401; B. Novelli, *Aspects of Karimojong Ethnosociology* (Verona, 1988), 41-49; Knighton 2005, 133-176. Jie: J. Lamphear, *The Traditional History of the Jie of Uganda* (Oxford, 1976), 35-51; P. H. Gulliver, "The Age-set Organization of the Jie Tribe," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*, 83, 2 (1953), 147-168; P. Spencer, "The Jie Generation Paradox," in P. T. W. Baxter and U. Almagor (eds.), *Age, Generation, and Time: Some Features of East African Age Organizations* (New York, 1978), 131-150. Turkana: P. H. Gulliver, "The Turkana Age Organization," *American Anthropologist*, 60, 5 (1958), 900-922; A. Barrett, *Sacrifice and Prophecy in Turkana Cosmology* (Nairobi, 1998), 69-75. Toposa: H. Müller-Dempf, "The Ngibokoi Dilemma: Generation-sets and Social System Engineering in Times of Stress – an Example from the Toposa of Southern Sudan," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 134, 2 (2009), 189-211; C. Peter, *Ceremonials and Rites of Passage among the Toposa of Southern Sudan* (Khartoum, 1994). Nyangatom: S. Tornay, "The Nyangatom: An Outline of their Ecology and Social Organization," in M. Bender (ed.) *Peoples and Cultures of the Ethio-Sudan Borderlands* (Lansing, 1981), 137-178. Jiye: G. Verswijver, *The Jiye of South Sudan* (Geneva, 2015), 92-107. Dodos: E. M. Thomas, *Warrior Herdsmen: The absorbing chronicle of an expedition to the tribesmen of northern Uganda* (New York, 1965), 55-62.

[50] The ability of age-classes to unify clans is a major theme in literature on age-grading. See G. Schlee, *Identities on the Move: Clanship and Pastoralism in Northern Kenya* (London, 1989) & J. Galaty, "Pastoral Orbits and Deadly Jousts: Factors in the Maasai Expansion," in J. Galaty & P. Bonte (eds.), *Herders, Warriors, and Traders: Pastoralism in Africa* (Boulder, 1991), 189; P. Lienard, "Age Grouping and Social Complexity," *Current Anthropology*, 57, 13 (2016).

sedentary elders' control of mobile youth. [51] *Asapan* therefore helped elder men assert their rights to the economic resources (cattle) that they owned but did not directly manage. In c. 900, the basic idea of formalized age-classes may have already been familiar to PNA speakers. Variations of age-classes exist across east Africa and likely have ancient roots.[52] In particular, the *gadaa* age-class system practiced by neighboring Lowland East Cushitic-speakers in Ethiopia has some conceptual correspondences with *asapan* and may have provided PNA-speaker with intellectual inspiration.[53] However, while *asapan* bears a family resemblance to the other age-class systems, it is structurally dissimilar from all others in crucial ways (discussed below). *Asapan* thus either radically re-interpreted familiar concepts or innovated wholly new theories of governance, or both.

We have just shown that climatic changes and social anxieties together opened the door to the adoption of age-classes among PNA-speakers. But to understand the particular shape which *asapan* took, it is necessary to first reconstruct other significant PNA cultural practices with which *asapan* interacted. Two aspects of Northern Ateker culture indispensable for understanding *asapan* are the sacred groves, or *ngakiriketa*, in which initiations and elders' meetings take place, and the high deity *akuj*, from whom elders derive their authority.

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[51] Seasonal subsistence patterns separating young from old, also including months-long hunting excursions practiced by North American Plains Indians, correlate with age-class systems in global history . See M. Ritter, "The Conditions Favoring Age-Set Organization," *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 36, 1 (1980), 87-104.

[52] C. Ehret, *An African Classical Age* (Charlottesville, 1998); H. Fleming, "The Age-Grading Cultures of East Africa: An Historical Inquiry" (PhD Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1965); R. LeVine & W. Sangree, "The Diffusion of Age-Group Organization in East Africa: A Controlled Comparison," *Africa*, 32, 3 (1962), 97-110; J. J. de Wolf, "The Diffusion of Age-Group Organization in East Africa: A Reconsideration," *Africa*, 50, 3 (1980), 305-310.

[53] Specifically, the "generational" aspect is similar. See U. Almagor, "The Dialectic of Generation Moieties in an East African Society," in D. Maybury-Lewis & U. Almagor (eds.) *The Attraction of Opposites: Thought and Society in the Dualistic Mode* (Ann Arbor, 1989), 143-169. This is not to suggest that *asapan* is essentially derivative from *gadaa* – a position cogently argued against in E. Sanders, "East African Age-Grade Systems: Structure and Origin," (PhD Dissertation, Columbia University, 1968).

Ngakiriketa and *akuj* are so thoroughly intertwined with *asapan* today that it is difficult to imagine how *asapan* could have existed independently of the them. Indeed, historical evidence suggests that versions of these two phenomena pre-dated the emergence of *asapan*, and that the latter was built upon their foundations. Before attempting to reconstruct the early days of *asapan* itself, then, we must first turn to the histories of *ngakiriketa* and *akuj*.

Sacred Groves and Supernatural Being: Akiriket and Akuj in Proto Northern Ateker Society

The *asapan* initiation ceremony which elevates adult Northern Ateker men into the role of political decision-makers is one of three major components of a larger complex. The others are *akiriket* (sacred groves) and *akuj* (deity). *Asapan* would in many ways be meaningless without them. At its core, *asapan* is the path by which one gains admission to sit in the *akiriket,* where major political questions are decided and public rituals are performed. The initiation ceremony takes place within the *akiriket*, and formal ranking according to *asapan* classes is only truly significant while an *akiriket* is in session. Without the *akiriket*, *asapan* would be little more than a social club. Within the *akiriket*, status as an *asapan* initiate and the relative rank of one's age-class determine access to political power.

There is a similar dynamic with regard to the high deity *akuj. Akuj* guarantees the power wielded by the senior age-class within the *akiriket*, because elders derive much of their political authority and social influence from their perceived closeness to *akuj*. *Akuj* is also widely considered to reside most strongly within an *akiriket*. The *akiriket* is a sacred space because *akuj* is there, and the trees of its grove remain unmolested because of the threat of curses against anyone who should disturb them. But *akuj* also relies on *asapan* to maintain relevance in Northern Ateker society, because it is only through *asapan* initiates that *akuj*'s intercessory presence can be made manifest. Speaking of the Karimojong specifically, but in a statement that

is applicable to other Northern Ateker societies, anthropologist Neville Dyson-Hudson succinctly

captures the theoretical three-legged stool underpinning Northern Ateker political power:

The immediate source of political authority among the Karimojong is a corporate office: elderhood (achieved through *asapan*). The channels of political authority are the relationships created between groups and persons by age ranking. The occasions for the exercise of political authority are primarily at public ritual gatherings, councils associated with them, and publicly arbitrated disputes (played out in the *akiriket*). The obligations of political authority are the furtherance of Karimojong collective interests as expressed in their political policy. The demonstrable instrument of political authority is the obedient membership of all sub-senior age-sets; its attributed instrument is the intervention of deity (*akuj*) in its support.[54]

Asapan, *akiriket*, and *akuj* are thus mutually reinforcing.

Linguistic evidence examined in Chapter 3 shows that a form of the word *akiriket* dates to the

Proto Ateker period, before c. 900 CE. Likewise, the semantic transformation of the Proto

Eastern Nilotic root *-kudy- "rain" to Proto Ateker *-kuj- "sky" and then PNA *akuj "high

deity," may have been well underway by the late Proto Ateker period. Before c. 900, the sky was

already being thought of as an agent capable of producing transitive verbs (Chapter 3). By the

time prolonged aridity struck South Sudan c. 900 CE, both *akiriket* sacred groves and the *akuj*

deity existed as basic concepts – if not in the same form as today, at least bearing important

similarities.

Curated groves of ancient trees called *ngakiriketa* dot the sere lands occupied by the

Northern Ateker today. They usually stand alongside riverbeds. Entering an *akiriket*, with its

cooling shade, rustling leaves, chirping birds and bubbling brooks, can seem a transformative

experience after having just been standing on the hot sunburnt plains outside. Today, these

inviting spaces serve as the primary sites for the ritual activities and political meetings of multi-

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[54] Dyson-Hudson 1966, 155 (parenthetical references added).

lineage territorial sections, or *ekitela* (pl. *ngitela*), which form the basis of Northern Ateker

everyday social life. Each of the seven major Northern Ateker political/linguistic communities –

Karimojong, Jie, Dodos, Toposa, Jiye, Nyangatom, and Turkana – comprises a number of

ngitela, and most also have a chief *akiriket* where society-wide rituals can occur. Fixed in their

positions and widely considered to have endured since ancient times, *ngakiriketa* are the most

permanent spatial element of a multi-nodal, integrated social landscape otherwise composed of

mobile herds, temporary camps, and shifting homesteads.[55]

But how long have *ngakiriketa* existed in their present role, and what form did they take

in the PNA era? The use of groves for ritual purposes is very common in Eastern Nilotic culture,

and may well date to the Proto Eastern Nilotic era, though there is no linguistic data to confirm

this. Each clan among the Eastern Nilotic-speaking Kakwa of northwest Uganda, for example,

maintains a sacred grove called a *laro* in which important ceremonies are performed, meetings

are held, and royal chiefs are buried.[56] The Maasai similarly maintain a sacred place in the Loita

Hills of Kenya called *Eneeni Inkujit* at which a grass-tying rite is performed, described by one

visitor as "a grove which seems to belong to another world."[57] Sacred groves are frequently used

by Teso diviners, or *imurok*, for rain ceremonies and also among the Usuku Teso for

neighborhood meetings, and are variably called *atuket*, *airiget* (cognate with *akiriket*), or *awiunit*

(Chapter 6). However, significant physical differences distinguish Northern Ateker sacred groves

from those used by other Eastern Nilotic-speakers, while Northern Ateker *ngakiriketa* all

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[55] It must be noted that *ngakiriketa* in Turkana are not quite so fixed, and this exception will be shown in Chapter 5 to be important for understanding the distinctiveness of *asapan* in Turkana.

[56] KW, Koboko, 24 September, 2017.

[57] F. Mol, *Maasai Language & Culture Dictionary* (Lemek, 1996), 62. As discussed in Chapter 6, grass-tying is also an important method of blessing among the Teso.

conform to a single spatial type (See Figures below). The judicious conclusion is that, while PNA-speakers likely inherited a strong tradition of using sacred groves, they made their own further revisions once they had become a distinct language community.

It is difficult to determine the antiquity of particular *ngakiriketa*. The excavation of an *akiriket* near Mt. Moroto in Karamoja revealed ritual activity over many centuries, perhaps even by an earlier population preceding the arrival of Ateker-speaking Karimojong.[58] I visited a number of sites maintained virtually without change since mid-century anthropologists described them.[59] *Ngakiriketa* are universally considered to be "very old," most pre-dating any living memory, and they have been conserved across generations by a threat of harsh supernatural sanctions of illness or death promised to anyone who cuts firewood from their trees. The strength of these widely-recognized supernatural sanctions derives from the close connection between these sacred sites and the Ateker deity *akuj*, who most presume is especially close to tall trees because they, like mountains, reach nearer the huge sky that covers the Ateker plains and serves as both a metaphor and a home for the deity.[60] I was unable to visit any *ngakiriketa* north of the South Sudan-Uganda border in the likely homeland of PNA-speakers because of the ongoing civil war, but some of the earliest Europeans to reach this region document important sacred groves which likely *ngakiriketa*.[61]

[58] M. Davies, "Landscape, environment and settlement in Karamoja, Eastern Uganda, c. 2000 BP to present," *Preliminary report on second season of fieldwork* (Nairobi, 2010).

[59] KA, Lokelala, 22 July 2017; JI, Nakapelimoru, 08 August 2017; JI, Kalogwal, 22 August 2017; KA, Napianyenya, 27 August 2017; DO, Sidok, 03 October 2017; TU, Nariokotome, 23 October 2017; DO, Koputh, 29 October 2017.

[60] KA, Lokelala, 22 July 2017; KA, Locerep, 01 August 2017; JI, Lokitelebu, 11 August 2017.

[61] L. F. Nalder, *A Tribal Survey of Mongalla Province* (London, 1937), 34.

The etymology of the word *akiriket*, derived from a Proto Ateker root *-rik "to encircle, to compress together," captures both the sense of the noun as a place for gathering as well as the basic shape of the semi-circle in which gatherers always sit. The *akiriket* circle joins together attendees from disparate lineages and dispersed settlements for public events, such as the -ud-akin "freeing of the cattle" ceremony described above. Although the exact form of *ngakiriketa* differs between the seven Northern Ateker political communities, all contain at their core a semi-circle of initiated adult men, usually with senior elders seated in the center and the youngest initiates at the ends (see Figures 4.2 through 4.5). Significantly, in all *ngakiriketa* except those belonging to the Jie (see Chapter 5), seating is ordered with no regard for lineage or clan affiliation. In this way, *ngakiriketa* manifest the cross-clan unity generated by the elevation of the age-class above other modes of political identification. At the center of each semi-circle are a roasting fire (*ngakim*) and pile of leaves (*ngakwi*) on which roasted meat is left to cool before distribution.

Schematic of
Turkana Akiriket

Ngakim

Left Side

Right Side

Ngakwi

Ngimor

Ngirithai

Eldest Elders
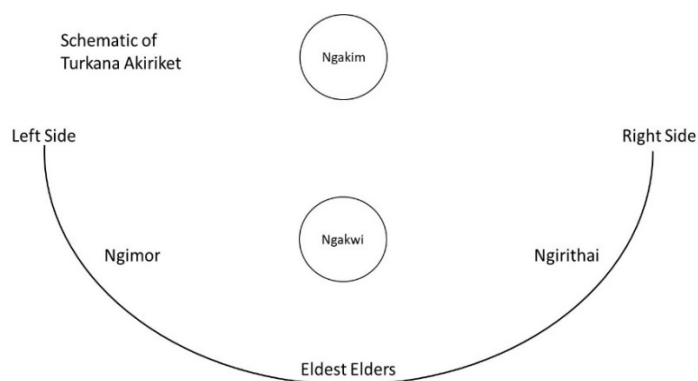
Figure 4.2 – Schematic of Turkana *akiriket*, drawn by the author
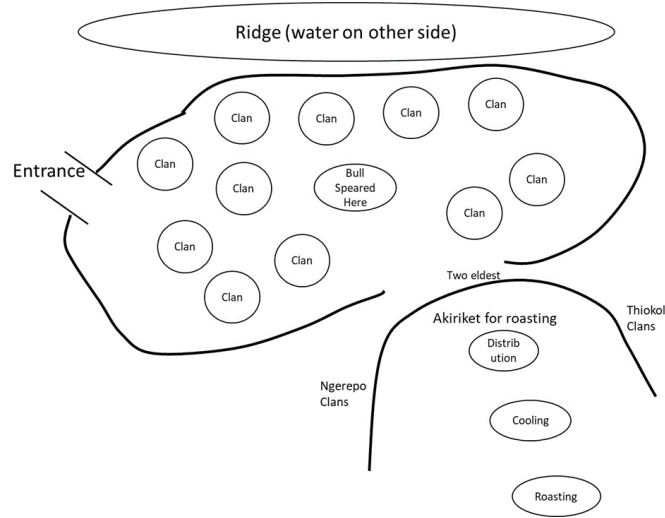
Figure 4.3 – Schematic of Jie *akiriket*, drawn by the author
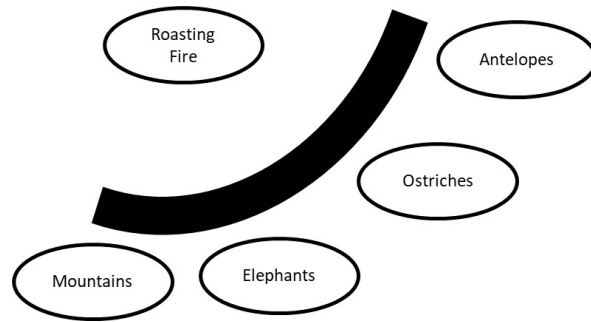
Figure 4.4 – Schematic of Nyangatom *akiriket*, drawn by the author
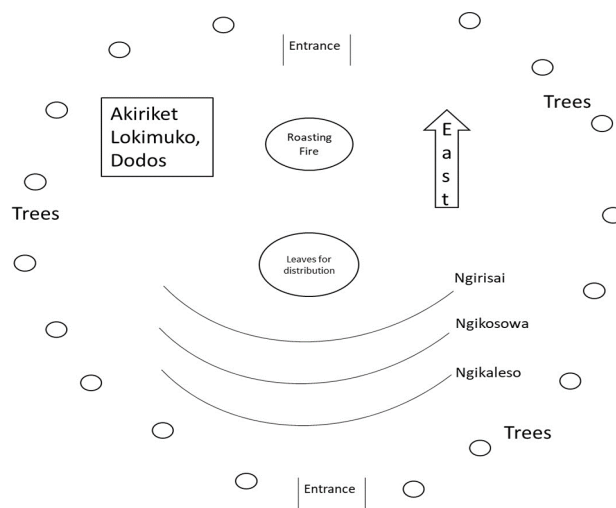
Figure 4.5 – Schematic of Dodos *akiriket*, drawn by the author

Events conducted within a Northern Ateker *akiriket* today require domestic animal sacrifice, with preference for oxen, although goats and camels may also be used. Animal sacrifice likely has a very long history in Nilotic ritual practice.[62] In particular, the idea that an animal's blood should be spilled in ceremonies associated with death, such as those remembering the deceased and/or preventing ancestral spirits from molesting the living, has a wide resonance among many Nilotic-speaking communities and their neighbors.[63] The Northern Ateker have expanded the number of occasions of animal sacrifice, requiring animals to be slaughtered in the performance of nearly any public ceremony. For efficiency, the Northern Ateker typically use the occasion of slaughtering animals already mandated for other reasons, such as to confirm a marriage agreement, as opportunities to hold an *akiriket*.[64]

Animal sacrifice was important for *akiriket* activities because the sacrifice itself enabled the *akiriket*'s social and spiritual work. As noted in Chapter 3, Proto Ateker speakers slaughtered livestock in the course of showing hospitality to visitors (see the discussion of *-pej-); sharing a sumptuous meal surely buoyed relationships between *akiriket* attendees otherwise thinly spread across a wide arid landscape. PNA-speakers, like their Proto Ateker ancestors, also recognized a connection between animal sacrifice and causality, demonstrated in the polysemy of the root *-sub "to sacrifice, to cause or initiate (as in a 'first cause')."[65] Ritual animal sacrifice during the PNA period is furthermore directly attested in the innovated lexeme *-mook, meaning "to

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[62] Nilotic sacrifice is considered in detail in S. Simonse, *Kings of Disaster: Dualism, Centralism, and the Scapegoat Kin in Southeastern South Sudan* (Kampala, 2017).

[63] E. Grove, "Customs of the Acholi," *Sudan Notes and Records*, 2, 3 (1919), 157-182.

[64] KA, Lokelala, 22 July 2017.

[65] Ateker 148.

cleanse with ritual sacrifice" in PNA, derived from a Lwo word for the abomasum, or fourth

stomach compartment of a ruminant herbivore.[66]

The special place of meat-feasting in Northern Ateker ritual and the physical centrality of

meat-roasting in Northern Ateker *ngakiriketa* together highlight the importance of animal

sacrifice for PNA-speakers. But it is also notable that for the Northern Ateker, as well as other

Eastern Nilotic-speaking groups including the Teso and Maasai, there is a gendered distinction

made between roasting meat, which is the domain of men, and boiling meat, which is the domain

of women. If this dichotomous attitude toward gendered food preparation is inherited from a

common Proto Tung'a history, then by placing roasting at the center of the *akiriket*, PNA-

speakers may have been making a spatial statement about the character of the *akiriket* as a male

space.[67] *Asapan* was an institution created primarily by elder men to reinforce their position, and

it is not surprising that a male-dominated *akiriket* was selected as the site of its enaction.

One signature event that occurs in virtually every recorded *akiriket* function is the public

prayer, or *akigat*. Invariably led by *asapan*-initiated elders, *akigat* is a call and response prayer

beseeching *akuj* to bring rain, prosperity, and blessings to the community, and sometimes death

and destruction to enemies. The word root *-gat(a) dates to the Proto Ateker period, when it was

borrowed from early Lwo-speakers and invoked a sense of aggregated loudness, such as from a

group chanting or a fire roaring.[68] Reflecting once again the supernatural power present in

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[66] PNA 27.

[67] N. Nagashima, "Boiling and Roasting: An account of two descent based groupings among the Iteso of Uganda," *Hitosubashi Journal of Social Studies*, 8, 1 (1976), 42-62; A. Talle, "Ways of Milk and Meat Among the Maasai: Gender Identity and Food Resources in a Pastoral Economy," in G. Pálsson (ed.) *From Water to World-Making: African Models and Arid Lands* (Uppsala, 1990), 90.

[68] Ateker 29.

Ateker concepts of groupness, the loudness of *-gat(a) was associated early on with public

cursing. For example, Proto Ateker-speakers could reprimand an anti-social miscreant by using

group chants or cursing him in unison. In the PNA period, the semantics of *-gat(a) became

more restricted, so that the term no longer signified mere audible loudness. It came instead to

denote a specific ritualized act of public prayer beseeching *akuj* for either blessings or curses –

usually for the community rather than a particular individual. The call-and-response prayer

called *akigat* today is nearly identical across Northern Ateker societies, further suggesting that

this innovation occurred among PNA speakers. Therefore, while the verb *-gat(a) entered Proto

Ateker with the generic meaning "to make loud noise" (often for cursing) it came to be used by

PNA-speakers narrowly, referring to the public performance of call-and-response intercessory

prayers. Meetings in the *akiriket* provided a space for such public acts. This development was

imbricated in a larger shift in PNA theology. For, around the same time, PNA-speakers became

more specific about the being and nature of the intercessory agent to which *-gat(a) was intended

to appeal: the high deity *akuj*.

Reconstructing the spiritual beliefs of a non-literate society from the deep past is a

fraught undertaking. To do so using evidence from dictionaries compiled by early colonial

missionaries is even more treacherous. And the problem of feedback is further compounded

when conducting linguistic fieldwork more than a century after the world religions of

Christianity and Islam have taken root in the region under consideration. As historians Paul

Landau, Okot p'Bitek, William Worger and others have noted, research conducted by

missionaries or after missionary encounters can easily fall into the trap of drawing false

analogies between Abrahamic religions and indigenous African belief systems.[69] In their zeal to translate the Gospel, missionaries have too often sought and "found" a local word for "God" in the Abrahamic sense where no such concept truly existed. Any attempt to explain the *akuj* deity of PNA-speakers then, requires especially careful attention to both the semantics of linguistic reconstruction, and the historical setting in which translation occurs.

There is no evidence for any figure resembling a "High God" in Proto Ateker society before c. 900, because there are no stable lexical reflexes for concepts like "God" or "intercessory prayer" in Proto Teso, the closest linguistic sibling of PNA.[70] Likewise Teso folklore and oral traditions make no reference to such a figure. In fact, since missionary linguists first worked in Teso, there have been at least nine different translations offered for "God," ranging from the traditionally Catholic *lokasuban* "the first-causer" to the traditionally Anglican *edeke* "disease."[71] To speak of any single, overarching spiritual being in Proto Teso or Proto Ateker cosmology would be folly.

However, in languages descended from PNA the situation is different, and this difference captures an important shift in PNA-speakers' cosmological views that was likely in motion by c. 900 CE. All missionaries' translations of "God" in Northern Ateker languages, regardless of their Christian denomination or country of origin, have readily rendered the same word, *akuj*,

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[69] P. Landau, "'Religion' and Christian Conversion in African History: A New Model," *Journal of Religious History*, 23, 1 (1999), 8-30; O. p'Bitek, *African Religions in Western Scholarship* (Kampala, 1970); W. Worger, "Parsing God: Conversations about the Meaning of Words and Metaphors in Nineteenth-Century Southern Africa*," Journal of African History*, 42, 3 (2001), 417-447.

[70] The Teso word for "prayer" is simply *ailip* "to beg, to ask for" and can also be used in secular conversations.

[71] B. Ekeya, "The Emurwon – Diviner/Prophet – In the Religion of the Iteso," (PhD Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1984); for an example of this process recorded at the time of translation, see A. L. Kitching, *On the Backwaters of the Nile: Studies of Some Child Races of Central Africa* (London, 1912), 130-131.

with no semantic equivocation.[72] This translation history can be taken as evidence favoring the semantic stability, and perhaps antiquity, of the gloss. In addition, a*kuj* appears frequently as a conscious and causal agent who intercedes in human affairs from a place above the sky in numerous widely-distributed Northern Ateker folktales.[73] Without debating the exact soundness of equivalencies drawn by missionaries between Northern Ateker and Christian concepts, it seems clear that PNA-speakers recognized the existence of some sort of powerful unitary spiritual force and named this "deity" *akuj*. The etymological history of the word *akuj* from "rain" to "sky" to "deity" (Chapter 3) sheds light on the pragmatic environmental concerns driving spiritual innovation in a period of severe aridity. The monist nature of *akuj*, connected by ritual to political events in the *akiriket*, provided the metaphysical scaffolding on which large over-arching Northern Ateker ritual confederacies could be erected without a central human authority. As discussed below in detail, the *asapan-akiriket-akuj* complex was compelling because it incorporated disparate lineages and distant settlements while distributing power through the equal nodes of *ngakiriketa*. Whether such incorporation would have been feasible if each *akiriket* or separate lineage recognized a different array of spirits or gods is doubtful.

In summary, available evidence indicates that many PNA-speakers subscribed to a belief system in which a high deity, *akuj*, could be implored to bless a community when that community came together in a group prayer (*akigat*) performed at a gendered-male sacred grove called an *akiriket*.[74] PNA religious activities drew power from and reinforced ideological

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[72] A. Barrett, *Incarnating the Church in Turkana* (Eldoret, 1977).

[73] Perhaps the most famous and widespread example is the story of the ogre-woman Naipekisina, who is drowned in a flash flood caused by *akuj* while she is chasing after intended victims. See Mirzeler 2014 & H. Hague, *Turkana Religion and Folklore* (Stockholm, 1986).

[74] *Asapan* itself was also likely seen as tightening connections between elders and *akuj*. As was explained to me by an elder in Karamoja, "*asapan* makes one closer to God. So when you are praying, and you have gone through

commitments to the inherent value of social gathering. The same theme emerges through the

"circling" and "compressing" work done by the physical constraints of the *akiriket* itself. Having

established this context, we can next ask how men could gain access to the *akiriket*, become a

channel of *akuj*'s power, and thereby rise to political prominence in PNA society. For this, we

finally turn to our attention to *asapan* itself.

The Birth of Asapan

The mountainous topography of the PNA homeland had as much impact on the history of *asapan*

as the wider climatic desiccation discussed above. This influence can be seen today in every

initiation of a "Mountain" age-set – "The Mountains" being the most widespread and frequently

recurring of all the ancient Northern Ateker age-class names. Northern Ateker communities have

long targeted wetter areas of high elevation for permanent settlement.[75] The oldest settlement

clusters of the Karimojong, for example, are on the slopes and foothills of Mount Moroto and

Mount Kadam.[76] Likewise, oral traditions often claim ancestral homes among mountains and

narrate past migrations as stories of people moving from one hill to the next.[77] Praise songs sung

by the wives of the Mountain age-set in the twentieth century still highlight the importance of

mountains and their durability for the construction of age-based identities:

They were, even long long ago

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asapan, you can say 'oh, my brothers who are living with God, ask God to help me, etc.' When someone who has gone through *asapan* speaks with his mouth, it is connected to heaven, and it is a wish from heaven." KA, Lokelala, 22 July 2017.

[75] Mountains can thus be said to serve as key points of memory in the landscaped archive of the Ateker past. See G. Oba, *Climate Change Adaptation in Africa: An historical ecology* (London, 2014), 40-59.

[76] N. Dyson-Hudson, *Karimojong Politics* (Oxford, 1966), 264.

[77] H. Müller (trans., ed.) "Toposa Traditional Texts"; Lamphear 1976; C. G. Seligman & B. Z. Seligman, *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan* (London, 1932), 364.

And they endured, appearing strong
They were, even long long ago
Striped Mountains, children of our grandfathers[78]

During the period of aridity beginning c. 900, areas of higher elevation and therefore relatively more rainfall would have been even more important than they are at present because of the valuable refuge they provided to cereal agriculture. Drawing analogies from settlement patterns today, PNA permanent homesteads, called *ere, were probably located at or near higher elevation to provide easier access to farms. Large permanent cattle kraals, called *a(w)uyy-, would have been similarly located. During the wet season, PNA-speaking families likely stayed together at higher elevations while farming cereals and grazing livestock close by. This annual separation of upland elders and lowland herding youth is a ubiquitous theme of Northern Ateker oral traditions. After the harvest, elders and toddlers were then left behind while young men and women set out to graze the family herds away from home in the lower plains. Older women were likely in charge of distributing harvested cereals and managing milch cows left for young children while the herds of elder men were taken to the low-lying plains.

Such patterns of transhumant pastoralism engendered the literal separation of old and young. Separation probably fueled anxieties among elder men as discussed above, but it also created a new and readily accessible mode of group identity: age. For the better part of each year, young men and women from different clans and villages would have met together on the low-lying plains. Certainly, they would have coordinated pasturing, discussed current events, and stayed the night in one another's temporary camps. Just as surely, they also danced, drank, and

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[78] Dyson-Hudson 1966, 177.

romanced.[79] It is in this period that Northern Ateker speakers innovated a word for a "dancing ground," called *-kero because of its place in the *-ro or "outlying grazing land," that served in the modern era as a site for the courtship of young men and women outside the strictures of negotiated marriage.[80] Here again was a potential locus of elder anxiety; not only were the means of economic production controlled by travelling youth, but so too were activities surrounding social reproduction.

In these lowlands, we can imagine that identities constructed along lineage, clan, or village lines were subsumed by shared concerns of the young generation: finding marriage partners, begging bride-wealth from fathers (for young men) or attaining an honorable bride-wealth (for young women), and managing a healthy and productive herd. Meanwhile, elder men home in the uplands must have waited with uneasy anticipation for the return of the herds – herds which they "owned" but did not manage – as the dry season grinded on and grain stores wore out. Elder men and women shared concerns about fairly distributing livestock among multiple sons, preparing for a dignified and healthy old age, and using their wisdom and political authority to maintain the continuity of a verdant community.

In this context, age came to the forefront of PNA discourse, and then eventually to the center of political life. Informal age classes slowly became reified as a newly prominent category of social division. The linguistic history of formal age-classes began with the heightened recognition of "generations" as discrete social entities. The noun PNA-speakers innovated to

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[79] For careful ethnographic descriptions of Northern Ateker dances in the 20th century, see M. Robbins. & L. Robbins, "A Note on Turkana Dancing," *Ethnomusicology*, 15, 2 (1971), 231-235 & K. Gourlay, "The making of Karimojong cattle songs,"(Unpublished Seminar Paper, University of Nairobi, 1971).

[80] PNA 14; R. Dyson-Hudson, "Children of the Dancing Ground, Children of the House: Costs and Benefits of Marriage Rules (South Turkana, Kenya)," *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 54, 1 (1998), 19-47.

describe a "generation" was *-lung-urat, derived from the Proto Ateker verb *-lung- meaning "to make a whole thing, to heap together parts into a whole."[81] This etymology indicates that "generations" were not merely chronological categories, but also meaningful groups with holistic identities. This early concept of "generation" did not merely mark time; it was a real social unit made up of people who shared certain experiences and interests, not unlike modern western "generations" of the sort theorized by Karl Mannheim.[82] To more exactly describe personal relationships within shared generations, PNA-speakers semantically constricted the Proto Ateker word *(e/a)-kes- "colleague, fellow" (derived from a verb *-kes "to bundle together") to refer exclusively to a chronological "age-peer."[83] Lexical innovations therefore mark the emergence of the social experience of an age-based group identity as a newly significant concept for PNA-speakers. This shift laid the intellectual groundwork for political efforts to determine with further precision the basis on which people were assigned to one generation rather than another, and what that would mean for social order. The answer, more than that "old" would control "young," ended up being that "fathers" would control "sons."

The most distinctive characteristic of the *asapan* system that emerged by c. 1200 CE was its dual alternating generational classes that were based on filial status rather than chronological age. Through *asapan* initiation, Northern Ateker men throughout recorded history have joined what might best be called a "filial set," immediately junior to their father's set.[84] It is worth

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[81] PNA 24.

[82] K. Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations," in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (London, 1923).

[83] PNA 15.

[84] Filial sets are often subdivided into smaller named "age-sets" or "initiation-sets" formed by men who went through initiation at approximately the same time. The broader filial sets are by far the most important

dwelling on the distinctiveness of this method for creating age-classes. Most age-class systems, including that of the linguistically related Maasai, instead use a ladder of chronologically-defined rungs (warriors, rulers, elders, etc.) through which a cohort comprising men of similar chronological age is promoted over time, beginning around age fifteen.[85] This institution enhances military capacity by regimenting military-age males, provides moral or technical instruction for adolescents coming of age, and fosters the *esprit de corps* of social groups through shared experience.[86] Such African age-classes have long drawn the attention of western scholars, and many have seen in these functions of chronologically defined age-classes a likely historical explanation for the emergence of age-based political systems writ large.[87]

However, none of these functional explanations for the emergence of formal age-classes can explain the development of a system such as *asapan*, based on filial status rather than chronological age. Filial sets do not, in practice, generate groups of similarly-aged men. Especially in polygamous societies, one father may produce sons with different wives over a span of decades leading to significant age variation between half-brothers who are nonetheless assigned to the same set based on their shared father. This age/generation "mismatch" compounds over time, when the grown sons have their own children, also at different ages. To

organizational category in *asapan*, and the focus of most of the present analysis. On average, a single filial set can have four or five subsets.

[85] P. Spencer, *Youth and Experiences of Ageing among the Maa* (Berlin, 2014), 22-42; J. Berntsen, "Maasai Age-Sets and Prophetic Leadership: 1850-1910," *Africa*, 49, 2 (1979), 134-146.

[86] Lamphear, 1998.

[87] For classic analyses, see: B. Bernardi, *Age class systems: Social institutions and polities based on age* (Cambridge, 1985); S. N. Eisenstadt "African Age Groups: A Comparative Study," *Africa*, 24, 2 (1954), 100-113; F. Stewart, *Fundamentals of Age-Group Systems* (New York, 1977). Paul Spencer focuses on the military aspect, see P. Spencer, "Age Systems and Modes of Predatory Expansion" in E. Kurimoto & S. Simonse (eds.), *Conflict, Age & Power in North East Africa* (Athens, OH, 1998), 171-172.

write a satisfactory history of *asapan*, it is necessary to account for the theoretical challenge

raised by what I call the "filial principle." Any narration of *asapan*'s origins that makes

explanatory use of the functional value of creating same-aged groups for use in warfare or other

domains would be flawed because it failed to account for the filial principle. A properly

contextualized explanation of *asapan* must instead ask how it connected to wider themes –

fathers' anxieties about their mobile herding sons, spatial challenges to creating usable political

communities, and the ever-present fear of drought – that proved most important for PNA-

speakers in the 900-1250 period.

The construction of formal political classes based on membership in a generation was

accomplished through the *asapan system (*asapan*) that emerged during the PNA period. The

word *asapan derives from same root as the Proto Ateker noun *-sap-at "young man (in his

twenties, roughly)," that being the Proto Tung'a verb *-sap- "to grow, to sprout."[88] To describe a

generic age-class, PNA-speakers innovated the term *-nyam-et, literally "those who ate

together," likely echoing meat-feasting during initiation.[89] Every PNA age-class also bore its

own special name. The only such name that can be definitively reconstructed to PNA is Ngimor,

or "Mountains" (discussed above) but a great many others are named for plains-dwelling large

fauna, lending support to the postulated mountain/plain dichotomy marking age categories.[90]

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[88] PNA 2. I am less than fully confident in this Tung'a reconstruction because it is only based on one Maasai reflex. However, given the scant linguistic data available for other Tung'a languages, it is certainly possible the reflex could be found in Lotuxo or Ongamo with further research. Phonologically, the word-initial /s/ is a marker of a Proto-Tung'a era innovation, which further supports my tentative reconstruction. A second possibility is that the word is directly borrowed from the Ik (Rub) word *tasapet* "age initiation," but I think it is far more likely that borrowing went the other direction (see Chapter 5). A third possibility is borrowing from Southern Nilotic, which has the reflex *isap* "to grow" in Kalenjin, but this also strikes me as more likely a borrowing from Maa.

[89] PNA 1.

[90] The name "Mountains" appears as one of the major filial set names in every Northern Ateker society.

According to all ethnographic sources, there were at any given time two age-classes – and only two age-classes – in existence: the "fathers" who ruled in the sacred grove, or *ki-rik-et, and the "sons" who were to obey. Because *asapan* was a response to a shift in the mobility of cattle as a means to assert elder men's control over herds, age-classes were constituted exclusively by male members of PNA society.

A critical aspect of the claims of political authority made by Northern Ateker elder men today is that, through their initiation into *asapan* and the subsequent advancement of their age-class to senior status, they gain a privileged position to beseech the deity *akuj* for blessings or curses. Numerous ethnographers describe how both the desire for effective prayers of rain and fecundity and fear of elder men's curses incentivize Northern Ateker publics to endorse the power of elders as channels of *akuj* in ritual settings.[91] Group prayers led by elders (*akigat*) occur in the same spaces (*akiriket*) and at the same time as worldly political activities such as resolving judicial disputes or planning military adventures. Both are led by *asapan* elders. Thus, from the outset ritual authority was a conduit for political authority. In effect, through their office as elders – access to which was mediated by *asapan* initiation – senior generations of men have collectively drawn upon the power of *akuj* to assert a right to rule the political community.

But elders were not elders because they were old in a physical sense (though they usually were), but because they were members of a senior age-class initiated through *asapan*. There is thus a semantic distinction to be made between merely physical "old age" and the social status of "elderhood." In fact, such a distinction can be dated to between the tenth and thirteenth centuries. PNA-speakers innovated a male-gendered noun, *e-ka-suk-out, to describe this "elder man with

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[91] Dyson-Hudson, 1966; Knighton, 2005.

social seniority," while still retaining the old Tung'a word *a/e-mojong for "old woman or man."[92] A female-gendered noun for elder woman, *akimat, was retained from Proto Ateker, and derived from a recognition of elder women's rights over cereal crops (Chapter 3). The etymology of the title *e-ka-suk-out is unclear. It may derive from the root *-suk- "to bend," with a social elder being literally "one who is bent over," This etymology does not suggest any lofty notions about the "wisdom," "experience," or "power" of elderhood, perhaps indicating that it was not the personal character of elders *per se*, but their mere physical being, that PNA-speakers found compelling. Indeed, it is common today for community members to carry an elder with dementia or physical disabilities to an *akiriket* meeting.[93] The significance of his presence is not based on anything in particular he says or does (he may even be ridiculed for senility in daily life), but in his capacity by merely being present in a sacred space to maximize the effectiveness of group prayers beseeching *akuj* for rain, fecundity, or other blessings.

The fact that *e-ka-suk-out appears to have only existed as a masculine noun likely reflects an expectation of political pre-eminence held by men, at least within the confines of the *akiriket*. Outside the *akiriket*, however, PNA women found other avenues to exert power. Most importantly, they likely utilized the well-recognized power of singing in unison to literally make their voices heard by leading men. Toposa foundational traditions, for example, recall how young women attached to a temporary herding camp convinced its leaders to build their permanent homes by singing together

The cows are saying "let us be taken to the settlement"
The goats are saying "let us be taken to the settlement"

[92] PNA 7; Tung'a 21.

[93] A poignant illustration is found in Thomas 1965, 55-62.

The brides are saying "let us be taken to the settlement"[94]

On a more recent occasion, the linguist M. Schroeder recounts how Toposa women upset about a peace settlement signed with the British colonial government stirred community resentment by singing together "I accuse (the generation set) which has brought the government."[95] Such politically organized women's singing became formalized through initiation groups called *akiwor* in Karamoja by no later than c. 1800 (see Chapter 5), but the practice likely stretches much farther into the past. These singing groups notwithstanding, however, the political power of elders in the *asapan* system likely did rob women of opportunities to exercise formal authority.

In part, this was because *asapan* minimized the political role of clans. The business of clans (*atekerin* in Teso, and *ngimacarin* in Northern Ateker) across Ateker-speaking cultures is largely governed by women (see Chapters 3, 5 and 6 for a more detailed discussed of clans). Women are considered authorities on which animals are taboo to eat, for example, and elder women administer the process, *-nyonyo, through which new Ateker brides are fully admitted to their husbands' families.[96] In Proto Teso society, and likely during the Proto Ateker period described in Chapter 3, relationships between clans mediated through marriage and the exchange of bride-wealth were a crucial fulcrum of everyday politics. Coordination between clans was essential for resolving land disputes, punishing crimes, and mounting military operations. The Teso *etem*, or "neighborhood association" system which evolved from an earlier Proto Ateker political tradition was explicitly understood as a means for representing and balancing competing

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[94] M. Schröder, *Toposa Traditional Texts* (Unpublished Manuscript, 2008), 23.

[95] M. Schröder, 2008, 27.

[96] Ateker 116.

clan interests (Chapter 6). As administrators of the rituals which established inter-clan

relationships, women had a prominent structural position at the center of political questions.

However, *asapan* subordinated clan affiliation as a primary political category, because political

decisions were made within the *akiriket* (Chapter 5). An institution created by men likely also

subordinated the practical political agency of women. Therefore, the same integrative function of

asapan that created political identities cutting across clan affiliation also undermined the

structural political power of PNA-speaking women.

Although *asapan* initiation was surely an important personal event for a PNA-speaking

man and his family, the assignment of sets based on filiation instead of biological age indicates

that the core concern of initiation was not to prepare youth for adulthood, as was the case in

other parts of East Africa.[97] Indeed, *asapan* stands out among other age-class systems in East

Africa for the absence of any physical tests, periods of instruction, or coming-of-age feats

performed by initiates. Nor could an institution that considers brothers born decades apart to be

coevals be plausibly established as a means of regimenting young men of military age.[98] The

raison d'être of *asapan* was, first and foremost, the buttressing of elder men's authority. It was

likely acquiesced to because of the benefits it promised to society as a whole. *Asapan* enhanced

access to supernatural blessings, disciplined youthful herders within a hierarchical system, and

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[97] For example, the Tiriki of Kenya or Nuer of South Sudan. See W. Sangree, "Role Flexibility and Status Continuity: Tiriki (Kenya) Age Groups Today," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology*, 1 (1986), 117-138; Evans-Pritchard 1936, 234.

[98] Contrary cases are the Maasai and Zulu systems. See R. Larick, "Spears, Style, and Time among Maa-Speaking Pastoralists," *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology*, 4 (1985), 206-220; M. Deflem, "Warfare, Political Leadership, and State Formation: The Case of the Zulu Kingdom, 1808-1879," *Ethnology*, 38, 4 (1999), 377.

integrated disparate clans through a single political rubric. But it did not take boys and mold them into adult men.

These principles were set in motion during the group prayers (*akigat*), led by elder men, that accompanied rites of initiation. These prayers make little reference to the actual initiates, beyond noting their physical presence. Instead, they emphasize the public healing which initiation prayers bring about, while also asserting the authority of elders and *akuj*. Consider, for example, the following excerpt from a call-and-response prayer during a 1955 Karimojong initiation recorded by Dyson-Hudson, when elders from the Mountains set were initiating junior men from the Gazelles set:

The Gazelles. I say the Gazelles. There are Gazelles
There are!
These people, the Gazelles which are here, they have grown up
They have become big!
The Mountains also. There are Mountains
There are!
There are!
There are!
The Karimojong also, they are!
They are!
There are Karimojong.
There are!
Cattle as well. The cattle of the Mountains. They are.
They are!
The cattle, the cattle of the Mountains, they become fat.
They are fat!
They become fat. Do they not become fat?
They are fat!
The land. This land here. Does it not become good?
It is good!
…
There is well-being in our country, is there not?
There is!
It is here.

It is!
Yes. Evil is going away.
It has gone!
…
Akuj has heard.
He has heard!
He has heard.
He has heard!
The sky, the cloud-spotted sky here, it has heard!
It has heard![99]

Aside from an acknowledgement that the junior Gazelles had grown old enough to initiate, almost nothing is said about them. The cattle – who everyone is explicitly reminded belong to the Mountain set, or the "fathers" – are celebrated for becoming fat. Through the ceremony, the land will become good, and evil will be banished, legitimizing the senior generation's benevolent authority. The actor who accomplishes these blessings is *akuj*, of course, but also the sky in which *akuj* dwells. In all this prayer of initiation, therefore, the focus is on how the deity, through the sky, will hear the prayers of the Mountains set and bring health to the land, drive away evil from the community, and make the cattle of the Mountains fat. The Gazelle initiates themselves merit little mention, and are not acclaimed for accomplishing anything. Of course, we have no audio recordings from the twelfth century to compare this prayer to, but it and the many others like it across the Northern Ateker world nonetheless encapsulate something of the public nature of *asapan* which in all likelihood has a deep history.

Membership in age-classes brought potentially dangerous young men into a cooperative structure, admonishing them to uphold their responsibilities to the broader community. The public events surrounding *asapan* initiation provided elders with an opportunity to assert their

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[99] Dyson-Hudson 1966, 165-167.

authority, channeled the intrinsic spiritual power of gathered multitudes to beseech *akuj* for

blessings, and brought members of dispersed settlements together to discuss more earthly matters

over a convivial feast. Finally, *asapan* reminded the sons who tended livestock far away that

their herds were by right the property of their fathers. This last factor helps explain the somewhat

cumbersome filial principle. If *asapan* had grown out of concern for assuring the orderly

transformation of children into adults, one would expect initiations to be scheduled according to

chronological age. However, *asapan* was at its core a disciplining practice concerned with

control over herds.[100] In Ateker family life herds were "owned" by fathers and envied by sons;

asapan age-classes were structured so as to formalize this hierarchy.[101]

But what was the perceived value of the initiation itself, which as noted above paid

virtually no practical attention to developing the initiates' skills, knowledge, or fortitude?

Anthropologist Victor Turner's classic work on age initiations elsewhere in Africa can be helpful

in more precisely framing the question of what work the actual rite of *asapan* initiation does.[102]

Turner argues that most African age-initiations generate potentially dangerous liminal spaces by

reifying the transitional line between that which is for children and that which is for adults; the

line itself is dangerous because it is not fully one thing nor the other, and inherently challenges

basic classifications of social order. This liminal space is powerful and transformative, capable

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[100] Lamphear records a useful quotation from a Jie informant on this exact point: "*Asapan* ensures that young men will respect elders and obey them. Without *asapan*, young men would not always obey should their elders order them to do something, or to fetch something, or to slaughter oxen so that the elders may eat. Often, young men are not obedient nor are they respectful. That is the way with young men. *Asapan* ensures they will obey." Lamphear 1972, 289.

[101] "Owned" must be in scare quotes here because Ateker wives, mothers, and young children possess certain inalienable rights to use animals "owned" by family patriarchs.

[102] V. Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, 1967), 98.

of fundamentally changing initiates' identities if properly harnessed. Through a carefully

controlled initiation process (often months-long in the cases informing Turner's work), initiates

receive secret knowledge and pass various tests in order to successfully make the transition from

one classification to another. The symbology and ritual of the liminal transition mark the initiate

as irrevocably different from a child: cutting genitalia, teaching secret knowledge, or physically

relocating initiates to live in different homes are all ways that age-class societies may position

initiates as fully adult.[103] Figuratively, the ceremony kills a child to make an adult.[104]

On their face, the practices discussed by Turner bear little similarity to *asapan* initiations

that occur across the Northern Ateker world. *Asapan* is neither secretive nor lengthy, requires

little effort on the part of initiates, and does not permanently alter the bodies or daily routine of

initiates (except for authorizing them to wear a certain style of headdress).[105] Although the

details vary between communities, certain steps of *asapan* initiation are shared by all Northern

Ateker polities.[106] During an *asapan* initiation, the entire community of men and women work

together to usher initiates through a very public liminal space in the short amount of time

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[103] This was common in many age-grading systems of eastern Africa. Examples are offered in J. de Wolf, "Circumcision and Initiation in Wester Kenya and Eastern Uganda: Historical Reconstructions and Ethnographic Evidence," *Anthropos*, 78, 3/4 (1983), 269-410.

[104] The transformation of the child into the adult is a central component for all the best ethnographies of initiation. The first sentence in Corinne Kratz's seminal *Affecting Performance: Meaning, Movement, and Experience in Okiet Women's Initiation* (Washington, DC, 1994), for example, is "This book explores how Okiek children in Kenya are made into adults through initiation..." By highlighting the disconnect between chronological age and *asapan* initiation to suggest that such a transformation was not central to initiation, this chapter represents a theoretical departure from other work in the field.

[105] The verb for decorating a headdress with feathers, *-wal, can be reconstructed to the PNA period. PNA 40.

[106] The below summary is drawn from a combination of my own field work among the Dodos, Karimojong, Turkana, and Jie, as well as numerous ethnographic publications listed above. Especially informative interviews were: TU, 23 October 2017, Nariokotome; KA, 22 July 2017, Lokelala; KA, 23 July 2017, Naciele; JI, 19 August 2017, Lokatap; DO, 03 October 2017, Kaabong.

available during one *akiriket* gathering. There is nothing secretive or separate about *asapan* initiation – indeed, secluding the initiation would have defeated its communal purpose. The actual work of initiation is conducted not by initiates themselves (who must sit still and silent), but by elder men who lead prayers, offer blessings, and smear initiates with symbols of fertility such as chyme and water in the *akiriket*, and by elder women who lead initiates throughout re-enactments of childbirth rituals in a nearby house. Young women typically provide food and drink, assist with setup, and participate in prayers. Initiates' extended families typically combine resources to proffer the animal slaughtered during initiation. Although the ceremony's communitarian value is plain enough, it contains no sequence of steps taken by initiates through which they obviously step out of childhood and into adulthood.

If we take seriously Turner's argument that the transformative power of liminal spaces lies at the heart of age initiations, then we must ask what the nature of the liminal space created by *asapan* was and how its power was harnessed and directed in the absence of rites of passage noticeably associated with adulthood. From my own fieldwork and careful reading of ethnographic accounts from numerous Northern Ateker societies, I argue that *asapan* initiation is fundamentally not a "coming of age" ritual focused on the development of initiates but instead a re-enactment of childbirth focused on the health of the entire community. Of course, the community included initiates who become junior officers of the integrative body politic instantiated in the *akiriket*. More importantly, though, initiates are in a sense re-born through the rite of initiation. The power inherent in their liminal journey creates an opportunity – symbolic or not – to condition a re-birth, into greater health, of the entire community.

There are three specific components of *asapan* initiation procedures that closely resemble Ateker childbirth rituals. They are present across the Northern Ateker world. First, initiates are

stripped of all clothing and adornment during the ceremony, given a new name (typically derived

from the type of bull or goat they speared in the *akiriket*) and then re-clothed to symbolize their

fresh introduction to the world. Secondly, during the ceremony a short cord made of woven fiber

or animal intestine mimicking an umbilical cord is affixed to the back of the initiates' head by a

sticky mud, called *emunyen*, and it is only after this falls off that initiation is considered complete

(See Image 4.1). Third, when initiation ceremonies in the *akiriket* are complete, initiates are

brought to the home of an older woman who feeds them milk. Upon taking the milk, initiates are

required to act surprised, as if they have never tasted milk before, and remark something like

"ahh, so this is milk, this is new to me." The obvious symbolism is of the newborn suckling for

the first time.

Image 4.1 – Symbolic umbilical cord affixed to initiate's head during an *asapan* ceremony (photograph by author)

This practice seems to fit into a broader motif of death and re-birth in the ideology and

environment of the Northern Ateker. It is present in the treatment of fire, for example. Following

a catastrophe such as a major drought, or whenever an entire filial set officially retires, the elders

may order a "new fire" to cleanse the land.[107] In this case all fires are extinguished and the ashes

are disposed of, while a designated person lights a new fire, which is then distributed by runners

throughout the territory. Moving farther back in time, there is also a deep-rooted practice in

many societies sharing an Eastern Sudanic civilizational inheritance with the Ateker in which

communities facing collective peril will publicly execute their divine kings, whose power is then

"re-born" in a successor once the society has been cleansed.[108] These practices mirror the natural

environment. Savannah grasses are frequently reduced to almost nothing by dry spells, controlled

burning, and over-grazing, but their hardy and deep root systems produce a nitrogen compound

which can respond almost immediately to even a small amount of rainfall, turning the brown

scrubland green almost overnight.[109] Herds of livestock have the same capacity; is not at all

uncommon for herds to be reduced significantly through drought or disease only to bounce back

rapidly after a few good years. This interpretation may help explain the Karimojong naming of

their keystone *akiriket* and its nearby riverbed as *Apule*, meaning "navel."[110]

Northern Ateker climate history, as reconstructed through analysis of lake sediments, is

consistently inconsistent in the same way. From year to year rainfall is highly variable and

unpredictable, but there is an underlying decadal cycle of consistently distributed better and

worse years.[111] If drought, crop devastation, and stock losses were always a looming threat, so

too was prosperity just around the corner – only one year of decent rainfall, or one cycle of death

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[107] Lamphear, 1976; LB, Kobulin, 30 September 2017; TO, Kaabong, 06 November 2017.

[108] Simonse, 2017; L. Bender, *The Nilo-Saharan Languages: A Comparative Essay* (Munich, 1997).

[109] D. Pratt & M. Gwynne, *Rangeland Management and Ecology in East Africa* (London, 1978), 85-90.

[110] KA, Rupa, 24 July 2017.

[111] Halfmann *et al.*, 1994.

and re-birth, away. It was this life-giving cycle that was perhaps invoked through the symbolism of re-birth that imbues so many aspects of *asapan* initiation. The potentially hot-headed and spatially unmoored youth, in this view, were symbolically re-born as responsible members of the body politic and managers of social reproduction. This theory helps further explain the vexing focus on initiates' filiation rather than their actual biological age – after all, can a young man be "born again" as a son into any generation other than that immediately below his father's?

Until now we have focused on the ritual and social aspects of *asapan*, and especially on the benefits enjoyed by male elders and the broader community, but paid relatively little attention to the initiates themselves. Before leaving the formative period of *asapan* behind and, in the next chapter, examining changes the institution underwent after 1250 CE, it is worth considering why young men bought into a system that kept them in a junior status for the majority of their lifetimes. To ask the question another way – given that youthful herders held *de facto* control over the all-important family herds for most of the year, why did they submit for centuries upon centuries to such a gerontocratic institution?[112] Surely, part of the answer lies in a cultural tradition of respect for the idea of elderhoods, familial ties between fathers and sons, and potential supernatural punishments for violating the will of elders operating with the sanction of *akuj*.[113] But I also want to briefly consider the political economy of gerontocracies, which can help explain of longevity of age systems across East Africa.

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[112] That they would do so is not at all obvious, considering the long history of youthful rebellion against gerontracy in Africa – especially in the colonial and post-colonial eras. See examples from M. Aguilar (ed.), *The Politics of Age and Gerontocracy in Africa* (Trenton, 1998).

[113] Almagor compellingly likens such explanations to Weber's concept of "charismatic leadership," although in this case it is the generation of elders in general – rather than any old individual – which bears charismatic power, see U. Almagor, "Charisma Fatigue in an East African Generation-Set System," *American Ethnologist*, 10, 4 (1983), 635-649.

Asapan kept young men in junior positions, to be sure, but it also provided them with a stable and predictable pathway to political power. Tensions between junior and senior age-classes were probably tempered by the knowledge of junior set members that they would one day be senior, so long as they lived long enough to reach elderhood.[114] Because lineage background or clan affiliation were not relevant to the pursuit of power through age-classes, there was no permanent political underclass of "commoners" as exists in centralized societies with royal families or aristocratic lineages. To paraphrase Marx, few men had "nothing to lose" from overthrowing the system.

In this way, *asapan* would have been partially immunized against social revolution just as any large organization that provides its members with a clear roadmap of opportunities for personal advancement is. The system was not perfectly egalitarian. Women were excluded from power in the *akiriket* and forced to find alternative paths to political influence such as singing groups described above. On the other hand, Northern Ateker women derive a social rank from the age-class of their husbands, so an individual wife probably had a similar set of incentives as her husband to invest in the system. Like-wise men who were too old at the time of their initiation might expect to pass away before their age-class attained a senior rank, but this was more likely the exception than the rule.[115]

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[114] This same careerist logic of promotion from youth to elder is likewise identified as a source of political stability in age-grading villages among the Balanta of West Africa by historian Walter Hawthorne. See W. Hawthorne, *Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves: Transformations along the Guinea-Bissau Coast, 1400-1900* (Portsmouth, NH, 2003), 128.

[115] The fate of "over-aged" men in generational age systems has generated significant debate. Müller makes a strong case, based on computer simulations, that the problem is not as great as once thought. A point overlooked thus far, but which I think is germane to this debate, is that high rates of immigration (discussed in Chapters 2, 5 and 6) would have kept the average age of initiates fairly close to the "optimum" of about 25-35 years, because immigrants were not restricted to join the age-classes immediately junior to their fathers. In addition, there were

There were the poor as well. In the harsh aridity of South Sudan c. 1100, it would have been possible for an unlucky or unskilled family to lose all their livestock and/or crops to drought and slip quickly into destitution. Historian Rhiannon Stephens' recent work shows that multiple words for poverty existed in PNA, and to her lexicon we can add *-ka-yar-an, the PNA innovation for "servant" derived from the Proto Ateker root *-jar- "to be alive, to subsist."[116] As a last resort to avoid death, these *-ka-yar-an may have pawned themselves or perhaps their families as servants to wealthier herders in order to access livestock from which they could sustain life. However, this wealth inequality would have presented little challenge to the overarching *asapan* system. To begin with, the rule of age-class elders is mostly limited to ritual activities, public matters such as warfare, and the arbitration of judicial disputes; except for the levying of cattle fines consumed by the public, *asapan* elders have no authority to redistribute wealth. In addition, wealth is not a prerequisite for membership in a senior age-class, so *asapan* could have created opportunities for the poor to punch above their social weight – at least while seated in the *akiriket*.

Asapan, then, would have been a dubious target for the restless poor, because it was not structurally connected to the distribution of economic resources. This disconnection clearly limited *asapan*'s potential to create a truly egalitarian society. On the other hand, it likely inured the institution from being appropriated by wealth-seekers or becoming a tool for patronage politics used by aspiring "big men." All told, these dynamics likely fostered stability, militating

undoubtedly "correctives" applied in extreme circumstances. See Spencer, 1978; Müller, 1989; and Dyson-Hudson, 1966.

[116] PNA 12; R. Stephens, "'Wealth,' 'Poverty' and the Question of Conceptual History in Oral Contexts: Uganda from c. 1000 CE," in A. Fleish & R. Stephens (eds.), *Doing Conceptual History in Africa* (New York, 2018).

against broad-based social upheaval and inculcating a fairly conservative brand of popular politics – least in regard to *asapan*.

Conclusion

By the end of the PNA era, likely no later than c. 1250, a diverse mix of political and spiritual beliefs, subsistence practices, and social activities were slowly woven together to create the complex tapestry called *asapan*. Although we can never be privy to specific moments of debate and intellectual creativity which led to the invention of this system, this period of intense political creativity left spatial, linguistic, and cultural resonances lasting into the twentieth century. From these resonances we have drawn a picture of what *asapan* looked like in the twelfth century, and imagined how and why it gained prominence among PNA-speakers. By doing so, we reconstructed a model of precolonial African politics that stands as an important alternative to the centralized and lineage-based models which now dominate the relevant historiography.

Asapan responded to a number of imminent social anxieties raised by the shift to transhumant pastoralism during an historically arid period. It formalized emerging social divisions based on age in a way that allowed young people to take the lead in adopting new transhumant subsistence patterns while elders retained a *de jure* control over cattle, the primary means of social reproduction. It also provided a cogent explanation of how the sky, and the high deity who was in and of the sky, could provide rain and fecundity through the elders, further buttressing elders' claims to social and political authority. Finally, in an era when people were more spatially dispersed than ever before and lineage groups continued to cleave apart, *asapan* placed the *akiriket* at the center of political life. *Asapan* thereby provided an avenue for cooperation and coordination between lineages and clans across the larger geographical scale

required by more arid conditions. This unifying capacity of *asapan* would prove instrumental

during the robust expansion of the Northern Ateker world outside of its South Sudanese

homeland once rains returned in the thirteenth century. It is to this expansion which we will now

turn.

Chapter Five

***Asapan* through the Ages: The Expansion of a Decentralized Institution among the Northern Ateker and their Neighbors, c. 1250 CE to 1900**

Around 1250 CE, rain in the East African savanna began to fall on a more regular schedule. The long arid period during which *asapan* had been forged finally came to a close. This environmental transition opened a new chapter in the institutional history of *asapan*. Increased rains enabled the expansion of Proto Northern Ateker (PNA) communities across today's Uganda-Kenya-Ethiopia-South Sudan borderlands. PNA-speakers brought their *asapan* system to these new lands. With this slow spread of speakers, the PNA language community diverged first into two branches – Highland and Lowland – and eventually into the seven distinct dialect groups (Karimojong, Jie, Dodos, Toposa, Nyangatom, Jiye, Turkana) that exist today. *Asapan* was continuously modified by each of these groups. In every case, *asapan* provided the template for constructing cohesive political communities without a central leader or lineage chief. By 1800, each Northern Ateker dialect community maintained its own distinct version of *asapan* shaped by local social and ecological factors.

Asapan's influence did not stop at Ateker linguistic borders. Amidst regional volatility during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, non-Ateker neighbors responded to climatic, social, and political disruptions by domesticating elements of *asapan* in their own societies.[1]

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[1] The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in this part of East Africa were characterized by major social, political, economic, and ecological disruption leading to significant transformation. Among the major drivers of disruption were (in overlapping chronological order): the expansion of Northern Ateker-, Maa-, and Oromo-speaking pastoralists, intensification of the trans-Saharan Nile Valley slave trade, the onset of ivory and slave trades with the Swahili coast, the militant expansion of centralized Bantu states, decadal epidemics and droughts, incursions of early European traders, soldiers, and missionaries, imperial expansion by the Ethiopian state, and finally – and most significantly – the establishment of formal colonial rule by Britain. E. Alpers, *Ivory & Slaves in East Central Africa: Changing Patterns of International Trade to the Later Nineteenth Century* (London, 1975); D. Anderson, "The beginning of time? Evidence for catastrophic drought in Baringo in the early nineteenth century," *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 10, 1 (2016), 45-66; T. Ofcansky, "The 1889-1897 Rinderpest Epidemic and the Rise of

Asapan presented non-Ateker neighbors with a usable model of politics that stood as an alternative to lineage-based centralization. By the dawn of formal colonial rule c. 1900, these numerous versions of *asapan* formed a contiguous arena of shared political practice that rivalled the nearby and more well-studied zone of lacustrine Bantu kingdoms in geographical size. The efflorescence of *asapan* among both Ateker and non-Ateker populations until the eve of colonial rule provides a counterpoint to assumptions about the historical pre-eminence of lineage-based centralized politics in precolonial Africa.

As aridity became less severe, the landscape offered new possibilities. Previously uninhabitable semi-desert plains of today's northwestern Kenya became marginally productive for livestock grazing, while the slightly wetter PNA homeland was able to sustain larger populations. But, as average decadal rainfall increased following c. 1250 CE, the economic and political practices that PNA-speaker communities had adopted in response to dry conditions did not disappear. Transhumant pastoralism and *asapan* had already become cemented in PNA life. Under more favorable climatic conditions, however, they played a different historical role, enabling growth and expansion rather than mere sustainment. Coincidentally, a second accelerating factor entered the picture around the same time. Northern Ateker communities also began to fully adopt a new species of cattle, the small and hardy *Bos indicus* hump-backed zebu, which was better adapted to dry conditions. Hardier cows, a wetter climate, and a political

British and German Colonialism in Eastern and Southern Africa," *Journal of African Studies*, 8, 1 (1981), 31-38; R. Pankhurst & D. Johnson, "The great drought and famine of 1888-1902 in northeast Africa," in D. Johnson & D. Anderson (eds.), *The Ecology of Survival: Case Studies from Northeast African History* (Boulder, 1988); R. Reid, *Frontiers of Violence in North-East Africa: Genealogies of Conflict since c. 1800* (Oxford, 2011), 39-94; R. Reid, *War in Pre-Colonial Eastern Africa: the Patterns & Meanings of State-Level Conflict in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens, OH, 2007); J. Barber, *Imperial Frontier: A study of relations between the British and the pastoral tribes of north east Uganda* (Nairobi, 1968); J. Tosh, *Clan Leaders and Colonial Chiefs in Lango: The Political History of a Stateless Society c. 1800-1939* (Oxford, 1978) & R. Atkinson, *The roots of ethnicity: the origins of the Acholi of Uganda before 1800* (Philadelphia, 1994).

system well-suited for incorporating diverse people and constructing geographically extensive political communities all combined to inaugurate a period of Northern Ateker predominance in the region lasting until the early twentieth century.[2]

This chapter begins by tracing the expansion of Northern Ateker-speakers onto the highlands of northeastern Uganda and across the lowland plains of northwestern Kenya after c. 1250, reconstructing the linguistic divergence of PNA into two sub-groups: Proto Highland NA (HNA) and Proto Lowland NA (LNA) (Map 5.1). It then considers four occasions when later communities made changes to their inherited *asapan* systems in order to incorporate foreign populations, provide avenues to power for women, and contend with variable ecological contexts. In the wake of this migratory period and political creativity, the entirety of nearly 100,000 square kilometers was governed by at least seven distinct Northern Ateker republics. The chapter ends by examining the myriad ways elements of *asapan* were borrowed by non-Ateker neighbors for those neighbors' own reasons. Taken together, these two narratives – Ateker expansion and change; non-Ateker borrowing – offer an untold history of the development of what anthropologists Simon Simonse and Eisei Kurimoto label as one the of five major "arenas" of age-class government in East Africa.[3] It is the story of how a republican institution created by a small pastoral society amidst severe drought was transformed into the

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[2] At the same time, nearby Oromo communities expanded across much of southern Ethiopia through a similar process. They also used an age-class system and had begun herding zebu cattle as well. G. Oba, *Herder Warfare in East Africa: A Social and Spatial History* (Cambridgeshire, 2017); J. Hultin, "Social structure, ideology, and expansion: the case of the Oromo of Ethiopia," *Ethnos*, 40 (1975), 273-284.

[3] E. Kurimoto & S. Simonse (eds.), *Conflict, Age & Power in North East Africa: Age Systems in Transition* (Athens, OH, 1998), 5. Simonse and Kurimoto persuasively argue that, with certain exceptions, East African age-class systems are best seen as belonging one of four or five broad regional "arenas" of age-class types. Within each of the arenas, local systems varied, but basic principles shared in common are easily recognized. Notably, most of these arenas cross linguistic groups, troubling older notions of "tribe" that see political structure, language, and culture as inherently related.

dominant political model used in area of over 100,000 square kilometers spanning four modern nations.

Map 5.1 – Highland Northern Ateker and Lowland Northern Ateker Ranges of Occupation

Rain, Zebu Cows, and Northern Ateker Expansion

Herders in a transhumant pastoral economy produce wealth and sustenance in arid environments by calculating that the increased acreage of fodder achievable through mobility can compensate for a dearth in average grazing resources per unit of land. Increased productivity in such a system, therefore, can be brought about by either an increase in the availability of fodder in grazing lands or greater mobility of herding groups. By the fourteenth century, PNA-speakers

saw both factor endowments rise. Greater average fodder yield was a predictable result of higher average rainfall. To understand the simultaneous increase in mobility it is necessary to discuss one of the most significant changes to East African pastoralism to occur in the past millennium: the introduction of hump-backed zebu cattle.

The zebu cattle type is an exotic cattle species indigenous to South Asia and notable for its large thoracic hump, small stature, and relatively low water requirements. The earliest evidence for knowledge of hump-backed cattle in northeast Africa is a golden figurine unearthed from second-century Axumite Ethiopia.[4] However, this early testament to Afro-Asiatic exchange does not seem to have been accompanied by the introduction of zebu cattle in any quantity to wider East Africa, for the earliest unambiguous archaeological attestation in East Africa is from c. 1500 in Kenya.[5] Yet, zebu-type cattle have been almost exclusively herded by most East African pastoralists at least since Europeans began taking notes in the nineteenth century. Therefore, sometime between the second and sixteenth centuries, zebu cattle must have been introduced to eastern Africa, after which they were likely taken up by herders with alacrity.

When and how did this introduction occur? The most significant event connecting South Asia and the Middle East to eastern Africa during this 1200-year period was the overland expansion of Islam beginning in the seventh century. Scholars in the 1950s linked the spread of Islam with the introduction of zebu cattle.[6] That hypothesis has been reinforced by recent genetic

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[4] F. Marshall, "The origins and spread of domestic animals in East Africa," in R. Blench & K. MacDonald (eds.), *The origins and development of African livestock: Archaeology, genetics, linguistics, and ethnography* (London, 2000), 201.

[5] Ibid., 205.

[6] H. Epstein, "The Zebu Cattle of East Africa," *East African Agricultural Journal*, 21, 2 (1955), 83-95.

studies arguing that zebu cattle reached both northeastern and West Africa – the African Dar al-Islam – shortly before 1000 CE.[7] PNA-speakers had little to no direct contact with early Islamic expansion, so zebu cattle could only have been introduced indirectly after they had crossed the 200-mile distance between the southernmost frontier of the Sudanese region of Islamic influence and the northernmost lands inhabited by PNA-speakers.[8] Following initial introduction, it presumably would have taken some years for this new species to completely replace the older humpless *Bos taurus cf. africana* herds already owned by PNA-speakers. It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that the transition to zebu cattle occurred in perhaps the second half of PNA's existence as a single protolanguage between 1100 and 1250. If so, the thorough replacement of indigenous cattle by zebu cattle in Northern Ateker herds probably roughly coincided with the return of greater rainfall, c. 1250.

Linguistic evidence can be used to confirm and refine oral traditions suggesting that the introduction of zebu cattle was a critical moment in PNA-speakers' history. In the locally famous founding myth "Nayece and her grey bull Engiro" (Chapter 4), it is notable that the lost, wandering bull is named Engiro.[9] The word *engiro* refers to a specific shade of light grey most closely associated with the breed of zebu cattle herded by the Northern Ateker, and not found

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[7] O. Hanotte *et al.*, "Geographic distribution and frequency of a taurine *Bos taurus* and an Indicine *Bos indicus* Y specific allele amongst sub-Saharan African cattle brands," *Molecular Ecology*, 9 (2000), 393.

[8] For a description of this historical setting, see P. M. Holt, "The Nilotic Sudan," in P. M. Holt, A. Lambton, B. Lewis (eds.), *Cambridge History of Islam Vol. V* (Cambridge, 1977), 327-344.

[9] M. Mirzeler, *Remembering Nayeche and the Gray Bull Engiro: African Storytellers of the Karamoja Plateau and the Plains of Turkana* (Toronto, 2014).

among larger indigenous stock.[10] The name's root, *-ro, is a noun for non-farmable grazing land innovated by PNA-speakers between c. 900 and 1250 CE (Chapter 4).[11] The bull named Engiro means literally "he of the people of *(a)ro*," or "he of the people who are in remote grazing lands."[12] Historian John Lamphear's speculation that the legend of Engiro may "reflect the acquisition of the Zebu by the Ateker" fits with this linguistic evidence. [13] The famous bull's name may well refer to the fact that the distinctively grey-colored zebu cattle enabled herders to spend more time exploiting remote grazing lands, or *-ro, because they could move farther from predictable water sources in any given day. Taken with other evidence discussed above, it is likely that the Proto Northern Ateker adopted zebu cattle by the end of the 900-1250 arid period, providing them with a newfound ability to reach farther into marginal grazing lands memorialized in legend.

Increased mobility led to Northern Ateker geographic expansion through a slow process known to scholars of pastoralism as "migratory drift."[14] As herding parties began to cover greater distances, they pushed their frontiers of settlement. Temporary herding camps were trailed by a shift in permanent homesteads towards areas of untapped grazing opportunity. Although there is no reliable means for demographic reconstruction, we can imagine that an

[10] The light grey coat is adaptive and well-balanced for a hot environment with little cloud cover, high solar radiation, and potentially significant temperature shifts during a single day. R. Collier & K. Gebremedhin, "Thermal Biology of Domestic Animals," *Annual Review of Animal BioSciences*, 3 (2015), 513-532.

[11] PNA 31.

[12] Male noun prefix /e-/ + plural personal prefix /-ngi-/ + noun stem /-ro/.

[13] J. Lamphear, "The People of the Grey Bull: The Origin and Expansion of the Turkana," *Journal of African History*, 29, 1 (1988), 32.

[14] For an excellent discussion of "migratory drift" and pastoral use of space, see A. Smith, *Pastoralism in Tropical Africa: Origins and Development Ecology* (Athens, OH, 1992), 1-31.

overall increase in subsistence productivity probably led to an increase in population, providing PNA-speakers with both an incentive to permanently relocate (population pressure) and more people available to move. Simultaneously, the increased mobility afforded to herders by zebu cattle created opportunities to explore new lands farther afield from mountainous homelands, thus expanding the horizons of Northern Ateker geographical knowledge.

Hardier cattle and more rain would almost certainly have produced larger herds, in addition to a greater human population. In a culture requiring bridewealth payment before men could be married and start their own separate families (Chapter 3), abundant cows may have created more opportunities for marriage, and therefore more opportunities to establish new homesteads. The same abundance of cows may also have attenuated concerns of elders about being left without enough cattle for sustenance by mobile youth. Oral traditions of the Northern Ateker are replete with stories of young men arguing with their fathers about the sons' desires to take ownership of part of a family herd in order to marry (Chapter 4). It is easy to imagine how such a debate might have ended less acrimoniously, in favor of the son, if there were a bigger pie for all parties to take a slice from. If scarcity drove communities before c. 1250 to build institutions and practices to combat social fragmentation, relative abundance by the fourteenth century likely weakened the practical impetus to stay together, further contributing to "migratory drift."

The Northern Ateker territorial expansion that began by the end of the thirteenth century unfolded in two distinct geographical spaces: highlands and lowlands. The highland migrants (HNA) include the linguistic ancestors of today's Jie, Karimojong, and Dodos, who moved up onto the Karamoja Plateau of northeastern Uganda. Lowland migrants (LNA) instead pushed

east and south around the Karamoja Plateau to the Omo River and Lake Turkana. Their linguistic descendants include today's Turkana, Toposa, Nyangatom, and Jiye.

As early HNA-speakers ascended into Uganda's highlands and moved south they found a more hospitable climate capable of supporting significant cereal agriculture. Topographically, this region was much like the homeland they left behind. It was also characterized by sharp changes in elevation, including three mountains nearing or exceeding 10,000 feet above-sea-level: Moroto, Napak, and Kadam. As with the hilly Ateker homeland, the tops of these mountains were also the dominion of Rub-speakers. In other ways the Ugandan highlands were different. Greater overall rainfall levels established a different ecozone with a new range of fodder grasses. Most significant would have been *Cenchrus pennisetiformis*, a type of buffel grass that is a hearty fodder and considered a defining grass species of the Karamoja Plateau's most prevalent ecozone.[15] For *C. pennisetiformis*, HNA-speakers innovated the word *etanoko from an unknown source.[16] More abundant rain would have contributed to more predictable cereal yields. Proto Karimojong-Jie speakers likely returned to the finger millet cultivation of their Proto Ateker ancestors; this certainly was the case for a segment of the Jie population for whom finger millet became a central ritual item (see below). Although archaeological work remains to be done, the grinding stones Lamphear discovered near Koten mountain in northeastern Uganda (which he persuasively argues was an early HNA settlement location) would have been suitable for finger millet production.[17] A potential linguistic trace marking intensified cultivation is the HNA word *atukit, derived from the Proto Ateker *-tuk "to heap

[15] J. Snowden, *The Grass Communities and Mountain Vegetations of Uganda* (London, 1953), 48.

[16] HNA 3.

[17] J. Lamphear, "The Traditional History of the Jie of Uganda" (PhD Dissertation, University of London, 1972), 504

together," which denoted a type of large communal granary positioned close to cereal fields to allow for efficient storage of higher quantity harvests.[18]

Productive cereal fields likely had an anchoring effect on year-round homesteads, making settlements more permanent. The root *-kay(i) "house" in Proto Ateker, inherited from Proto Tung'a *-kaji, produces predictable reflexes in all modern descendants – it is the first word any Northern Ateker-speaker would use to denote his or her house.[19] However, there are clear differences in architectural traditions dating at least to the early twentieth century, which reflect different lifeways. HNA communities in Uganda build permanent houses with stick- or daub-walled houses and thatched roofs similar to those used by Lwo and Bantu speakers in central and southern Uganda. These houses are grouped together in defensible, palisaded compounds requiring significant upfront investments of labor. Such homesteads are difficult to move – usually remaining in place for years at a time. Their use on the Karamoja Plateau is a reflection of the more sedentary lifeways of HNA-speakers. Because houses of such semi-permanent construction were the primary buildings for living, HNA-speakers innovated a new term, *-kodo, to distinguish houses from impermanent thatched "huts."[20]

In contrast, LNA communities in South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Kenya build one type of less permanent house, stitched together from modular parts. These houses are well-suited for semi-nomadic annual subsistence practices.[21] For these houses, LNA speakers innovated the

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[18] HNA 4.

[19] Tung'a 8.

[20] HNA 2.

[21] J. Arensen, *Sticks and Straw: Comparative House Forms in Southern Sudan and Northern Kenya* (Dallas, 1983), 71-74; C. Eastman, "The language of housebuilding among Turkana women," in *Proceedings of the 3rd Nilo-Saharan linguistics colloquium* (Kisumu, Kenya: 1986), 81-96.

term *-keru to describe a small storage space, or "attic," used to store small amounts of grain, honey, or other supplies.[22] LNA-speakers also continued to refine the practice of mobile transhumant pastoralism, further detailing their cattle taxonomy with the new word *epasakan "bullock," and innovating the word *-ku-tam "leather sack for carrying butter."[23] while expanding the orbit of their transhumant routes into the unoccupied near-desert of northwestern Kenya. In the driest areas, this expanded orbit eventually gave way to a purer nomadism. Families began continually shifting their homes on a seasonal basis to follow available fodder grasses through a process they named *-ram-akin.[24] LNA-speakers also innovated new terms for especially shady tree species that could provide resting shade for herders scattered throughout arid plains. For the wide-canopy Sycamore Fig (*Ficus sycomorus*) often found along seasonal riverbeds, they innovated *ecoke, and for the aptly named Shepherd's Tree, they differentiated between a rough- and smooth-leaved species (*Boscia angustifolia* and *Boscia coriacea*), naming them *emejen and *eedung, respectively.[25]

As they expanded into their present-day territories, both the highland and lowland language communities encountered new, non-Northern Ateker populations. Today, evidence that the Northern Ateker incorporated these alien communities can be found in clan names indicating populations of foreign origin.[26] One prominent example is the Siger clan. Lamphear persuasively

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[22] LNA 5.

[23] LNA 9; LNA 6.

[24] LNA 11.

[25] LNA 2; LNA 7; LNA 3.

[26] An analysis of northern Ateker clan geography offered in Appendix V demonstrates that clan names tend to be distributed across Northern Ateker language communities in clusters so that more names are shared within LNA

argues on the basis of oral tradition that the original Siger were a Cushitic-speaking population living on the shores of Lake Turkana at the time of Turkana arrival.[27] He further contends that the Siger were responsible for introducing camels to the Northern Ateker – a hypothesis Christopher Ehret supported by demonstrating that the root *-kal "camel" was indeed borrowed from Lowland East Cushitic speakers.[28] To explain the integration of the Siger into the Northern Ateker clan system, Lamphear argues that the shore-dwelling Siger became overwhelmed socially, economically, or militarily by the newcomer Turkana. In response, a significant part of the population decided (the extent of voluntary choice is unclear) to "become" Turkana by joining *asapan* and establishing their own clan called Ngisiger, attaching a Northern Ateker prefix to the historically Cushitic ethnonym. Over time, Siger descendants became enmeshed in the high mobility of Northern Ateker life. Some travelled north and west, eventually forming the Ngisiger clans found today among the Toposa, Nyangatom, and Karimojong.

A second example of alien immigration is that of the Woropom group – perhaps Cushitic speakers as well, or maybe from Ehret's Southern Nilotic "Kenya-Kadam" – who lived on the Karamoja Plateau before Northern Ateker migration.[29] Nineteenth-century reports of oral traditions recounted by British military officers claim this group fell victim to predatory

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and HNA communities than between the two larger groups. That this distribution supports the historical classification of LNA and HNA into distinct communities proposed in this Chapter and Chapter 2.

[27] Lamphear, 1988; See also B. Lynch & L. Robbins, "Cushitic and Nilotic Prehistory: New Archaeological Evidence from North-West Kenya," *Journal of African History*, 20, 3 (1979), 319-328.

[28] C. Ehret, "Language Contacts in Nilo-Saharan Prehistory," in H. Andersen (ed.), *Language Contacts in Prehistory: Studies in Stratigraphy* (Philadelphia, 2001), 146.

[29] Ehret 1970, 70-73.

Karimojong raids at some point in the past.[30] Certainly the Northern Ateker retained their

sophisticated offensive military capacity during migration (Chapter 3), and there is no reason to

think that the early Karimojong or any other Northern Ateker group would have hesitated too

long in using force to incorporate alien populations and their grazing or farming lands. Like the

Siger, the Woropom were incorporated into the Northern Ateker political community as the

Ngiworopom clan, and today their initiated men have full rights in the *akiriket*.[31] Finally, some

populations incorporated by the Northern Ateker were Southern Ateker Proto Teso speakers. The

Karimojong, Jie, Turkana, Nyangatom, and Toposa all have clans named Ngikatapa, or "bread

people," which recalls their epithet for Proto Ateker speakers who moved south to pursue finger

millet cultivation after c. 900 CE. Among the Jie and Turkana are also found a group called

Ngiteso, and Jie clan members recount traditions connecting themselves to Teso (Appendix V).

The above are only a few of many examples of alien populations being incorporated into

Northern Ateker political communities – and as seen in the following chapter, this theme was

also important in Teso history. Although the reasons any individual or group may have had for

joining the Northern Ateker likely ran the full gamut of possible motivations, the *asapan* system

streamlined the integration of immigrants. Lineages and ancestors are famously of little

importance in Northern Ateker culture compared to most other African settings.[32] It is rare for a

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[30] C. A. Turpin, "The Occupation of the Turkwel River Area by the Karamojong Tribe," *Uganda Journal*, 12 (1948), 162.

[31] Elements of this group were also incorporated into the Proto Teso language community. See J. B. Webster, D. H. Okalany, C. P. Emudong & N. Egimu-Okuda, *The Iteso During the Asonya* (Nairobi, 1973), 28-40.

[32] Gulliver 1955, 3. As an aside, this is not the case for all Eastern Nilotic communities. When, after ten months of working exclusively among Ateker-speakers, I travelled to Koboko in northwestern Uganda to collect linguistic attestations in the Kakwa language, I was immediately struck by how informants would often introduce themselves by reciting a long and venerable list of ancestors traced to the putative founder of a clan. Although this practice is common in much of eastern Africa, it is in my experience almost entirely absent among the Ateker.

Karimojong or Turkana person to identify his or her great-grandparent or sometimes even grandparent by name. Clans are almost never named after founder figures nor are the personal qualities of their mythical founders considered significant for explaining their history or character. Political community is not a matter of tracing descent through a reproductive lineage.

For this reason, there was and is a low theoretical barrier to entry for immigrants wishing to join a Northern Ateker political community. Lamphear recalls that, upon his initiation into Jie *asapan*, his son was automatically assigned to the next junior set and told that he would forever be considered "thoroughly Jie."[33] In my own fieldwork, I met a man in Karamoja who had been abducted in warfare from the Teso, but was raised by a Karimojong father, initiated into *asapan*, and became a respected *akiriket* elder.[34] I also met a man living in Dodos whose father had immigrated from Karamoja as part of a larger unrelated group in search of better grazing lands. Together his father and the others had become members in full standing of the local *akiriket* after collectively adopting a new clan name and cattle brand.[35] Although descent is sometimes used metaphorically to explain clans, even in everyday life this is widely recognized by the Northern Ateker as a useful fiction. For men, "becoming" a Karimojong, a Jie, a Dodos, or otherwise is a function of being accepted into an *akiriket* through the rite of *asapan*. For women, it is either a function of initiation into a Northern Ateker clan through marriage or adoption, or the accession of a husband to a local *akiriket*. Determination of bloodlines plays no meaningful role. If one assumes this was true in the past (as indeed, the evidence from the Siger, Woropom, and others

[33] Lamphear 1976, 28, fn 17.

[34] KA, 01 August 2017, Naro.

[35] DO, 28 October 2017, Loyoro.

strongly supports), then it is easy to see how *asapan* would have streamlined the process by which large groups could "become" Northern Ateker.

The Eastern Nilotic language family – and especially its Ateker subgroup – is among the most genetically diverse language populations of East Africa, pointing towards a great number of intimate relationships between Ateker-speakers and non-Ateker peoples.[36] The combination of an ethic of assimilation with a steady means to effectuate incorporation helps explain the rapid expansion of Northern Ateker culture over a large area in the middle of the last millennium. Expansion was accomplished as much by assimilation and incorporation of outsiders as by the conquest, expulsion, or annihilation of indigenous peoples. This general process is certainly not unique for Africa (or anywhere), but in the case of the Northern Ateker, it is safe to pinpoint *asapan* as a key factor enabling the smooth integration of outsiders.

Asapan Through the Ages

The divergence of PNA into a highland and lowland group, was followed by further splits of these two language communities into the seven distinct political communities that exist today. Each has modified the institution of *asapan* for different purposes. Within each community, *asapan* practices are fairly uniform (with the exception of Dodos, discussed below). For example, when I visited *ngakiriketa* ninety kilometers away from each other in different districts of Karamoja, their spatial layout and ritual procedures were virtually identical despite the lack of any central standard-keeping authority. But between the seven different political communities

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[36] Chapter 2, and V. Gomes *et al.*, "Mosaic maternal ancestry in the Great Lakes region of East Africa," in *Human Genetics*, 134 (2015), 1013-1027.

there is a diversity in *asapan* practice, including differing lists of filial set names and variant initiation procedures. In each case, this institutional diversity is a result of a specific history.

An unfortunate and paradoxical limitation of the comparative method of historical linguistics is that the most recent histories – those pertaining to single language communities – can easily fall out of focus because comparative analysis becomes impossible. Happily, these later periods also take historians within range of oral traditions, helping to close the chronological gap between the period accessible through comparative linguistics and the documented twentieth century. Judicious use of ethnographic information from the past century can help further contextualize historical changes that occurred over the past two hundred years. Still, the paucity of available sources precludes any comprehensive accounting of eighteenth and nineteenth-century political histories. I will instead use this section to illuminate four instances that can be gleaned from evidence where *asapan* served as a common structure through which people navigated to pursue individual and collective goals.[37] *Asapan* was changed through its use – it is an institution continuously reproduced and modified by creative tension – but it remained as the shared ground on which political contests took place.

This section begins by illuminating Jie integration of alien communities by examining the unique physical layout of the Jie *akiriket* and reading changes made to the Jie *asapan* structure in the context of Jie foreign relations. Secondly, I examine the growth of a parallel women's initiation system in Karimojong society in order to reveal strategies by which women pushed against the male control of *akiriket* politics. The third and fourth cases analyze how ecological

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[37] The closest publication approaching this sort of comprehensive catalogue of *asapan* practice would be H. Müller-Dempf, "Ateker Generation-Set Systems Revisited – Field Facts and Findings, and a Systemisation," *Max Plank Institute for Social Anthropology Working Papers*, 183 (2017).

factors shaped later versions of *asapan* by examining the two ecological extremes of the

Northern Ateker world: the comparatively wet and cool country of the Dodos and the extremely

hot and dry land of the Turkana. It is in part because of their positions on these ecological

extremes that the Dodos and Turkana today maintain *asapan* systems which deviate the most

from the Northern Ateker prototype. Probing the histories of each variation accentuates the

elements of *asapan* historical actors either found most compelling or were conversely willing to

discard.

Asapan in the Highlands – Jie, Karimojong, and Dodos

We begin in the highlands. As discussed in Chapter 2, the likeliest homeland for the main

body of the HNA language community was in northeastern Uganda. Specifically, we can place

the Proto HNA language community between the Koten-Magos hills surveyed by Lamphear and

the Apule River's *akiriket,* which today's Karimojong consider to be their ancestral point of

dispersal. Glottochronological estimates suggest that the Jie and Karimojong branches of the

HNA family diverged in the decades after 1600 (Chapter 2). Lamphear's generational reckoning,

modified by Spencer's refined calculations likewise place the divergence of Proto HNA

sometime in the early seventeenth century.[38] The last filial-set name the two groups shared in

common was Ngipalajam. Since the Ngipalajam set shared by the Jie and Karimojong, the two

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[38] In other words, these paragraphs assume the basic validity of Lamphear's method for chronological reckoning (counting back through named generations – see Chapter 2), but modifies Lamphear's dates in light of Spencer's calculation that filial sets last on average fifty-seven years, as opposed to Lamphear's forty. The effect is to push the presumed date of HNA divergence, during the time of the Ngipalajam generation, from the early 1700s to the early-mid 1600s. See Chapter 2, as well as Lamphear 1976, 36 & Spencer 1978, 146.

groups have not held another name in common, according to all lists collected by observers during the twentieth century.[39]

Oral traditions collected by Lamphear and Nagashima from the Jie and Karimojong agree that HNA divergence was driven by disputes regarding the ownership and grazing of cattle, amplified by "lack of water," and that the Koten-Magos-Apule region was the original homeland of both.[40] Paleoclimatological data and comparative analysis of oral traditions conducted by Webster and others suggest that this same period coincided with the worst regional drought since 1250 – called the Nyarubanga Famine in Lwo oral traditions – perhaps providing an environmental cause for the tensions leading to divergence.[41] Based on the current location of both language communities, as well as the concentration of Karimojong *ngakiriketa* around Mount Moroto and Jie *ngakiriketa* around the modern town of Kotido, it is reasonable to assert that this linguistic divergence occurred as a result of pre-Jie communities moving generally northwest, while the pre-Karimojong moved generally south.[42] Both groups incorporated new immigrants into their socio-political structures, although evidence of incorporation of both

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[39] Lamphear 1976, 36 & 110; D. Clark, "Karimojong Age-groups and Clans," *Uganda Journal*, 15 (1950), 217.

[40] Lamphear 1972, 251; Consider the following tradition recorded by Nagashima from a Karimojong informant: "A single tribe… above the (Rift Valley Escarpment). As today, in the dry season the bulk of the herds and flocks were kept in camps away from the settled homesteads, and were controlled by the younger men. One year, at the beginning of the wet season, the young men refused to return to or near the homesteads when ordered by the elder men… The younger men remained completely obdurate so the tribe split into two, the Karamojong proper, and the seceding people who became known as the Jie. The Jie lived in the vicinity of Koten Hill (to the north) and the Karamojong lived near the Mogos Hills (to the south). From that time on, the two tribes were sworn enemies." N. Nagashima, "Historical Relations among the Central Nilo-Hamites: An Analysis of Historical Traditions," *University of East Africa Social Science Council Conference: Sociology Papers,* 2, (1968) 360.

[41] D. Verschuren et al., "Rainfall and drought in equatorial east Africa during the past 1,100 years," *Nature*, 403 (2000), 410-414; J. B. Webster (ed.), *Chronology, Migration and Drought in Interlacustrine Africa* (Halifax, NS, 1979).

[42] Dyson-Hudson 1966, 143.

Southern Lwo and pre-Teso populations is more pronounced among today's Jie than today's

Karimojong.

The Jie are divided today into two major territorial divisions: Lokorwakol and Rengen.

There is a particularly strong historical connection between the Rengen division and pre-Teso

populations who preceded the Northern Ateker incursion into northeastern Uganda c. 1000 CE.

Finger millet was the central staple for pre-Teso emigrants leaving the Proto Ateker homeland

and the crop holds a central place in Teso ritual life (Chapter 6). Responses to surveys conducted

during my fieldwork among the Jie show that fully 77% (14/18) of members of Rengen clans

surveyed placed finger millet at the center of birth rituals, compared to only 15% (6/41) of the

Lokorwakol *ngimacarin*. These findings support Lamphear's contention, based on oral

traditions, that the Rengen division was more strongly influenced by the pre-Teso people.[43] The

most likely source of this influence would have been pre-Teso migrants who, fleeing arid

conditions in South Sudan after c. 900 CE, did not reach the Proto Teso homeland of Usuku and

instead settled *en route* in small communities throughout the grasslands of northeastern

Uganda.[44] *Asapan* served an integrative function as the early Jie built a polity that included pre-

Teso populations.

Jie *ngakiriketa* stand out among all other Northern Ateker *ngakiriketa* because their form

mixes the "standard" Proto Northern Ateker layout with sacred grove types used in Teso (Figures

[43] The results of a survey of different rituals by *emacar* I conducted in Jie, for example, indicate that 77% of Rengen division *ngimacarin* use finger millet as the sole foodstuff which women eat in the period after giving birth and before the umbilical cord falls off and the new baby is introduced to the wider community. Among Lokorwakol division *ngimacarin*, 12% use finger millet as the sole foodstuff, and only 21% use finger millet in any capacity (See Appendix V).

[44] Lamphear 1972, 220-222 argues that elements of the Poet and Loser Jie clans have an especially clear pre-Teso origin.

5.1 & 5.2). Although the actual roasting and eating of sacrificed meat is conducted in a semi-circle reminiscent of the PNA style, the sacrificial bulls are slaughtered and public prayers conducted while *akiriket* attendees sit in smaller circles segregated by clan. These smaller circles are called *auuma* among the Jie, the same as they are in Teso meeting places, and the Jie are the only Northern Ateker population to have this word. Another noteworthy similarity between Jie and Teso grove meeting practices is that elder representatives from different clans roast and eat the bitter gall bladder of slaughtered oxen. All other Northern Ateker populations discard the gall bladder as waste, whereas both the Jie and Teso elders eat it with the explicit justification of "sharing the bitterness" between clans.[45] All these practices, plus the fact that both social age and clan identity (as opposed to just social age for other Northern Ateker) determine seating order in the Jie roasting semi-circle suggest that the evolution of the Jie *akiriket* was uniquely influenced by contact with pre-Teso groups. The most likely historical explanation for this confluence of ritual and language between the Jie and the rest of the Teso language community is that Jie *akiriket* practices gained their hybrid character because of efforts by the pre-Jie Northern Ateker to incorporate pre-Teso populations into their political community. Such integration was accomplished, in part, by adopting the latter's use of sacred groves in order to group clans together and "share the bitterness" of the gall bladder. These practices publicly embodied the integration of distinct clans. The Jie therefore incorporated Teso practices into their *asapan* ritual and spatial configuration were tailored for creating a shared community, indicating how the Jie may have modified *asapan* to integrate pre-Teso communities.

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[45] TE, Opuyonga, 19 January 2017; JI, Lokitelebu, 11 August 2017; KA, Lobulepede, 27 August 2017; TE, Orungo, 07 November 2017.
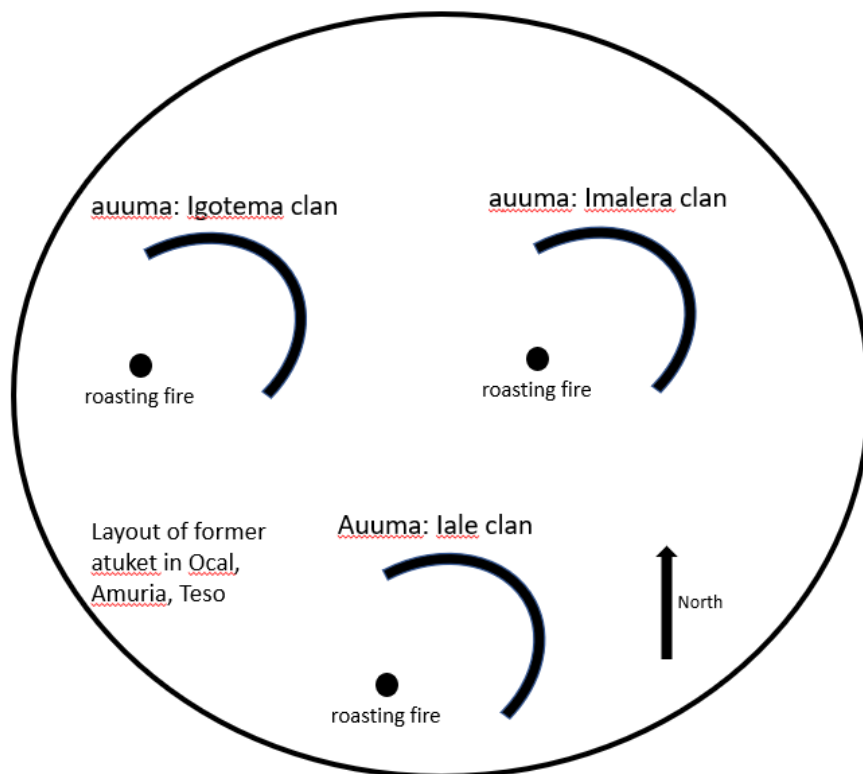
Figure 5.1 - *Atuket* layout in Teso (no longer extant; described from memory at the original

site)[46]
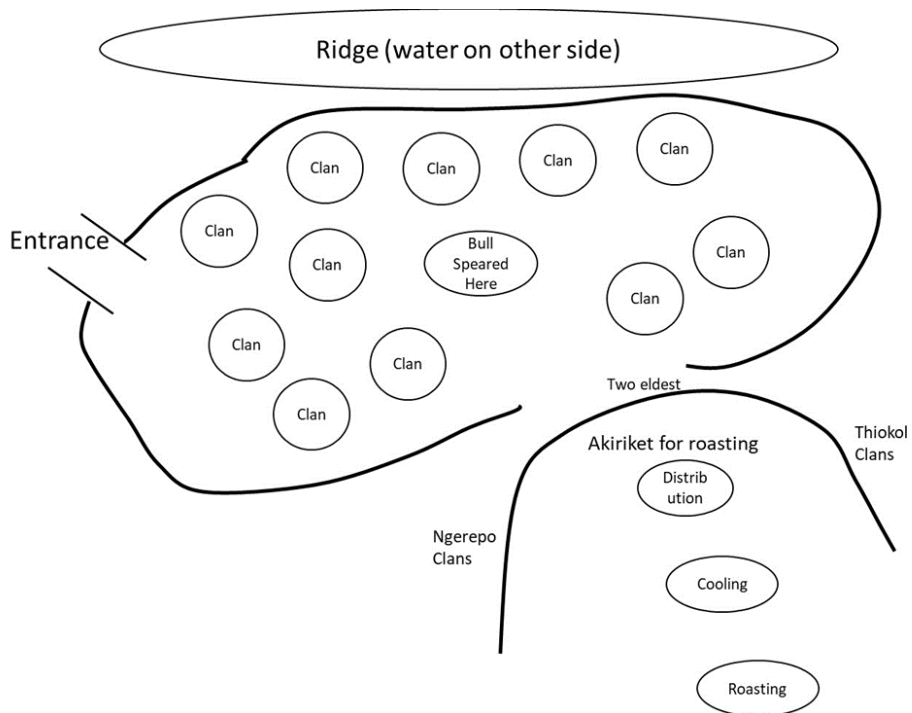
Figure 5.2 - Jie *akiriket* layout, featuring mixture of forms between traditional Northern Ateker semi-circle and Teso "clan circles"[47]

The Jie also incorporated Lwo communities into their emerging polity. As Jie populations expanded west from Koten-Magos-Apule towards today's Kotido, they came into increasing contact with various Lwo-speaking groups in the region. Economically, this movement seems to have coincided with a degree of intensification in cereal agriculture, especially along the Longiro river. Oral traditions collected by Lamphear suggest that higher cereal yields were made possible by the incorporation of knowledgeable Lwo and pre-Teso farmers, who probably contributed their expertise during the construction of an elaborate well and irrigation complex by Jie-speakers.[48] As Jie pioneers and extant Lwo populations faced the task of combining a non-lineal

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[47] JI, Kalogwal, 22 August 2017.

[48] "The people who went to the west (from Koten) grew only small gardens of sorghum before they moved, but when they arrived (in Jieland) they learned to be good cultivators and grew large fields of sorghum. They soon learned about other crops, as well." Quoted in Lamphear 1972, 263. See also P. H. Gulliver, "Jie agriculture," *Uganda Journal*, 18 (1954) 65-70.

Ateker age-class politics with a Lwo politics of lineage and kinship, this work was mediated through this same herding/cultivation distinction.

Early Jie expansion into present-day Jieland was not frictionless. Oral traditions collected by Lamphear clearly remember a military component to Jie migration, with tough fighting on both sides. Expansionist warfare may well be the origin of the name "Jie" itself, which translates as "the fighters." It is impossible at this date to reconstruct the relative military power of the Jie and their potential Lwo and pre-Teso enemies during the 17th and 18th centuries. But, a series of wars fought to a relative draw between the Jie and Acholi during the late 19th century may indicate a situation closer to military parity than overwhelming Jie dominance.[49] As discussed in Chapter 3, Ateker military tactics were likely geared towards sporadic raids and harassment, and the military factor of Ateker expansion was for the most part probably more a function of harassed populations choosing to cede mediocre land rather than organized conquest by Ateker forces.[50] If Jie migrants faced organized military resistance by Lwo forces (who, it must be said, had more regular access to iron weapons), then the realities of local opposition to Jie invasion may help explain Jie acquiescence to changes in their *akiriket* structure mentioned above. It would also explain their creation of hereditary political offices controlled by clans of Lwo origin. As discussed below, these changes may also have been agreed to by *akiriket* elders as part of a grand bargain that allowed them to avoid the forced retirement found elsewhere in the Northern Ateker world.

[49] J. B. Webster & J. Lamphear, "The Jie-Acholi War: Oral Evidence from Two Sides of the Battle Front," *Uganda Journal*, 35, 1 (1971), 23-42; W. D. M. Bell, *The Wanderings of an Elephant Hunter* (London, 1923), 63.

[50] J. Lamphear, "Brothers in Arms: Military Aspects of East African Age-Class Systems in Historical Perspective," in E. Kurimoto & S. Simonse (eds.), *Conflict, Age & Power in North East Africa: Age Systems in Transition* (Athens, OH, 1998), 79-87.

Examining the establishment and trajectory of one particular such office - that of "fire-maker" - can help elucidate the reforms that were made to the *asapan* political structure through Jie interactions with foreign communities. As in many places throughout the world, the Northern Ateker cultural repertoire includes a "new fire" ritual conducted to both symbolize and engender rebirth and cleansing on a societal level (Chapter 4).[51] In most Northern Ateker communities, the decision to initiate a new fire is taken by *asapan* leaders, and oral traditions cited by Lamphear indicate this was true among the early Jie as well. But, as Lamphear brilliantly reconstructs, the right to initiate and start a new fire was contested during the period of Jie expansion, especially within the Lokorwakol division.[52] At first, the Toroi clan seems to have made a successful claim that one of their number ought always to be the ritual fire-maker. This claim was based upon a tradition linking the semi-mythical Jie founder, Orwakol, to the Toroi.[53] However, other evidence suggests that the Toroi clan of the Jie may have a historical connection to the pre-Teso groups that the Jie eventually absorbed. The Toroi clan, for example, is unusual among others of the Lokorwakol section in that they keep finger millet as their central food for birthing rituals, and clan elders whom I interviewed explicitly claimed a Teso origin.[54] Perhaps Orwakol as a historical figure had himself some connection to the pre-Teso inhabitants of the region, although this would be difficult to ascertain with certainty today. If the Toroi clan was identified in some way with the pre-Teso group, the granting of fire-making power to the Toroi clan may have been

[51] For the Jie specifically, see Lamphear 1972, 235.

[52] Lamphear suggests that the fire-maker position did not undergo the change described in these paragraphs among the Rengen division, and is emphatic that the two divisions maintained separate fire-maker offices, as well as different *asapan* schedules. See Lamphear 1972, 239.

[53] Lamphear 1972, 236.

[54] Appendix V.

a concession made by the invading Jie to pre-Teso population. The fact that the unique Jie title

for "fire-maker" is *ekeworon* – a Northern Ateker version of the Teso word *eigworone*

"mourning leader" (Chapter 6) – lends further credence to a Teso connection.

Whether the Toroi fire-makers had immigrated from Koten-Magos or claimed a pre-Teso

origin, it is clear that they were from the broad Ateker family. A shift away from Ateker control

of fire-making occurred when the Jimos clan of Lwo origin wrested this position from the

Toroi.[55] The story of Jimos political maneuverings told by Lamphear is one of a coup effected by

a combination of intrigue and personal politicking. Although the details might easily have been

skewed by centuries of re-telling, it is clear that the Jimos take-over ushered in two significant

changes to the fire-maker role in Jie politics. First, the fire-maker rose to a position of singular

judicial authority, as the ultimate arbiter of disputes between clans.[56] This change marked a

degree of centralization that was absent elsewhere in the Ateker world (although it must be

remembered that the Rengen and Lokorwakol divisions remained as separate jurisdictions).

Second, the fire-maker cultivated a distinctive ritual relationship with cereal crops, representing a

departure from Northern Ateker traditions accentuating cattle.

[55] On the Lwo origin of Jimos, see J. P. Crazzolara, "Notes on the Lango-Omiru and on the Labwoor and Nyakwai" *Anthropos*, 55, 1/2 (1960), 190 & R. Herring, "The Origins and Development of the Nyakwai," (Unpublished Seminar Paper, Makerere Department of History, 1972). Note that the prefix /Ji-/, which means "people of" in numerous Lwo languages, is also indicative of Lwo origins.

[56] Nonetheless, Lamphear makes the point that, for smaller offenses at a local level, *asapan* elders retained judicial authority. This comports with my own observations of an *akiriket* meeting in Jie where *asapan* elders censured a particular clan because one of its youthful members had insulted elders from other clans. JI, Kologwal, 22 August 2017. Note that the present position of Jie fire-makers has been the subject of recent debate. See M. Mirzeler & C. Young, "Pastoral Politics in the Northeast Periphery in Uganda: AK-47 as change agent," *Journal of Modern African Studies,* 38 (2000), 407-429; B. Knighton, "Of War-Leaders and Fire-Makers: A Rejoinder," *History in Africa*, 34 (2007), 411-420; M. Mirzeler, "The Importance of Being Honest: Verifying Citations, Rereading Historical Sources, and Establishing Authority in the Great Karamoja Debate," *History in Africa*, 34 (2007), 383-409.

The office of fire-maker became ensconced in a parallel ritual system stressing sorghum. The dual practical eminence of both cattle and cultivation in Jie society, dating to the initial occupation of their current lands, is captured by the following call-and-response prayer recorded by Lamphear:

Leader: There are cattle and they are good.
Response: They are!
Leader: There are crops, and it is good.
Response: It is!
Leader: Should the cattle die, there are crops!
Response: There are!
Leader: If the crops do not grow, there are cattle.
Response: There are!
Leader: Let there be rain so there will be cattle and crops.[57]

Drawing on the economic significance of highland cereal crops, the Jimos clan magnified the role of the fire-maker in Jie society by establishing ritual connections between the health of the annual harvest and the fire-maker's power. They do so in ways that aligned with the ritual connections between cattle and *asapan* elders elaborated in Chapter 4. In imitation of the *akiwodakin* "freeing of the cattle" ceremony, Jie fire-makers offered to bless sorghum seeds before yearly planting. As one of Lamphear's informants explained, "[t]he (fire-maker) would bless the sorghum seeds and then distribute them to the territorial (sections), saying 'Go now, and plant your gardens.'"[58] Jimos fire-makers reinforced their ritual position vis-à-vis sorghum by adopting new gastronomic taboos, refusing to eat wild fruits, meat from animals that died of natural causes, or sorghum grown outside Jieland.[59] But these innovations did not draw entirely from Ateker tradition. Noting specific similarities between certain Lwo harvest rituals and Jimos

[57] Lamphear 1976, 29. For more on the context of such prayers, see Chapter 4.

[58] Lamphear 1972, 327.

[59] Ibid.

fire-maker activities Lamphear persuasively argues that the idea of a lineally-descended political leader, acting as a judicial arbiter between clans is much closer to the Lwo office of *rwot* ("king") than any Ateker precedent.[60] The office of fire-maker was thus an amalgamation of Lwo and Northern Ateker traditions.[61] By the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Jimos clan had leveraged the significance of Jie sorghum cultivation to establish a new centralized political office over which it retained hereditary control.

Hereditary centralization, thus introduced to Jie politics by Lwo groups, did not radically transform Jie political logic. The structures built around *asapan* proved capable of integrating elements of Lwo kingship ideology without destroying the fundamentally decentralized, gerontocratic nature of Northern Ateker politics. Compromises were made. For example, although fire-makers were restricted to the Jimos clan, responsibility for choosing individual men to be fire-makers was vested in ruling Jie age-classes. The office of fire-maker was not passed down from father to son automatically, and Jie *asapan* elders approved each transition. *Asapan* elders also retained control over ultimate decisions of war, peace, and diplomacy, even if the fire-maker was often charged with executing plans approved by elders in the *akiriket*.[62] With their power to choose a fire-maker, their control over debate within the *akiriket*, and their supernaturally-sanctioned judicial authority within individual clans, *asapan* elders, remained the ultimate source of political legitimacy, while the fire-maker emerged as an executive leader.

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[60] Ibid.

[61] For an especially thoughtful treatment of Lwo precolonial political philosophy, see L. Schiller, "Gem and Kano: A Comparative Study of Two Luo Political Systems Under Stress, c. 1880-1914," (PhD Dissertation, Northwestern University, 1982), 67-119.

[62] Lamphear 1972, 335-336

Of course, the exact distribution of powers between *asapan* elders and hereditary Jimos fire-makers must have been a topic for debate and dissension. It was in all likelihood negotiated by each groups' representatives over decades in *akiriket* deliberations now lost to history. Perhaps at the time the debate was understood, as it appears in hindsight, to be a competition between decentralized Ateker pastoralists on one hand and Lwo farmers with a tradition of centralized kingship on the other. If so, the question remains, what did *asapan* elders gain by agreeing to share power with a Jimos fire-maker?

One possible answer is that Jie elders acquired a guarantee that they would not face forced retirement as eldest elders routinely are elsewhere in the Northern Ateker world. The precarious position of eldest elders is a recurring point of contention in Northern Ateker politics, because there is a general rule that the senior age-class must retire before junior initiations can begin. Retirement, in most cases, relegates once-grand *akiriket* elders to the margins of political decision-making. Elders are typically cajoled into retirement only when they are too few and too weak to resist the entreaties of junior men. Such debates usually involve charges that the senior set is too old and frail to discharge its managerial duties.[63]

The Jie have long stood as an exception to this rule, because the eldest elders never retire, even when they are few in number and seen as senile, and initiations of junior sets can begin while "grandfathers" are still in power.[64] It is possible that this arrangement dates to the Jimos debates of the eighteenth century. With executive responsibility taken over by the fire-maker, old

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[63] The best discussion of this phenomenon (among the Dassanetch) is U. Almagor, "Charisma Fatigue in an East African Generation-Set System," *American Ethnologist*, 10, 4 (1983), 635-649.

[64] "The *anyameta* (age-sets of the oldest men) have the most power. That is because they have grown closest to God (Akuj) over many years. They can truly bless the people, even if they become foolish and speak like children, they are still wise, because they are the oldest." Lamphear 1972, 292.

men of the *akiriket* would have been less susceptible to aspersions cast on their level of energy and quick-wittedness. The logic of retirement may have appeared less poignant with daily executive functions exercised by fire-makers. This was quite possibly the result of a grand bargain. As individuals, *asapan* elders may have agreed to share power with Jimos fire-makers not only to maintain a well-balanced relationship between Ateker herders and Lwo farmers, but because they were induced to agree to changes by the offer of no more forced retirement. This, of course, is entirely speculative, but nonetheless seems a plausible explanation for an innovation in Jie *asapan* practice that fits with an overall narrative of compromise and negotiation that permeates sources of Jie history. In any case, one must remember that changes to *asapan* practices were the result of individual debates, deliberation and comprises built up over time.

In contrast with the Jie, Karimojong *asapan* practice does not appear to have been as heavily influenced by foreign populations, and it retains many elements that likely date to the PNA period. Debates over who could access power within the *akiriket* nonetheless propelled institutional change in Karamoja, leading among other things to the creation of a parallel initiation structure for women. One of the hallmarks of *asapan* throughout the Northern Ateker world is that women, as well as uninitiated and retired men, are excluded from sitting in *akiriket* meetings. Gender roles in Ateker societies have changed in other ways over time - for example, pottery is considered a men's activity in Teso but women's activity in Karamoja.[65] And, common stereotypes of Northern Ateker culture as extremely patriarchal are quite misleading in regards to informal aspects of everyday life.[66] Nonetheless, the consistency today of women's

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[65] TE, Olupe, 02 May 2017; KA, Nadunget, 01 August 2017.

[66] Gulliver's observation that, in Turkana, "a wife is the moral equal of her husband in their informal relationship" accords with my own experience in most Northern Ateker societies. P. H. Gulliver, *A Preliminary Survey of the Turkana* (Cape Town, 1951), 215.

exclusion from the *akiriket,* often justified by the Northern Ateker by a widespread association in

Eastern Nilotic cultures between men and meat-roasting (roasting being central to *akiriket*

activity), suggests that this exclusion probably dates to the PNA period.[67] In Karamoja, women

crafted an institutional response to male political privilege in the form of initiated singing

groups, called *akiwor*, to gain influence in *akiriket* politics.[68]

It is impossible to date the emergence of *akiwor* with precision, but singing groups were

spread across Karamoja with a well-established traditional history in the mid-twentieth century,

suggesting that they extended at least into the precolonial past.[69] *Akiwor* singing groups are

similar to *asapan* filial sets in that they cut across clans and territorial sections. Women from

diverse backgrounds belong to a single singing group and declare a sense of affinity for one

another. Like *asapan*, *akiwor* groups are distinct, named entities. One enters through initiation

and belongs until death. The late ethnomusicologist Kenneth Gourlay claimed in 1970 that

akiwor initiation is conducted along alternating generational principles similar to *asapan*, with

the alternating groups "Trees" and "Anthills" being analogous to the "Mountains" and

"Gazelles" of Karimojong *asapan*.[70] If Gourlay is correct (I was unable to definitely confirm

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[67] This does not mean that women, in practice, do not slaughter or roast meat, but that when they do so it is often understood as a transgression of traditional gender roles. H. Owino, "Turkana women defy community gender roles to earn a living," *The Kenyan Woman*, 56 (March, 2015).

[68] Here, Karimojong women were participating in a wider pattern of creative protest by east African pastoralist women. See D. Hodgson, "Introduction: Gender, Culture, & the Myth of the Patriarchal Past," in D. Hodgson (ed.) Dorothy (ed.), R*ethinking Pastoralism: Gender, Culture, and the Myth of the Patriarchal Pastoralist* (Athens, OH, 2000), 14.

[69] It should be remembered that most of Karamoja did not come under continuous effective control of British colonial officials until the 1930s at the earliest. See J. Barber, "The Karamoja District of Uganda: A Pastoral People under Colonial Rule," *Journal of African History*, 3, 1 (1962), 111-124.

[70] K. Gourlay, Trees and Anthills: Songs of Karimojong Women's Groups," *African Music*, 4, 4 (1970), 115-121. A repository of Gourlay's Karimojong recordings can be found through the British Library at: https://sounds.bl.uk/World-and-traditional-music/Ken-Gourlay-Uganda.

Gourlay's claim during my own fieldwork, but accept his conclusion for the period he was studying) this may signal an intentional parallelism with *asapan*.

With regard to the procedures for assigning women to singing groups, *akiwor* is structurally unlike *asapan* in one key way. Women are initiated into singing groups on the basis of chronological age, usually joining a group between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five.[71] Unlike *asapan* initiation, which is more or less automatic if one is eligible and interested, singing groups are formed through the volition of young women who gather together, approach an older woman, and ask permission to join together as a group. More so than *asapan*, *akiwor* thus reflects an act of intentional corporate agency on the part of initiates. If the group's preferred matron agrees to sponsor initiation – which she is prone to do after receiving gifts from the young women – she will choose a name for the group and lead them into the wilderness for period of less than a week. During interviews, this stay in the wilderness was described as a time of both hardship and joyous celebration, which came to an end when the old woman smeared the younger women with *emunyen* (clay), thereby confirming their membership in a named singing group.

Once initiated, the women could come together as a singing group at various public events. Gourlay specifically mentions their participation in *akiwodakin*, the annual "freeing of the cattle" ceremony. Women I interviewed remembered singing at a wider variety of *akiriket* functions. During these public performances, women sang songs addressing a variety of concerns. They sang to assert rights of use: "I say to you – don't cut down the trees, my friend. I

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[71] The following two-paragraph summary is based on the above article by Gourlay and the following interviews I conducted in 2017: KA, Nacile, 23 July 2017; KA, Nabokat, 25 July 2017; KA, Lowoyakromai, 31 July 2017; KA, Nawanatau, 31 July 2017; KA, Nadunget, 01 August 2017; KA, Katulem, 24 August 2017.

tell you – don't cut them down. They are our trees to cut."[72] They sang to offer opinions on others' labor: "…the (*Acacia campylacantha* tree) is used for fencing the cattle kraal. Loriono can use it for fencing the cattle kraal of Lokalama's father."[73] They sang to celebrate their bonds as a group, referencing the thick bush in which their initiation had taken place: "The dark thicket is intertwined and moves as one, it keeps thickly together"[74] and "I have tied my friend, my friend Kiyo, mother of Angoriabong, wife of Apalotaruk… the tree with intertwining branches is the tree of Mongino's mother, of Nawalio's mother…"

Akiwor initiation appears to no longer occur, allegedly because insecurity since the Idi Amin era makes it dangerous to stay overnight in the wilderness. However, older women I interviewed throughout Karamoja had a clear recollection of their own singing groups, and the consistent description of initiation procedures and the similarity in singing group names indicate that this was a cohesive society-wide institution much like *asapan*.

Chapter 4 argues that the assignment of men to *asapan* sets based on filiation rather than age, and the lack of a "coming of age" instruction or test, count against any notion that *asapan* was conceived primarily as a means to empower young men as individuals or distinct groups. The opposite is true with regard to *akiwor*, which initiated women of the same chronological age after a period of seclusion in the wilderness. The lack of comparative data and the near-total neglect of the institution by previous scholars makes this account of *akiwor* history provisional

[72] Gourlay 1970, 117.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid., 116.

and incomplete.[75] However, a careful consideration of *akiwor* in a context where *asapan* was the

dominant social and political institution suggests that *akiwor* created opportunities for women to

assert their voice in Karimojong political life. We have already noted that *asapan* initiation is

strictly limited to men, and in all likelihood has been since its inception. Although women

participate in *asapan* through association with their husbands – wives automatically adopt the

filial set of their husbands, along with its appropriate emblems and social privileges – they are

formally excluded from the *akiriket*, along with children, retirees, and uninitiated adult men.

Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 4, the declining political significance of clan *vis-a-vis* age

limited women's access to the political sphere at the same time that it helped integrate far-flung

Northern Ateker lineage into a political whole.

    Akiwor is best seen as arising in this context of female disenfranchisement.[76] The term

akiwor is likely derived from an older root meaning "to sing".[77] By creating named groups –

Trees and Anthills – women used *akiwor* to capture the Ateker social valence of such bodies. By

organizing singing groups according to chronological age, women used *akiwor* to form socially

meaningful cohorts which did not rely on or directly reflect the male-dominated sphere of

asapan. They also captured any natural *esprit de corps* among age-peers. Singing groups were a

clever choice for women seeking a voice, literally, within the *akiriket*. Standing outside the

[75] A more robust study of *asapan* from the perspective of "outsiders" – i.e. uninitiated men, women, and retirees – would be a valuable undertaking. My hope is that by providing a framework for thinking about *asapan* in a comparative historical context, such work will be possible in the future.

[76] Citing *akiwor* an example, Simonse and Kurimoto argue that women's age groups in eastern Africa are usually created in opposition to male dominance in different areas of social life. Simonse & Kurimoto 1998, 19.

[77] Ateker 165; KA, Naciele, 23 July 2017. Catholic missionary Vittorio Maconi alternatively suggests the term is derived from a term for "elopement," see V. Maconi, "L'iniziazione ai gruppi di eta femminili presso i Karimojong," *Festschrift zum 65 Geburtstag von Helmut Petri*, 344-359 (as cited in Simonse & Kurimoto 1998, 20).

akiriket but raising their voices in unison, women tapped into the same Ateker idealization of

group speech that imbued communal *akigat* prayers with spiritual power while also physically

making their voices heard in the political decision-making space. This need not have always

been explicitly antagonistic, and songs have often been sung in support of particular filial sets of

men, but it was always nevertheless an exercise in power.

To end our discussion of the highlands, we shift now some 120 miles north and 500-1000

feet higher, to Dodos territory in the far northeast of Uganda. Because of its position at the apex

of the local Rift Valley complex, Nadodos is the coolest and wettest area occupied by a Northern

Ateker group. During the climate regime that has existed, with some variation, since the

fourteenth century, Nadodos has been fairly well-suited to growing finger millet, sorghum, and

pearl millet. Transhumant pastoralism in Nadodos has a less extensive reach and shorter

duration, both because it is less necessary in a better-watered climate with less painful dry

seasons, and because large tracts of Nadodos are at times inundated with tsetse flies, thereby

limiting quantities of usable grazing land.[78] Dodos subsistence practice is shaped by these

environmental considerations, and on average the Dodos spend less time herding cattle away

from home and derive more calories from cereal crops than any other Northern Ateker society.

Because subsistence practice shapes settlement patterns, the Dodos also have relatively more

sedentary lifestyles, and "are dependent upon the land immediately surrounding their homesteads

for most of their subsistence needs."[79] I argued earlier that the *asapan* was shaped by spatial

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[78] In fact, the former may cause the latter, because tsetse fly infestations expand or retreat as a result of human activity; W. Deshler, "Livestock, Trypanosomiasis, and Human Settlement in Northeastern Uganda," *Geographical Review*, 50, 4 (1960), 541-554.

[79] W. Deshler, "The Dodos Country: A Study of Indigenous Settlement in a Semi-Arid Area of Uganda," (PhD Dissertation, University of Maryland, 1957), 95.

practices of annual transhumant pastoralism from fixed homesteads. Indeed, significant

variations to that spatial practice accompanied changes to *asapan* structure.

Of all Northern Ateker communities, formal academic scholarship has the least to say

about the Dodos with regard to *asapan*.[80] This is firstly a consequence of coverage. Since 2015,

when anthropologist Gustaaf Verswijver published *The Jiye of South Sudan*, the Dodos stand out

as the only Northern Ateker population about whom no systematic research by university-trained

anthropologists or historians from either the western academy or Africa has ever been

conducted.[81] The most significant ethnographic source for the Dodos, author Elizabeth Marshall

Thomas' 1965 travel account *Warrior Herdsman*, is a scant source on *asapan*.[82] The second

reason that Dodos *asapan* is poorly understood is that there is no single system, but instead a

great degree of internal variation. Lamphear notes that, "despite interviews with some thirty

Dodos informants, a clear understanding of their generation-set system was never achieved."[83]

During my own fieldwork, it became apparent that differences in Dodos initiation schedule,

naming conventions, and *akiriket* procedures explain Lamphear's difficulty. Unlike other

Northern Ateker societies, there is no singular Dodos version of *asapan*. It is therefore likely

impossible to hypothesize an "original" form of *asapan* among the Dodos, if such an institution

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[80] The near-total lacuna of ethnographic material on the topic is a motivation for including the following admittedly presentist description in this history dissertation.

[81] G. Verswijver, *The Jiye of South Sudan* (Geneva, 2015).

[82] Thomas generously invited me into her New Hampshire home and shared her original fieldnotes with me in 2018. They have proved useful in other aspects, but do not provide a systematic study of Dodos *asapan*. I am indebted to Liz for her kindness and assistance in digging up and sharing these invaluable materials, which will be deposited at Harvard's Peabody Museum at some point in the future.

[83] Lamphear 1976, 108, fn 10.

ever even existed. But, we can recognize that this variation itself has a history worth investigating. It is a history shaped in part by Dodos' relatively sedentary subsistence practice.

Dodos *asapan* does not strictly fit the filial set model found among today's Karimojong, Jie, Nyangatom, Toposa, and Jiye.[84] Brothers are not obligated to join the set immediately junior to their father. If one son is significantly younger, he can join a more junior set. Nor are sets uniform across Nadodos. Although there is a roughly shared reservoir of set names, the opening or closing of specific sets is not coordinated across space or time, and each *akiriket* maintains its own unique history of set initiations. As in the rest of the Northern Ateker world, Dodos *ngakiriketa* are the focal point for politics within each territorial section, but the ontology of territorial sections differs. In "standard" *asapan* systems, there is mostly a one-to-one correlation between *akiriket* and territorial section, or *ekitela*. However, Dodos-speakers differentiate between the word *ekitela*, a purely topographic category, and *ariet* (literally "grazing space"), a social geography. In Karamoja, if a family moves from one *ekitela* to another, they have joined a new socially-defined territorial section. Among the Dodos, it is possible to shift one's geographic home (i.e. one's *ekitela*), while still remaining attached socially to an *ariet* in another place. In such cases, a family would have two *ngakiriketa* – a local one in the new territory for addressing matters between neighbors, and a second in the ancestral *ariet*, which is where *asapan* initiation would still be conducted.

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[84] Aside from a handful of pages in Thomas' *Warrior Herdsmen*, the only other material on Dodos *asapan* I am aware of is a short section from Ben Knighton's monograph, *The Vitality of Karimojong Religion: Dying Tradition or Living Faith* (Burlington, VT, 2005). All other data supporting this section comes from five weeks of fieldwork I conducted in Nadodos. Interviews most relevant to *asapan* are: DO, 2 October 2017, Kopoth; DO, 3 October 2017, Kaabong; DO, Lokocil, 4 October 2017; DO, Lokooli, 4 October 2017; DO, Kaabong, 5 October 2017; DO, Loyoro, 28 October 2017; DO, Kaabong, 29 October 2017; DO, Kaabong, 30 October 2017.

A satisfying history of Dodos politics cannot be written without significantly more research, but we can at least imagine two factors which may have contributed to Dodos political fragmentation. The first is the relatively more sedentary character of Dodos subsistence, which likely limited both the occasions and necessity for coordinated activities between far-flung groups who were less likely to encounter each other during annual grazing cycles. A second reason may be higher levels of immigration into Dodos, also related to ecology. Because of its high elevation and relatively favorable climate, Dodos has long attracted refugees during times of drought. Recently many Toposa have entered Nadados seeking refuge from drought exacerbated by civil war in South Sudan, and it was common for Turkana families to send relatives to stay in Dodos earlier in the twentieth century.[85] I interviewed a man whose grandfather had immigrated to Dodos with a group of friends and family from Karamoja in search of better grazing opportunities (see above). By the present century, his family had been fully integrated into Dodos society – they were "thoroughly Dodos" to borrow Lamphear's phrase – while the descendants of those Karimojong immigrants today form a unique Dodos clan.

Toposa families are probably the greatest source of Ateker-speaking immigrants in Nadodos. Today, Toposa herders are granted relatively unrestricted access to Dodos lands, and when asked about this relationship, Dodos-speakers refer to the Toposa as being from the "thigh of their grandmother," meaning that the two are, in some sense, "one people."[86] Such claims cannot be taken uncritically, and stories positing shared origins between groups often reflect

[85] E. Thomas, *Warrior Herdsmen: Six Months with the Dodoth of Northern Uganda* (New York, 1965).

[86] DO, Kaabong, 3 October 2017. The phrase may be read as invoking an affinal rather than consanguineal relationship, because the thigh (*amuro*) is often exchanged during marriage feasts.

contemporary political concerns as much as events from the lived past. Nevertheless, a history of Toposa immigration to Nadodos may help explain the idiolectal occurrence in Dodos speech of some particular phonological variations typical of Toposa, including the attachment of an /ny-/ prefix to singular nouns and infinitive verbs, as well as the outlying high percentage of core vocabulary the two speech communities share today.

As *asapan* slowly ceased to function as a unifying political institution geared at controlling dispersed herds, initiates looked to the retain the institution as a "rite of passage" that would confer on them an enhanced social status. The debates surrounding this change may be lost to time, but eventually chronological age became a stronger factor governing initiation timing. Although the general principle that sons should follow fathers is recognized as ideal by the Dodos, a mechanism was created by the twentieth century for very young brothers – who would have been potentially barred from initiation in a truly filial system - to be assigned to a set twice junior from their elder fathers following a ceremony called *akilumokin,* from the verb "to dip into, to plunge."[87] *Asapan* in Dodos became, in practice if not in theory, decoupled from filiation.[88] One product was that the number of sets in existence at any given time increased in number. Whereas the Karimojong, Jie, Nyangatom and Toposa today always recognize only two active sets – the "fathers" who control the "sons" – the Dodos recognize a multiplicity of age-classes, with seniority more related to chronological age. This shift is now reflected in the physical layout of the Dodos *akiriket*, where rather than having only one row of men seated in a

[87] DO, Loyoro, 28 October 2017.

[88] DO, Kaabong, 05 October 2017. This was open ground for debate. In one group interview I conducted, a man argued on the basis of his biological age that he should be in a set twice-junior from his father's, while others accused him of wanting to be the most senior in biological age of the lower-ranked set.

continuous semi-circle, there can be as many as three or four rows representing different active

sets, with the most senior claiming the front row and controlling ritual activities (Figure 5.3).[89]
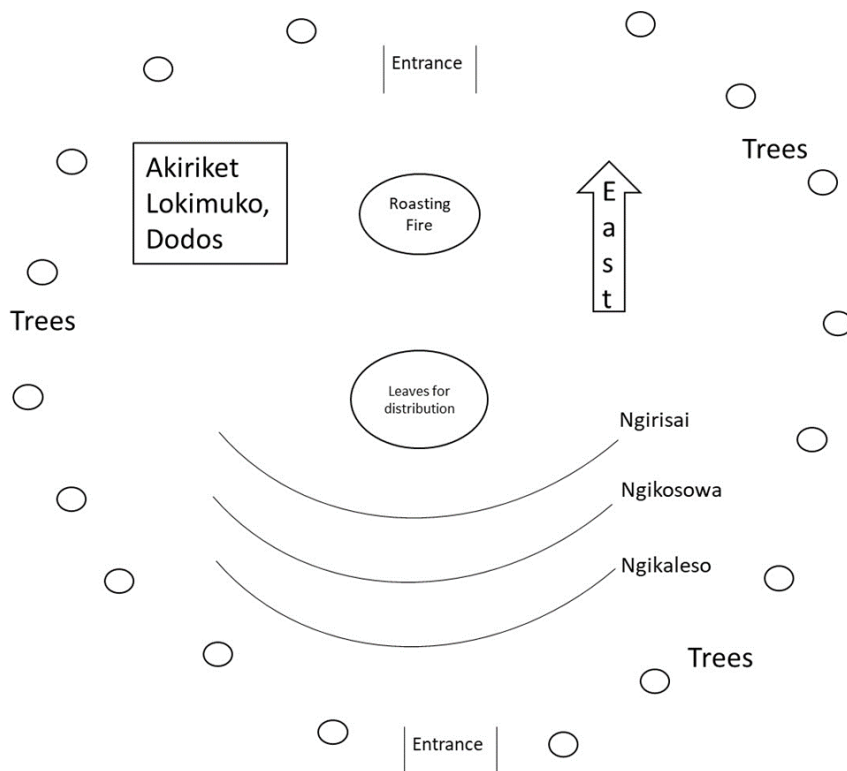
Figure 5.3 - A Dodos *akiriket*, drawn by the author[90]

Asapan among the Dodos is rarely practiced today. When it is, it tends to be spoken of as

a true "coming of age" ceremony intended to bestow honor on the participating individuals

through their sharing of largesse by offering livestock for sacrifice and communal consumption.

It is notable that the location of *asapan* has also shifted in Dodos. Although those I interviewed

concurred that the eldest brother of a father ought to conduct his initiation in public at an

akiriket, it is generally thought appropriate for younger brothers to have their initiation at home

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[89] For example, in the Lokimuko *akiriket* south of Kaabong town, there was space for three sets – Leopards, Buffaloes, and Ostriches – to sit simultaneously. This would never occur in other Northern Ateker *ngakiriketa*.

[90] DO, Kaabong, 29 October 2017.

with other members of their clan. This is done through a smaller "confirmation" ceremony called *akityekar*, in which the initiate or a group of initiates spears a goat, shared with members of the extended family. The derivation of this word from the verb "to forge or shape iron" perhaps connotes the sense, echoed in interviews, that the point of conducting such a ceremony is to "forge" the individual initiate into an adult – a concept that represents a departure from the historical ideology of *asapan*. Much more research remains to be done on Dodos *asapan*, and the above only represents my own general impressions. What does seem clear, however, is that *asapan* in Nadodos is unique among Northern Ateker societies in its lack of uniformity, and that this should be understood in relation to the more sedentary settlement and subsistence practices of the Dodos.

For each of the three Highland Northern Ateker communities – Jie, Karimojong, and Dodos – *asapan* served as shared ground for political contests. These contests concerned the incorporation of alien communities for the Jie, the political voice of women among the Karimojong, and the role of chronological age in determining access to a "coming of age" ceremony among the Dodos. Although asapan was re-shaped in different ways by these different contests, it was never discarded, and the basic principle of decentralized governance that it enabled remained the rule across the entire region.

Asapan in the Lowlands: Turkana and Toposa

The entire eastern edge of Dodos slowly rises from a base elevation of 4,500-5000 ft. to a ridgeline exceeding 6,000 ft. At the summit of this ridge, a precipice of more than 4,000 ft. marks a particularly stark portion of the "rift" in the Rift Valley. Looking west from this point, the land is relatively cool, lightly forested and green. Looking east, one sees a hot, dry, brown, and flat plain punctuated intermittently with ancient rocky volcanoes. These plains are home to

the Turkana, who have adopted the most nomadic settlement and subsistence practices of any Northern Ateker group as the only feasible means to cope with harsh arid conditions. In almost a mirror-opposite process from the Dodos, the drier hotter conditions led to increased mobility, also representing a departure from PNA-era transhumance patterns, and this spatial re-arrangement also led to significant structural changes to the ancestral *asapan* system.

Turkana *asapan* practice departs most profoundly from other Northern Ateker societies in that it lacks a senior-junior opposition between its two cyclical filial sets – the Ngimor "Mountains" and Ngirisai "Leopards." The rule of filiation strictly applies in Turkana, so that the sons of the Mountains are themselves Leopards, and *vice versa*. However, except for a vague sense that the Mountains are symbolically "senior" (perhaps as a memory of the mountain-elder connection in the PNA homeland discussed in Chapter 4), the two sets today are equal in status and power.[91] This fundamental shift generated other variations in Turkana *asapan* practice. Within the *akiriket*, members of filial sets sit on opposite sides of the semi-circle, and individuals sit on either side in order of initiation date, so that the center of the semi-circle is occupied by the elders of either filial set. Both filial sets recruit continuously instead of having one senior set

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[91] P. H. Gulliver, "The Turkana Age Organization," *American Anthropologist*, 60, 5 (1958), 903. The Turkana age system resembles, in this way, left-right moieties found among many Cushitic-speaking groups in the region. However, there is no evidence – linguistic or otherwise – that this is a product of cultural borrowing. In fact, linguistic traces of influence from lakeside Lowland East Cushitic-speakers on the Turkana (aside from the word for "camel") are surprisingly few. For example, lakeside Turkana-speakers developed a robust fishing economy on top of a pre-existing Cushitic fishing economy, but internally innovated words for fishing practice rather than borrowing Cushitic loans. There are no shared lexemes for fishing between Turkana and the Elmolo language spoken by Cushitic minority fishing communities on Lake Turkana's southern islands. See B. Heine, "Traditional Fishing in the Rift Valley of Kenya: An Ethnographic Survey," *Sprach und Geschichte in Afrika*, 4 (1982), 7-40 & J. C. Sherrer, "Fisherfolk of the Desert: An Ethnography of the Elmolo of Kenya," (PhD Dissertation, University of Virginia, 1978). Although Ehret does claim Cushitic loans into Northern Ateker, most, if not all, of the words he identifies can be dated to the Proto Ateker period. See Ehret 1982, 46.

closed to initiation and one junior set open, eliminating the problem of "over-aging" that has long been a source of consternation for outside scholars studying the Northern Ateker.

Groups of men initiated into filial sets in the exact same ceremony form recognized sub-sets across the Northern Ateker world. But, only in Turkana are these true "age-sets," because members are initiated into *asapan* at roughly the same chronological age. The generic word for age-set in Turkana is, appropriately enough, *anaket* meaning "those who suckled at the same time."[92] Because young men are initiated together in the mid-twenties to early thirties, it is possible for *asapan* to generate practically useful social groups who can work or fight together. The Turkana imbued *asapan* initiation with a "coming of age" sense not found among other Northern Ateker groups.[93] Indeed, going through the rite of *asapan* is widely seen as a pre-requisite for marriage by Turkana today, and I have been told that this notion is even recognized by the Kenyan local government which unofficially requires any man appointed to a position of parish/ward leadership to have already undergone initiation.[94] *Asapan* in Turkana, in other words, fulfills many of the practical functions of age-set organization typical of chronologically-

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[92] LNA 8. Note that the word *anaket* also is attested in Toposa, Nyangatom, and Jie. In these instances, it refers to unofficial children's play groups. Müller-Dempf asserts that Toposa *nganaketa* served as the smallest building blocks of larger Toposa age-sets and then filial sets. However, because the rule of filiation is observed among the Toposa, it is difficult to conceive of how this could be true. In my own discussions with Toposa-speakers, they were adamant that *nganaketa* represent social children's groups which exist separate from the *asapan* structure. Young Toposa girls also form *nganaketa*, but are not initiated into *asapan*. See H. Müller-Dempf, "The Ngibokoi Dilemma: Generation-sets and Social System Engineering in Times of Stress: An Example from the Toposa of Southern Sudan," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 134, 2 (2009), 197. The generic words for such "sub-sets" vary widely across Northern Ateker languages, including: *asepic* "band of men," *ajore* "army," and *asapanet* "*asapan* group."

[93] TU, Ajuluk, 20 October 2017.

[94] The link between marriage and initiation was first documented in 1927, and appears to have already been well-established. See E. D. Emley, "The Turkana of Kolosia District," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 57 (1927), 165. Regarding the alleged *asapan* requirement to be in local government, there are obvious implications of such a rule for the gender balance of local government. I have not had an opportunity to gather official statistics at the parish/ward level.

defined age-set systems across East Africa, and in this way it differs greatly from the remainder of Northern Ateker societies.

These unique characteristics of Turkana *asapan* raise questions of causality. Did the Turkana abandon the practice of ranking filial sets as senior and junior in order to realize practical benefits of age-set organization based on chronological age? Or, did a shift away from set-ranking for other reasons coincidentally open the conceptual door to re-imagining the purpose and use of *asapan*? Both views have been advanced by scholars.

Anthropologist Harald Müller-Dempf argues for the latter.[95] He begins by positing that a period of drought in the nineteenth century placed extra stress on the inhabitants of this already harsh environment, resulting in devastating livestock losses. According to his computer models, Müller-Dempf argues that this drought occurred during the time when a filial set named Ngipyei "Wild Dogs" was senior and Ngiputir "Warthogs" was junior. Substantial livestock losses meant that the junior Warthogs were unable to find the requisite number of cattle to properly marry. Because, in Ateker kinship theory, children born out of wedlock are considered to be the immediate junior of their mothers' fathers, Müller-Dempf hypothesizes that a systemic crisis occurred when a large number of unmarried Warthogs fathered "illegitimate" children who were assigned as Warthogs of equal social rank to their biological fathers. This created an extreme discordance between chronological age and filial set assignment, which could only be resolved by agreeing to share power equally between both generations of Warthogs. Thenceforth, the principle of seniority was replaced by one of equal moieties. Although he does not directly address the other unique characteristics of *asapan* in Turkana, it seems implicit in Müller-

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[95] H. Müller-Dempf, *Changing Generations: Dynamics of Generation and Age-Sets in Southeastern Sudan (Toposa) and Northwestern Kenya (Turkana)* (Fort Lauderdale, 1989).

Dempf's historical account that the primacy of chronological age should have grown out of the disappearance of a seniority principle, rather than the other way around. An alternative view is that proposed by Lamphear, who agrees with Müller-Dempf that the seniority principle collapsed around the time of the Warthogs, but imagines a reverse causation. For Lamphear, the need for regimented military units during the expansion of the Turkana into their present territory was the likely cause of a re-alignment of *asapan* practice away from filial sets and towards the more martially useful biological age-sets.[96]

Müller-Dempf and Lamphear both offer plausible histories of *asapan* in Turkana, although their work is necessarily speculative. Historical linguistics provides evidence to help test to these broad historical hypotheses. By re-reading the work of Müller-Dempf, Lamphear, and others while paying close attention to space and with additional context provided by historical linguistics, a more coherent picture emerges. Instead of seeking to understand why "the Turkana" innovated a new system, I suggest it is more fruitful to see the elaboration of the Turkana *asapan* system as a defining component of a distinct Turkana polity during the period when the Turkana, Toposa and Nyangatom dialect communities diverged from their shared ancestral protolanguage of LNA. *Asapan* was modified to meet the needs of a particular population, and that modification became a defining feature of the polity called "Turkana." But gaining this picture requires first a re-evaluation of the evidentiary basis on which the origins of these distinct political communities has previously been reconstructed. Because the argument

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[96] J. Lamphear, "Historical Dimensions of Dual Organization: The Generation-Class System of the Jie and Turkana," in D. Maybury-Lewis & U. Almagor (eds.), *The Attraction of Opposites: Thought and Society in the Dualistic Mode* (Ann Arbor, 1989), 250.

presented here requires a wholesale revision of current settlement chronologies, a detour is in order.

Virtually all current scholarship on the Northern Ateker accepts as a given historical fact that the Toposa, Nyangatom, Jiye and Turkana political communities "originated" on the Karamoja plateau. This assertion rests almost entirely on two kinds of oral traditions: charter myths such as that of Nayece and her grey bull mentioned above, and migration histories. There are a number of problems with this current understanding. To begin with, if one looks at Ateker "origin" traditions holistically, rather than from the point of view of just one or two groups, they become circular. In other words, every Ateker group (to include the Teso) "came" from another, and every group gains a sense of identity through its relationship to another. So, the Karimojong "came" from the Turkana, the Jie "came" from the Karimojong, and the Turkana "came" from the Jie.[97] For Müller-Dempf, the Toposa "came" from the Karimojong, while for anthropologist Serge Tornay, they "came" from the Jie.[98] The Nyangatom, according to the Tornay's recounting of Toposa tradition, "broke away" from the Toposa, but the Nyangatom Tornay spoke with claimed that they also "came" from either the Jie or Karimojong, and therefore did not "break away" directly from the Toposa. In virtually every single account, the cause of rupture is said to be that young men were frustrated with the rule of elders and decided to abscond with the family herds to form a new society. Chapter 4 suggests that the prevalence of such stories stems from widespread social anxieties arising during the early-second millennium shift to transhumant pastoralism. But this plot is a Northern Ateker literary trope, not a historical account. Many

[97] Nagashima 1968, 343; Dyson-Hudson 1966, 262.

[98] Müller-Dempf 2009, 191; S. Tornay, "Archéologie, ethno-histoire, ethnographie: trois façons derenconstruire le temps," in J. Mack & P. Robertshaw (eds.), *Culture history in the Southern Sudan: archaeology, linguistics, and ethnohistory* (Nairobi, 1982), 131-148.

Northern Ateker recognize this.[99] These stories are not sufficient as the sole basis for

reconstructing historical migrations, and they supplant what were in fact complex political

processes that occurred *in situ* with "ethnogenetic" accounts focused too much on migration

narratives. Historians' reliance on them until now has generated widely-accepted

misunderstanding of the basic contours of Northern Ateker settlement history.

In a 1968 essay, anthropologist Nobuhiro Nagashima offered the most thoughtful attempt

to reconstruct Ateker migration histories through the comparative analysis of oral traditions,

putting in the yeoman work of pulling together ethnogenetic accounts from across the Ateker

world to logically parse out the single historical hypothesis that best explains them all.[100] The

project was not an unqualified success. Among Nagashima's important insights, however, was

that accounts of the histories of "our people" as told by local storytellers often are in reference to

clans and not entire "tribes." This point allows him to reconcile seemingly contradictory origin

stories of "the Turkana," for example, by suggesting that some clans may have indeed come

originally from the Jie highlands, but others did not. Nagashima is correct, here. But by making

this point, he destabilizes the entire project of reconstructing broad, sweeping "tribal" migration

stories. There is undoubtedly some validity in fine-grained historical reconstructions that analyze

migration stories at the clan level, and this approach is one of the great strengths of Lamphear's

careful and detailed reconstruction of Jie history. Implicit in Lamphear's work, however, is the

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[99] There is a famous story about the origin of the Iteso, told by the Karimojong, which is that Teso society is composed of all the young people who used to be Karimojong, but left their elders (the Ateker root for "old" is -mojong) behind. The elder Karimojong admonished the youth "you will go to your graves" ("graves" being *atesin* in Ateso), and that is where the ethnonym Teso comes from. On occasions with Karimojong friends when I brought up that the word for "graves" in Karimojong is *ngilyel* and not *atesin*, and moreover, that a Karimojong society comprised entirely of old people could not have survived, they laughed and readily admitted it is "just a story."

[100] N. Nagashima, "Historical Relations among the Central Nilo-Hamites," in *University of East Africa Social Science Council Conference: Sociology Papers*, 2, (1968) 338-377.

fact that the Jie do not have a singular "ethnogenesis," and are instead a political community crafted from different groups of people who bound themselves together through the institutions of *asapan* and *akiriket* as described above. Currently proposed precolonial histories of the Lowland Northern Ateker communities do not achieve this level of nuanced analysis.[101]

Current scholarship contends (on the basis of a small number of contradictory oral traditions) that the Proto Northern Ateker community travelled *en masse* from the PNA homeland in South Sudan up onto the Karamoja plateau once climatic conditions improved after c. 1250. Only later, after having entirely abandoned the Proto Ateker homeland, did elements comprising the Lowland Northern Ateker (LNA) language communities then move back down to low-lying plains of South Sudan and Kenya now occupied by today's Toposa and Turkana. This theory leaves a number of unresolved questions, made all the more acute through rigorous linguistic and paleoclimatic analysis. First, it postulates that the Northern Ateker abandoned their homeland just as its environment was improving, without identifying any external push or pull factor. Second, the assumption that the Turkana, Toposa, and Nyangatom diverged separately from a Proto Northern Ateker community living in northeastern Uganda fails to explain 1) the higher rates of core vocabulary cognates between LNA languages, 2) the existence of certain lexical and phonological innovations restricted only to LNA languages, and 3) the higher numbers of discrete clan names shared by LNA-speaking communities. Finally, this theory violates the "principle of fewest moves" often used to reconstruct pre-literate migrations. The

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[101] This is not meant as a critique of authors who have written on LNA communities. These anthropological and linguistic studies did not take up the charge of writing fine-grained precolonial history because they were interested in other questions. The present dissertation also does not fill this gap, although it provides perhaps a more useful starting point for future research. It seems likely to me that a detailed history of the Toposa, Nyangatom, and Turkana based on assiduous research with oral traditions like that conducted by Lamphear would be very fruitful.

theory assumes a complete abandonment and then reoccupation of Southeast South Sudan by Ateker-speakers, when Ockham's razor would argue that Ateker occupation of this region has simply remained a constant fact.

Happily, oral traditions are not the only source available to investigate this history. As shown in Chapter 2, evidence from historical linguistics suggests that today's Toposa, Nyangatom, and Turkana societies are linguistically descended from a common protolanguage, which I call Lowland Northern Ateker (LNA). In addition to unique lexical and phonological innovations and high rates of shared core vocabulary, these groups also share a common material culture, such as mobile houses constructed of light sidings sewn together and light wooden carrying containers well-suited to the drier low-lying plains they inhabit (See Images 5.1 through 5.3). The LNA language communities taken together form, in other words, a distinct cultural and historical – as well as linguistic – sub-group within Northern Ateker.

Image 5.1 - Typical Toposa house, from J. Arensen, *Sticks and straw: Comparative house forms in southern Sudan and northern Kenya* (Dallas, 1983), 74.

Image 5.2 - Typical Turkana house (photograph by the author)

Image 5.3 - Typical Nyangatom house (photograph by the author)

If we assume that the political forms of the Toposa, Turkana, and Nyangatom are derived from a shared lowland history from which they slowly emerged, then we can also make better sense of the history of named generations. Müller-Dempf, for example, asserts that the Toposa and Turkana, at some point in their earlier histories, descended from the Karamoja plateau before travelling to their present locations. He cites as evidence of this common origin in Karamoja the

fact that the two groups share in common a series of specific filial set nicknames – Ngibokora "Tortoises", Ngitukoi "Zebras", and Ngipiyei "Wild Dogs" – as well as the alternating "real" names of Ngimor "Mountains" and Ngirisai "Leopards."[102] Yet, while this is certainly evidence of common origin, it does not point to the highland Karamoja Plateau, where neither the Jie, Dodos, nor Karimojong have this same list. It is, instead, further evidence for the existence of a separate, later, community comprising ancestors of today's LNA-speakers that was historically distinct from the Proto HNA community in the highlands of northeastern Uganda.

A more parsimonious account – one consistent with linguistic evidence – would be that the two main branches of PNA (HNA and LNA) became slowly differentiated over time as a result of their physical division between highlands and lowlands. Of course, individual families or portions of clans could have moved between the two regions. But the retelling of these movements through common literary tropes does not require historians to posit the back-and-forth movement of entire political communities as if they were balls on a billiard table.

The above assertion that ancestors of today's Toposa and Turkana speech communities have a relatively recent shared history as members of a distinct Lowland Northern Ateker group requires a revision to Müller-Dempf's history of *asapan* in Turkana. Müller-Dempf posits that, after the Toposa and Turkana migrated (separately, from the Karamoja Plateau) into their present locations, they both faced the same severe regional drought. He dates this drought to around 1850, although a recent article by David Anderson is probably correct in suggesting it may have

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[102] It must be remembered that common practice in Northern Ateker set-naming is to have two "real" alternating names which grandfathers share with grandsons, in addition to a "nickname" for each historically particular set that inhabited an alternating position. One can be a member of, for example, the Ngipiyei "Wild Dogs" set of the Ngirisai "Leopards" alternation.

occurred a few decades earlier, when it also struck the Maasai.[103] Müller-Dempf argues that the Toposa and Turkana responded differently to the crisis of marriageability and its consequent production of a severely "underaged" class of Warthogs described above. Faced with two large classes of the same "generation" aged decades apart, the Toposa split the Warthogs into two separate filial set lines (which later re-converged), whereas the Turkana abandoned the principle of filial set seniority altogether. By way of explanation for the differing responses, Müller-Dempf offers only that "apparently [the Toposa] did not apply the same social engineering as the Turkana did…"[104] Müller-Dempf's solution is important, original, and convincing as far as it goes. Rather than proffering a functionalist account of Turkana's age-set structure, he helps us imagine the set of environmental conditions and social pressures which led to significant structural change. However, his analysis is unavoidably limited because of his starting assumption that the Toposa and Turkana were distinct groups with their own separate "youth leaving Karamoja" migration histories. After revising the "origins" story of LNA communities, a more interesting transformation comes into view.

I suggest Müller-Dempf is correct in postulating that a catastrophic drought disrupted the *asapan* structure of lowland Northern Ateker communities, but that he overlooks that this disruption affected different parts of LNA society in different ways due to variable ecologies and subsistence practices. Drought-induced social disruption would have had the most severe effects on the LNA-speakers living in the most arid of the lowland zones – today's Turkana County, Kenya. Here, pre-Turkana speakers had shifted by necessity from a subsistence practice

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[103] Anderson, 2016.

[104] Müller-Dempf 2009, 204.

combining cereal cultivation and seasonal transhumant pastoralism to a purer style of nomadic pastoralism. The previous seasonal bifurcation of families into two homesteads (a "main" homestead for old women and young children, and a satellite cattle camp for herders) that defined PNA culture was turned into a permanent state. The two homesteads no longer converged for half of each year, while both were picked up and moved on a fairly regular schedule. In addition the *pater familias* and herd owner likely began spending most of his time with the satellite camp, where he could retain direct control over his herds and also best apply his hard-won technical herding expertise.[105] This new spatial practice associated with nomadism, as opposed to traditional Northern Ateker semi-annual transhumance pastoralism, challenged the underlying logic of the filial principle elaborated in Chapter 4.

If the herd owner was co-located with his herd throughout the year, the annual anxieties produced by the PNA *akiwodakin* ceremony would have dissipated, and along with it, the governing rationale of the PNA *asapan* structure. Pre-Turkana speakers had carried with them into the semi-desert an *asapan* system characterized by endemic "overaging," an inability to regiment military units, and little in the way of rites of passage from youthhood to adulthood. This cost was worth paying when young men controlled herds they did not own for half of each year. But under the new nomadic regime, the underlying purpose of *asapan* – elders' control over livestock – no longer existed to justify the continuation of an unwieldy age-class system once it became challenged by droughts in the way Müller-Dempf describes. Faced with an acute crisis of "underaging" caused by the filial principle, pre-Turkana speakers abandoned the filial principle itself. The two "generations," who already overlapped in age to a great extent after the

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[105] Gulliver, 1955; A detailed description of this practice in the more recent past can be found in J. McCabe, *Cattle Bring Us to Our Enemies: Turkana Ecology, Politics, & Raiding in a Disequilibrium System* (Ann Arbor, 2011).

Warthog's crisis of marriageability, were made political equals as well, with young men initiated at an appropriate chronological age.

This shift was caused by the adoption of nomadic pastoralism, but it had knock-on effects. Military regimentation was more easily tied to *asapan* initiation, as Lamphear discusses. The presence of initiation ceremonies conducted in men's early twenties became a convenient tool for grappling with the inherently fraught transition from childhood to adulthood, and more elements of worldly social standing accreted to *asapan* until it became a true "rite of passage" in the classical sense. Perhaps most significantly for the broad narrative of Northern Ateker history, the rejection of the filial principles by pre-Turkana speakers and their creation of separate initiation practices effected a political split with other parts of the LNA language community. In other words, the modification of *asapan* practice which occurred in the Turkana plains during the nineteenth century was not undertaken by an already-distinct Turkana polity, but was rather the event that produced "the Turkana" as a separate political community.

Finally, it is worth noting one apparent consequence of this shift, perhaps unintended, for Turkana society: the proliferation of allegedly "lawless" bands of youthful cattle rustlers during the twentieth century. As discussed by anthropologists Ian Skoggard and Terefi Abate Adem, these bands were very often constituted during collective *asapan* initiations undertaken by young men of roughly the same age.[106] Local criticisms of these youthful lawbreakers tended to focus on their performative displays of disrespect for elders, but it was the elimination of the filial principle from Turkana *asapan* that had enabled their organization into "anti-social" cohorts to begin with. The same factor that make chronological age-grading an effective means for

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[106] I. Skoggard & T. A. Adem, "From Raiders to Rustlers: The Filial Disaffection of a Turkana Age-Set," *Ethnology*, 49, 4 (2010), 249-262; McCabe 2011, 101-103.

establishing military regiments – fostering *esprit de corps* of age-peers initiated together –

empowered groups of young initiates at the same stage of life with common resentments against

gerontocracy to organize into "gangs." Moreover, by removing the senior/junior opposition of

asapan sets, the careerist logic that encouraged stability by promising youth promotion to higher

status with time was also disrupted. *Asapan* in Turkana thus became vulnerable to what

Lamphear adroitly labels the "setting the fox to guard the henhouse" dilemma of chronological

age-classes, in which nominally protective regiments of military age men are perceived of by

others as the true threat to social stability.[107] The specific debates which sustained the filial

principle in most Northern Ateker societies for centuries are lost to time. But we can imagine

that fear of the consequences of youthful empowerment may have been raised at various points

in Ateker history as a justification retaining the seemingly unwieldy filial principle. Certainly, as

Skoggard and Adem make clear, that danger came to pass in Turkana, at least in the minds of

elders now anxious about the youth for an entirely different reason.

Asapan Borrowed by Neighbors

East Africa, in the nineteenth century, faced a number of major upheavals including the inland

penetration of Muslim and European travelers, the southward extension of the Ethiopian state, a

series of droughts, the introduction of devastating diseases including rinderpest, and the onset of

colonial rule. During this same century, numerous neighbors of the Northern Ateker borrowed

some form of *asapan* (or *sapana* in languages preferring word-final vowels). Although it is

difficult to pinpoint when borrowings occurred, it is clear that by the nineteenth century *asapan*

had been incorporated into the social or political life of the following neighbors: Jo-Abwor

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[107] J. Lamphear, 1998, 81.

(Ethur) and Jo-Akwa (Labwor), Mening, Ik (Teuso), Napore, Didinga, So (Tepes), Pokot (Suk), and Usuku Teso (See Map 5.2).[108] The full range of motivations for borrowing *asapan* are difficult to assess, and such a project would require historical inquiry into each of these populations that is beyond the scope of this dissertation. But a recognition of the ways that a fundamentally decentralized political structure was borrowed by relatively more centralized societies during a time of widespread upheaval usefully pushes against stubborn neo-evolutionary assumptions about the trajectory of political centralization in nineteenth century Africa, and is worth even a cursory examination.

Rather than seeking to reconstruct the history of *asapan* borrowing in each case, the following paragraphs highlight the shape of *asapan* as it is practiced in these different spaces. By doing so, it is possible to get a sense of why the neighbors of the Northern Ateker may have found it prudent to adopt some elements of *asapan*, what the historical implications of such adoptions might be, and what this can tell us about how *asapan* was viewed from an etic perspective. Three consistent themes emerge from this analysis. First, *asapan*, *ngakiriketa* (or at least the sacred grove concept), and *akigat* prayers (but not necessarily the specific High God *akuj*) were often borrowed as a bundle. Second, the idea that age-classes should be constructed according to the filial principle with only two sets active at a time was not particularly important to non-Ateker populations. Third, the borrowing of *asapan* occurred in most instances in a context of Northern Ateker military and economic, if not also cultural, dominance. Because there

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[108] Parenthetical names, with the exception of Labwor (which designates a language region), are alternative, sometimes pejorative, ethnonyms provided for reference purposes. Linguistically, these peoples fall into the following families. Lwo: Jo-Abwor & Jo-Akwa; Rub: Ik & So; Surmic: Didinga; Kalenjin: Pokot; Ateker: Usuku Teso; Unclassified: Napore. Based on two core vocabulary lists recorded with the assistance of Mr. Paul Ongoet, I believe the Mening most likely belong to the Lotuxo-Maa language family, but further work is needed to confirm this classification; see also M. Mann & D. Dalby (eds.), *A Thesurus of African Languages* (New York, 1987), Entry #72B.

is no published material on Didinga *asapan* and I was unable to conduct research in South

Sudan, the Didinga are regrettably excluded from this section.[109]
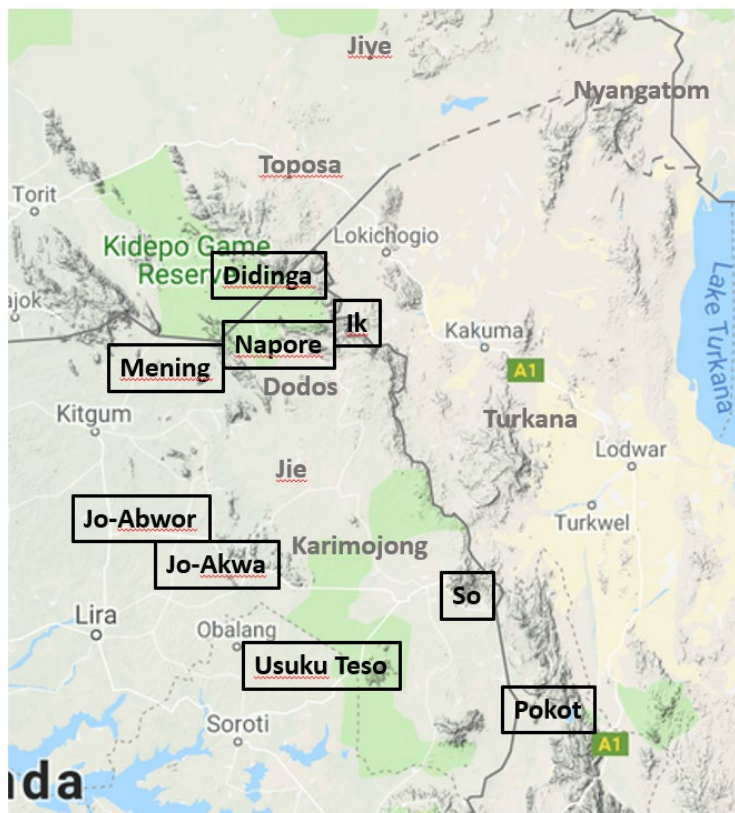
Map 5.2 - Outlined names are communities that borrowed a form of *asapan*.

Asapan in the Labwor Hills

 The Jo-Abwor people are one of two distinct Lwo-speaking groups who live in the Labwor hills,

a well-watered and fertile region that abuts Teso, Karimojong, and Jie territory.[110] Though they

[109] The only reference I am aware of for *asapan* in Didinga consists of two dictionary entries for noun and verb forms of "initiate (to adulthood)" translated with the root *sappan*. See Rosato 1980, 92. Also, Ateker words are used for named *gadaa*-like sets among the Dassanetch.

[110] There is reason to believe, based on oral traditions, place-names, and some Labwor clan names that at least some ancestors of the Labwor population were Ateker-speaking Ngikatapa populations who intermarried with Lwo-speakers as the two groups migrated south from South Sudan following c. 900. This position is advanced by R.

share a language with the neighboring Jo-Akwa, or Nyakwai, they are politically distinct. Both

groups have long practiced iron smelting and smithing, which had a formative influence on their

relations with their Northern Ateker neighbors, the Karimojong and Jie (Image 5.4).[111] From

before the onset of colonial rule – and as far back as anyone remembers – the Karimojong and

Jie have considered each other enemies and raided one another's cattle. They long did so with

iron weapons supplied by Labwor blacksmiths, and given the Lwo derivation of many Proto

Ateker words related to iron production (Chapter 3), it seems likely that this exchange

relationship has a very long history.[112] In the nineteenth century, if not earlier, the supply of iron

was shaped by Ateker politics, so that the Jo-Abwor supplied iron tools and weapons to the Jie,

and through them to the Turkana, and the Jo-Akwa traded iron to the Teso and Karimojong.[113]

Living in an ecologically attractive region on the border of the expansionist Karimojong and Jie,

both Labwor groups may have leveraged their status as iron-suppliers to maintain political

independence from their more numerous and powerful Northern Ateker neighbors. Their

strategies for cementing productive alliances with trading partners, however, extended beyond

Herring in "A History of the Labwor Hills" (PhD Dissertation, University of California at Santa Barbara, 1974), 161-164. He argues that the ancestors of the current inhabitants occupied the Labwor hills after c. 1785.

[111] The Labwor smelting industry is now defunct, although local blacksmiths still manipulate manufactured iron rods into tools. I was only able to find one very old man who remembered how to build and run a smelting furnace, and he led me to a hilly area filled with slag deposits to confirm the presence of smelting in the past. LB, 30 September 2017, Opoponga (see picture). For an earlier description of Labwor smelting, see E. J. Wayland, "Preliminary Studies of the Tribes of Karamoja: The Labwor, The Wanderobo, the Dodotho, and the Jie; with a note concerning the Karamojong," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 61, (1931), 197-201.

[112] For a treatment of this history based on oral traditions, see R. Herring, "Production and Exchange in Labwor, Uganda" (Conference Presentation, African Studies Association, 1973); LB, Atheder, 29 September 2017.

[113] Herring 1974, 249-264 & 301.

ensuring continued supplies of iron at consistent prices.[114] The Jo-Abwor, for example,

cultivated marriage alliances with the Jie, and both the Jo-Abwor and Jo-Akwa adopted different

aspects of *asapan* practice into their own societies. The Jo-Akwa also managed to draw upon

their status as blacksmiths to carve out a niche position in the Karimojong political system.

Image 5.4 - Iron slag in the Labwor Hills (photograph by the author)

The Jo-Abwor did not borrow the word *asapan* to describe their age-class initiation

practice, instead retaining a Lwo word *kwogo*, but they did adopt age-class structures that

partially reflected aspects of the Northern Ateker system.[115] The Jo-Abwor today maintain a two-

track age-class structure. The most important track for everyday life is initiation into a

chronological age-set, of which at any time there are approximately five active sets. Each of

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[114] Herring records memories of the following fixed exchange rates for the iron-livestock trade: 1) one bull = two spears plus a cowbell, or two hoes; 2) one goat = one hoe, one spear, or one axe. Ibid., 254.

[115] The present synthesis is based on the following sources: R. G. Abrahams, "Dual Organization in Labwor?" *Ethnos*, 51, 1-2 (1986), 88-104; R. Herring, "The 'Origins' of the JoAbwor and JoAkwa," (Seminar Paper, Kenyatta University College, 1976); R. Herring, 1974; LB, 29 September 2017, Atheder; LB, Abim, 01 October 2017; LB, Obwuro, 01 October 2017.

these age-sets is given a name at the time of initiation, and membership in an age-set authorizes men to sit in the Jo-Abwor semi-circle for adult men, called the *akiriket*. Like the Northern Ateker *akiriket*, the Jo-Abwor *akiriket* facilitates meetings between different lineage groups, called *kaka*, within a single territorial section, called *othem* (the relation to the Teso *etem* system is explored in Chapter 6). Although each *othem* maintains a distinct list of age-set names, some Lwo and some Ateker in origin, Jo-Abwor men also belong to cross-cutting filial sets with the alternating Ateker names Ekothowa "Buffaloes" and Ekoria "Honey Badgers." Though assignment to one of these two sets is based on an oppositional filial principle, there is no sense of seniority between them.[116] Membership in one of these two sets, in a broad sense, makes a man a true member of the Jo-Abwor political community, but membership does not determine who has a right to make political decisions. In addition to the Ateker names and the familiar principle of filial alternation, the generic name for such sets – *enyameta*, or *meto* – further confirms that they are borrowed from the Northern Ateker, where the word for "filial set" is *anyamet*.

What motivated the Jo-Abwor to borrow certain aspects of Northern Ateker political structure is elusive. We can imagine, however, that they may have been attracted to the *akiriket/anyamet* concept's capability to create methods of political identification that cut across clans (Figure 5.4). Or, maybe the Jo-Abwor adopted social institutions easily legible to their Jie allies as a strategy to improve foreign relations. In support of this hypothesis, historian Ralph Herring quotes a Jo-Abwor man speaking about the Jie relationship: "When the Jie say that the

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[116] Abrahams notes that this is similar to the Turkana version of *asapan* and suggests that the seniority principle may have disappeared from both societies for similar reasons. I think, for reasons given below, it is unlikely that this is an ancient system for the Jo-Abwor, and therefore doubt that such a seniority principle ever existed. See Abrahams 1986, 91-95.

Labwor are their brothers, they mean this: You and I have met here. Our fathers were different.

We are friends, but our children will grow up like brothers because of our friendship. It was so

with the Labwor and Jie."[117] Perhaps initiating their men into filial sets analogous to those of the

Jie helped the Jo-Abwor elucidate how the two populations could be "brothers."

Figure 5.4 - Jo-Abwor *akiriket*, drawn by author[118]

If so, the Jo-Abwor set name "Buffaloes" may be a clue that the adoption of filial sets has

a fairly recent history. "Buffaloes" was the name of the junior Jie filial set – i.e., the set with

younger men more apt to fight in wars - at the end of the nineteenth-century.[119] Around this time,

a large war broke out between the Jie and Lwo-speaking Acholi, with the Jo-Abwor stuck in the

middle. The Jo-Abwor had long supplied iron to both, but relations with the Acholi had already

deteriorated throughout the late nineteenth century. Perhaps, finding themselves stuck between

two much larger warring populations, the Jo-Abwor adopted the corporate identity of

"Buffaloes" for their young men in part to harness the unifying power of society-wide filial sets,

[117] Herring 1974, 250.

[118] LB, Obwuro, 01 October 2017.

[119] Lamphear 1976.

but also to demonstrate to the Jie that, their Lwo tongue notwithstanding, they should be trusted (and protected) as allies.[120]

A similar dynamic was at play in Jo-Akwa history. In possession of valuable iron technology and bordering both the Karimojong and Jie, who were perennial enemies, the Jo-Akwa were in a precarious position.[121] Whether driven by need for a stable alliance, seeing opportunities for profit, or coerced by the Karimojong, the Jo-Akwa appear to have definitively thrown their lot in with the Karimojong by the end of the nineteenth century.[122] They went further than the Jo-Abwor, claiming to not merely be "brothers" of the Karimojong, but adopting a Karimojong identity that persists to this day.[123] To make this claim, they took advantage of the power of *asapan* to create political communities from disparate groups, borrowing many aspects of *asapan* wholesale. The Jo-Akwa, for example, borrowed the concept of ranked, cyclical filial sets, along with the names for these sets – "Mountains" and "Gazelles" – from the Karimojong.[124] They did not adopt the word *akiriket*, but took up many Northern Ateker *akiriket*

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[120] Lamphear & Webster 1971, 33.

[121] The origins of the Jo-Akwa as a separate group are not completely clear, but they seem to have been established in their present location by the mid-nineteenth century. See R. Herring, "The Origins and Development of the Nyakwai," (Seminar Paper, Makerere University, 1972).

[122] R. Herring, "Cattlemen and Farmers: The Historical Pattern in Northern Uganda" (Seminar Paper, Kenyatta University, 1975), 14-16.

[123] LB, Kobulin, 30 September 2017. An element of coercion is suggested by the following quotation from a Jo-Abwor informant recorded by Herring: "The Jo-Akwa… claimed to be Karimojong because they feared the Karimojong would attack and kill them if they claimed to be Jo-Abwor." Herring 1975, 14.

[124] Herring 1975, 15; LB, Atheder, 29 September 2017. One can be tempted to say they borrowed the word *asapan*, although both it and the Lwo word *kwogo* are used interchangeably to refer to filial set initiations.

practices, such as *akigat* unison prayers, which were led by initiated elders within the *othem,* or territorial section.[125]

Herring claims that in the initial stages of their alliance with the Karimojong, the Jo-Akwa allowed the Karimojong to dictate the timing of their initiations and generational hand-over ceremonies, and he suggests this is a sign of their subordinate political relationship. If correct, this is very interesting, because during the most recent hand-over of power from the Mountains to the Gazelles, the Karimojong waited for a signal from a prominent Jo-Akwa family to declare the appropriate time for the ceremony to occur.[126] More research is sorely needed, but this may indicate that the conscious attempt on the part of the Jo-Akwa to incorporate themselves within the Karimojong political system continued throughout the twentieth century. If so, it has likely been mediated through the symbolism of iron, harkening to the important position the Jo-Akwa held *vis-à-vis* the Karimojong through their control of this important resource. When I visited to the son of the (now-deceased) Jo-Akwa man who had ordered the latest generational hand-over, he quickly ushered me to see a large iron spike deposited in a shrine, which he claimed was the symbol of Jo-Akwa authority to open and close filial sets across all of Karamoja (Image 5.5).

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[125] Herring claims that the concept of *othem* was restricted to the Jo-Abwor, and that the Jo-Akwa use a synonym *aurianeth*. Perhaps usage has changed over time, but during my fieldwork in 2017, the place at which public meetings and *akigat* prayers were held was called *othem*, and *aurianeth* was translated to me as a generic word for any meeting. Interestingly, one of the prerequisites to lead Jo-Akwa *akigat* prayers is a working knowledge of Karimojong as a liturgical language. Because of the nature call-and-response nature of *akigat*, it is possible for an audience to participate even without understanding the language, as long as the leader is a competent speaker. The liturgical use of the Karimojong language in *akigat* ceremonies, plus the adoption of the Karimojong individual sacrificial rite of *amooch* (from *amook*), suggest that the Jo-Akwa may have been attracted to the supernatural dimension of Karimojong ritual practice, although this requires further research.

[126] KA, Naciele, 23 July 2017; KA, Nakapiripirit, 27 August 2017.

Image 5.5 - A large iron spike in a shrine in Nyakwai, said by the shrine manager to symbolize the Karimojong relationship with the Jo-Akwa – photograph by author

Asapan in the Mening and Napore communities

Northeast of Labwor, in today's Dodoth County of Uganda, there are two small, culturally distinct populations who live on the northwestern edge of Dodos settlement. One, the Mening, appear to speak a language related to the Lotuxo branch of Ongamo-Maa, while the other, the Napore, claim to have once spoken their own language but today speak Dodos.[127] Both groups claim to have lived in this region before the arrival of Northern Ateker migrants, and it is possible that their ancestors once shared similar cultural or linguistic attributes. Both groups today practice a version of *asapan* (called *sapana* in the Mening language), but the structure

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[127] I elicited two core vocabulary lists in the Mening language. Further fieldwork and analysis is still needed, but the language seems to be most closely related to Lotuxo, having the highest percentage of shared cognates with Lotuxo and containing a /p/ > /f/ sound change similar to Lotuxo.

differs greatly from the standard practice of the Northern Ateker. Because these deviations from Northern Ateker *asapan* follow very similar patterns, they can be discussed in the same frame.

If, in fact, the Mening and original Napore languages are related to Lotuxo, it is possible as well that the Mening people shared in what anthropologist Simon Simonse call the *monyomiji* age-class "arena," which had a historical nucleus among the Lotuxo but became widespread throughout southern South Sudan over the past millennium.[128] In the *monyomiji* system, age-sets are assigned according to chronological age, and there are number of fixed age-classes through which one is promoted throughout life.[129] Neither the filial principle nor the dual alternation principle of Northern Ateker *asapan* exist in the *monyomiji* system, and these characteristics are similarly absent in Mening *sapana* and Napore *asapan*i. Among both the Mening and Napore, young men between the ages of fifteen and twenty are led by their parents through an initiation test.[130] The initiate must spear a he-goat provided by friends or family, and then jump back and forth over a roasting fire while being beaten with sticks by community members. Ideally, his conduct will remain stoic. As a final test, the initiate must demonstrate mastery of grain preparation by fetching sorghum from a granary, grinding it by hand, and using it to brew beer or make porridge without anyone's assistance in a limited amount of time. This first level of initiation marks a young man as eligible for marriage (in theory, although not always in practice), and gains him entrance into what is, for both groups, called the *akiriket*. Over the years, a man and his age cohort advance through a series of age-classes, until reaching the most

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[128] Simonse & Kurimoto 1998, 5.

[129] Simonse, 2017.

[130] Because there is no published material on Mening nor Napore age-classes, the source for all this information is my own fieldwork. ME, Opotpot, 09 March 2017; ME, Lokabaya, 10 March 2017; ME, Telel, 1 November 2017; DO, Kawalakol, 1 November 2017.

senior rank – called Ngikolong (at least among the Mening), which is an Ateker word meaning either "The Suns" or "Those of Long Ago."[131] As one advances in age, his seating position in the *akiriket* half-circle shifts to the right, so that the eldest elders sit on the far right rather than in the center as among the Northern Ateker (Figures 5.5 & 5.6).
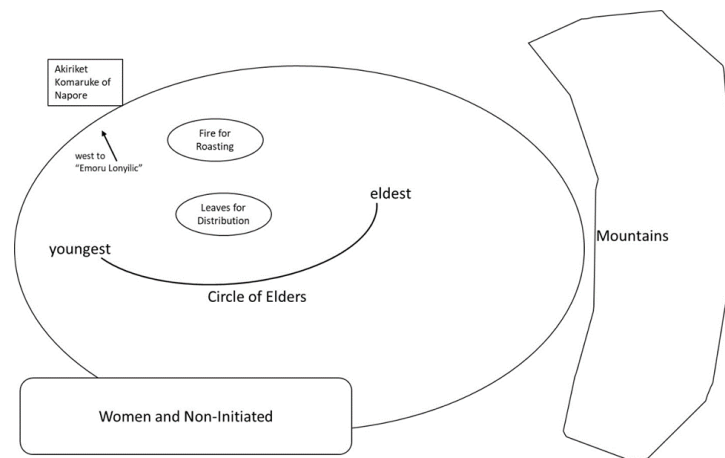
Figure 5.5 - Napore *akiriket*, drawn by author[132]
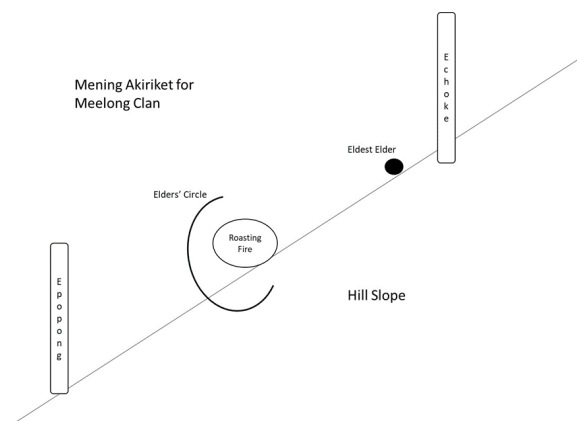
Figure 5.6 - Mening *akiriket* – drawn by the author[133]

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[131] *Akolong* means "sun" and *kolong* means "long ago" in all Ateker languages.

[132] DO, Kawalakol, 01 November 2017.

[133] ME, Telel, 01 November 2017.

Aside from the seating arrangement, the most significant difference between Mening and Northern Ateker *ngakiriketa* is the social unit they correspond to. *Ngakiriketa* for the Mening (the situation is less clear for the Napore) are used by and for distinct clans. Because each Mening clan has its own *akiriket*, *ngakiriketa* do not appear to have had the clan-integrating function that has been their hallmark in many other settings. Nor do age-classes, which do not appear to be coordinated across the twelve Mening clans. In answer to the question of why *sapana/asapan* is important, Mening and Napore respondents highlighted that it is how boys become adult men, that it creates an orderly mechanism for enforcing respect for elders within a clan, and that it marks men as marriageable. I only had limited time to conduct fieldwork among the Mening and Napore, but preliminarily, it seems that while a Northern Ateker vocabulary has been borrowed to name age-classes and denote the initiation ritual, this has mostly been a process of lightly grafting an Ateker lexicon onto an otherwise little-changed local practice. More research is needed to offer a satisfactory explanation of why such a lexical graft took hold throughout Mening society, but perhaps the fact that Mening-speakers emphasized that they sometimes share their *ngakiriketa* with the Dodos indicates that the lexicon of *asapan* was borrowed to make an indigenous age-class system seem more legible to their dominant Northern Ateker neighbors.

Asapan among the mountain-dwelling Rub

Two other indigenous groups in northeast Uganda who employ a form of *asapan* are the Rub-speaking Ik in the northeast highlands of Kaabong District and the Rub-speaking So on the mountains of Moroto and Kadam in today's Karamoja. There is little that can be said about Ik practice, which has received very limited scholarly attention. During my fieldwork, I learned little more than the following: 1) there was an Ik *tasapet* system through much of the twentieth

century, and possibly much earlier 2) it is widely agreed that *tasapet* will die out over the next decades because nobody is being initiated, and 3) Ik *ngakiriketa* have roughly the same semi-circle shape as the Northern Ateker version. In his 1985 review of Colin Turnbull's controversial monograph *The Mountain People*, linguist Bernd Heine briefly describes a *tasapet* system which is quite unlike Northern Ateker *asapan*, in that it is not based on a filial principle and does not have two alternating generations but rather a linear collection of named age-classes.[134] Heine does list *tasapet* sets named after animals (rendered in Ik, although for me the list was rendered in Dodos), but this list does not correspond to any Northern Ateker community. Heine's observations and my own fieldwork agree that *tasapet* initiates undergo a lengthy test during which they live unsupported in the forest, and this procedure is notably similar to another type of initiation practiced by the Rub-speaking So. Much more research is needed on Ik *tasapet* before drawing any historical conclusions, and one wonders if the practice will survive in memory long enough for such research to be possible.

South of the Ik on the two largest mountains of northeastern Uganda, Moroto and Kadam, the Rub-speaking So people also practice a form of *asapan*, using the same word as their Karimojong neighbors. One point that initially stands out about So *asapan* is its lack of supernatural overtones. The So have long maintained a secretive "ghost cult" called *kenisan*, into which elders are initiated through an arduous procedure, and it is through *kenisan* that So communities communicate with their impersonal "High God" figure, *belgen*.[135] This system of

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[134] B. Heine, "The Mountain People: Some Notes on the Ik of North-Eastern Uganda," *Africa*, 55, 1 (1985), 5. Heine's review of Turnbull's *The Mountain People* adroitly exposes what must rank among the most ill-conceived, inaccurate, and poorly contextualized "anthropological" texts ever written on Uganda.

[135] J. Weatherby, "The Secret Spirit Cult of the Sor in Karamoja," *Africa*, 58, 2 (1988), 210-229; C. Laughlin & E. Laughlin, "Kenisan: Economic and Social Ramifications of the Ghost Cult among the So of North Eastern Uganda,"

initiation and ritual is complex and deeply rooted in many aspects of So cultural practice, with

the So borrowing of *asapan* having been "laid over already existing institutions like a grid,"

rather than serving to replace or uproot them.[136] The Karimojong origins of So *asapan* are

clearly indicated by the names of So initiation sets – Mountains and Gazelles – and by the fact

that the ritual grove in which initiations are conducted is called *kiriket*, from the Northern Ateker

akiriket. *Asapan* is rare among the So today, but in the middle of the twentieth century, enough

So were being initiated that most every So adult man said he desired to "have my *asapan*."[137] In

cases where the So *asapan* system had a practical effect, it was usually in support of other, well-

established institutions such as *kenisan*. For example, although non-state political authority in the

mid-twentieth century was vested in *kenisan* elders, including the determination of who would be

eligible for *kenisan* initiation, *asapan* sets were mobilized as a convenient method for organizing

the determination of *kenisan* eligibility. Given that *asapan* does not appear to be critically

important for any aspect of So life, the question must be asked: when and why did the So adopt

asapan?

 The question of "when" may be impossible to answer, although anthropologist Charles

Laughlin suggests it is a fairly recent innovation. As to the motivation for adoption, it may be

that *asapan* was not "borrowed" by the So from the Karimojong in the sense that they were two

self-contained groups sharing ideas, but rather that a mixing together of So and Northern Ateker

families induced *asapan*'s piecemeal introduction over time. The So maintain their own

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Africa, 42, 1 (1972), 9-20; SO, Katabok, 29 August 2017; SO, Moruita, 30 August, 2017; SO, Tapach, 06 October 2017.

[136] C. Laughlin & E. Laughlin, "Age Generations and Political Process in So," *Africa*, 44, 3 (1974), 278; SO, Kakingol, 29 July 2017.

[137] Laughlin & Laughlin 1974, 271.

indigenous marriage lexicon, but they have borrowed words related to "concubinage,"

"unfinished marriage engagements (e.g. without bridewealth being paid off)," and "co-

habitation" from the Northern Ateker.[138] At least one Northern Ateker (Jie) source has claimed

that Rub women "could marry whomever they pleased," and it was fairly common, at least in the

mid-twentieth century, for Karimojong and Turkana men to marry So wives and "take up

residence" in So territory.[139] Because Northern Ateker marriage is ideologically patrilocal, this

would represent a deviation from typical practice, and it seems likely that Northern Ateker men

who moved into their So wives' family homes may have been "not fully married" according to

Northern Ateker custom.

Perhaps a certain class of male Northern Ateker immigrants – cattle poor and not

properly married, but seeking to exploit the better agricultural yields provided by mountain

elevations – sought to bolster their social position by highlighting their *asapan* status in their

new homes. In their new environs, the fact that these men had undergone formal initiation into

the wider region's dominant political structure may have been regarded with a certain social

cachet. Given the regional economic and military dominance of the Northern Ateker, non-

immigrant So men may have also seen value in also joining this institution, perhaps to improve

their prospects of trade and/or marriage with their powerful neighbors. What appear in retrospect

to be intentional cultural "borrowings" on a grand scale can be, when examined at a more

[138] C. Laughlin, "Maximization, Marriage, and Residence among the So," *American Ethnologist*, 1, 1 (1974), 133. For example, So: *akicol* "partial marriage" & *apudori* "cohabitation"; Karimojong: *akicul* "to pay compensation in livestock for pregnancy of unmarried girl," & *apudor* "to be betrothed".

[139] Laughlin & Laughlin 1974, 273.

granular level, something that occurs between and among individuals, rather than across hermetically sealed cultural units.

Asapan among the Kalenjin

If So society's historical adoption of *asapan* was a somewhat haphazard process which did not radically affect pre-existing social institutions, the opposite must be said for the pastoral Pokot who lived just southeast of the So mountains. The Southern Nilotic Kalenjin-speaking Pokot are today divided culturally and economically into two spheres – the plains-dwelling, predominantly pastoralist Pokot who are neighbors to the Karimojong and Turkana, and the hill-dwelling, predominantly agriculturalist Pokot living generally farther south. Among the pastoralists only, "*sapana*" has become infused into many aspects of life, in some instances displacing Kalenjin practices or social values.[140] The division of the Pokot language community into distinct highland and lowland cultures appears, on the basis of limited archaeological evidence, to date to c. 1750, by which point Northern Ateker pastoralists had probably already begun to occupy territory to the immediate north (Turkana) and west (Karimojong).[141] The extent to which interaction with Northern Ateker communities helped produce present-day Pokot divisions is impossible to determine without further research, but it seems clear that the plains pastoralists whose economic subsistence practices came to revolve around cattle-keeping were strongly influenced by nearby Northern Ateker social institutions and material culture.

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[140] J. Peristiany, "The Age-Set System of the Pastoral Pokot: the "Sapana" Initiation Ceremony," *Africa*, 21, 3 (1951), 188-206.

[141] M. Davies and H. Moore, "Landscape, time and cultural resilience: a brief history of agriculture in Pokot and Marakwet, Kenya," *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 10, 1 (2016), 71.

In most settings where *asapan* has been borrowed from the Northern Ateker, the borrowers refer to *asapan* as their own indigenous, timeless tradition; the Pokot make no such claim. The epic poem of the hero Merkol instead tells a story of how Merkol descended the Suk hills of western Kenya in search of grazing land for his cattle, when he encountered the Karimojong. Seeing that the Karimojong were fierce warriors, Merkol asked the secret of their military success, and learned that it was the mud headdresses worn by Northern Ateker men who had completed *asapan*. Merkol was warned, however, that it would be deadly to attempt to wear such headdresses without first spearing an ox during an *asapan* feast. It was from this point on that the pastoral Pokot began to wear mud headdresses and initiate men into *sapana*. Pastoral Pokot neighbor both the Turkana and Karimojong, but this oral tradition suggests ther *sapana* had a Karimojong origin. The adoption by the Pokot of Karimojong set names – the Mountains and Gazelles, in the Ngakarimojong language – would seem to confirm this. There is little evidence indicating when this borrowing may have first occurred. However, *sapana* seems to have been fully operational by the late nineteenth century because Pokot men interviewed in 1947 remembered *sapana* initiation ceremonies datable to no later than c. 1896 according to estimations based on dating of wider Kalenjin circumcision groups.[142]

Although the epic of Merkol may be evidence for Northern Ateker military supremacy during the late eighteenth century, it is unlikely that *sapana* originated among the Pokot solely for the purpose of warfare because, as discussed above, the filial principle makes Northern Ateker *asapan* an unwieldly method for organizing military forces.[143] But the Merkol story also

[142] J. Peristiany, "The Age-Set System of the Pastoral Pokot: Mechanism, Function, and Post-Sapana Ceremonies," *Africa*, 21, 4 (1951), 283.

[143] Karimojong and Turkana military power is a common theme in Pokot folklore. See H. K. Schneider, "Pokot Folktales, Humor, and Values," *Journal of the Folklore Institute*, 4, 2/3 (1967), 286-318.

suggests that the Pokot – who are not traditionally monotheists – found something attractive about the supernatural element of *asapan*. If so, this may explain the very careful replication of Karimojong ritual practice during Pokot *sapana* ceremonies, which use Karimojong as a liturgical language and physically resemble Karamojong *asapan* in terms of *kerket* layout. The Pokot also place emphasis on certain parts of the slaughtered ox such as the *amuro* "hind leg" which is reserved for Pokot elders just as it is among the Karimojong, and perform a Karimojong-style *adongo* dance during *sapana* ceremonies.[144] A second similar function is the social integration accomplished through Pokot *sapana*. Because set names and age-class identities are shared across Pokot society, initiation into *sapana* opens the door to wider social connections for the initiate.[145]

Yet, while many rituals of *asapan* were borrowed intact from the Karimojong, the social function of *asapan* underwent a process of domestication among pastoral Pokot.   The Pokot, like most Kalenjin-speakers, have a long-inherited tradition of social initiation into adulthood based on circumcision (for boys and girls), which may have origins in earlier interactions with Maa-speakers who migrated into the area.[146] "Coming of age" through a public rite is thus a historically important component of Pokot initiation ritual. By the mid-twentieth century, however, anthropologist John Peristiany recorded that it had become increasingly common for pastoral Pokot men to forego circumcision or initiation into a circumcision class in favor of

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[144] Observed similarities in *akiriket* practices between the Karimojong and Pokot are also noted in: A. J. Docherty, "The Karamojong and the Suk," *Uganda Journal*, 21, 1 (1957), 33-34.

[145] Ibid., 188-206.

[146] For lexical evidence, see C. Ehret 1971, 197.

merely undergoing *sapana* to mark their entrance to adulthood.[147] *Asapan*, in its Northern Ateker

form, does not reliably generate correspondences between biological age and eligibility for

initiation, and it is perhaps for this reason that Peristiany noted that the filial principle was not

strictly followed by Pokot initiates. Today, at least for the pastoral Pokot men I spoke with,

sapana is the primary means of achieving adult status and the right to marry, and usually occurs

in young adulthood.[148] Girls, lacking *sapana* as an option, still tend to undergo a circumcision-

based initiation, although international NGO and national government efforts against female

circumcision have curtailed this practice in recent decades.[149]

       To the extent that Pokot men eschew circumcision-based initiation, or at least supplement

it with *sapana* initiation, the sense of initiation as a "physical test" has declined in Pokot society.

As Peristiany writes:

To a person who has witnessed the initiation ceremonies of the Kipsigis and of the hill Pokot one
of the most striking characteristics of *sapana* is that it stresses the recognition of the initiate's
adult status without submitting him to the long circumcision teaching and tests which have the
twofold aims of permitting the seniors to assess the initiate's worthiness and of integrating him
into his set. During *sapana* there are no necessary actions to be performed by the initiate. There
is no ordeal, no pride in sharing an esoteric knowledge from which the non-initiated are
excluded. During the ceremony itself the initiate plays a very secondary role... There is no
emulation between fellow initiates, no feeling of elation at having achieved one's social ambition
in the face of the opposition of society, no triumph over pain and hardship to enhance the
warrior's prestige in the eyes of women.

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[147] Although this is a point of friction between agricultural and pastoral Pokot, and between young and old. See
Peristiany 1951a, 204-206.

[148] PK, Katabok, 28 August 2018.

[149] A. Woolf (ed.), *Baseline Study Report: Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting and Child Marriage among the
Rendille, Maasai, Pokot, Samburu, and Somali Communities in Kenya* (Nairobi: UNICEF, 2017).

Whether young Pokot men came to prefer *sapana* to circumcision in part because it was "easier" is a question beyond the scope of this chapter, but Peristiany's observation is important for what it highlights about *asapan*. Even taken out of its original cultural context, the initiate himself is conspicuously insignificant in the *asapan* initiation ceremony in comparison to other East African age-set systems. This is because, as argued above, *asapan* is not fundamentally a "coming of age" ceremony for young men, or even an "age-set" institution in the proper sense of the term. *Asapan* is instead a community-based institution. *Asapan* empowers people by bringing them together and ordering society according to age, not by lifting up particular men whether as individuals or in discrete groups. Even when domesticated for Pokot use, *asapan* retained many of these elements (Figure 5.7).

Figure 5.7 - Pokot "kerket" from Peristiany, 1951

Conclusion

Asapan was a major political innovation in precolonial East Africa, defining one of the major "arenas" (see above) of age-class government in the region. It underwrote the expansion of Northern Ateker culture across an area of some 100,000 square kilometers. Elements of *asapan* were also domesticated as integral parts of the political systems of at least eight non-Ateker communities in the region by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. *Asapan* proved

attractive to Northern Ateker and non-Ateker people alike because it offered a pathway to integrate disparate clans into a political whole through age-class initiations. At its core, *asapan* ranked male members of political classes based on their participation in public initiation ceremonies without regard to lineage. That this proved not only attractive but persuasive to many thousands of people spread across multiple cultural groups shows that impersonal institutions were considered to be a serious political model alongside ideologies of centralized monarchy that are more famous in the region. But *asapan* was not the only example of this dynamic. In Teso, frontier communities established another type of anti-monarchical politics, which we turn to now in Chapter 6.

Chapter Six

The Politics of Pioneers and Hearths in Precolonial Teso

Between c. 900 and 1250 CE, sustained aridity forced Ateker families and individuals to fundamentally reconsider their approach to subsistence. Proto Ateker-speakers confronted a choice: remain in place and adopt a transhumant pastoral lifestyle, or move south toward wetter climes and continue cultivating finger millet. Chapters 4 and 5 explore the history of those who remained in place. This chapter focuses instead on those who migrated south and eventually formed the Proto Teso language community, which itself later diverged into the various Teso dialects extant today. Although the choice presented to each Proto Ateker-speaker was essentially binary – to stay or to move – the historical process through which this grand sorting-out occurred should not be imagined as a simple nor abrupt cleavage of one group into two.

Over centuries, individuals and their extended families made thousands of small-scale decisions to move south for what must have been a myriad of contingent reasons nested in a worsening environmental context. They may have suffered one too many crop failures, felt trapped in debtor relationships, wished to join friends who were also moving, wanted a chance to strike out on their own, or sought opportunities for greater wealth. This slow and decentralized process fractured the Proto Ateker language family. As migrants lost touch with Ateker-speakers remaining at home, natural processes of linguistic change affected both groups in different ways, leading eventually to two distinct languages – Proto Northern Ateker and Proto Teso – and marking the end of Proto Ateker. Thus, it would be a fallacy to say that the Proto Teso moved while the Proto Northern Ateker stayed, because neither group existed as such until migration was well underway. Social, linguistic, cultural, or economic practices which today distinguish

descendants of the two groups were the result, and not the cause, of choices made by members of a Proto Ateker language community that had remained basically intact until c. 900-1250 CE.

For southward migrants, this process also fragmented the ancestral Ateker clans. As families and friends from different lineages joined together as pioneers in small groups, the atomization of the two dozen or so ancient Ateker patriclans rendered these clans unusable as day-to-day political constituencies. As space expanded and time moved forward, ancient patriclans also became less potent as categories of exogamy. But the idiom of patrilineally-defined exogamy did not disappear. Southward migrants continuously invested in the invention and re-invention, naming and re-naming, of new smaller and more localized exogamous units. By the time colonial ethnographers arrived in Teso, there was already a bewildering array of more than one thousand "major clans" and "sub clans," and this growth continued into the twentieth century.[1] Today, one of the perennial challenges faced by officers of the Iteso Cultural Union is the seemingly impossible task of maintaining an updated and complete list of Teso clans.[2] In contrast, among each Northern Ateker political community there remain only a few dozen recognized "clans." This continual invention of new clans in new territories sustained clanship as a greater political force than it was in Northern Ateker communities. The locus of Teso political decision-making on questions such as war and peace or settlement of judicial disputes came to reside in inter-clan congresses called *etem*, or "neighborhood association," rather than the Northern Ateker *akiriket*. This difference had implications for the political

[1] For an example of "bewildered," see L. Williams, "Teso Clans," *Uganda Journal*, 4 (1936), 174-176.

[2] Iteso Cultural Union, *Iteso Clan Directory* (Soroti, 2017).

position of Teso women who, in their role as managers of initiations and births into clans, exercised influence over fundamental political constituencies.

The existence of thousands rather than dozens of named exogamous groups is only one area where the Teso from their linguistic cousins in Karamoja and Turkana before the colonial era. The Teso were primarily cereal farmers who also kept livestock, whereas the Northern Ateker were primarily pastoralists who grew cereals when possible. Age-sets in Teso were both less important than and structurally unlike the Northern Ateker *asapan* system described in Chapters 4 and 5. Whereas Northern Ateker ritual practices revolved around a singular deity called *akuj*, Teso-speakers recognized numerous spirits – ancestral and natural – plus magical stones, enchanted swamps and rivers, powerful grave shrines, non-corporeal evil twins, and a plethora of other poorly understood but nonetheless fearsome unseen forces.[3] And, over time, Teso *imurok* (doctor-diviners) became recognized as an alternate source of political authority standing outside the *etem*/clan structure, whereas parallel Northern Ateker *ngimurok* remained for the most part subservient to age-set elders.[4]

However, one social characteristic they continued to hold in common was the avoidance of heritable centralized political leadership. Despite their frequent and fluent interactions with neighboring chieftaincies and kingdoms, Teso-speakers never developed analogous offices. This was not a failure of social evolution (Teso-speakers were decidedly open to new ideas in other areas), but rather the outcome of both sociopolitical structures and cultural values. Because of the fragmentation of migrating clans and the incorporation of numerous immigrant groups, different

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[3] Some of these beliefs have been borrowed by segments of Northern Ateker society, especially among the Jie (Chapter 5).

[4] An exception must be made for some parts of Turkana, especially in the late-precolonial period and early colonial periods.

levers of political power (e.g. war-making, resource allocation, judicial disputes, and public ritual) were separately held by distinct institutions, so that authority in one sphere could not easily be translated to power in another. Specifically, two parallel modes of social power emerged through Teso migrations: a feminized space concerning the reproduction of kinship groups and the utilization of land, and a masculine space concerning relations between unrelated kinships groups in the same territory. Later in Teso history, a third mode emerged in the form of *imurok* (doctor-diviners) who stood outside both spheres but wielded influence in each. Yet, this observation alone does little to account for the emergence of a complexly decentralized form of politics in Teso; after all, many precolonial East African states were built upon a foundation of multiple pre-existing *loci* of power.[5] The explanation for why Teso took a different path also lies in social norms that emphasized autonomy at the level of families while denigrating the unequal accumulation of coercive power in any form.

Critically, the durability of decentralized politics came not merely from the value that Proto Teso-speakers placed on autonomy (which was not unusual in East Africa or anywhere else), but from a clear-eyed recognition that political equality was inextricably linked to economic equality. Case studies from across the globe show how political centralization is often constructed on the back of wealth inequality, especially in prosperous sedentary farming economies such as Teso.[6] In Teso, such wealth inequality was anathematized by many, and numerous innovations in Proto Teso vocabulary suggest a denunciation of both extreme wealth

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[5] The seventeenth and eighteenth century expansions of the kingdom of Buganda are a strong example. See N. Kodesh, *Beyond the Royal Gaze: Clanship and Public Healing in Buganda* (Charlottesville, VA, 2009).

[6] A now-classic text on this topic that informs my work is M. Mann, *The Sources of Social Power, Vol I* (Cambridge, UK, 1986). James Scott has examined these questions in two recent works. See J. C. Scott, *The Art of the Not Being Governed: an Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven, 2010) & J. C. Scott, *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States* (New Haven, 2017).

and extreme poverty (see below). Debt is the key concept here, because relations of indebtedness are the fulcrum on which people and groups often parlay economic inequality into political hierarchy.[7] The problems that inequality were perceived to cause came not merely from inequality *per se*, as odious as it may have seemed to some individuals, but also from the debt obligations which attended it. Social strictures against the generation of extreme wealth combined with structural economic impediments to the establishment of long-term debt obligations – especially in the realm of labor – are a necessary condition for explaining how an Ateker cultural disposition favoring small-scale autonomy overwhelmed broader regional trends favoring political centralization in the late precolonial era.

Pre-Teso Southward Movement to the Sixteenth Century

The exodus of the pre-Teso southward out of South Sudan into eastern Uganda and, eventually, western Kenya was a haphazard and decentralized process occurring at a small scale over many centuries. As outlined in Chapter 2, this history unfolded in three broad stages: 1) low-density and sporadic movements of pre-Teso speakers out of South Sudan beginning c. 900, 2) the development of a distinct proto-Teso culture and language in the Usuku region of today's Uganda by c. 1600, and 3) the spread of the Teso language community beyond Usuku to its current regions between c. 1600 and 1900. This movement of Ateker peoples, beginning around the turn of the last millennium, either coincided with or slightly trailed a similar migration by a large number of Western Nilotic Lwo-speakers into north central Uganda, who were likely

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[7] For a good overview of this literature, see G. Peebles, "The Anthropology of Credit and Debt," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 39 (2010), 225-240 and for a recent take on the connection between debt and political inequality see D. Graeber, *Debt: The First 5000 Years* (Brooklyn, NY, 2011).

driven by similar motivations.[8] Some portion of migrating Ateker-speakers - including many members of the *ngirarak* and *ngikaruwok* clans - became thoroughly enmeshed in the Lwo language and culture. Across north-central Uganda, these people formed what historian Ralph Herring calls bilingual and multicultural Ateker/Lwo "clusters," including the "Lango cluster" from which would eventually emerge today's Lango people.[9] There has been an interminable debate as to whether today's Lango, who speak a Lwo language but retain many Ateker ritual practices and specialized Ateker vocabulary, are "really" Ateker or Lwo, and the debate will not be resolved here.[10] For the present purpose, it suffices to note that the retention of significant Ateker ritual and political institutions by Lango-speakers into the early twentieth century helps us date these institutions to at least the beginning of pre-Teso migration around the eleventh to twelfth centuries.[11]

[8] This population movement played out in an environmental context of increasing aridity, although individual motivations surely varied. B. Ogot, *History of the Southern Luo: Volume I, Migration and Settlement, 1500-1900* (Nairobi, 1969); D. W. Cohen, "The Face of Contact: A Model of a Cultural and Linguistic Frontier in Early Eastern Uganda," in R. Vossen & M. Bechaust-Gerst (eds.), *Nilotic Studies: Proceedings of the International Symposium on Language and Histoyr of the Nilotic Peoples, Colonge, January 4-6, 1982* (Berlin, 1983), 339-355; R. Atkinson, *The Roots of Ethnicity: The Origins of the Acholi of Uganda before 1800* (Philadelphia, 1994); J. B. Webster & J. M. Onyango-ku-Odongo, *The Central Lwo during the Aconya* (Nairobi, 1976).

[9] R. Herring, "A History of the Labwor Hills," (PhD Dissertation, University of Southern California, Santa Barbara, 1974).

[10] For a good overview of this debate, see G. N. Uzoigwe, "The Beginnings of Lango Society: A Review of Evidence," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 6, 4 (1973), 397-411"; for a linguist's take, see E. Bavin, "Morphological and Syntactic Divergence in Lango and Acholi," in R. Vossen & M. Bechaus-Gerst (eds.) *Nilotic Studies: Proceedings of the International Symposium on Languages and Cultures of the Nilotic Peoples, Cologne, January 4-6, 1982, Part One* (Berlin, 1983), 149-168.

[11] We can be confident in some cases that these institutions were not recently borrowed from Ateker-speakers because their Lango terms do not contain subsequent sound changes. For example, the *-woro- age-set system (discussed below) would be pronounced /-gworo/ or /-bworo/ in Lango if it had been recently borrowed from Teso.
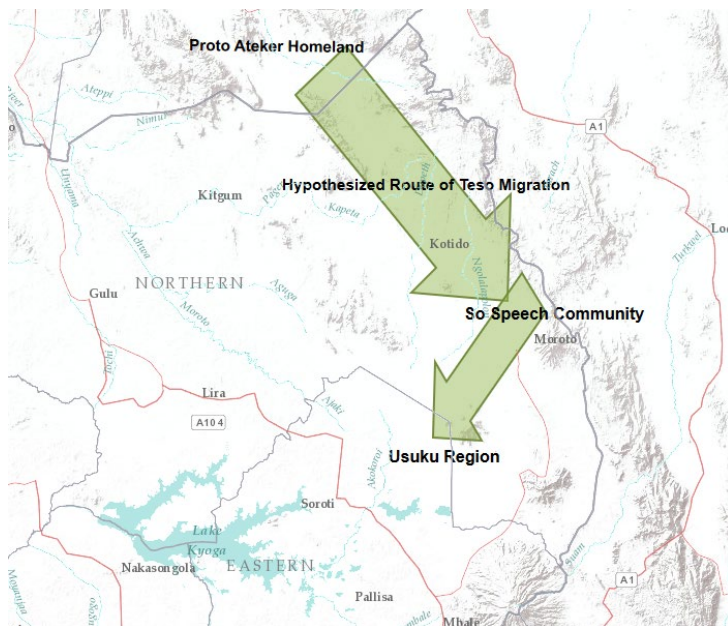
Map 6.1 - Proposed Teso Migration Route, along the Rift Valley escarpment to Usuku

The linguistic ancestors of today's Teso people moved south along a more easterly route than Lwo groups, roughly following the upper plateau of the Rift Valley escarpment separating Uganda and Kenya. We can be confident in reconstructing this route because pre-Teso speakers borrowed a set of loanwords from the highland-dwelling Western Rub populations inhabiting the Moroto, Kadam, and Napak mountains in this region (Map 6.1).[12] From these people (also called the So, Sor, or Tepeth), early Teso-speakers borrowed specific food collection terms such as *-tenus "beehive, drum" and *-sik "honey," as well as the metaphysical term *kere meaning "all things" from the twinned Western Rub terms *kere belgen* "things of God" and *kere bokotan* "things of the earth."[13] Teso-speakers may also have learned about the efficacy of ritual practices

[12] I have also collected a Teso oral tradition claiming that migrating Iteso stayed for "200 years" in Moroto (that is, near Western Rub communities) before moving into Usuku; TE, Soroti, 3 September, 2015.

[13] Teso 34; Teso 29; Teso 9.

at rivers, swamps, and gravesites from the Western Rub-speakers.[14] Based on ethnographic

evidence, the term "Teso" itself may be derived from this period. According to nearly all Teso-

speakers today, the word "Teso" is derived from the noun *ates*, meaning "grave," which is a

clear borrowing from Western Rub, and was used to name at least some portion of the people

called Teso today prior to the arrival of British colonizers.[15]

The southward migration of pre-Teso communities along the upper Rift Valley was

spurred by a desire to continue cereal cultivation in the face of arid conditions. Indeed, this social

fact became imprinted in the Teso language, which translates "south" *as angalakimak*, or

literally "healthy finger millet."[16] Rates of Northern Ateker emigration slowed significantly once

rains returned to South Sudan c. 1250-1300 CE. As detailed in Chapter 2, a combination of

evidence from comparative linguistics, glottochronology, and oral traditions suggest that Proto

Teso was spoken by an intact language community in greater Usuku no later than c. 1600 CE.

Thus, one can estimate that the southward shift of pre-Teso migrants covered the 150-mile

distance between the South Sudanese hills and Usuku over the course of perhaps 350-400 years,

which is a rate of less than half a mile per year.[17] This is a very rough calculation, but even if it is

off by fifty percent, this movement must be seen as unfolding across multiple generations, rather

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[14] There are no clear borrowings from Western Rub for "swamp" or "river," although the word *-cilet for "river" in Teso is an innovation dating to the Proto Teso period, derived from the Ateker verb *akicil* "to tear, to put a path or mark in the ground." Teso 4.

[15] Teso 33; Church Missionary Society Archives, "Crabtree to Stock," Jan. 29, 1903.

[16] *angale* "to be well, healthy" + *akimai* "finger millet".

[17] This number roughly corresponds with David Schoenbrun's observation (personal communication, 2019) that "1 km per year is the standard rate attached to mixed agricultural dispersals in savanna settings."

than as a singular event like the "great treks" to which other scholars have compared it.[18]

Furthermore, migration was probably not a smooth process, but instead proceeded in fits and

starts. Notwithstanding higher average rainfalls, the period 1240-1600 did witness at least two

decades-long regional droughts, evidenced by high levels of salinity in Lake Naivasha (western

Kenya) during the periods c. 1380-1420 and c. 1550-1600.[19] Early Teso communities likely

responded to these bouts of aridity with the same solution employed by their ancestors: moving

south in *ad hoc* groups. Indeed, The fragmenting social effects of such droughts can be seen in

the Proto Teso innovation *-beli for "famine, drought," derived from the Proto Ateker root -bel-

"to break apart."[20] Rather than conjure a singular "great migration," it is prudent to consider

small-scale social processes that contributed to a slow and uneven expansion of Teso-speakers

ever farther south. For this, we can turn to a combination of evidence from comparative

ethnography, oral traditions, and linguistics.

Oral traditions collected in the late 1960s and early 1970s are especially instructive on

this question. Under the auspices of the History of Uganda project sponsored by the Ford

Foundation, Makerere University history professor J. B. Webster organized teams of Teso

students to conduct historical surveys across Teso, asking people about their family migration

histories.[21] Every survey included a version of the question: what were your ancestors' reasons

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[18] J. B. Webster, D. H. Okalany, C. P. Emudong & N. Egimu-Okuda, *The Iteso During the Asonya* (Nairobi, 1973), 19.

[19] D. Verschuren, K. Laird & B. Cumming, "Rainfall and drought in equatorial eastern Africa during the past 1,100 years," *Nature*, 403 (2000), 410-414.

[20] Teso 1.

[21] J. B. Webster's periodic reports on this project, entitled "The 'History of Uganda' Project Under the Direction of the Department of History, Makerere University College" (Kampala, 1969), are stored in the Northwestern University Africana Library's vertical files. For an overview of this period in Makerere University's history, see C. Sicherman, "Building a History Department at Makerere, 1950-1972," *History in Africa*, 30 (2003), 253-282.

for undertaking migration? It is, of course, impossible to make definitive statements about particular family migrations between 1150 and 1600 CE based on evidence collected between 1969 and 1971; even the earliest family histories ostensibly date only to the mid-sixteenth century. But the data illuminate the sheer diversity of proffered rationales for migration, and indicate a general pattern prioritizing short-term and parochial considerations. Teso migrants included the rich and the poor, brothers feuding over land inheritance, people fleeing famine, war, and community quarrels, and hunters seeking new game. Migrating groups came in many sizes, and were often not related by blood or marriage. Small bands of migrants were likely to integrate with pre-existing kinship groups upon reaching their new homes, while larger coteries could establish new patriclans bringing together disparate migrants through a metaphor of patrilineal agnatic relation.

According to Webster's research, the typical Teso pioneer in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was a man in his 30s, newly married, and seeking to establish his own homestead and cereal fields free of interference from parents' and male siblings (including full brothers, half-brothers, and brothers-in-law).[22] Anthropologist Ivan Karp argued that a young man marrying and establishing his own homestead was a critical step towards achieving full social status as an adult Teso man, and that once such homesteads were established they were functionally independent from the extended family.[23] The element of spatial separation itself is an important practical consideration here. As explained during an interview recorded by

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[22] Webster, *et al*. 1973, 1-20.

[23] I. Karp, *Fields of Change among the Iteso* (London: 1978), 105-111. This finding resembles anthropologist Victor Uchenu's assertion from another "republican" setting – Nigeria's Igbo – that "founding a new homestead in Igbo society is always a political act, an assertion of independence from a parental homestead." V. Uchendu, "Eza Na Ulo: The Extended Family in Igbo Civilization," *Dialectical Anthropology*, 31, 1/3 (2007), 181.

Webster, "(t)here is no advantage of a separate home nearby in the sense of being one's own boss. You might still be asked to do things in your father's home."[24] There is linguistic evidence indicating that this pattern also held in the Proto Teso period around the sixteenth century. There is no Proto Ateker word for "marriage" that is distinguishable from the bridewealth transaction that occurred between newlyweds' parents. Yet, Proto Teso-speakers innovated a term, *-many, from "to dwell together, to have sex together" to describe such a lifelong commitment between partners.[25] A married person in the Proto Teso language was described as *edukokina*, the same adjective to describe a house for which construction had been completed; literally, to be "married" in early Teso was to be "built (as in a house)."

The separation of families through migration may also be seen in a Proto Teso innovation for "sibling," *-nac, derived from a Proto Ateker root meaning "to pass by, to avoid."[26] Furthermore, the root word *-boot for an isolated home, away from a larger family, is the same in both Northern Ateker and Teso, but only among the former does it also produce terms connoting poverty and loneliness.[27] In Teso today it is generally assumed that establishing an *eboot* "single new home" is a significant step in one's lifecycle.[28] Finally, the Proto Ateker root *-wo "to stand up, to stand firm, to be resilient," which has a positive connotation in all Ateker languages, produced specific terms like *-wo- "to build a strong home" and *-to-bwo-t "to migrate, to shift homes" only in Proto Teso. These innovations reflect an increased emphasis

[24] Webster *et al*. 1973, 18-19

[25] Teso 19.

[26] Teso 11.

[27] Teso 3.

[28] TE, Katekwan, 18 February 2017; TE, Orungo, 01 February 2017.

among the Teso on a newlywed couple's marrying and physically moving away along their paths toward adulthood, and this pattern can also be clearly seen in ethnographic studies of both groups.[29] Since better-watered lands that were also unoccupied by other Ateker-speakers were generally in the south, it makes sense that the slow replication of this process over generations would eventually lead to a large-scale southward extension of Teso culture and language.

After centuries of slow and sporadic southward movement, pre-Teso communities found themselves concentrated in the forested, fertile, rain-fed lands of greater Usuku, roughly corresponding to today's Katakwi district. In this wetter land, Teso-speakers' attention was drawn to fishing. They innovating a new type of fish-spear, *emacar, from the tool previously used to brand cattle, a new word for fish – *agaria – from an unknown source, and borrowed a new type of fishing basket – *ekodo* – from Lwo-speakers.[30] Usuku was the geographical nucleus of the Proto Teso language, as evidenced by the high degree of internal dialectical diversity found today in the region, as well as the consistency of oral traditions collected by Webster's team pointing to an Usuku homeland (Chapter 2). The Teso word for "forest," *amagoro, is derived from one of the largest territories in greater Usuku.[31] It is impossible to say for certain who lived in Usuku prior to Teso immigration, although Webster's traditions suggesting that the area was occupied by one of the "Lango Clusters" called Miro appears more likely than others claiming that Usuku was completely uninhabited.[32] If Proto Teso-speakers forcibly ejected

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[29] For the Northern Ateker case, see P. H. Gulliver, *The Family Herds: A Study of Two Pastoral Tribes in East Africa, the Jie and* Turkana (London, 1955).

[30] Teso 18, KBT 2, PNT 2.

[31] KBT 5.

[32] Webster *et al.* 1973, 9-11

previous occupants in any large number, it was likely through the slow and unintentional military process described in Chapter 3 for the Proto Ateker, whereby reccurring cattle-raids pestered indigenous populations enough to convince them to pack up and leave.[33]

Far more important for Teso expansion was the incorporation, rather than expulsion, of non-Ateker peoples. Probably the earliest and most numerically significant group of joiners were Lwo-speakers. Proto Teso-speakers borrowed Lwo words to name unfamiliar new fodder grasses requiring significant annual rainfall, the most prominent being Guinea Grass (*Panicum maximum*), called *edinyo, and Elephant Grass (*Pennisetum purpureum*), called *egada.[34] Of the several so-called "major clans" which are commonly understood to be original Teso groups, at least two – Inomu and Ikomolo – have origins among Lwo communities who preceded Teso-speakers into eastern Uganda.[35] Innumerable other Teso clan names point to the multiple foundations of the Usuku homeland. Some, including the Iworopom, Ingariama, and remnants of the aforementioned Miro, were probably non-Ateker groups already present upon Teso arrival, while other such as the Itepes and Iyale immigrated into Teso from Rub- and Kalenjin-speaking communities more than fifty miles away.[36] Although their etymologies remain obscure, it is possible that the Proto Teso semantic differentiation between an older term *-moit "foreigner"

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[33] As mentioned in Chapter 2, Proto Teso-speakers continued to use a raiding military tactic inherited from Proto Ateker-speakers. TE, Apuda, 10 February 2017; TE, Moru Inera, 19 April 2017.

[34] Teso 5; Teso 6.

[35] Webster *et al.* 1973, 5; Cohen 1972, 144-145; Cohen 1988, 67-68.

[36] For Iworopom (including a debate about the clan's origin) see Webster *et al*. 1973, 35-36, N. Nagashima, "Two Extinct Age Systems among the Iteso," in E. Kurimoto & S. Simonse, *Conflict, Age & Power in North East Africa* (Athens, OH, 1998), 227-249 & Chapter 5 of this dissertation; for Ingariama, see Webster 1973, 34; "Tepes" is a common ethnonym for Western Rub-speakers and a clan in Usuku; For Iyale, see N. Nagashima, "Traditional Social Institutions among the Iteso of the Present Usuku Sub-County," (Makerere Department of History, Seminar Paper, Sept. 3rd, 1969), 2.

and the innovation *-surup "enemy" was made because of a need to distinguish threatening from non-threatening outsiders in a social "melting pot" where warfare nonetheless persisted.[37]

I use the term "melting pot" because this history is not one of diverse groups living in close proximity while staying in cultural and reproductive siloes, and therefore does not replicate other well-known examples of decentralized African politics, such as the "heterarchy" of Jenne-Jeno in West Africa.[38] Teso society has a long tradition of virilocal, uxorilocal, and idiolocal (a single family living by itself, on a frontier) residential movements, alongside strict exogamy rules that encourage both interclan and interethnic marriage. We can imagine that as the area of Teso occupation spread beyond Usuku after c. 1600, men and women moved continuously within and beyond Teso, creating mixed families speaking both Ateker and non-Ateker languages. One striking pattern in the hundreds of family histories collected by Webster's team across Teso is that virtually every family claims to have immigrated from somewhere else, making no effort to claim "firstcomer" status.[39] For example, when D. H. Okalany interviewed fifty-five families in Mukongoro (today's Kumi district), twenty claimed ancestors from Pallisa (southwest Teso), seven from nearby Ngora, three from Usuku, five from Magoro (near Usuku),

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[37] Teso 7.

[38] R. McIntosh, *The Peoples of the Middle Niger* (Malden, MA, 1998).

[39] The point here is not only that Teso-speakers did not claim "firstcomer" prestige with respect to non-Teso groups. As historian Kairn Klieman has noted, "firstcomer" rights can be usurped by descendants of migrants who do not claim to literally be autochthonous. Indeed, many Teso traditions tell stories of "small red men" who were true autochthons in the region. By suggesting that Teso communities were generally uninterested in "firstcomer" ideologies, I mean first that they had little interest in their own status vis-à-vis the traditional autochthons of their own myths, and second that competition between Teso-speakers for "firstcomer" status is also much rarer than in other similar settings. For a contrasting example, see the dispute between abaiseWakooli and abaiseNaminha clan members over their relative "firstcomer" status in D. W. Cohen, *The Historical Tradition of Busoga: Mukama and Kintu* (Oxford, 1972), 140-154. For a robust discussion of the issue in a Bantu-speaking context, see K. Klieman, *"The Pygmies were our Compass": Bantu and Batwa in the History of West Central Africa, Early Times to c. 1900 CE* (Portsmouth, NH, 2003).

five from Karamoja, four from Bukedea (southern Teso), four from Bantu-speaking Busoga, and

two from the western Serere peninsula.[40]

A key social objective for early Proto Teso-speakers would have been facilitating the

pacific integration of physically proximate yet unrelated Ateker patrilineages and non-Ateker

immigrants, cleaved into small bands by migration and now living near one another. To manage

political relations between kin-groups, early Teso-speakers drew on memories of a Proto Ateker

past in which clan, family, and territory had greater overlap. Of particular importance was a

deep-rooted metaphor imagining the political community as components of a physical

homestead. Within the kin-group, the *ekek* "door of a house" provided the conceptual foundation

for a patrilineage, while the *ekale* "family yard" was equated with the nuclear family of one

mother with her children (in a polygamous setting).[41] This metaphorical relationship was further

extended to territorial units. For the Lango, the word *etogo* "house" was used to describe a

territory-based ritual polity, while the Proto Teso themselves extended the concept of the *etem*

"hearth" to describe the venue for inter-clan meetings.[42] Comparative ethnography suggests that

one purpose of these "houses" was to cement peaceful relations between potential competitors. A

strict "no fighting" rule is frequently described as unequivocally necessary for an *etem*

meeting.[43] This emphasis is also reflected in the Proto Teso lexicon, which shifted from

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[40] Webster *et al*. 1973, 117.

[41] Interestingly, this usage is reversed in Usuku, so that *ekek* is a smaller unit than *ekale*.

[42] T. Hayley, *The Anatomy of Lango Religion and Groups* (Cambridge, UK, 1947), 45 ; Teso XX.

[43] TE, Madera, 22 February 2017; TE, Agule, 28 April 2017; TE, Oale, 08 November 2017. This kind of cultural limitation on fighting – or at least its severity – is widespread across the Ateker world. In Northern Ateker societies, there are strict rules about the use of sticks rather than sharpened weapons for fighting within clans or territorial sections. L. Mair, *Primitive Government* (Gloucester, MA, 1975), 96.

describing "peace-making" in passive terms invoking the verb "to sleep" to an active process called *-puc, derived from a verb meaning "to re-plaster or maintain a house."[44] The work of building a peaceful political community never ended, and involved covering over accumulating cracks as part of regular maintenance.

As the area of Teso occupation spread, so too did the number of clans with non-Ateker origins. There is today a higher concentration of clans with distinctively Bantu names appearing along the Nilotic/Bantu borderlands near the Mukongoro River and Mount Elgon, harkening back to this immigration from Busoga, Bugwere, and Bugisu.[45] The widespread construction of multicultural families left a genetic signature in Teso bodies as well: of 416 Iteso tested for the sickle cell trait in the 1940s, nearly 18% tested positive, which is much higher than any other Ateker-speaking population but resembles numbers found in Lwo-speaking and Bantu-speaking populations.[46] Trade also played a role, and relations with Bantu-speakers in particular were reinforced through a burgeoning iron trade. The Teso inherited knowledge of iron tools from their Proto Ateker ancestors, but after reaching the Mpologoma River near Busoga their consumption switched from finished iron implements sourced in the northern Labwor hills to a mixture of finished and unfinished iron sourced in the Bantu kingdom of Bunyoro and acquired

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[44] Teso 26.

[45] Iteso Cultural Union, 2017.

[46] H. Lehman & A. Raper, "Distribution of the Sickle-Cell Trait in Uganda, and its Ethnological Significance," *Nature*, 164 (1949), 494-495 & A. L. Okwi *et al.*, "An update on the prevalence of sick cell trait in Eastern and Western Uganda," *BMC Blood Disorders*, 10, 5 (2010), 1-6. The sickle cell trait is common amongst Bantu and Lwo communities, both of which are likely sources for the trait in Teso today. Because of the recentness of Teso migration into the region, this cannot possibly be explained by evolutionary adaptation. However, it must be noted that the term "Iteso" is not clearly defined by the researchers.

via Basoga middlemen.[47] Teso traders supplied livestock and ivory in exchange for iron, and this market eventually became regular enough to produce a regional lexicon of exchange combining a mixture of Ateker and Bantu words by the nineteenth century.[48]

The frontier was an important factor in Teso history and memory. It inspired both the well-known and aged ballad "The Travels of Ongimalem" which implores the title character to "go exploring, Ongimalem, bring much rain…" and the only published Teso novel, *Restless Feet*, by Laban Erapu.[49] Even by the mid-twentieth century, the frontier had not yet entirely disappeared. Teso migration into lightly populated areas of today's Amuria district continued well into the late colonial era.[50] The Amuria example can be helpful for recognizing patterns of migration that harken to the deeper past. Informants in northern Amuria, on the edge of Teso district, explained to me that most northern villages had been founded in the 1950s by pioneers from Soroti (Teso's largest town) and Usuku. After explaining that Teso people "like to learn new things and go new places" but also bring "farming" and "civilization" with them, these men and women explained the general process for founding new Teso settlements. This process is worth explicating at some length in order to understand how the frontier shaped social dynamics in precolonial Teso.

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[47] R. Herring, "Iron Production and Trade in Labwor, Northeastern Uganda," *Transafrican Journal of History*, 8, 1/2 (1979), 75-93; TE, Kumi, 08 February 2017; TE, Kanapa, 09 February 2017. Iron from Labwor continued to be used in northern Teso, especially in Amuria; TE, Moru Inera, 19 April 2017.

[48] W. Crabtree, *On the Slopes of Mt. Elgon* (London, 1902), 182.

[49] An important hint of the antiquity of "Travels of Ongimalem" is the use of the verb *aireb* in the first verse. The word, meaning "to explore" in Proto Ateker, has been completely replaced in the Teso language, and is only known from oral literature (the survival of obsolete words through popular song is a common feature worldwide; consider the phrase "… and called it macaroni" in the song "Yankee Doodle").TE, 01 February 2017, Guyaguya; L. Erapu, *Restless Feet* (Nairobi, 1969).

[50] Webster *et al.* 1973.

The first step is to discover suitable land, which can take place by accident in the course of hunting or because one is intentionally searching for a new home. The Teso language makes such a distinction: land was discovered by either an *arotan*, one who explores for the sake of exploration, or by an *angican*, one who intentionally seeks out new land for settlement.[51] Upon discovering new land, a successful explorer will convince others, whether related or not, to join the new settlement. Significantly, those who settle together will form a new clan ("ateker"), regardless of whether they were members of the same clan in the place they left.[52] Clans, in this scenario, provide a useful idiom for organizing settlement, and the strictly metaphorical nature of agnatic descent claims is recognized by all.[53] Over time, as more iterations of this process occur at neighboring sites, a wider territorial group is formed from different "clans" living in the same neighborhood. These territorial associations were called *etem* "hearth" or sometimes *airabis* "speaking place," and are discussed below.[54] My own fieldwork in Amuria reinforced similar themes found by Webster's team elsewhere in Amuria, and by Karp in southern Teso.[55] There is every reason to believe that this general pattern stretches deep into the Teso past.

Although northern Amuria remained a living frontier into the colonial era, boundaries elsewhere in Teso had become generally fixed before the nineteenth century, while the Teso

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[51] Ateker 151.

[52] A second example provided was that, "all the Iteso living in an area of Kampala together" would constitute a clan.

[53] Because the categories were formed through movement, they have always been in semantic flux. To speak of an "ateker" in Teso is to be needfully imprecise – the word can be translated as "clan," "sub-clan," "kin-group," or "all of Teso." There is no strict definition in English or Ateso for these concepts, and they all bleed into each other. In this chapter, I retain the use of all these terms in my writing to capture as best I can the way they are used in everyday Teso speech. To put it another way, the ambiguity of these terms in Teso is a feature, not a bug.

[54] For an early description of the *etem* structure, see A. C. A. Wright, "Notes on the Iteso Social Organization," *Uganda Journal*, 9, 2 (1942), 64-66.

[55] I. Karp, *Fields of Change among the Iteso* (Nairobi, 1979).

population continued to increase. As discussed in Chapter 2, my Teso dialect classification

indicates that the area occupied by Teso speakers reached its limits in the far southeast (Tororo)

and southwest (Pallisa) by the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, providing enough time for

"Nuclear Teso" to emerge as a distinct dialect around Lake Bisina in the nineteenth century. In

other words, by perhaps the eighteenth century, the southern frontiers of Teso had already been

reached, and some migrants had begun doubling back in the direction of Usuku rather than

proceeding uniformly south. This group would include the 36% of families interviewed by

Okalany (above) who had migrated northwest from Pallisa to Mukongoro. Although population

estimates in precolonial Africa are notoriously imprecise, the relatively high number of people

living in Teso can be deduced from the earliest archival records in the area.[56] Writing in 1902,

Muganda Anglican missionary Anderea Batulabude noted that Teso district is "much more

densely populated than (B)Uganda"; a claim endorsed by English missionary William Crabtree

who added that "Teso… is densely populated by a people… (whose) staple food is *bulo*, a small

grain like millet (i.e. finger millet)."[57] The kingdom of Buganda had a fairly dense population

relative to other parts of East Africa in the nineteenth century, so even if Batulabude and

Crabtree were overstating Teso's position vis-à-vis Buganda, it seems clear many people within

the Teso language community lived in close proximity to one another by the nineteenth century.

Teso from the eighteenth century onward, then, may best be understood as a frontier

culture from which (with the exception of Amuria) the frontier had disappeared. Certainly,

mobility remained a factor in Teso life. Lacking a frontier, enterprising Teso individuals still

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[56] For a discussion of demographic scholarship in the wider region, see S. Doyle, *Crisis and Decline in Bunyoro: Population and Environment in Western Uganda, 1860-1955* (Athens, OH, 2006).

[57] Church Missionary Society Archives. "Annual Letter of the Rev. W. A. Crabtree" (Masaba, Nov. 4th 1901).

moved within the Teso cultural area. They moved outside of it as well. For example, one of the great political leaders in the borderland Bantu-speaking Soga kingdom of Bulamogi was born and raised in Teso before immigrating to Busoga.[58] But, for most parts of Teso, the availability of land on which a young Teso man could stake a new claim became rare. He could still move away from his father and siblings, but doing so would now entail integrating with an already-established political community, Teso-speaking or otherwise, somewhere else. This increased population density tested the political systems Teso-speakers had established since their migration from South Sudan. The remainder of this chapter examines the ways Teso-speakers balanced the principle of small-scale autonomy with the needs for intricate coordination between communities living in close proximity without succumbing to centralized political rule. The *etem* system, clans, and age-sets were all important ingredients of this emerging political solution, but the increasing politicization of *imurok* "diviners" – standing entirely outside traditional power structures – was an equally significant innovation during this period.

Clanship and Gender since the Sixteenth Century

The shift from generally open frontiers to mostly closed, more densely populated space changed how the Teso political economy was constituted. As was true in much of precolonial Africa, land during the Proto Ateker period was not a particularly scarce resource, with the exception of access points to permanent water sources for cattle-grazing. In the centuries following c. 1600, however, land in Teso became increasingly more valuable as its scarcity increased alongside increased production of new world crops, often introduced by Great Lakes Bantu- or Swahili-speaking communities, including certain species of banana, root crops, and later groundnuts.

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[58] Webster *et al.* 1973, 147.

This enhanced valuation of crops – and therefore the land on which they grew – was recognized

by Proto Teso speakers who innovated a new term *-mion "wealth in crops," which was

distinguished from the inherited Proto Ateker word *-bar- connoting "wealth in livestock."[59]

The distribution and ownership of productive farms acquired greater salience over the centuries

in Teso. A large majority of family histories collected by Webster's team emphasize disputes

over land, rather than the disputes over cattle which lay at the center of Northern Ateker oral

histories. Sons and brothers quarreled over land inheritance more than livestock, and the single

greatest reason proffered to Webster's team for past migrations was to find new land.[60] To

describe land as a scarce and carefully allocated resource, Proto Teso speakers innovated the

terms *-korisit "cultivated field," and *akor "to cultivate soil," from the Proto Ateker root *-kor

"to divide and allocate."[61] In Teso, as is the case everywhere in the Ateker world, the allocation

of farmland was traditionally controlled by elderly members of kin groups, whereas use of

hunting and herding lands was not so restricted. A closing frontier, therefore, increased the value

of farm land and likely buttressed the significance of kin groups in Teso political life.

While kin groups became ever more crucial arenas for allocating land to farmers they lost

control over land beyond their immediate ken. As mentioned above, Proto Ateker clans had

become fragmented through centuries of migration. They were continuously dispersed and

divided into numerous "sub-clans" (also called *atekerin*) to the point where, in many instances,

the entire membership of one "clan" in a given territory might include only a single patrilineage

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[59] Chapter 3; R. Stephens, "'Wealth,' 'Poverty' and the Question of Conceptual History in Oral Contexts: Uganda from c. 1000 CE," in A. Fleish & R. Stephens (eds.), *Doing Conceptual History in Africa* (New York, 2016), 21-48.

[60] Webster *et al*. 1973, 13-20.

[61] Teso 13.

(*ekek*). As a result of sporadic migration, dozens of kinship groups of various sizes lived together in the same wider territory. Regardless of their size, scope, or appellation, all Proto Teso kinship groups were delimited in practice by exogamy and adherence to prescribed kinship rituals called *etal, and they were conceived of through the idiom of patrilineage – real in some cases, fictive in others.[62] But individual kinship groups no longer managed sizable territories as they likely had in the Proto Ateker past.

With multiple clans co-existing in close proximity, the need arose for political institutions capable of addressing issues that lay outside the domain of a single kinship group. What emerged was a clear bifurcation of socio-political spheres, which anthropologist Nobuhiro Nagashima convincingly argues can be properly characterized as "feminine" and "masculine."[63] The management of kinship groups themselves – the work of determining membership, allocating resources, approving marriages, and ensuring the group's spiritual health – was a domain mostly controlled by women. Relations between multiple kin groups living in the same area - including questions about war and peace, rainmaking, and the resolution of judicial disputes between kin groups – were generally controlled by men. Marriage alliances created an overlap between the two domains. As the economic preeminence of kinship groups became more stark, Proto Teso-speakers erected norms and institutions to manage intra-clan and inter-clan relationships, with women taking charge of the former.

Women maintained influence over the constitution and reproduction of kinship groups through their control over a clan-specific social institution called *etal*. The word *etal* was

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[62] Teso 31.

[63] N. Nagashima, "Boiling and Roasting: An Account of Two Descent Based Groupings among the Iteso of Uganda," *Hitosubashi Journal of Social Studies*, 8 , 1 (1976), 42-62.

inherited from a Proto Ateker generic root meaning "custom, tradition, ritual," but was semantically narrowed by Proto Teso-speakers to refer explicitly to a series of clan rituals dealing with patrilineal reproduction, encompassing marriage, bridewealth, childbirth, child-naming, and the treatment of infant illness. Many isolated components of Teso *etal* date back to the Proto Ateker period, such as the ceremony of smearing new brides to initiate them into their husband's clan, a rule confining a mother and newborn indoors until the loss of the umbilical cord, or the practice of children suckling on a breast to "confirm" a given name.[64] The conceptual innovation of *etal* in Teso was that it brought these disparate practices into the same frame, regularized them within each clan, and clearly tied their performance to the alliance established between two kinship groups through marriage. Although patriarchs remained the titular exchangers of bridewealth (albeit with expectations that livestock be distributed to agnates and affines), women managed this engine driving marriage, childbirth, and inter-clan relations. The particulars of *etal varied from place to place and clan to clan, but there are enough clear consistencies across Teso to sketch a prototypical *etal* system and to recognize regional innovations in later centuries.[65]

Surveying descriptions of *etal* from across Teso, it seems likely that *etal* rites in the Proto Teso period were initiated at the point when a pregnancy was made public. Prior to bearing a child, new brides were socially in what Nagashima calls a liminal state – not merely a "girl"

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[64] Such rituals are generally considered important for protecting the physical health of the mother and baby, but the invisible, protective powers are not named in the rituals, and the components of the rituals themselves predate Proto Teso-period conceptual innovations surrounding ancestral spirits and other non-corporeal forces.

[65] One detailed description of *etal* in the 20th century can be found in: C. Borromea, "The Iteso Traditional Customs of Marriage and the Initiation Ceremony," in J. Waliggo & D. Byabazaire (eds.), *Incarnating Christianity in Uganda: Proceedings of the Second National Theological Week* (Masaka, 1983), 151-160. See also B. M. Kagolo, "Tribal Names and Customs in Teso District," *Uganda Journal*, 19, 1 (1955), 44-45.

(*apese*), but also not a "woman" (*aberu*).[66] Nagashima correctly describes *etal* as the process by which this transition was effected, and in this way, *etal* allowed mothers-in-law to control the integration of young women married into a patrilineage. Upon publicizing her first pregnancy, a bride would be instructed by elder women to start avoiding clan-specific foods, alongside a slate of additional taboos such as not eating meat directly from the bone.[67] Although *etal* is sometimes translated as "taboo," it is more accurate to understand it as "release from taboos." A new mother's diet is most severely limited immediately after giving birth, when she may only eat porridge made from finger millet. Over a number of months, *etal* progresses through various stages – *aipudun* "bringing the child out," *aruun* "child-naming," *emutula* "maternal grandmother gives back-carrying skin (*anapet*) and food to child," and *abwaton* or *aitodor* "child's first visit to mother's natal home." These events culminate in *ekonyokoit* "biting the bone," where the new mother eats meat off a bone to signify her release from taboos, and finally *apietar*, when the woman is given her own ritual stick (*esas*) signifying her full-fledged womanhood and membership in a new kinship group.[68] In addition to the new mother growing as an individual, the alliance of two families linked in marriage was strengthened by the frequent visits between families required to conduct each ceremony. Above all, *etal* bolstered the patrilineage by helping its newest adult member to gain social maturity and by ensuring ritual

[66] Nagashima 1976, 56. Note that this distinction does not seem to have been inherited from the Proto Ateker past, or at least not in this form. It likely represents a Teso innovation. See Chapter 3 for Proto Ateker conceptions of "womanhood."

[67] This observation and the following summary of *etal is derived from the following interviews, in addition to published scholarship elsewhere cited: TE, Keelim, 20 January 2017; TE, Atapar, 09 February 2017; TE, Apuda, 10 February 2017; TE, Okoba, 14 February 2017; TE, Akarukaei, 15 February 2017; TE, Katekwan, 18 February 2017; TE, Agama, 25 February 2017; TE, Ojeburon, 19 April 2017; TE, Kapelebyong, 20 April 2017; TE, Kibale, 27 April 2017; TE, Agule, 28 April 2017; TE, Asinge B, 11 October 2017.

[68] All of these terms are widely distributed throughout Teso and likely date to the Proto Teso period.

steps were taken secure the health of the child. *Etal* also enhanced ties between neighboring kinship groups, bolstering the social health of the overall community.

However, *etal* was more than just a set of transitional ceremonies ushering a new mother into womanhood and cementing family alliances. Today, it is also widely perceived as an opportunity for elder women of a patrilineage – especially the mother-in-law – to assess the new bride as a kin group recruit. Although an initial bridewealth transaction preceded marriage and pregnancy (at least in theory), the new bride did not officially join her husband's clan until she had cleared the obstacles of *etal* set forth by her new clan's elder women. *Etal* could not be completed without children. Thus, *etal* served in theory as a means for patrilineages to reduce the risk of initiating infertile women, and may well have done so in the past.

This focus on fertility eventually waned, however, in the well-watered and densely-populated southwestern portion of Teso where the value of farmland in comparison to livestock was highest. Here, a potential new bride entered a period of probationary apprenticeship, called *aibwan*, during which she was required to demonstrate her skill in managing a cereal farm assigned to her while living in her husband's homestead. A key theme is that the bride should prove her ability to operate independently; she is not allowed, for example, to obtain aid from others in fetching water or to access other clanswomens' granaries. In theory, at least, a mother-in-law held veto power over a new bride if she "failed" to prove herself as a competent cultivator.[69] The relevant Teso expression, "a woman marries herself," was explained to me as

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[69] This shift aligns with a wider trend across the continent. Wherever hoe-based agriculture built on the labor of women is economically pre-eminent, bridewealth transactions tend to have less social significance, and "women are valued as producers and reproducers." E. Akyeampong & H. Fofack, " The Contribution of African Women to Economic Growth and Development: Historical Perspectives and Policy Implications Part I: The Pre-Colonial and Colonial Periods," *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper* (April, 2012), 9. This is not to say that brides were valued only through a rubric of bridewealth and family alliance in Northern Ateker societies; detailed ethnographies of marriage in Turkana clearly show that patriarchs (unsurprisingly) are influenced by a potential

encapsulating both the stress placed on a new bride to meet her potential mother-in-law's

expectations, and the agency accorded to women in the Teso marriage process. With the

increased importance of cereal agriculture relative to livestock-herding, the economic

significance of a bridewealth transaction could easily be overtaken by concerns about competent

management of farmland. Prospective brides were judged on their merits as cultivators rather

than being seen as sources of new children, or pawns of a bridewealth and alliance transaction –

In a period of increased land scarcity, skill as a cultivator was serious business.

Women propagated a patrilineage's reproduction by managing marriage and childbirth.

Men dealt with death. The only Teso mortuary practice for which there is unambiguous evidence

of Proto Ateker inheritance is a rite called *apunya*, which was a feast of remembrance led by

clansmen and conducted in the years following the death of a prominent person. Teso-speakers

also participated in a widespread regional practice of family members of the departed shaving

their heads as a sign of mourning soon after death. Because all words for "grave" in modern

Ateker languages are borrowed, it is impossible to definitively reconstruct burial practices to the

Proto Ateker period. (Although the word *-nuk- "to bury any object" can be used to describe the

physical act of burying a body and may have been in the deeper Tung'a past).[70] Proto Teso-

speakers, however, borrowed a new word, *-tes "grave," from Western Rub-speakers early in

bride's or groom's work ethic, intelligence, and agreeableness when arranging bridewealth. The significant differences in southwest Teso are, first, that such determinations are made by mothers-in-law rather than fathers, and second, that the women's cultivating skill was an important enough factor to be institutionalized within the *etal structure. For Turkana, see R. Dyson-Hudson, "Children of the Dancing Ground, Children of the House: Costs and Benefits of Marriage Rules (South Turkana, Kenya)," *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 54, 1 (1998), 23-26. It should also be noted that ethnographic sources from the past century agree that, contrary to enduring stereotypes, mutual attraction and personal relationships often play a significant role in crafting Ateker marriages, with women especially exercising varying degrees of "free choice." For one early example, see J. H. Driberg, "The Status of Women among the Nilotics and Nilo-Hamites," *Africa*, 5, 4 (1932), 414.

[70] Tung'a 31; TE, Okata, 09 February 2017.

their migratory history.[71] Western Rub-speakers have an elaborate tradition surrounding

ancestral spirits, and it is possible that Proto Teso-speakers were inspired by Western Rub

neighbors when they innovated the word *-kwam-in, meaning "ancestral spirits," from the root

for "wind."[72] In any case, Proto Teso-speakers appear to have paid increased attention to the

activities of ancestor spirits than their linguistic forebears, and the *-punya ceremony was the

chief means by which the living managed their relationships with the dead.[73]

From at least the very early days of their migration out of today's South Sudan, pre-Teso

men established institutions further regularizing mourning rituals, in parallel with the

development of *etal by women. Specifically, men from the same clan and of roughly the same

biological age joined together in "mourning groups" called *-woye from the Proto Ateker root *-

wo "to wail, to mourn."[74] Members of a *-woye were responsible for managing the *-punya

rituals when one of their group died.[75] This system came to be called *eigworone, from the same

root.[76] Much like the Northern Ateker *-gat "group prayers" discussed in Chapter 4, *-woye

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[71] Teso 33.

[72] Teso 15.

[73] Modern Teso burial practices, and their socio-economic implications, are discussed at length in B. Jones, *Beyond the State in Rural Uganda* (Edinburgh, 2009).

[74] Teso 38; For Lango age-sets, see Driberg 1923, 243-244. The following information on Teso age-sets is compiled from the following sources: Webster et al. 1973; Nagashima 1998, 228-249; J. Lawrance, The Iteso: Fifty Years of Change in a Nilo-Hamitic Tribe (London, 1957), 74-78 & Wright, 1942. See also Karp's description of Tesyo age-sets in Kenya, where they were called *ekiworone*; this pronunciation corresponds with regular sound changes between Nuclear Teso and Kenyan Tesyo, and further confirms that the *eigworone* system dates to the Proto Teso period. I. Karp, "Traditional Southern Iteso Social Structure," (Sociology Working Paper no. 109, Makerere University, 1971), 10. see also N. Nagashima, "Two Extinct Age Systems among the Iteso," in E. Kurimoto & S. Simonse (eds.), *Conflict, Age & Power in North East Africa: Age Systems in Transition* (Athens, OH, 1998), 234 & TE, 19 January 2017, Opuyonga. Age-classes are sometimes also referred to using the generic term for "generation," *aturi*.

[75] TE, Oale, 22 February 2017; TE, Oale, 08 November 2017; Nagashima 1976, 59-60.

[76] The additional /g/ is a regular sound-change in Teso, while the suffix /-rone/ is formed from the noun form, as in Ateso e(b)woron "mourner" (note that the /g/ has just recently shifted to /b/ as explained in Chapter 2).

groups tapped into a longstanding Ateker tradition recognizing the power of voices raised in unison to effect supernatural change. These groups were often named after large fauna (giraffes, warthogs, zebras) like the *asapan* age-classes discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. Although they had virtually no structural similarity to *asapan* and their etymology suggests an obvious connection to wailing or mourning (a clan-based activity in Ateker culture, and therefore outside the purview of the *asapan* complex for the Northern Ateker), it is possible that the inspiration for creating age-based men's groups and/or naming them after giant fauna came from knowledge of developments farther north. This activity may well have been driven by a desire to achieve more efficacious means of engaging with ancestral spirits. We can speculate that binding men together into initiation groups in life helped streamline communication with their spirits, or *-kwam-in, after death.

Teso age-classes never gained the political prominence of their Northern Ateker counterparts, remaining instead a peripheral organization primarily concerned with the appeasement of ancestral spirits through *apunya. As discussed below, age-classes played a role in rainmaking ceremonies, but this was primarily in support of *imurok* (diviners). *Asapan* was borrowed by the Usuku Teso group from the Northern Ateker relatively late – perhaps in the nineteenth century – but there is no evidence that *asapan* ever existed outside of Usuku, and linguistic evidence suggests it was borrowed.[77] Numerous scholars have followed British

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[77] Nobody outside of Usuku whom I interviewed had ever heard of *asapan*, except for a man who had participated in an effort at revitalizing the practice in Usuku. The same was true for Nagashima and Karp. See, Nagashima 1998, 232. For a discussion of *asapan* in Usuku, see TE, Opuyonga, 19 January 2017; TE, Opuyonga, 26 January 2017; TE, Orungo, 01 February 2017; & TE, Oale, 08 November 2017; for non-recognition of *asapan* outside of Usuku, see TE, Otaaba, 08 February 2017; TE, Atapar, 09 February 2017; TE, Mukongoro, 13 February 2017; TE, Akarukaei, 15 February 2017. The linguistic evidence is not dispositive here, but it is worth noting that the Northern Ateker word *-wal "to decorate with feathers (after *asapan*)" is only found as an Ateso word in Usuku. In Usuku, it is pronounced /wal/, indicating a recent borrowing, because there is a regular sound change that would make it /bwal/ if the word had been inherited from Proto Teso. Furthermore, I was told by Teso *asapan* experts in Usuku

colonial official J. C. D. Lawrance in asserting that Teso was governed chiefly by age-sets until the late precolonial period, and that age-sets of the *asapan* variety were brought to an end through the machinations of British-sponsored Baganda armies led by the general Semei Kakungulu in the early 1900s.[78] For Lawrance, this early colonial annihilation of Teso age-class government was so total that virtually no living Teso people remembered how political age-sets worked by the middle of the twentieth century. This assertion is problematic in that it assumes an Anglo-Ganda hegemony so strong as to beggar belief. A more parsimonious explanation for the absence of a strong age-class governments in Teso is that they never existed in the first place. In precolonial Teso, age-sets were first and foremost a matter of managing ancestor spirits through *apunya. Neither *etal nor *apunya were new concepts in Teso, but both underwent regularization though the creation of new institutions in the centuries following pre-Teso southward migration.

People standardized kinship-based rituals when clans were becoming fragmented. This was a response to the challenges widespread migration imposed on the clan-based model of politics. However, fragmented Teso kinship groups residing in close proximity also encountered issues arising from the shared use of territory that could not be effectively addressed through the rubrics of bilateral marriage alliances or clan-based mourning groups. Warfare, disputes over public land used for hunting and grazing, crimes committed by members of one clan against

that their initiations were coordinated with Karamoja – suggesting that Usuku *asapan* was always oriented northeast, away from the rest of Teso. See PNA 40.

[78] Lawrance, 1957; Joan Vincent, in *Teso in Transformation: The Political Economy of Peasant and Class in Eastern Africa* (Berkeley, CA, 1981), pg. 101, is one scholar among many to accept Lawrance's assertion.

others, and concerns about failing rains (often attributed to malevolent rain-killers, and so falling under the umbrella of criminal activity) affected people on a territorial basis.

To identify what made Teso strategies for addressing territorial political questions distinct, it is instructive to make regional comparisons from the same period. Amidst parallel Lwo migrations, the archetypal pattern was for a single dominant "royal" clan or patrilineage to emerge as responsible for maintaining the community's well-being. This led to the establishment of kingdoms dominated by historically Lwo clans in Busoga, for example, and the *rwot* polities of the Acholi.[79] In both Lwo- and Bantu-speaking areas the ideal of power held by patriarchs in a patrilineage was extended to the broader political community – the leader of a territory was structurally and metaphorically similar to the head of a patrilineage. The foundation of this political arrangement was the practice of reciprocal obligation: leaders (called "big men" in the classic anthropological literature) granted social subordinates rights in land, offers of military protection, and/or promises to bring rain in exchange for loyalty from their subjects.[80] Royal families in Busoga constructed hierarchical systems in which they devolved power to local "chiefs" who had the right to apportion land to commoners. Discourse energizing centralized politics was often explicitly patrilineal.[81] Chiefs in small scale societies such as the Kakwa

[79] D. W. Cohen, "The Cultural Topography of a 'Bantu Borderland': Busoga, 1500-1850," *Journal of African History*, 29, 1 (1988), 57-79; R. Stephens, *A History of African Motherhood: The Case of Uganda, 700-1900* (Cambridge, UK, 2013), 74-144; Atkinson, 1994.

[80] H. Hanson, *Landed Obligation: The Practice of Power in Buganda* (Portsmouth, NH, 2003); J. Vansina, *Antecedents to Modern Rwanda: The Nyiginya Kingdom* (Madison, WI, 2004).

[81] I Kopytoff, "The Internal African Frontier: The Making of African Political Culture," in (I. Kopytoff ed.), *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies* (Bloomington, IN: 1989), 17.

claimed authority based on myths of descent from a single ancient ancestor, while in the

kingdom of Buganda the notion of royal descent was baked into contests over political power.[82]

In contrast, the discursive use of patrilineal claims to legitimate rule fell flat in Teso, where there was an absence of discussions about "royal" clans or lineages with a right to lead. Teso origin myths recognize unproblematically that wider Teso society was always composed of diverse clans with no single ancestor, and leave no room for a particular patrilineage to claim a birthright to rule.[83] As in centralized states such as Buganda, which was stitched together from different clans, diversity was likely seen as a strength.[84] Each Teso "major clan" has a stereotypical "skill" - healing broken bones, delivering effective curses, among others – that when pooled together generated value beyond the sum of its parts.[85] But none of the clans had as its "specialty" a right to rule over others; in all of recoverable Teso history, there were never any royals, nor chiefs, and therefore no "commoners" either.

By rejecting patrilineal claims to territorial political authority, Teso society also sharply departed from classic examples of East African "segmentary lineage" societies to which it is often compared, such as the Dinka or Alur.[86] In segmentary lineage societies, patrilineal

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[82] KW, Liru Hill, 24 September 2017; C. Wrigley, *Kingship and State: The Buganda Dynasty* (Cambridge, UK, 1996).

[83] This represents a significant contrast from neighboring political communities, such as the Basoga. See L. Fallers, *Bantu Bureaucracy: A Century of Political Evolution among the Basoga of Uganda* (Chicago, 1970), 141.

[84] N. Kodesh, *Beyond the Royal Gaze: Clanship and Public Healing in Buganda*

[85] Karp 1971, 7. This is reminiscent of Jane Guyer's observation that Africans sought diversity, rather than mere quantity, when seeking "wealth-in-people." J. Guyer, "Wealth in People, Wealth in Things – Introduction," *Journal of African History*, 36, 1 (1995), 83-90.

[86] M. Sahlins, "The Segmentary Lineage: An Organization of Predatory Expansion," *American Anthropologist*, 63, 2 (1961), 322-345; A. Southall, "The Segmentary State in Africa and Asia," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 30, 1 (1988), 52-82.

identities generally overlap with territorial identities, and lineages are traced back (fictively, at least) into the deep past. In segmentary societies, if Lineage A and Lineage B recognize a common Ancestor X, they may fight amongst themselves, but will combine forces if threatened by another lineage with a more distant common ancestor, or no shared ancestor at all. Such a combination is based on the metaphor of shared descent from Ancestor X (Chapter 1). Although it was the case that in Teso separate lineages living near one another could unite for common purposes, they did so for strictly pragmatic reasons, and recruited a common leader based on competence, rather than patrilineal claims. With high levels of migration and immigration, everyone would have known perfectly well that their neighbors did not share any lineage. There is no evidence such claims were ever effectively made.[87] Even in the late twentieth century, when the people in the Teso region advocated for government recognition of a cultural leader, colloquially referred to in English as a "king," they chose the title *emorimor* – a reduplication of the root /-mor-/ meaning "to mix different things together and create a whole."[88]

Rather than marking one dominant clan or family as hereditary ruler in a particular territory, Proto Teso-speakers created inter-clan meeting spaces called *etem, derived from the Proto Ateker word for "family hearth," to address territorial issues. When this innovation occurred, there was already a long-established word in Proto Ateker to denote kinship-based, patrilineal authority, captured by the root *-pol, which produces word such as "large," "big man," "elder," and "patriarch."[89] But this root was not suitable to describe leaders charged with

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[87] There are oral traditions recounting failed attempts however. See Webster *et al.* 1973, 109-110.

[88] S. Esibo, "Transcending Traps and Obstacles to Democracy and Development in the Society of the Iteso," *Journal of African Democracy and Development*, 1, 2 (2017), 159-161; TE, Oale, 04 March 2017; TE, Kichinjaji, 01 March 2017.

[89] Ateker 126.

facilitating *etem meetings or dealing with other issues outside the clan. For positions of

territorial political leadership Proto Teso-speakers innovated a word for a second type of

authority, *-ped-or, from the Proto Ateker root meaning "competence, ability."[90] Proto Teso-

speakers recognized little correlation between the type of authority held by heads of

patrilineages, which was based on ownership of land and cattle alongside one's position as *pater

familias*, and the kind of authority required to manage an *etem meeting. The leader within an

*etem must be a person who was wise, fair, and above all able to build consensus between

clans.[91] Moreover, because power ran in dual tracks of lineage and *etem, it was difficult to

convert one type to another. Even if a wealthy patriarch with *-pol "bigness" was elected on the

basis of perceived *ped-or "competence" to be a leading voice in the *etem, there was no

guarantee his lineage relative would share his abilities and follow as *etem leader. Teso politics

provided no clear path for multigenerational accumulation of territorial power by a single

lineage, because patrilineage headship was not a metaphor that extended beyond the immediate

exogamous group. There would be no "father of the clans" in Teso.

The specific title given to an *etem leader was *ekeraban, derived from the Teso root *-

rab "to speak," because he could productively manage a conversation.[92] The details of *etem

procedure differed across Teso, but in many cases the *ekeraban may not have held a permanent

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[90] Ateker 119.

[91] TE, Mukongoro, 13 February 2017; TE, Atapar, 09 February 2017; D. Okalany, "A Conflict Between Iteso Pre-Colonial Judicial Procedure and the British Pattern of Development," (MAWAZO workshop, Makerere University, 1988).

[92] Teso 8. This term only appears with a masculine prefix, supporting ethnographic observations that the position was exclusive to men. The idea that competent speaking was an essential part of leadership was not unique to Teso, and was also prominent among the Northern Ateker, even if they did not capture it directly in their word for a political leader. See B. Knighton, "Orality in the Service of Karamojong Autonomy: Polity and Performance," *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 18, 1 (2006), 137-152.

office. For example, for *etem meetings meant to resolve judicial disputes between two clans,

historian David Okalany insists that the *ekeraban was required to be selected from a third clan

not party to the dispute.[93] In settings where a permanent *ekeraban was appointed, he was

chosen through an election called *aseo from Ateker root *-se- "to select, to pick (as in crops),"

and upon his death or retirement, another *ekeraban could be selected based on perceived merit

from a different clan.[94] Crucially, the *ekeraban could not himself command armies into war nor

arbitrarily render a verdict on a clan dispute – his function was merely to facilitate conversation

and arrive at a consensus if possible.[95] If such a consensus proved impossible, the only true

remedies were probably violence or emigration.

*Etem meetings were held near large shady trees – for physical comfort surely, but also

harkening to an inherited Eastern Nilotic tradition of meeting in special groves (Chapter 4).

Traditional *etem meetings are virtually extinct today, and the word *etem* has come to designate

a modern administrative district.[96] But they still reside in memory. For as long ago as anyone

from the twentieth century could remember, *etem* meetings in Usuku occurred in sacred groves

called *atuket* that had restrictions on tree-felling similar to the Northern Ateker *ngakiriketa*. It is

impossible to know whether this practice was borrowed from the Northern Ateker or dates to the

initial Usuku occupation.[97] All but one *atuket* I am aware of has now been cleared of trees, but

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[93] Webster *et al.* 1973, 130.

[94] Ateker 146; TE, Mukongoro, 13 February 2017; TE, Atapar, 09 February 2017.

[95] Webster *et al.* 1973, 77-79.

[96] Specifically, *etem* is the word used for the Local Council III Sub-County level of government.

[97] The word *atuket* simply means "coming-together place," and provides no definitive answer to this question. The allegedly ancient *atuket* sites in Usuku are littered with potsherds and roasted animal bones, and are potentially rich sites for future archaeological excavation. In particular, the most famous *atuket* in Usuku would be a good

their locations are still widely known in northern Teso. A map created using GPS coordinates I

took during my fieldwork from a sampling of these sites reveals a past socio-political landscape

dotted with physical manifestations of Teso's inter-clan cooperation.[98] Such sites are too distant

a memory to make a similar map in southwestern Teso, where even in the nineteenth century

meetings were held at a temporary shady area called *airabis*, or "speaking place."

The physical layout of a twentieth-century Teso *etem* meeting resembles the Northern

Ateker *akiriket* in very specific ways, suggesting that both derive from a common Proto Ateker

form (Figures 6.1 & 6.2). Similarities include the half-circle shape, with men seated on stools (in

the Teso case, heavy three-legged stools poorly suited for long-distance herding).[99] They would

be seated according to seniority with women flanking the outsides of the gathering, and a

centrally-located roasting fire facing the half-circle.[100] Meat is roasted and distributed according

to gender, age, and social rank, as is the case for the Northern Ateker. A key difference is that, in

Teso meetings, participants sat in separate half-circles determined by kinship group rather than

coming together as one territorial community. Oral histories explain that the *ekeraban would

move freely between each cluster facilitating discussion, but the clans did not sit together – a

physical representation of their reserved autonomy. As far as I can tell, the relative size of

starting point because it has already been destroyed by Pentecostal activists and is no longer functioning as a culturally important space.

[98] The map itself will not be published in this dissertation because some of these sites have been targeted with destruction following accusations of witchcraft over the past few decades.

[99] The word for "stool" can be reconstructed to Proto Teso as *ekicolong, and derives from the verb "to rest one's head." Because Northern Ateker stools can be used alternately as head-rests, whereas Teso stools cannot, we can surmise that the Teso stool type is a more recent introduction to Teso material culture.

[100] This same layout is also used for the *ekonyokoit etal* ritual, described above. Nagashima 1976, 55.

kinship groups in the *etem did not change this layout: no matter how many people represented a

clan in a given territory, each clan had a separate circle within the *etem.
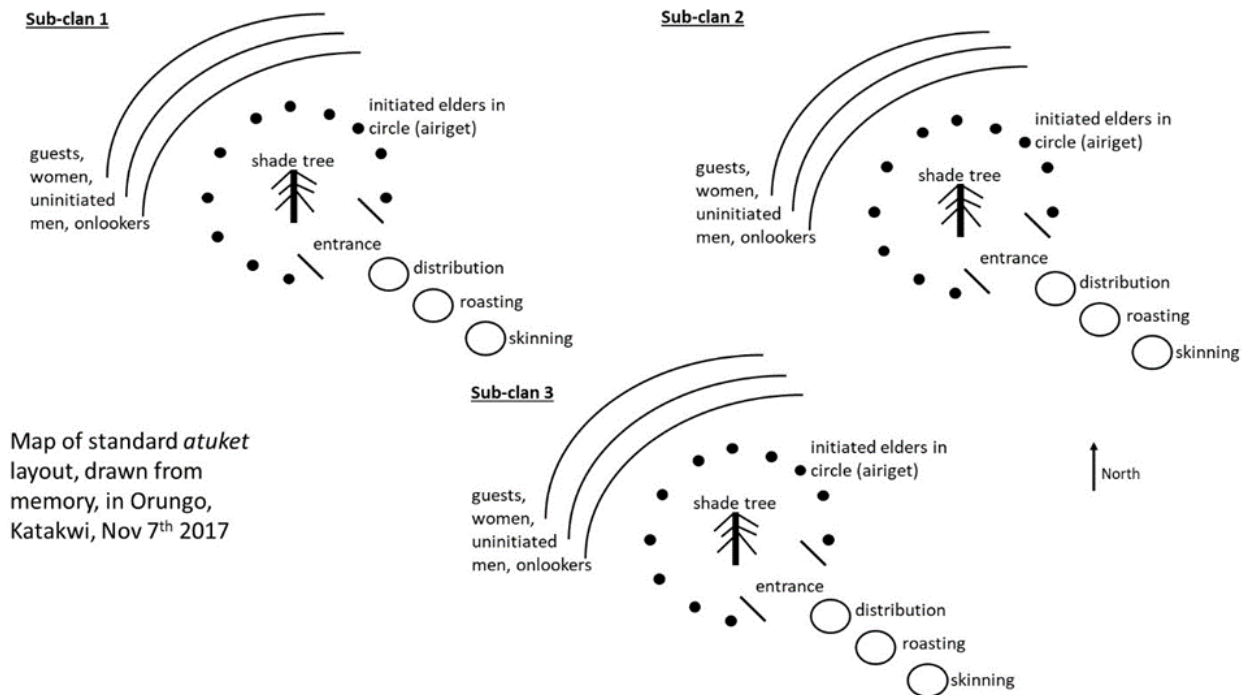
Figure 6.1 – Layout of *Atuket* in Usuku
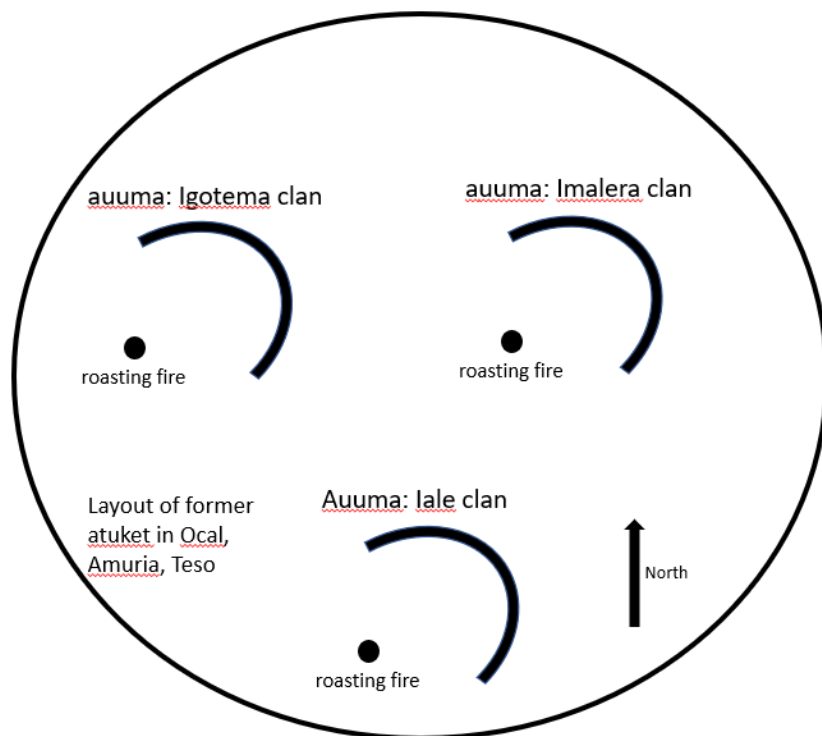
Figure 6.2 – Layout of Atuket in Amuria

In precolonial Teso, kin groups – discussed using the idiom of patrilineal clanship – were the fundamental building block of territorial politics. The greater political prominence of kinship for Proto Teso-speakers compared to their Northern Ateker cousins derived in part from the higher value of land, which was allocated along patrilineal lines. Clans became fragmented through migration, so Teso-speakers made institutional investments in clan activities, regularizing the performance of *etal rituals and creating *-woye mourning groups. However, models of patrilineal authority were not extended to territorial governance as happened elsewhere in the region. For territorial matters, the *etem system held clans in balance.

The Durability of Republican Decentralization

Up to now, I have reconstructed the migratory history and basic sociopolitical systems of the precolonial Teso. But, to describe the past is not to explain it, and the central question of

decentralization remains. Precolonial Teso contained many of the essential preconditions that theorists of social evolution have long associated with the rise of political centralization, including high population density and sedentary farming. Yet, Teso society did not move in that direction, instead forging a political topography of dispersed *etem neighborhood congresses led by leaders elected based on perceived ability. How did Teso-speakers maintain a decentralized political system in the face of social forces which have often led to the domination of the many by the few, usually through a idiom of patrilineal reciprocal obligation? Or, put another way, why did ambitious, charismatic, and wealthy power-seekers largely fail to centralize political power in their hands and those of their children – at least in any enduring way?

The answer cannot be that there were no such ambitious individuals in Teso. This assertion would fly in the face of common sense, and moreover such characters can be found in oral traditions from the early twentieth century (see below). The answer cannot be that the people of Teso were especially attached to distributed autonomy. Many publics have imagined, and desired, a political structure that preserved autonomy at the level of the family or individual without eventually succumbing to either lawlessness or elite domination; fewer have achieved this in practice.[101] Part of the answer was likely that the division of political power across two separate spheres – *etem/territory and *etal/kinship – restricted the accumulation of political power in the hands of a single dominant lineage or charismatic speaker. But this was true elsewhere as well, in places where "big men" of powerful lineages nonetheless successfully achieved territorial power by creating networks of obligation allowing them to extend claims of "wealth-in-people" actualized in the forms of labor and material tribute across significant

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[101] Scott, 2017.

distances.[102] To answer this question, it is necessary to closely examine how inequality of power was actually made manifest in Teso society, as well as options disempowered individuals had for escaping, or at least limiting the effect of, unequal structures. In so doing, the following section seeks to both answer a puzzling question particular to Teso history while also offering a model of how decentralized politics in precolonial Africa can be examined as themselves a product of historical change, rather than simply examples of centralization waiting to happen.

To account for the durability of decentralized politics in Teso, two further historical factors can be discerned. First, precolonial Teso's economic values and practices provided little opportunity for the accumulation of labor obligations, stockpiling of resources, or creation of power imbalances between clans through indebtedness. As a general rule, political autonomy is easily undermined by severe imbalances in wealth, because debtor-creditor relationships are quickly generated by inequality, thereby binding debtors to creditors through labor, land, and tax obligations. Debt has long been seen by historians as a key building block in the systems of patrilineal reciprocal obligation that were foundational for the creation of centralized states across precolonial East Africa (Chapter 1). A combination of social values denigrating wealth accumulation and economic structures preventing the payment of debt through labor served to substantially limit the occurrence of debtor-creditor, and hence patron-client, relationships in Teso. Along with fragmented authority, low levels of debt were keys that unlocked a durable mode of decentralized politics that answered, and maybe even inspired, the long-recognized autonomous civic ethic of the Teso people.

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[102] Jeffrey Herbst sets the physical limit at the amount of space that could be travelled by a leaders' messenger over a few weeks. J. Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton, 2000), 49. Of course, this range might be extended by waterways.

Second, the efflorescence of diverse spiritual practices in Teso – borrowed and internally innovated – enhanced an alternate locus of social power, the *imurok* ("diviners"). Unlike their counterparts among the Northern Ateker, *imurok* (sg. *e/amuron*) leveraged new Teso spiritual ideas to stand outside both *etal* and *etem* power structures. The *imurok* were empowered spiritual specialists, who possessed *-ped-or (competency) in different aspects of the non-corporeal realm. They were usually understood to be specially selected for possession by individualized spirits. Their rise as political actors by the eighteenth century provided alternative pathways for people to achieve their goals, thus limiting the capacity for leaders in either the *etal or *etem spheres to monopolize power. For example, *imurok* were consulted on fertility issues more typically controlled by women through *etal. They were also asked to provide judgement in criminal cases by casting spells to determine culpability, a domain typically the province of *etem* leaders.[103] Crucially, as explored below, *imurok* also led rain-dances in conjunction with *-woye age-sets, thereby preventing lineage heads or *etem* speakers from claiming a key attribute in kingship ideologies across the region – the belief that the health of a land was connected to the well-being of the political leader.[104] Furthermore, because *imurok* stood outside the *etem* structure, they became figures whom publics rallied around during times of crisis, such as wars, requiring coordination across multiple *etems*. They, rather than the leader of the strongest *etem* or head of the wealthiest family, served as temporary pan-Teso unifiers when needed. With the rise of the *imurok*, Teso had three independent poles of political authority

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[103] B. Ekeya, "The Emurwon – Diviner/Prophet – in the Religion of the Iteso" (PhD Dissertation, University of Nairobi, 1984); for a thick description of *emuron* healing practices, see also S. Selden, "Curing Tales from Teso," *Journal of the Folklore Institute*, 13, 2 (1976), 137-154.

[104] For example see S. Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and History in Tanzania* (Madison, WI, 1990) & C. Cooke, "Bari Rain Cults," *Sudan Notes and Records*, 22, 2 (1939), 181-186.

– lineage, territorial, and spiritual – which worked in concert with one another but could not be effectively combined under a single leader. This division of leadership helps explain the durability of Teso decentralization.

Freedom from debt

Anthropological literature on the Teso, along with all other Ateker-speakers, is replete with examples of a long-standing tradition valuing small-scale political autonomy for both families, as discussed above, and individuals. Although the fruits of individual autonomy were enjoyed most thoroughly by elder men, this ideal crossed age, class, and gender boundaries. The most obvious example is young men struggling to break away from their fathers and establish new families of their own, whether by securing their own plots of land in Teso or building their own herds in Karamoja and Turkana. Ethnographic literature shows that women also were generally free to divorce, maintained control over their own cereal farms, and found ways such as *etal in Teso or *akiwor* in Karamoja to gain a voice in politics (Chapter 5). What makes Ateker principles of autonomy historically interesting is not that freedom rang especially deep in Ateker hearts. It is that Ateker-speakers appear to have recognized and grown concerned by the inevitable connection between socio-political autonomy and economic autonomy, and to have fingered debt as the tissue connecting one to the other (Chapter 3). This dynamic is most clear in the Teso case.

As described in Chapter 1, social debt can easily transform economic dependence into political subordination in settings where the work of politics is not explicitly segregated from social networks. In Teso, this segregation was never as firmly drawn as it was in the Northern Ateker *asapan* system, rendering Teso society more vulnerable to structural economic challenges to republican government. In Teso, kinship institutions were challenged by migratory fragmentation, but they were never replaced as the basic unit of political competition, and even

became more prominent as land became scarcer. *Etem* congresses existed as public institutions through which kinship groups could create decentralized and republican forms of territorial governance. Yet, the longevity of such political forms was by no means pre-ordained, and the basic social and economic structure of Teso contained many of the conditions that have led to "wealth-in-people" centralization elsewhere – labor intensive seasonal agriculture, kinship-based political constituencies, economic inequality, and numerous centralized neighbors to provide workable examples. Despite these factors, Teso did not become centralized, and retained an essentially republican form of territorial government. One factor in explaining this phenomenon is that the Teso people developed both a culture that was intensely skeptical of debt and inequality as well as cultural practices that practically limited the ability of aspiring "big men" to accumulate social debt. Teso, more so than the Northern Ateker world, provides an opportunity to engage with the history of an African culture of republicanism.

To understand why the restriction of debt was an important factor for modeling Teso's durable decentralization, we must briefly grapple with debt's role in the creation of centralized polities elsewhere in Africa. The relevant theoretical construct here is again the "wealth-in-people" model. As explained in Chapter 1, the most ubiquitous means by which "big men" in African "wealth-in-people" frameworks stored wealth was through the accumulation of social debt. With the exception of slavery, "wealth-in-people" was not measured by literal ownership of other humans, but by the collection of many unbalanced social ledgers. Aspiring rulers added to such ledgers by offering subjects a range of culturally-specific goods and services without demanding immediate payment. Offerings could include feasts, choice farmland, livestock, crops, hunting prizes, ivory, gold, beads, and other treasures, rain-making, military support, esteemed offices, and more. The rich were in a position to suffer short-term losses in exchange

relationships with the poor. Debtors' repayment unfolded over time, taking the form of labor on public works, annual tribute, military service, and more. Longstanding debt was the glue that held people in the orbit of centralized states. Hence wealth inequality was connected to political power – Malinowski called such unbalanced ledgers "funds of power" for this exact reason.[105] The long-term maintenance of unequal exchanges benefitting the debtor in the short term is critical here, for it both allowed debt to accumulate and provided a material benefit for subject populations that disincentivized exit from the political relationship. Political competition in this framework occurred between aspiring patrons who jockeyed for relationships of reciprocal obligation with potential followers. Indeed, social debt underwrote political centralization in much of east Africa during the Proto Teso period, from Lwo chiefdoms, to the "ministates" of Busoga, to the large Great Lakes kingdoms (Chapter 1).

Debt is not always odious for the debtor; as explored in Chapter 1, debt can bind rich and poor together, provide creditors with an incentive to root for debtors' success, and create social safety nets to limit extreme destitution. But the Teso seem to have been acutely aware of the socio-political imbalances debt and inequality could also produce, as well as the political implications of those imbalances.[106] Or, at least, the economic systems and social norms developed during Teso migration and settlement functioned to limit the accumulation of debt between families or individuals. Limited indebtedness in turn paved the way for the emergence of social institutions that buttressed political equality between families and preserved individual autonomy without generating centralized structures. Given the wide range of social relationships

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[105] B. Malinowski, "The Primitive Economics of the Trobriand Islanders," *Economic Journal*, 31, 121 (1921), 1-16.

[106] For a description of this dynamic in a setting outside Africa, see M. Sahlins, "Poor Man, Rich Man, Big-Man, Chief: Political Types in Melanesia and Polynesia," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 5, 3 (1963), 285-303.

affected by this cultural innovation, I suspect that this shift was to some degree the intentional outcome of intellectual discourse, not so different from debates over similar topics in the West (and in Teso) today. Of course, we lack any contemporary written records to prove such a claim; this is an undeniable weakness of the present historical reconstruction. What we can do, however, is point to this shift and theorize about its implications for political evolution. We can apply judicious historical imagination to consider the contexts in which debates about debt, inequality, and power likely occurred and who probably participated in those debates.

The Teso likely inherited a general skepticism towards debt from their Proto Ateker ancestors. Linguistic evidence discussed in Chapter 3 shows how Proto Ateker-speakers developed a complex lexicon to describe nuanced differences between types of debt obligation, and the normative value placed on economic autonomy can be seen in the derivation of the Ateker root *-lak-ar- "happiness" from the Proto Tunga *-lak "to discharge debt."[107] This tradition continued to be linguistically productive among the Northern Ateker, who borrowed a Lwo word for "gift," *-mic, but gave it the gloss "debt."[108] Like the sociologist Marcel Mauss, they recognized that a gift was almost invariably an invitation to obligation.[109] Proto Teso-speakers were also concerned about debt. The Proto Teso innovation *-kop, forming "to borrow" and "to lend," for example, was derived from a Proto Ateker root meaning "to snatch away by force."[110] The act of entering debt relationships was, quite literally, an act of "snatching," with moral implications for snatcher and snatched. So too, demanding repayment was an act fraught

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[107] Ateker 77.

[108] PNA 26.

[109] M. Mauss, *The Gift: The form and reason for exchange in archaic societies* (trans. J. Guyer) (Chicago, 2016).

[110] Teso 12.

with tension. Proto Teso-speakers innovated *-bura "to claim a debt" from an earlier Ateker root evoking quarreling, brawling, and anxiety.[111] Debt was an unavoidably political question, connected to manifestations of coercion and conflict.

Two particular modes of debt obligation have played an outsized historical role in the transformation of social obligations into permanent political structures across precolonial Africa. The first is debt created between lineages by bridewealth transactions. The second is agricultural labor obligations owed to "big men." Neighborhood inequities and debates over greed and the sharing of food may be central to the everyday individual experience of debt, but it is credit held by lineages and recurring labor obligations that are the stuff royal families, armies, and state projects are made of. Across Teso society in the mid-twentieth century, no traditional path to accumulate either of these types of debt existed. This was not because bridewealth and labor exchanges were absent from Teso society. It was instead because these two realms of exchange were contained within closed economic spheres in which both parties felt enormous social pressure to actively cultivate equitable transactions.

We can take bridewealth first. Even though Teso clans became fragmented through migration, they retained social significance as exogamous units in which all members expected to partake in bridewealth transactions – either contributing to a groom's prestation or receiving part of a bride's payment. Marriage and childbirth processes unfolded over a long time and involved a series of steps as dictated by the women who controlled *etal (see above). Bridewealth negotiations occurred early in a marriage, but full payment could take years. Proto Teso-speakers even innovated a new verb *-yit "to pay bridewealth," derived from the verb "to

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[111] Teso 2.

trickle, to drip slowly" to describe this lengthy procedure.[112] As years went by, relationships and interests inevitably changed, so it would be erroneous to conceive of bridewealth as an isolated transaction that captured a particular moment in time. Bridewealth was only part of a long process, dominated by *etal, that stretched from initial introductions until a bride was fully initiated into her husband's clan after giving birth to a healthy baby. Throughout this period, the two families bound together in marriage visited each other's homes according to a formal schedule, and each visit included a prestation.

The two main bridewealth events – when a new bride was first escorted to her husband's home, and when a large herd was driven to the home of the bride's parents - were by no means the only transactions included in the process. Immediately upon receipt of a bridewealth herd, a protracted back-and-forth of smaller payments was initiated by the gift of a goat from the bride's brother to her groom's family. Although details vary, each step of *etal included actions that can be read as a careful rebalancing of accounts between the wife-giver and wife-taker after the initial transaction. At events such as the discovery of pregnancy, childbirth and child-naming, the baby's first visit to his or her maternal grandmother's home, and feasts releasing the bride from taboos, rules are always prescribed as to who should provide beer, meat, and finger millet. There are also scheduled opportunities for ritualized contestation over the terms of the transaction. For example, a common ceremony is performed where women in the wife-taker clan will hurl abuse at the new bride, accusing her of not being worth her parents' bridewealth payment, or for one party to enter the other's home without permission and remove a choice chicken. In a ritual found throughout Teso, when a woman produces twins – thereby proving her fertility was greater

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[112] Teso 39.

than expected – members of her natal family run to her husband's family's compound and demand to be further compensated with food and drink.[113] If her brother or uncle can manage to break through the roof of the house where beer is being brewed, he wins the right to distribute beer exclusively to the wife-giver family.

Such visits cultivated affinal affection and cemented (and sometimes complicated) family alliances. An important part of that affective relationship was built upon mutual gift-giving calibrated to ensure neither family ended the marriage transaction in debt to the other. As Nagashima writes,

> The total structure of the affinal relationship is so composed as to achieve in the end an ideal equilibrium and equality between the two groups and between individuals who stand as affines. Politically, neither can be structurally superior to the other, because the goal of the relationship is to establish an equal alliance.[114]

The equilibrium Nagashima describes can be understood in the context of the "wealth-in-people" theory of political economy. In Busoga, for example, Lwo patriarchs with large families would "marry off" daughters to Bantu-speaking lineages as part of a strategy for establishing patron-client relationships with them. Proto Teso-speakers avoided this form of indebtedness and inter-lineage inequality by carefully managing bridewealth transactions to ensure they ended close to a balanced ledger.

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[113] TE, Atiira, 28 February 2017; TE, Mela, 13 October 2017.

[114] N. Nagashima, "Is the Wife-Giver Superior? The Affinal Relationship among the Iteso of Kenya with Special Reference to Ivan Karp's Propositions," in N. Nagashima (ed.), *Themes in Socio-Cultural Ideas and Behaviour among Six Ethnic Groups of Kenya* (Tokyo, 1981), 67.

Debt in the form of labor obligations was also restrained by Teso custom. Communal labor was a prominent feature of the Teso economy, and Teso-speakers in various regions innovated at least four words to describe the it: *-tai (in Proto Teso), *eboole*, *etoni*, and *ewome*.[115] Because of the seasonal nature of rain-fed agriculture, large bursts of work were required for short periods of time, as fields became ready to plant, weed, protect, and then harvest. Proto Teso-speakers developed a system of rotational communal farm labor for these periods, with the hosting family responsible for providing nourishing millet beer at the day's end. The decision to work in another's field on a given day was freely made, but Karp (above) suggests that a certain frequency of enthusiastic participation was necessary to avoid being labeled *epoget*, or "proud." As Karp argues in his prized essay, "Beer Drinking among the Iteso," the choice to perform labor established an obligation on the host to provide beer. Such beer parties were a central fixture in Teso social life, and any attempted substitution of another form of payment for labor would be a considered a serious *faux pas*.[116]

Thus, while there was a market for labor in Teso, it was a severely constrained market in which the only reasonable type of exchange was beer for labor. Beer parties only lasted a day or two (at most), and finger millet beer itself was only potable for a week at most. Therefore, all labor exchange was necessarily temporary: work was done, beer was provided, and the ledger was balanced. Moreover, participation in this market was driven by laborers rather than hirers, so the debt was imposed by the laborer on the host, and not vice versa. Writing on Dar-Fur, Barth argues that a closed labor-beer market among the Fur was entirely self-contained, and for this

[115] Teso 30.

[116] Karp, 1971.

reason could not be converted into capital accumulation in other markets.[117] A similar dynamic was in play in Teso. Because debt was imposed by the laborer, and because it was required to be repaid in beer and beer only, and because beer was a temporary good, there was no obvious route to accumulate debt in the form of labor obligation. Without any recognized social tool for imposing labor obligations, it would have been difficult if not impossible for an aspiring leader to collect "wealth-in-people" in the mode explained in Chapter 1.

As discussed above, long-term debt is inextricably connected to inequality. There is linguistic and ethnographic evidence that wealth inequality – especially if derived from "hoarding" – was also stigmatized by many Proto Teso-speakers. On the operation of this stigma at the individual level, Karp's ethnography is especially helpful, for he convincingly demonstrates that the Kenyan Teso with whom he lived in the 1960s-70s saw the economic actions of individuals as unavoidably linked to the broader social health of their community. For Karp, the primary determinant of whether one was a moral person is whether he or she displayed social, *-pap-er- ("friendliness"), or anti-social,*-pog- ("harmfully proud"), behavior.[118] Both *-pap-er and *-pog- were innovated in Proto Teso from Proto Ateker roots, and therefore index a discourse which occurred in the Proto Teso period. A sociable person, to quote Karp, "eats out of doors, frequently brews beer for his neighbors, and is willing to cooperate in working parties and share his resources." Such a person was called *e/apapero*, and the word is derived from the Proto Ateker polysemous transitive verb invoking meanings such as "to provide water, to quench

[117] F. Barth, "Economic Spheres in Darfur," in R. Firth (ed.), *Themes in Economic Anthropology* (London, 1967), 149-174.

[118] I. Karp, "Beer-Drinking Among the Iteso" (Discussion Paper, Institute for Development Studies, University College Nairobi, 1970), 11.

another's thirst, to revive someone by sprinkling him with water."[119] Given the devastating

aridity which spurred the genesis of Teso, the value of sharing water is obvious. The opposite of

e/apapero was called *e/apoget*, described by Karp as "a proud and selfish man… who lives

alone, does not cooperate in neighborhood labor and beer parties and eats hidden in the rear of

his hut, rather than outside so that anyone who passes by can share his meal." The word likely

derives from an Ateker root meaning "to boast," which was also used by Teso-speakers to

rename a particular kind of ivory bangle worn by rich men in the region.[120] A moral person

shared water, an immoral person was boastful and displayed wealth.

Conspicuous consumption in the form of ivory bangles and other decorations existed in

early Teso (and virtually everywhere else on earth), but these displays could invite suspicion that

one's wealth had been gained as a result of anti-social behavior. Signals of wealth were likely to

arouse envy, and Proto Teso-speakers innovated a new word from this emotion, *-lili-, which

replaced the same root that had meant "anger" in Proto Ateker.[121] One morning in 2017, when

visiting a man in Teso who had recently begun construction on a large house, my host told me

that overnight some people in his village had kneecapped of one of his prized bulls with a club.

As people discussed the incident with me, they readily agreed that this was a foreseeable (if still

criminal) result of "envy" aroused by the construction, and no one suggested further action was

appropriate. Anger and stigmatization of allegedly greedy consumption (in fairness, I found my

host to be generous with all his neighbors) was also a problem of apparently widespread concern,

because Teso-speakers innovated at least seven separate roots that can be glossed as "greedy": -

[119] Teso 22.

[120] Teso 25.

[121] Teso 17.

likid-, *-lut*, *-pok*, *-rang*, *-ridid*, *-sinye*, *-wangon-*. The continuous generation of new ways to speak about greed likely indexes the ideological debates surrounding the social appropriateness of wealth accumulation. This is not evidence of consensus on these issues – the presence of vigorous debate suggests quite the opposite – but rather that Teso-speakers were unwilling to let the issue go.

Individual displays of wealth could become flashpoints for debate because material equality was considered a social good by many people. Proto Teso-speakers thought about prosperity explicitly in term of equality, innovating the term *-ke-rian- "prosperity" by adding a causative prefix to the Proto Ateker root *-rian "equal (as in height), at par."[122] The word is also translated in Teso as "economics," so that to speak of "studying economics" in Teso is to literally speak of "studying the cause of equality." In contrast, Teso speakers adopted the descriptive metaphor *ainya ejungula* "to spread the *ejungula* plant" as a term meaning "to become rich." In this phrase, wealth accumulation was equated with the cultivation of *ejungula* (*Jatropha curcas*), an inedible invasive species, fatally poisonous to humans and animals, with no medicinal value, useful only for creating thicket fences to wall off plots of land.[123]

Social ideals of equality notwithstanding, Teso society has produced richer and poorer individuals. Over the centuries, Teso-speakers have both inherited and innovated descriptive terms for specific kinds of wealth - generic wealth (*abara*), wealth-in-food (*amio*), wealth-in-

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[122] Teso 10.

[123] Note that *Jatropha curcas* has recently been farmed in Teso as a potential biofuel, and could be linked to wealth in this way. However, the term *ainya ejungula* appears in a 1953 dictionary pre-dating the discovery of its biofuel potential, so this is not a plausible explanation for the expression. However, this phrase must date to the period after c. 1600 hundred, because *Jatropha curcas* is indigenous to the Americas and was introduced to East Africa Portuguese merchants. J. Kiggen, *English-Ateso Dictionary* (London, 1953), 307.

cattle (*elisina*) and wealth-in-property (*emaali*). Notably absent are any glosses evoking "wealth-in-people." There is reason to believe, however, that the idea of a minimum social safety net consisting of better off neighbors providing food and water to the poor was considered a social good. Aside from the *pap-er gloss discussed above, six of the seven lexical innovations for "greed" have to do specifically with greedy eating or drinking (eating indoors, taking large lumps of millet bread, gulping beer too fast, etc.).[124] This does not prove that food *was* always shared. But the fact that, when searching for terms to allege anti-social behavior, Teso-speakers consistently made comparisons to people who ate indoors or too quickly suggests the expectation of sharing food was widely acknowledged. My own experience in Teso comports with Karp, who writes that "a major ideal of Iteso sociability is the sharing of food," and this responsibility to share food extended to non-kin living in one's territory.

It is very likely that this social more became fully developed in the Proto Teso period, and speculatively, the existence of a safety net in the form of expected charity may have undermined efforts of aspiring "big men" to gain followers with promises of basic subsistence. This underlying culture of charity may thus have been a factor discouraging the growth of a "wealth-in-people" form of politics. If the poor were often cared for by neighbors, however, this does not mean that negative connotations did not become attached to poverty. Teso-speakers innovated the term *-can for "poverty," and historian Rhiannon Stephens correctly notes that this root produces polysemous glosses indicating that many Proto Teso-speakers considered the destitute a burden on society because of their begging.[125] One specifically identifiable group of

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[124] Historian Elias Mandala does an excellent job excavating the nuance of eating indoors or outdoors in another context. See E. Mandala, *The End of Chidyerano: A History of Food and Everyday Life in Malawi, 1860-2004* (Portsmouth, NH, 2005), 222.

[125] Stephens, 2016.

poor beggars in Teso was Karimojong immigrants, many of whom likely left Karamoja because

of stresses from herd loss before entering the more fertile Teso region, where they introduced a

word *-yaror "to beg sorrowfully."[126] Surely, some individual families faced stressful moments

balancing the social imperative to share food with their desire to retain meager foodstuffs. But

the social ills of poverty and begging may have been seen as even more pernicious than the

immediate burden such activities placed on neighbors. The most acute problem associated with

begging may have been that it created obligations, thereby reminding other Teso-speakers of the

persistence of debt, itself a challenge to the political ideal. The cognitive dissonance created by

any contradiction between a republican ideal and actual inequality could also just be flatly denied

to save face. Historian Source Opak, for example, notes that in Teso: "A poor man is often heard

to remind his wealthy neighbor that 'I do not eat at your home' even when he has just shared a

rich man's meal. This individualism or independence, if you like, was so deep-seated in the Iteso

psyche that nobody expected them to embrace the concept of one leader."[127]

Exploring the concept of "wealth-in-people" in the precolonial Teso context, where it did

not produce any semblance of centralized politics, does not detract from the usefulness of the

theory. Rather, it re-affirms the theory's value by showing how the decentralized politics of Teso

were possible precisely because they were missing a key feature of "wealth-in-people," namely

debt. Whether or not early Teso-speakers themselves explicitly argued that social equality and

freedom from debt prevented the accumulation of political power in a single lineage while

preserving small-scale autonomy is impossible to know for sure. Source Opak insists that Teso-

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[126] PNA 12.

[127] S. Opak, *A New Breed of Kings* (Kampala, 2001), 2, as cited in Esibo 2017, 156. Denial was not always an adequate solution however, as attested by one of Webster's informants who explained that he migrated to get away from his extended family because they "hated him because he was poor." Webster *et al.* 1973, 1.

speakers looked carefully at nearby centralized models and regarded them as "strange" and somewhat embarrassing for the participants, and he is probably correct.[128] It is worth imagining as well what they may have given up: as numerous historians have pointed out, the claims upon patrons to which "reciprocal obligation" models entitled clients were of real value even if inherently unequal, and might even bleed into discourses of affection.[129] In any case, what is clear is that the Teso political economy seems to have been almost tailor-made to resist the most common model for political centralization occurring elsewhere in the region. With debt restrained and strictures against rampant inequality in place, the processual march through "wealth-in-people" to political centralization described in much anthropological literature could not get off the ground.

Imurok

In the long history of Teso migration and settlement, lasting from c. 1000 CE to the early twentieth century, perhaps no semantic field underwent more change and growth than that of the spiritual realm. Proto Ateker cosmology, as far as can be adduced from evidence, recognized the existence of an ill-defined non-corporeal force in the world that could be harnessed and directed through the astute practice of spiritual specialists (*muron), with animal sacrifice, and by raising voices in unison (Chapter 3). As they moved south, Teso-speakers retained elements of all of these Proto Ateker words and practices, but at every encounter with new cultures they also

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[128] Esibo 2017, 150.

[129] Hanson, 2003.

borrowed new ideas, practices, words, and spirits. So regular was this pattern that Karp writes, "the exotic nature of tutelary spirits… makes up a virtual history of Iteso foreign relations."[130]

This process was both continuous and additive. Through the entire millennium beginning c. 1000 CE, Teso communities enthusiastically adopted new spiritual ideas to help make sense of and control the new territories they moved into, but did so without discarding older concepts. This trend helps explain why Christian missionaries early colonial period were vexed by the "superficiality" of Teso Christian belief despite the seeming alacrity with which the Teso professed the gospel of Christ.[131] Where missionaries sought root-and-branch renovation of Teso cosmology, the Teso themselves saw just one more opportunity to add to their ever-growing pool of spiritual resources. Teso enthusiasm for exotic spirits lasted well into the 20th century, so that today there is great diversity in spiritual practice in the region. Each part of Teso is influenced in specific ways by its neighbors, reflected in linguistic borrowings.[132]

Proto Teso spiritual innovation may have first been inspired by the Western Rub-speakers from whom they likely borrowed ideas about burial and ancestor spirits (see above). Proto Teso-speakers borrowed the Western Rub term *-tes for "grave," but derived new words identifying personal spirits (as opposed to a general non-corporeal force) from Proto Ateker roots. The form an ancestral spirit took was *-kwam-in, from the Proto Ateker word for "wind," while particularly malevolent spirits appeared in the form of whirlwinds, or *-ti-pipiru, derived from

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[130] Karp 1979, 87.

[131] L. Pirouet, *Black Evangelists: The Spread of Christianity in Uganda, 1891-1914* (London, 1978), 184.

[132] For example, on the southwestern border with Bantuphone communities, numerous Great Lakes Bantu spirits inform the work of Teso *imurok*. One *amuron* I spoke with in this region kept a spirit named "Elubale" locked in her shrine house, and *lubaale* is the Great Lakes Bantu word for a type of spirit. Other ideas have spread further, such as the Mukama twin figure, found throughout Teso. TE, Omodoi, 21 January 2017; TE, Moru Inera, 19 April 2017; TE, Oale, 29 April 2017; TE, Katekwan, 18 February 2017.

the root *-pipi "to cause pain."[133] Compared to the Northern Ateker, spirits in Teso became more individualized and anthropomorphized, and each Teso spirit was made manifest through its unique "voice," or *-toil, producing the noun *etoil "ghost" in Proto Teso.[134]

With their individual voices, specific spirits could possess specific people. The verb to describe this new spiritual understanding in Proto Teso was *-rum-it "to possess" from a Proto Ateker root meaning both "to seize (as in war booty)" and "to inherit through levirate."[135] This new kind of personalized possession underwrote the rise of spiritual specialists, called *-muron, as major political figures. The word *-muron and its social office date to the Proto Ateker period. But, whereas for the Proto Ateker and their Northern Ateker descendants these specialists gained their power strictly from mastery of certain ritual techniques, *-murok in Teso received their power from spirit possession. This distinction remains today. In Northern Ateker communities, *ngimurok* unproblematically discuss their apprenticeship and training, whereas most *imurok* I spoke with in Teso were emphatic to point out that they had no knowledge of spiritual practices before becoming possessed, and that the act of possession itself is what provided their "training."

This ontology of spiritual work affected the practice of specialists in Teso in a number of ways. Proto Ateker rituals such as tossing sandals, haruspication, shaking gourd rattles, and the

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[133] Teso 24; TE, Opuyonga, 26 January 2017; TE; TE, Gweri, 23 February 2017; TE, Guyaguya, 01 February 2017; TE, Kanapa, 09 February 2017; TE, Apuda, 10 February 2017; TE, Oale, 04 March 2017; N. Nagashima, "A Preliminary Report on the Spirit of the Dead among the Iteso of Kenya: A Case of Cultural Incorporation" (Seminar Paper, Institute of African Studies, University of Nairobi, 1976); I. Karp, "Power and Capacity in Iteso Rituals of Possession," in M. Jackson & I. Karp (eds.), *Personhood and Agency: The Experience of Self and Other in African Cultures* (Uppsala, 1990), 81-93.

[134] Teso 35.

[135] Teso 28.

application of medicinal herbs were retained as part of the Proto Teso *-muron toolkit.[136]

However, in Teso these activities were preceded by rituals of possession, with the possessing

spirit guiding the outcome of divination or healing sessions. The ontology of possession also

helped raise the profile of individual *imurok* throughout the community, because their power was

born of something inherently unique to the person (his or her possession), rather than a skillset

that could theoretically be learned by anybody. The house in which an *emuron* practiced – and

therefore, where a spirit dwelled – similarly gained special status as a "shrine," or *abila,

borrowed from a Lwo term with a similar meaning.[137] After death, *imurok* were irreplaceable as

individuals, which helps explain the construction of sacred groves around the graves of

prominent departed *imurok*.[138] This enhanced profile of the person and place of the *emuron*

enabled *imurok* to stand outside of *etem* and *etal* power structures while still influencing both.

Imurok grave sites likely served as points of community gathering for events such as *etem

meetings and *-woye initiations, but their significance can be most starkly seen in their

rainmaking function, which synchronized elements of territorial politics, age-sets, and ancestral

spirits through syncretic forms of inherited Ateker ritual. These events were led by *imurok*.[139]

The first Teso rain dance captured in writing occurred in the 1940s, and was observed by

British colonial administrator A. C. A. Wright. Wright narrated his experiences in the pages of

the *Uganda Journal*, and a close reading of his account can help illustrate how different factions

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[136] An early description of many of these *emuron* practices is found in J. D. Mullins, *The Wonderful Story of Uganda* (London: 1908), 162.

[137] Teso 1.

[138] TE, Opuyonga, 19 January 2017; TE, Atapar, 09 February 2017; TE, Okata, 09 February 2017; TE, Oale, 04 March 2017.

[139] TE, Gweri, 23 February 2017.

involved in territorial politics were brought together under the rubric of rain-making, led by

imurok.[140] The ceremony Wright observed was first announced by a pair of elder *irabok*

(speakers) of the local *etem*. Neither man held an official position in the colonial government nor

is either recorded as being a clan head (*apolon k'ateker*), but each had years of experience in

warfare and cultural leadership, thereby demonstrating *-ped-or, or authority from competence.

These men announced the decision to hold a rain dance after consultation within the *etem*, but

the leader of the actual event was a female *amuron*, named Akoli. Akoli moved to the front of a

group of hundreds of community members, leading a procession to a marshy land around a rocky

outcrop that carried a diverse array of materials, including inherited Proto Ateker artifacts such

as gourd rattles, as well as banana leaves introduced by Bantu-speakers. As Akoli led, a group of

men belonging to the same *ewoye* (age-set), called Ikaalen (the floods), sang songs "crying to

rain." After singing for some time with exuberance, the procession moved to another marshy site

where two prominent *imurok* were buried – a father, Otuke, and his son, Egole. Akoli, assisted

by another local *emuron*, led the group in a call-and-response prayer for rain:

> The rain, let it descend!
> > Let it descend!
> In descending, let it descend!
> > Let it descend!
> … (after turning toward the graves)
> They (Otuke and Egole) are shaking the papyrus for rain!
> The papyrus shakes our rain!
> …
> The rain, let it descend!
> > Let it descend!

[140] A. Wright, "A Rainmaking Ceremony in Teso," *Uganda Journal*, 10 (1946), 25-28;

The rain, let it descend on the head of Otuke!

Let it descend!

…

The rain, let it descend on the head of Egole!

According to Wright, "the next day an extremely heavy storm took place with heavy rain and such hail that many Abdim storks were killed and a lot of damage to cultivation done. This was followed by a week's steady rain."

We cannot, of course, assume that the set of rituals surrounding this apparently successful rain dance survived intact from the Proto Teso period, or that they exactly reflect rain dances conducted elsewhere in Teso during the same period. In fact, because of Teso's long history of diversifying spiritual practices, it is more likely that every such event was unique in some way. However, when compared to other examples of twentieth-century rain dances and my own interviews in the field, a number of basic themes remain consistent: the graves of *imurok*; the importance of swamps and swampy plants like papyrus; carrying banana leaves and gourd rattles; call-and-response prayers; and coordination between *etem* leadership, *imurok*, and *ewoye* leaders.[141] The accumulation of this particular set of elements as the foundation of rainmaking practice in Teso by 1940 was the result of centuries of innovations most likely curated by the spiritual specialists who stood at the forefront of Teso rainmaking.

The ever-increasing diversity of spirits and spiritual practices contributed to Teso's decentralized brand of politics by dispersing sources of power across the Teso landscape and

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[141] One common item not mentioned by Wright is the burial in swamp mud and subsequent excavation of quartz-containing "rain stones" called *acakat* (literally "that which is thrown," allegedly because it is "thrown" by a rainbow). TE, Kelim, 08 February 2017; TE, Kumel, 17 February 2017; TE, Gweri, 23 February 2017; TE, Aguma, 25 February 2017; TE, Serere, 28 February 2017; TE, Oale, 29 April 2017.

providing alternatives to the *etal* and *etem* frameworks for people to achieve their goals.

Operating outside of the *etal* and *etem* structures, *imurok* were capable of playing a mediating

and organizing role between these entities.[142] Furthermore, because the base of an *emuron*'s

power was not kinship or debt, they did not present an immediate threat to ideals of political

autonomy. It was thus the *imurok*, rather than the clan heads or *etem* speakers, to whom people

turned during times requiring collective action involving multiple *etems*. In the example above,

the *amuron* Akoli took center stage in a collective endeavor, cementing her own status while also

blocking the potential accumulation of a power by another centralizing figure.

Rain dances are one example of collective action. Warfare is another. During a series of

wars between southern Teso and neighboring Bagisu communities in the nineteenth century,

Teso armies only met success when *imurok* were behind their coordination.[143] *Etem* leaders or

clan heads who styled themselves as *aruwon* "commander" and tried raise armies with promises

of booty for participants, but did not work through an *emuron*, were accused of "thieving" and

"greed." Without an imprimatur from an *emuron*, such expeditions fell apart through

disorganization, in-fighting, and desertion. As David Okalany writes, military leaders were

"almost powerless without support of *imurok*." With *imurok* support, however, Teso fighters

were quite successful. The greatest victories against the Bagisu were engineered by the *amuron*

Amongin. She appointed an *aruwon*, blessed Teso armies with ritual smearing, and most

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[142] The most famous example is the renowned *emuron* Okolimong of Usuku, who carefully managed an alliance of competing *etems* during the nineteenth century. In this way, *imurok* were not unlike Leopard Skin Chiefs described by Evans-Pritchard for the Nuer, although they were more spiritually powerful. Webster *et al.* 1973, 69 & E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People* (Oxford, 1940).

[143] The details in this paragraph are taken from Webster *et al.* 1973, 105-114.

importantly provided a legitimate centralizing authority for military action.[144] Her military campaign met success, but secular leaders who then sought to translate Teso military organization into peacetime centralized government were roundly rejected as illegitimate, with proposed tax levies to maintain standing government armies likened to "stealing."[145]

However, *imurok* could also lose their positions if they attempted to translate spiritual authority into wealth or permanent political power.[146] One leading *emuron* of the mid-nineteenth century was Okadaro, who served as the focal point for a military confederacy comprising numerous *etems* in northern Usuku. This Usuku confederacy fought against Karimojong raiders to its north as well as engaging in intermittent wars against Teso communities to its southwest. Okadaro positioned himself not only as *emuron* of the confederacy, but also as *aruwon* (commander), and using this office he turned the right to distribute spoils into an opportunity to gain riches and built long-lasting patron-client relationships. Eventually Okadaro grew wealthy enough from his various activities that, when a famine came, he was well-placed to use his excess stores of grain and livestock to bail out poorer farmers, placing them in debtor relationships. In response, communities of the Usuku confederacy rebelled and overthrew him, accusing him of having deliberately caused the famine by stopping the rains so that he could gain power over the poor. Here, a civic ethic opposing social debt and inequality stymied just the sort

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[144] Ibid., 106.

[145] Ibid., 109-110.

[146] The narrative in the following paragraph is reconstructed from records of oral history interviews collected by J. B. Webster under the auspices of the Makerere University "History of Uganda" project. Teso Historical Texts #22 and #25, which discuss Okadaro and Okolimong, are deposited on microfilm at Yale University library. The broader historical context for these events can be found in J. B. Webster, "The Civil War in Usuku," in B. Ogot (ed.), *War and Society in Africa* (London, 1972).

of state-building "wealth-in-people" strategy that is a hallmark of precolonial African politics in non-republican settings.

Okadaro's ouster was organized by his apprentice, Okolimong, a man memorialized in Teso today as the greatest *emuron* of all. Okolimong served as the pre-eminent *emuron* of the Usuku confederacy until the first days of colonialism. He never fell from grace in the same way as his predecessor. He inspired his followers by leading an nearly ascetic life and abjuring any offer of secular political office, including rejecting British attempts to make him a "chief."[147] Like Cincinnatus in another republican setting, Okolimong was revered as a leader precisely because he refused to be one. Kingdoms cannot be built this way.

Conclusion

"Republican," "Independent," "Egalitarian," "Pioneer."[148] These are the words that come up time and again in scholarship about the Teso, as well as in daily conversation about Teso in Uganda today. Depending on the context, these "traits" can be discussed as an obstacle to Teso's progress, or the foundation of the region's indomitable spirit. As with all stereotypes, this discourse tends to be flawed; there is nothing "naturally" republican about the Teso people. But colonial ethnographer A. C. A. Wright was nonetheless on to something when he noted that the precolonial Teso political system was "unlike that of any of the better known tribes of Uganda" since it was not based on a "'vertical' division of clan or lineage, as found among the

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[147] For the British and Baganda strategy of co-opting local leaders as colonial "chiefs" in Teso, see G. Emwanu, "The Reception of Alien Rule in Teso: 1896-1927," *Uganda Journal*, 31, 2 (1967), 171-182 & A. D. Roberts, "The Sub-Imperialism of the Baganda," *Journal of African History*, 3, 3 (1962), 435-450.

[148] Or, in one early colonial missionary's phrasing: "independence and contempt of all constituted authority, unless it happens to pull in the direction of their own wishes." See A. L. Kitching, *On the Backwaters of the Nile: Studies of Some Child Races of Central Africa* (London, 1912), 154-155; Esibo 2017; D. Okalany, "The Pre-colonial History of the Iteso" (MA Thesis, Makerere University, 1980); J. B. Webster, "Pioneers of Teso," *Tarikh*, 3, 1 (1969).

neighbouring Bantu and Luo groups…"[149] This distinction has a history, but it is not a history of

Teso failing to centralize, nor of the Teso people living in an "earlier" stage of political

development. It is a history, instead, of people creating a robust alternative to lineage politics.

The anti-centralization tendency in Teso politics had origins in the political traditions of

the Proto Ateker language community from whom many Teso of today have descended. But it

was modified and refined since the emergence of Proto Teso as a distinct language community,

as a result of combined historical factors. As pre-Teso communities moved out of South Sudan,

they did so in small groups, fragmenting Proto Ateker patriclans and welcoming immigrants

from across the region. This migratory history generated the thousands of "major clan" and "sub

clan" combinations that exist in Teso today. Although lineage-based rituals such as *etal* and

apunya retained importance in the Proto Teso world of the sixteenth century, a new territorial

political institution called *etem* enabled unrelated clans living in close proximity to cooperate

through stable structures. Leadership in the *etem* was not based on one's position at birth, but

instead on "competence" determined by fellow *etem* members. Teso social mores privileging

economic equality and limiting the accumulation of debt effectively prevented aspiring *etem* or

clan leaders from converting their position into a broader power base. The rise of *imurok*

("diviners") as political figures in the eighteenth century, empowered by new syncretic Teso

spiritual practices and beliefs, further limited the ability of would-be centralizers to gain access

to multiple tracks of power. Spiritual, lineage, and territorial power were severed. By the time

British colonizers arrived in Teso in the early twentieth century, the people of Teso had forged a

densely populated and relatively well-off society that could be described as independent and

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[149] Wright 1942, 61. Wright, in my opinion, ascribes too much political significance to the *eigworone* age-initiation institution, which did not have strong a governmental role. His observation nonetheless stands.

egalitarian without great exaggeration. Leading Teso intellectuals have recently taken to calling

this tradition "republican" and in this they are basically correct.

Chapter Seven

Concluding Summary

"But of course the elders do not constitute *a* government for all Karimojong. This would be impossible since they are never all together in one place except for the great succession ceremony."[1] – Lucy Mair, *Primitive Government*, 1962 (italics in original)

The above quotation by renowned mid-century anthropologist Lucy Mair reveals the conceptual challenge that decentralized political systems like those of the Ateker have long posed for scholars of Africa. Today, Mair's words can be jarring, for they betray a blinkered conception of what counts as "government" among an allegedly "primitive" people. The claim that the Karimojong lack "government" is belied by the fact that the idea of "the Karimojong" is first and foremost a political rather than an ethnic category, geographically delimited by the reach of governance through a cohesive network of sacred groves. Only four years after Mair's *Primitive Government* was published, anthropologist Neville Dyson-Hudson examined in great detail how the mechanics of power worked on the ground in Karamoja in his seminal work, *Karimojong Politics*.[2] But Dyson-Hudson's descriptive account, and other ethnographies like it, can only get us so far. Such scholarship is missing a historical dimension, not least because those writing it lacked historical evidence. Historians such as J. B. Webster (*The Iteso during the Asonya*, 1973) and John Lamphear (*The Traditional History of the Jie of Uganda*, 1976) pushed back the chronology of Ateker history, using more refined methods for analyzing oral traditions.[3] However, since the 1970s, historical work on "decentralized" societies such as the Ateker has

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[1] L. Mair, *Primitive Government* (Gloucester, MA, 1975), 91 (italics in original).

[2] N. Dyson-Hudson, *Karimojong Politics* (Oxford, 1966).

[3] J. B. Webster, *The Iteso During the Asonya* (Nairobi, 1973); J. Lamphear, *The Traditional History of the Jie of Uganda* (Oxford, 1976).

slowed greatly, falling victim to both a lack of evidence and lack of interest. It has been my goal in the preceding pages to re-invigorate this inquiry by both applying new methodologies and by describing the significant theoretical stakes of this work.

Chief among those stakes is my claim that Ateker history calls for an alternative paradigm to the one most dominant in African political historiography: the centralized politics of personal lineage – often shorthanded as "wealth-in-people." Hereditary chiefs and kings loom large in both public and scholarly conceptions of Africa, buttressed by the idea that the metaphors of kinship from which their authority derive are the continent's most ancient and ubiquitous political currency. Two popular images – the precolonial clan head collecting followers through reciprocal obligation; the variably benevolent or kleptocratic modern chief distributing state resources through tribal patronage – are but different sides of this same coin. By combining historical linguistics with archaeology, ethnography, paleoclimatology, and oral traditions, I have reconstructed the history of African communities that separated lineage from public politics through the creation of impersonal institutions and complex multi-nodal methods for distributing power. This work has sought to provincialize hierarchical kinship politics as just one among many indigenous African models. It insists that ideas such as institutional independence and public sovereignty – which have been called "republican" ideas in other contexts - have a deep indigenous African history.

Our historical narrative began with the final retreat of the mid-Holocene African Humid Period, when a drying Sahara spurred diverse societies to migrate south, converging around today's mountainous Uganda-South Sudan border. Among these migrants were the ancestors of the earliest Proto Ateker speech community, which itself emerged as a distinct language group by c. 500 BCE. Lexical evidence shows how this community adapted to a new ecological setting

by borrowing ritual practices, food collection strategies, and iron technology from neighboring groups. Adding these influences to their own cultural inheritance, Proto Ateker-speakers crafted a loose clan-based political arrangement marked by collaborative meat-feasting. The durability of their socioecological system is suggested by the fact that the Proto Ateker community continued as a language group for more than a millennium. However, the onset of a severe arid period starting c. 900 CE fractured this status quo. Some Ateker-speakers migrated south to continue an economy based on cereal cultivation, while others remained behind and adopted a more mobile style of cattle-pastoralism designed to exploit distant grazing lands. As time elapsed, spatial separation led to slow divergence of Proto Ateker into two new language communities, Proto Northern Ateker and Proto Teso. Both drew on a shared tradition to establish new political institutions.

Northern Ateker pastoralists drew upon older Ateker traditions and neighboring ideas to invent a unique age-class institution called *asapan*. Here, political control over expansive territories was invested in councils of elder men whose qualification was based on age and initiation, rather than lineage or clan. Originally established to enable elders to control mobile herding youth, this system grew to encompass most aspects of social and ritual life, while also streamlining the incorporation of non-Ateker immigrants into Northern Ateker communities. *Asapan*'s political efficacy undergirded the rapid expansion of Northern Ateker pastoralists once rainfall returned and a hardier Indian cattle species was introduced after c. 1250 CE. *Asapan*'s long-term stability derived from the fact that the allocation of male political authority based on age rather than lineage or ethnicity provided predictable pathways to power for any men who lived long enough to achieve elder status. The eventual separation of migrating pastoralists into distinct highland and lowland communities spurred the emergence of numerous variations on the

same age-grading theme to satisfy local contingencies. For example, highland women created formal institutions to articulate their collective political influence through "singing groups" paralleling male age-classes. In the eighteenth century, *asapan* had become established as a dominant model in the region, borrowed in syncretic fashion by at least eight nearby non-Ateker populations.

A second population – from whom the Teso would emerge – responded to climatic aridity by migrating south to wetter lands. They travelled in small groups over centuries, fragmenting large Proto Ateker clans into smaller exogamous units, or "sub-clans." Settling new lands in eastern Uganda, they formed neighborhood associations, called "hearths" or *etem*, through which unrelated extended families and non-Ateker speakers living nearby met to coordinate dispute resolution, military operations, and ritual activity. Balancing the benefits derived from local unification of newly constituted sub-clans with mutual respect for each group's political autonomy became a key concern of etem politics. New norms influencing marriage negotiations, judicial disputes and communal subsistence practices strongly emphasized structural equality between lineages through enduring relationships of strict reciprocity that discouraged any one group from becoming too dominant. Combined with a strengthened public skepticism of wealth inequality, the impermanent and non-fungible nature of social and economic debt stymied the emergence of chieftaincies based on claims to people's labor, land, or livestock. Norms connecting economic equality to political autonomy enabled the endurance of a decentralized and republican style of politics in a region where centralized kingdoms based on leaders' "wealth-in-people" were increasingly common.

Despite stark economic, religious, and ecological differences, both Ateker groups created durable yet decentralized republics in a region famous for kingdoms. This was a feat of political

creativity. It directly challenges neo-evolutionary theories of African history which privilege centralization as the inevitable outcome of political dynamism. It also forces us to ask what is missing from our current paradigms of African politics – especially "wealth-in-people" – which do not easily map onto Ateker history. I have argued here that the simplest and best way to analyze the politics of the Ateker and others like them is to propose the existence of an alternative tradition of African politics in which the government "belonged to" the public more than people "belonged to" their government. This is an argument for the recognition of an African political *res publica*, or African republicanism.

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Appendix I – Innovations Confirming Sub-Groups

Proto Ateker

Lexical Innovations

	Item	History	Distribution
1.	*-yep "axe"	Replaces EN *-tolu; borrowed from Proto Nuer-Dinka[1]	Teso, Karimojong, Turkana, Toposa
2.	*-mar "to count"	Replaces EN *-ken-; etymology unclear	Teso, Karimojong, Turkana, Toposa
3.	*-irar "to hear"	Replaces EN *-ning-; etymology unclear	Karimojong, Turkana, Tesyo, Pallisa Teso
4.	*-kek "door"	Replaces EN *-kVkat-	Karimojong, Teso, Jie
5.	*-beye "egg"	Replaces EN *-kattil-	Karimojong, Teso, Turkana, Toposa
6.	*-reet "face, forehead"	Replaces EN *komon	Teso (forehead only), Karimojong, Turkana, Toposa
7.	*-ong- "I"	Replaces EN *nan-	Teso, Karimojong, Turkana
8.	*-risa "leopard"	Replaces EN *-kogwor-	Teso, Karimojong, Turkana
9.	*-moru toto "python"	Replaces EN *kitun	Teso, Karimojong, Turkana
10.	*-kiru "rain"	Replaces EN *-kudyu	Teso (rare), Karimojong, Turkana

Phonological Innovations

1.	PEN *dy > j / initial or medial	e.g. *ajotore* "to sleep" *angajep* "tongue"
2.	PEN *t² > s / final	e.g. *ngikumes* "noses"
3.	PEN *ty > l / medial	e.g. *elap* "moon"
4.	PT *ou > u / final	e.g. *ebu* "hyena"
5.	PT *c > ø / V _ V	e.g. *akook-* "belly"

Proto Teso

Lexical Innovations

	Item	History	Distribution
1.	*kere "all"	replaces Proto Ateker *daang	Tesyo, Kyoga-Bisina Teso
2.	*emukule "hide (worn)"	specifies "hide for wearing" in addition to "hide, generic"	Tesyo, Kyoga-Bisina Teso
3.	*-paris "Grewia tenax"	replaces Proto Ateker *-gom	Tesyo, Kyoga-Bisina Teso
4.	*-kori "tail"	replaces Proto Ateker *elado	Tesyo, Kyoga-Bisina Teso
5.	*-mo "to search"	replaces Proto Ateker *-sak	Tesyo, Kyoga-Bisina Teso

[1] Ehret attributes this to a borrowing from Kalenjin *ep* "to chop", however Nuer-Dinka *yep* "axe" is preferred because it explains the /y~j/ and is a direct translation. (Ehret 2003, 149)

Phonological Innovations

1.	Proto Tunga *ky > j / word-initial	e.g. aijer "to belch"

Kyoga-Bisina Teso

Lexical Innovations

	Item	History	Distribution
1.	*angor* "women (pl)"	irregular plural replaces regular plural *aber* "women"	Usuku, Ngora, Pallisa
2.	*ediopet* "one"	replaces iape "one" (possibly derived from same -pe- root)	Usuku, Ngora, Pallisa
3.	*ebeli* "famine"	replaces *etenge* "hunger" and *akoro*	Usuku, Ngora, Pallisa
4.	*ajulot* "feather"	replaces *akopirot* "feather"	Ngora, Pallisa, (mixed in Usuku)
5.	*aicil* "to milk"	replaces *akilep*	Ngora, Usuku, Pallisa
6.	*erongat* "cliff"	replaces *s(w)e?*	Ngora, Usuku, Pallisa
7.	*akaidu* "favorite wife"	replaces *naminat,* borrowed from North Nyanza	Ngora, Usuku, Pallisa

Phonological Innovations

1.	Proto Teso *aki- > ai- / infinitive verb prefix	e.g. aicwe "to pray"
2.	Proto Teso *w > gw / V _ a~o	e.g. egwapet "eland" e.g. agwo "to stand" (Pallisa dialect)
3.	Proto Teso *y > j / i _ a~o~u~e	e.g. ija "aunt" e.g. aijen "to know"

Nuclear Teso (Usuku, Ngora)

Lexical Innovations

	Item	History	Distribution
1	*apupun* "to hear"	replaces *aiyirar* "to hear"; semantic merging with -pup- "to listen, understand"	Usuku, Ngora

Phonological Innovations

1.	Proto KB *gw > bw / _ o[2]	e.g. abwo "to stand" e.g. aibworo "to mourn" e.g. ikarebwok "certain clan name"
2.	Proto KB *y > w / i _ e[3]	e.g. aiwen "to tie"

[2] It is possible that /o/ in any position adjacent to /gw/ is the conditioning factor. This would explain the sole exception: *ekosobwan* "buffalo" where "*ekosogwan*" is expected. No other instances of /ogw_/ or /obw_/ occur in Teso in order to test this hypothesis.
[3] There are many exceptions because this is a sound change in progress, not captured in the Kitching's 1915 dictionary. However, it is not occurring in Pallisa or Serere on the far southwestern corner of the Teso region.

	e.g. aiwelar "to scatter"

Proto Ngiro

Lexical Innovations

	Item	History	Distribution
1	*-tul- "owl"	replaces *-tuk-	Karimojong, Turkana, Toposa
2	*atum "broad spear head"	derived from *-tum- "fat, wide-bodied"	Karimojong, Turkana, Nyangatom, Jie

Phonological Innovations

1.	Proto Ateker y > ø / i _ e	e.g. akien "to tie" e.g. akiel "to scatter"
2.	Proto Ateker j > y / verify!!!	e.g. apeyo "visitor"

Turkana – Toposa – Nyangatom

Lexical Innovations

	Item	History	Distribution
1	*-tuk- "door"	replaces *ekek, from "mouth of house" (*akituk* = "mouth")	Turkana, Toposa, Nyangatom
2	*ekek "door overhang"	restricted meaning from *ekek* "door" for nomadic house	Turkana, Toposa, Nyangatom
3	*-ten "root"	replaces *-takagor, extends meaning of "branch" *-ten	Turkana, Toposa, Nyangatom
4	*-kanyer- "star"	replaces *-kacer- (from "gourd seeds")	Turkana, Toposa, Nyangatom
5	*-kuut- "bridewealth"	difficult to reconstruct a specific noun in Proto Ateker	Turkana, Toposa, Nyangatom
6	*-coke "Ficus sycomorus"	replaces *-bobor-	Turkana, Toposa, Nyangatom
7	*-pedor "to push through, to force"	from Proto Ateker *-pedor "competence, capability"	Toposa, Nyangatom, Turkana ("effort" only)

Phonological Innovations

1.	Proto Ateker w > ø / t~l _ an	e.g. *atonare* "to die" e.g. elona "far"
2.	Proto Ateker w > ø / g _o	e.g. akigor "to wail in mourning"
3.	Regressive Assimilation of 1st V in VCV construction	e.g. *ngukumes* "noses"

Karimojong – Jie – Dodos

| 1 | *atukit* "large shared granary" | derived from Proto Ateker *-tuk- "heaped together, assembled" | Karimojong, Jie, Dodos |
| 2 | *etanoko* "Buffel Grass" | replaces Proto Ateker *-rokw | Karimojong, Jie, Dodos |

| 1. | Proto Ateker *s > Ѳ[4] | Karimojong, Jie, Dodos (idiolectal) |

[4] This shift, or a similar s > ð, occurs sporadically in Turkana – Nyangatom – Toposa and in Dodos.

Appendix II – Core Vocabulary Wordlists

Below are core vocabulary wordlists elicited in all Ateker languages except for Jiye. Multiple elicitations were conducted for each language – including nearly thirty in Teso. Only one list per language is included in this appendix, with each list presented chosen for its geographically central position within its given language community. Analysis, including comparative percentages and the "trees" they produce can be found in Chapter 2.

	Teso	Karimojong	Dodos	Jie	Toposa	Nyangatom	Turkana
to bite	aikony	akikony	akekony	akikony	akikony	akikony	akukony
to blow	aikut	akutakin	akutakin	akutakin	akutakin	akutakin	akutakin
to breathe	aiyeng	akiyenga	akeyangakin	akiyenakin	akiyengar	akeyanakin	akiyenakin
to burn	aicwe	akicun	akicunyakin	akicun	akinom	akunom	akinom
to come	abunore	abunore	abunore	abunore	abunore	abunere	abunere
to count	aimar	akimar	akimar	akimar	akimar	akimar	akimar
to cut	aitub	akitub	akitub	akitub	akitub	akutub	akitub
to die	atwanare	atwanare	atwanare	atonere	atwanare	atwanare	atwanare
to drink	aimat	akimat	akimat	akimat	akimat	akimat	akimat
to eat	ainyam	akinyam	akimuj	akimuj	akimuj	akinyam	akimuj
to fall	aibiror	akibuthokin	akibusokin	akibuthokin	acakun	adakar	adakar
to fear	akurian	akiker	akurian	akurian	akurian	akurian	aemit
to fight	ejie	ajore	ajikin	ejie	ejie	ajikin	ejie
to fly	aporor	aporor	aporor	aporor	akipor	akipor	akipor
to give	ainakin	ainakin	ainakin	ainakin	ainakin	ainakin	ainakin
to beat	ainom	akiram	akiram	akiram	akiram	akiram	akiram
to take	aiyangar	akiya	akeya	aiyar	aiyawar	alemar	aiyar
to hunt	ameja	erika	akerik	erika	akerika	akirika	akirika
to kill	aiyar	akiyar	akeyar	akeyar	akyar	akeyar	akeyar
to know	ajenun	aanyun	aanyun	ayenun	ayenun	akiyen	aiyen
to laugh	akeni	akienare	akien	aikien	akienare	akienare	aikena
to hear	apupun	akiyirar	akiyerar	akiyerar	akiyerar	akiyerar	akiyerar

to play	abolia	abolia	abolia	abolia	abulia	abulere	abulia
to say	alimun	alimun	alimun	alimun	alimor	alimun	alimun
to scratch	aiko	akoekin	akoekin	akoikin	akoekin	akurony	akoikin
to see	aanyun	aanyuwath	akingolekin	aanyun	akiokokin	akungolekin	akungolekin
to sew	aidony	adonyokin	adonyokin	adonyokin	akidony	akudony	adonyuk
to sing	awere	aiyowokin	aiyekin	aiyo	aiyorwe	aiyokin	aiyo
to sit	aiboikin	akiboikin	akiboekin	aiboikin	akiboikin	akuboikin	akiboikin
to sleep	ajo	ajotoyor	ajotori	ajo	ajotor	ajo	ajo
to spit	aimuwar	akimwar	akimwar	akimwar	akimwar	akimwar	akumar
to squeeze	aicu	acuun	acukin	acukin	acuun	acuar	aicwekin
to stand	aibwa	akiwo	akiwo	akuwa	akiwo	akuwo	akuwo
to suckle	ainak	akinak	akitanak	akinak	akinak	akinak	akinak
to swell	abu	abuun	abuere	abuun	abuun	abuere	akibu
to think	aomom	akitam	akitam	akitam	akitam	akitam	akitam
to throw away	acakar	acakar	akimasar	akimathar	akimathar	akimathar	akimasar
to tie	aiwen	aiyenekin	akeyen	akiyen	akiyen	akiyen	ainekin
to turn	aibele	akibelekin	akibelekin	akibelukakin	akibelokin	akibelekokin	akibelokin
to vomit	ailek	akilek	akilek	akilek	akilek	akilek	akilek
to walk/go	alosit	arotokin	arotokin	alothit	akilot	arotokin	akilot
animal	etiang	itiang	itiang	etiang	itianget	etyengit	etyangit
ash	ekurun	ekuron	ekuron	ekuron	ikuron	ekuron	ekuron
back (of body)	epor	akau	ekau	akau	akaku	akaku; aabor	akau
bark (of tree)	abubuket	akabukete	akabuket	akaabuket	akabuket	akabuket	akaabuk
belly	akoik	akook	akook	akook	akook	akook	akook
bird	ikwen	iken	iken	ikweny	ikenyit	ikeny	ikeny
blood	aokot	ngaokot	ngaokot	ngaokot	ngaokot	ngaokot	ngaokot
bone	akoit	akoit	akoit	akoit	akoit	akoit	akoit
breast (female)	ekisin	ekithin	ekisin	ekithina	ekithin	ethikina	esikina
child	ikoku	ikoku	ikoku	ikoku	ikoku	ikoku	ikoku

fingernail	abelekek	emegerit	emegerit	ebebeku	ekamegerit	emegerit	emagerit
cloud	edou	edo	edo	edou	adith	edou	edou
day (countable)	aparan	apaaran	apaaran	akuwar	apaaran	akolongit	akolongit
ear	akit	akit	akit	akit	akit	akit	akit
egg	abeit	abeye	abeye	abeye	abeye	abeye	abeye
eye	akongu	akongu	akongu	akongu	akong	akongu	akongu
feather	ajulot	akopir	akopir	akopir	akopirot	akopirot	akopir
fire	akim	akim	akim	akim	akim	akim	akim
flower	aturot	aturot	aturot	aturot	aturot	aturot	aturot
foot	akeju	akeju	akeju	akeju	akeju	akeju	akichakat
grass	anyait	enyait	anyait	enyait	anyait	enyait	enyait
hair	etimat	etimat	etimat	etimat	etimat	etimot	etimat
hand	akan	akan	akan	akan	akan	akan	akan
head	akou	akou	akou	akou	akou	akou	akou
heart	etau	etau	etau	etau	etau	etau	etau
horn	amumwarat	amomwara	amumwara	amwara	aumwara	aumwara	aamwara
knee	akong	akung	akung	akung	akung	akung	akung
leaf	akiot	akwion	akiun	akwion	akion	akien	akuyen
liver	emany	emany	emany	emany	emany	emany	emany
louse	elacit	elacit	elacit	elacit	elacit	elacit	elacit
man	ekilokit	ekile	ekile	ekile	ekile	ekile	ekile
meat	akiring	akiring	akiring	akiring	akiring	akiring	akiring
moon	elap	elap	elap	elap	elap	elap	elap
mountain	emoru	emoru	emoru	emoru	emoru	emoru	emoru
mouth	akituk	akituk	akituk	akituk	akutuk	akutuk	akutuk
name	ekiror	ekiror	ekeror	ekiror	ekiror	ekiror	egiror
neck	emosing	emothiring	emooring	emothiring	emooring	emothoring	emosoring
night	akwar	akuwar	akuwar	akuwar	akuwar	akwar	akwar
nose	ekume	ekume	ekume	ekume	ekume	ekume	ekume
path (small)	esokot	ethokot	erot	esoi	erot	erot	erot

road	erot	erukude	erukude	erukude	erukude	erot	erukude
person	etunganan	etunganan	ituwan	etunganan	ituwan	itowan	etuwan
drizzle (of rain)	elimilim	elimilim	elimilim	elimilim	elimilim	elimilim	elimilim
river	ecilet	angolol	angolol	angolol	angolol	angolol	angolol
root	aliasit	atagorete	atagoroit	atagorete	atagoroit	atukurunot	N/A
sand	asinge	athingon	asingon	athingon	athingon	athingin	asingin
seed	ikinyomit	ekinyomit	ekinyomit	ekinyomit	ekinyomit	echokit	echokit
skin or hide	emukule	amuny	ejamun	amuny	amuny	amuny	amuny
sky	akuj	kidiama	adit	adith	akuj	adith	adis
smoke	aporu	apuru	apuru	akiriya	apuru	apuru	apuru
snake	emun	emun	emun	emun	emun	emun	emun
soil	alup	ngalup	ngalup	ngalup	ngalup	ngalup	ngalup
star	acerit	etop	akacer	ekacherit	akanyerit	ekanyerit	akanyer
stick (man-made)	ebela	ebela	ebela	ebela	ebela	ebela	ebela
sun	akolong	akolong	akolong	akolong	akolong	akolong	akolong
tail	ekori	ekothim	elado	elado	ekothim	ekothim	elado
tongue	angajep	angajep	angajep	angajep	angajep	angajep	angajep
tooth	ekelai	ekelai	ekelai	ekelai	ekelai	ekelai	ekelai
tree	ekitoi	ekitoi	ekitoi	ekitoi	ekutoi	ekutoi	ekutoi
water	akipi	akipi	akipi	akipi	akipi	akipi	akipi
wind	ekwam	ekuwam	ekuwam	ekuwam	ekuwam	ekuwam	ekuwam
wing	abebenok	abebenukat	akabenukat	akabenukwat	akebenukat	akabenukot	abebenit
woman	aberu	aberu	abero	aberu	aberu	aberu	aberu
worm	ekurut	ekurut	ekurot	ekurot	ekurut	eukurut	ekurut
year	ekaru	ekaru	ekaru	ekaru	ekaru	akaale; ekaru	ekaru
five	ikan	nikan	nikan	nikan	nikan	nakan	nikan
four	iwongon	niwomon	niwomon	iwomon	nowongon	nowomwon	wooman
three	iuni	niwuni	niwuni	niuni	niuni	nauni	uuni
two	iare	niare	niare	niare	niare	naare	aare
all	kere	daadang	daadang	daadan	daan	daan	daan

bad	erono	erono	erono	erono	ekuroc	erono	erono
big	epol	epol	epol	epolot	epol	epolot	epolot
black	iriono	irono	iriono	iriono	ekuron	lokirion	iriono
cold	elilim	elilim	elilim	elilim	elilim	elilim	eilim
dirty	imodokok	engoriana	engoron	engoriana	engoriena	engorena	euriana
dry	ewonit	ewonit	ewonit	ewonit	ewonit	ewonit	eonit
far	elwana	elwana	elwana	elwana	elwana	elwana	elwana
fat	etumit	etumit	etomit	etumit	etumit	etumit	etumit
few	ikidioko	ikudioko	ikudioko	ekudoko	ekidioko	ikidioko	ikidioko
full	ileleba	ileleba	ileleba	ileleba	ileleba	ileleba	ileleba
good	ejok	ejok	ejok	ejok	ejok	ejok	ejok
green	epir	elib	elib	elib	elib	eputhiana	epuriana
heavy	elangir	epot	epot	epot	epot	eput	epot
hot	emwana	emwana	emwana	emwana	emwana	emwana	emona
leftside	kedian	kedien	kedien	kedien	kedien	kideng	kedieng
long	ewoja	ewoe	ewoi	ewoj	ewoi	ewoi	ewoi
many	ipu	elalak	elelak	elala	ealak	elelak	elala
narrow	ediding	ediding	ediding	ediding	eeding	ediding	ediding
near	eapie	eapi	epapi	eapi	eapi	epapi	eapi
new	itet	ekitetyana	ekitetena	ekitetena	ekitetena	ekitetete	ekitetena
other	icie	ecie	acie	nicie	icie	acie	nicie
red	ereng	ereng	ereng	ereng	ereng	loarengan	ereng
rightside	teten	teten	teten	teten	teten	teten	teten
rotten	ebosit	ebothit	ebos	eboth	ebothit	N/A	ebos
sharp	ekwana	ekwana	ekwana	ekwana	ekwana	ekwana	ekwana
short	euriana	ewuruwana	ewuruana	euriana	ewuriana	ewuriana	ewuriana
small	edit	edit	edit	edit	edit	edit	edit
wet	epalal	epalal	epalal	epalal	epapal	epapal	epapal
wide	elal	elaan	elapat	elal	elal	elolom	ebalan

Appendix III – Sound Correspondences in Selected Eastern Nilotic Languages

The following table was created by combining Vossen 1982 with new data from Ateker langauges, and serves as a general guide to recgonizing sound correspondances across some of the best-documented Eastern Nilotic languages.

CONSONANTS & GLIDES									
PEN	Teso	Karm	Turk	Maa	Lotk	Lopit	Bari	Kakw	Phonetic Environment Notes
*p	p p p	p p p	p p p	p p p	f f p	Φ Φ p	p p p	p p p	
*b	b	b	ɓ	ɓ ɓ	b	ɓ	ɓ ɓ	ɓ	typically initiatial, sometimes medial, never final
*t	t t t	t t t~ø	t t t	t t t	ð ð t	t t t	t t t	t t ø	in Lotuka and Lopit, /t/ > /c/ preceding high vowel /i/ in reconstructions, and often the /i/ is lost
*t²	s~t	s~t~θ	s~t~θ	∫	s	s	s	s	medial and final only. NOTE: Vossen doesn't menion it, but this can be the ambiguous θ~s in Ateker
*d	d	d	ɗ _ ɗ	ɗ _ ɗ	d d _	d d d	ɗ ɗ _	ɗ ɗ _	
*dʸ	_ ɟ ø	ɟ ɟ ø	_ ɟ ø	ɟ ɟ ø~ɟ	ɟ ɟ ø	ɟ ɟ ø~ɟ	d d ʔ	t d ø	NOTE: in Nyangatom, this can by dʸ~ɟ medially
*c (pt)	c ø c	c ø c	c ø c	∫∫∫	_ø n/a	_ s n/a	n/a	n/a	reconstructed only to Proto Tunga ; for initial Maasai ashul, Turkana akicul
*kʸ	j _ k	y _ k	y _ k	∫ _ ∫	s	s	j	j	initial and final only. Vossen speculates kʸ was retained into Proto Tunga
*k (I)	k	k	k	k~ø	ø~x	γ~x	k	k	Vossen offers 4 version of /k/ in initial position.
*k (M)	k	k	k	k	x~k	x~k	k	k	
*k (F)	k	k	k	k	k	k	k	ø	
*g	g	g	g	ɠ	n/a	g	g	g	Vossen incorrectly claims EN /g/ is rare and only in initial position
*ku	kʷ bʷʔ	k w	k w	kʷ wʷ	x u	kʷ w	kʷ kʷ	ku ku	initial and medial only. NOTE: this leaves out gʷ found in Pallisa and Serere. PT: *ku
*gʷ	bʷ~w	u	u	wʷ	uʷ wʷ	uʷ	gʷ	gʷ	Vossen's data doesn't match mine regarding the presence of a /b/ in "bow" in Teso. Final and Med only
*s (pt)	s	s~θ	s~θ	s	s	s	n/a	n/a	
*m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	
*n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	
*ɲ	ɲ	ɲ	ɲ	ɲ	ɲ	ɲ	ɲ	ɲ	
*ŋ	ŋ	ŋ	ŋ	ŋ	ŋ	ŋ	ŋ	ŋ	

PEN	Teso	Karm	Turk	Maa	Lotk	Lopit	Bari	Kakw	Phonetic Environment Notes
* ŋ²	ŋ	ɲ	ɲ	ɲ	ŋ	n/a	n/a	n/a	Vossen's example is: asiŋe vs. asiɲe
*l	l	l	l	l	l	l	l	l	
*lʸ	l	l	l	l	y	y	y	y	
*r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
*rr	r	r	r	rr	r	r	r	r	Vossen believes this was *rr in Proto Tunga
*rdʸ	ri	ri	ri	ri	n/a	ri	j	j	final only
*w	w	ø~w	ø	w	w	w	w	w	see: aiwo "to leak" in Ateso and aore "to leak" in Karimojong and Turkana.
*y	y	y	ø	y	y	y	y	y	loss of /y/ in aki-eŋa ONLY in Turkana, not Toposa
*yy (pt)	yy~y~j	y	y	yy	y	y	n/a	n/a	Vossen suggests Proto Tunga innovation. He is using aki-yenun "to know" but not catching Teso /j/
VOWELS and DIPTHONGS									
PEN	Teso	Karm	Turk	Maa	Lotk	Lopit	Bari	Kakw	**Phonetic Environment Notes**
*i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	
*ɪ	ɪ	i	i	ɪ	ɪ	ɪ	ɪ	ɪ	
*e	e e	e e	e e	e e	e e	e e	e e	i e	medial and final only
*ɛ	ɛ e	ɛ ɛ	ɛ e	ɛ ɛ	ɛ e	ɛ e	ɛ ɛ	ɛ ɛ	
*a	a	a	a	a	a	a	e~a	o~a	
*ɔ	ɔ	ɔ	ɔ	ɔ	ɔ	ɔ	ɔ	ɔ	
*o	o~u	o~u	o~u	o	o	o	o~u	ɔ~o~u	/u/ in Bari appears preceding high vowels somewhere in the word
*ʊ	ʊ	u	ʊ	ʊ	ʊ	ʊ	ʊ	ʊ	
*u	u u	u u	ʊ ʊ	u u	u ʊ	u ʊ	u u	u u	medial and final
*eo	o	o	o	n/a	o	o	ɛ	ɛ	*moru* vs. *mere* for mountain is the cause of this
*ai	a	a	a	ai	a	a	ö	o	
*au	au	aʊ	aʊ	aʊ	a	a	öu	ou	
*ou (pt)	u	u	u	n/a	o	o	n/a	n/a	final only. For Proto Tunga only
*ua	wa	ua	ɔ	ua	wa	wa	ʊa	wa	NOTE: Vossen says Teso is /o/ but that clearly isn't the case even in Tororo (based on "to die")
*uo	u	u	u	uo	o	io	ö	u	final only

Appendix IV – Lexical Reconstructions

This appendix includes lexical reconstructions in the following protolanguages:

Protolanguage	Abbreviation in Text
Proto Tung'a	Tung'a
Proto Ateker	Ateker
Proto Teso	Teso
Proto Kyoga-Bisina Teso	KBT
Proto Nuclear Teso	PNT
Proto Northern Ateker	PNA
Proto Lowland Northern Ateker	LNA
Proto Highland Northern Ateker	HNA
Miscellaneous Non-Ateker Protolanguages	Spelled out as per language

Because Eastern Nilotic initial vowels are gendered and highly variable, I have reconstructed roots without vowel prefixes. With a small number of exceptions, reconstructions are listed by protolanguage first, and then organized alphabetically according to the first constant in the root word.

In addition to records from my own elicitation work, numerous dictionaries and other sources containing lexical data for languages related to Ateker or geographically proximate to Ateker were used in building appendix. They are as follows (organized by language group):

Ateker:

A. Kitching, *A Handbook of the Ateso Language* (London, 1915)

J. Kiggen, *English-Ateso Dictionary* (London, 1953)

J. Hilders & J. Lawrance, *An English-Ateso and Ateso-English Vocabulary* (Kampala, 1958)

A. Loyola, *Bi-Lingual Ateso Dictionary* (Katakwi, Uganda, 2007)

R. Dyson-Hudson, "An Akarimojong-English Check List of The Trees of Southern Karamoja," *Uganda Journal*, 26 (1962), 166-170.

P. Goode, *Edible plants of Uganda: The value of wild and cultivated plants as food* (Rome, 1989), 36-38.

J. Grade, J. Tabuti, P. Van Damme, "Ethnoveterinary knowledge in pastoral Karamoja, Uganda," *Journal of Ethnopharmacology*, 122 (2009), 279-292.

Nadiket Seminary, *Ngakarimojong-English Dictionary* (Verona, 1985)

P. Logiro & J. Ilukor, *A Simplified Ngakarimojong-English, English-Ngakarimojong Dictionary* (Kampala, 2007)

J. Wilson, "Check-List of the Artifacts and Domestic Works of the Karimojong," *Uganda Journal*, 37 (1973), 81-93.

S. Tornay, *Nyangatom Lexicon* (Unpublished ms, n.d.)

M. Schroeder, *Dictionary: Toposa-English, English-Toposa* (Nairobi, 2000)

J. Barton, "Turkana Grammatical Notes and Vocabulary," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, 2, 1 (1921), 43-73.

I. Ohta, "A Classified Vocabulary of the Turkana in Northwestern Kenya," *African Study Monographs*, 10 (1989), 1-104.

A. Barrett, *Turkana-English Dictionary* (London, 1990)

A. Barrett, *Turkana and their trees: their medical and ecological value* (Nairobi, 1996)

M. Vermi, *Turkana Dictionary* (Lodwar, 2006)

W. Morgan, "Ethnobotany of the Turkana: Use of Plants by a Pastoral People and Their Livestock in Kenya," *Economic Botany*, 35, 1 (1981), 96-130.

Bari-Mondari-Kakwa

R. Owen, *Bari Grammar and Vocabulary* (London, 1908)

L. Spagnolo, *Bari-English-Italian Dictionary* (Verona, 1960)

E. Wani & M. Goke, *Mundari-English Dictionary* (Juba, 2013)

Lotuxo-Maa

V. Ladu et al., *Lopit-English Dictionary (*Juba, 2014)

H. Arber, *A Simple Lotuko Grammar and Lotuko Vocabulary* (Lotuko District, 1936)

Raglan, "The Lotuko Language," Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, 2, 2 (1922), 267-296

C. Richmond, *Maasai Dictionary* (Arcata, CA, 2016)

A. Tucker & J. Tompo Ole Mpaayei, *A Maasai Grammar with Vocabulary* (London, 1955)

F. Mol, *Maasai Language and Culture Dictionary* (London, 1996)

C. Muratori, *English-Bari-Lotuxo-Acoli Dictionary* (Okaru, 1948)

B. Heine, I. Heine & C. König, *Plant Concepts and Plant Use: an ethnobotanical survey of the semi-arid and arid lands of East Africa, Part V: Plants of the Samburu (Kenya)* (Fort Lauderdale, 1988).

Bantu:

R. A. Snoxall, *Luganda-English Dictionary* (Oxford, 1967)

A. Hamilton, *Luganda Dictionary and Grammar* (Kampala, 2016)

R. Kagaya, *A Gwere Vocabulary* (Tokyo, 2006)

M. Davis, A Lyonyoro-Lunyankole-English and English-Lunyoro-Lunyankole Dictionary (Kampala, 1952)

Cultural Research Centre, *Dictionary: Lusoga-English, English-Lusoga* (Jinja, 2000)

B. Siertseme, *Masaba Word List* (Tervuren, 1981)

C. Rechenbach, *Swahili-English Dictionary* (Washington, DC, 1967)

Central Sudanic:

M. Blackings, *Ma'di-English, English-Ma'di Dictionary* (Munich, 2011)

Cushitic:

G. Gragg, *Oromo Dictionary* (East Lansing, MI, 1982)

S. Pillinger & L. Galboran, *A Rendille Dictionary* (Cologne, 1999)

R. Zorc & M. Osman, *Somali-English Dictionary* (Kensington, MD, 1993)

M. Nuuh Ali, "History in the Horn of Africa, 1000 BC – 1500 AD: Aspects of Social and Economic Change Between the Rift Valley and the Indian Ocean" (PhD Dissertation, UCLA, 1985), 323-346.

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Rub:

B. Heine, *Ik Dictionary* (Cologne, 1993)

T. Schrock, *The Ik Language: A Dictionary and Grammar Sketch* (Berlin, 2017)

H. Fleming, "Kuliak External Relations: Step One," R. Vossen & M. Bechaus-Gerst (eds.), *Nilotic Studies, Proceedings of the International Symposium on Language and History of the Nilotic Peoples* (Cologne, 1983), 431-477.

B. Heine & E. Carlin, "A dictionary of So, a Nilo-Saharan language of NE Uganda" (Unpublished MS, made public by Roger Blench at www.rogerblench.info, 2010)

B. Heine & C. Konig, *Plant Concepts and Plant Use: An Ethnobotanical Survey of the Semi-Arid and Arid Lands of East Africa, Part II: Plants of the So* (Uganda) (Fort Lauderdale, FL, 1988).

Southern Nilotic:

C. C. Ng'elechei, *Kalenjin-English & English-Kalenjin Dictionary* (Nairobi, 1979)

P. Crazzolara, *A Study of the Pokot (Suk) Language: Grammar an Vocabulary* (Bologna, 1978)

Summer Institute of Linguistics, Sabaot Dictionary (Nairobi, 1996)

Surmic:

R. Gain & N. Gile, *Suri-Baale – Amharic – English, English – Suri/Baale Dictionary* (Addis Ababa, 2015)

M. Rosato, *Didinga Grammar and Dictionary* (Rome, 1980).

C. Lopeyok Joseph, *Laarim-English Dictionary* (Juba, 2010).

R. Lyth, *A Murle Grammar* (Khartoum, 1971).

M. Bryant & K. Siralugu, *Suri-English-Amharic Dictionary* (Addis Ababa, 2013)

J. Arensen, Names in the Life Cycles of the Murle," *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford*, 19, 2 (1988), 124-130

Western Nilotic:

J. Crazzolara, *A Study of the Acooli Language* (London, 1938)

G. Savage, *A Short Acoli-English and English-Acoli Vocabulary* (Kampala, 1955)

A. Malandra, *English-Lwoo Dictionary* (Bologna, 1957)

J. Adong & J. Lakareber, *Lwo-English Dictionary* (Kampala, 2009)

M. Reh, *Anywa-English and English-Anywa Dictionary* (Cologne, 1993)

A. Nebel, *Dinka-English, English-Dinka Dictionary* (Bologna, 1936)

G. Okonye, *A Simplified Lango-English, English-Lango Dictionary* (Kampala, 2012)

A. Bole Odaga, *Dholuo-English Dictionary* (Kisumu, 2005)

J. Kokwaro & T. Johns, *Luo Biological Dictionary* (Nairobi, 1998)

R. Huffman, *Nuer-English Dictionary* (Berlin, 1929)

J. Kiggen, *Nuer-English Dictionary* (London, 1948)

J. Heasty, *English-Shilluk, Shilluk-English Dictionary* (Dolieb Hill, Sudan, 1937)

Miscellaneous and Proto Language Lexicons:

C. Ehret "Bantu Lists" (Unpublished MS)

C. Ehret "Non-Bantu Lists" (Unpublished MS)

H. Johnston, *The Uganda Protectorate* (London, 1902), 903-932

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P. Black, "Lowland East Cushitic: Subgrouping and Reconstruction," (PhD Dissertation, Yale University, 1974)

C. Ehret, *A historical comparative construction of Nilo-Saharan* (Cologne, 2001)

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<u>Proto Tung'a Reconstructions</u>

Reconstruction Number: 1
Gloss: to profit, become wealthy, prosper
Root: *-barV-
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: PN sense of increased size (see WN and SN reflexes) shifted to "to increase/profit, wealth" in PEN or PT (no Bari/Kakwa reflexes known). In Ateker only, root then forms plural noun meaning "domesticated animals" (with singular perhaps formed through re-analysis in

some modern languages, based on complex and sporadic singular suffixes). Lango gloss is likely a polysemy rooted in both WN and Ateker meanings.

DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *ekabaran* "rich man"; ibaren "livestock"
Karimojong: *ekabaran* "rich man"; ngibaren "livestock"
Turkana: *engibarit* "wealth, prosperity, treasure"; *ngibaren* "livestock" (with sg. *-barasit*)
Maa: *a-bar* "to increase, to profit, to tend, to keep"
Lotuxo: *abara* "rich"
Lango: *barr* "pasturage, where something is found in plenty"
Dholuo: *bar* "open field"
Nuer: *bar* "long"; *baare je* "to make long, tall"
Kalenjin: *bara* "wide"

Reconstruction Number: 2
Gloss: to eat fodder (of livestock)
Root: *-dak
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *adak* "to graze (of animals)"
Karimojong: *adaka* "to graze (of animals)"
Turkana: *akidak* "to graze (of animals)," *adakar* "neighborhood/grazing unit"
Toposa: *nyakidak*, "to graze (of animals)," *nyadakar* "grazing area"
Maasai: *adaa(k)* "feed, graze" (/k/ is specific to certain tenses)

Reconstruction Number: 3
Gloss: to castrate with a hammer
Root: *-dong-
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: from PEN/PN "to jolt, to shake up and down, to impact repeatedly." Borrowed from Ateker into Surmic. (cf. Vossen 1982, 449).
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *aidong* "to castrate by pounding," *edonga* "dance by jumping up and down"
Karimojong: *akidong* "to castrate by pounding," *edonga* "dance by jumping up and down"
Nyangatom: *ekidongit* "hammer for castrating"
Turkana: *akidong* "to castrate by pounding, to emasculate"
Toposa: *akidong* "to castrate by pounding"
Maasai: *enkidonget* "hammer for castrating"
Bari: *dodong* "to jolt"
Kakwa: *dodonga* "to shake up and down"
Lopit: *hidongita* "hammer," *dongi* "drum"
Nuer: *donge* "to beat, as in a drum"
Didinga: *kidong* "drum"
Murle: *kidong* "drum"
Baale: *kidong* "drum"
Larim: *kidong* "drum"

Reconstruction Number: 4
Gloss: bitter
Root: *-dua(r)-
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *edwar* "bitter"
Karimojong: *edwar* "bitter"
Nyangatom: *edwar* "bitter"
Turkana: *adwaris* "bitterness"
Lotuxo: *odwa* "sour"
Maasai: *adua* "to be bitter," *aduaru* "to become bitter"

Reconstruction Number: 5
Gloss: to cut with a knife (possibly also to arbitrate a dispute)
Root: *-dung
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: relationship between cutting and serving as an arbiter, as in the Maasai reflex below, is likewise found in the Ateker root *-*tub* "to cut, to judge a case"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *aidung* "to cut slightly, make an incision"
Karimojong: *akidung* "to cut slightly, make an incision"
Turkana: *akidung* "to cut slightly, make an incision"
Maa: *adung* "to cut, to divide into portions, to judge a case"

Reconstruction Number: 6
Gloss: sloped land, lowland, hole
Root: *-gum
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Karimojong: *agum* "mountainside, valley"
Turkana: *agum* "gorge, valley"
Lotuxo: *nagum* "bottom of a hill"
Maasai: *ologum* "rift, lowland"
Teso: *agum* "hole in rocky mountain (Katakwi only)"

Reconstruction Number: 7
Gloss: raid, war
Root: *-jor-
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: Derived from PEN *-dyor- "to hunt big game in a large group". Bari /d~t/ corresponds to Tung'a /j/. Lent to Surmic languages Laarim and Didinga.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *ajore* "army"

Karimojong: *ajore* "group of raiders"; *ajore* "to fight"
Turkana: *ajore* "team, group, army"
Nyangatom: *ajere* "large-scale expedition, fighting group, age group"
Toposa: *nyajore/nyajiore* "war, raid, fighting"
Jie: ajore "army, generation set"
Lotuxo: *ijoria* "war"
Maasai: *enjore* "war, raid, battle"
Laarim: *joree* "war"
Didinga: *jore* "war"
Kakwa: *dori* "to hunt in a large group"
Bari: *tore* "to sound a loud trumpet" (common in war in and hunting to coordinate attack)

Reconstruction Number: 8
Gloss: house
Root: *-kaj-
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Karimojong: *akai* "house"
Turkana: *akai* "house"
Teso: *akai* "small hut"
Maasai: *enkaji* "house"
Lotuxo: *naji* "house"

Reconstruction Number: 9
Gloss: water place, river
Root: *-(k)-are
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: from PEN *-kare "river" and earlier PN *-ar "to flow"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *akar* "lagoon, small lake"
Karimojong: *akare* "well, water hole"
Nyangatom: *akar* "major water hole dug in the bed of a river used during dry season"
Turkana: *akar* "well"
Toposa: *nyakare* "well, water-hole"
Maasai: *enkare* "water, river"
Bari: *kare* "river"
Kakwa: *kare* "river"

Reconstruction Number: 10
Gloss: bow
Root: *-k-awu
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *akabwa* "bow"

Karimojong: *akau* "bow"
Turkana: *akau* "bow"
Nyangatom: *akabu* "bow"
Toposa: *nyakabu* "bow"
Maasai: *enkawuo* "bow"

Reconstruction Number: 11
Gloss: rope
Root: *-kopi(t)-
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: Unclear. Vossen reconstructs this to Lotuxo-Maa, but it is safely reconstructed to the Proto Tung'a period because of Ateker attestations
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *akopiron* "string of bark"
Karimojong: *akopito* "fibre"
Toposa: *nyakopito* "string (of bark)"
Lotuxo: *ofith-o* "rope"
Maasai: *engkopito* "rope of bark, not yet twisted"
Lopit: *xothit-el* "rope, hair"

Reconstruction Number: 12
Gloss: famine
Root: *-kor-
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: possibly from a PEN root with a word-initial /g/
DISTRIBUTIONS
Karimojong: *akoro* "hunger, famine"
Toposa: *nyakoro* "famine"
Turkana: *akoro* "famine, hunger, drought"
Lotuxo: *naghore* "hunger"
Maasai: *akor* "to emaciate, to die of hunger"
Bari: *magor* "hunger"

Reconstruction Number: 13
Gloss: to divide/distribute
Root: *-k-or-
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: from PEN *-k-or- "to divide/distribute"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *aikor* "to distribute, serve out"
Karimojong: *akikor* "to divide, share out"
Toposa: *nyakikor* "to distribute"
Turkana: *akikor* "to distribute, share, divide, serve"
Maasai: *a-or* "to divide, to serve" (perhaps /k/ is a fossilized morpheme?)
Bari: *kor* "to divide, to share"

Reconstruction Number: 14
Gloss: urine, generic
Root: *-kul-
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: from PEN *-kul- "urine"; borrowed into Didinga-Murle
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *ekulam* "urine"
Karimojong: *ngakul* "urine"
Nyangatom: *ngakul* "urine"
Toposa: *ngakul* "urine"
Turkana: *ngakul* "urine"
Lotuxo: *ngaghula* "urine"
Maasai: *inkulak* "urine"
Bari: *kula* "urine" (cf. *lode*, urine of animals, same with Madi)
Didinga: *xula* "urine"
Murle: *kola* "urine"

Reconstruction Number: 15
Gloss: fear
Root: *-(k)ur(V)-
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: unknown. Root in Proto Ateker is *-kury-. Because of the way EN prefixes work, the initial /k/ is not necessary to reconstruct this root using the Maasai reflex *ure*.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *akurian* "to be frightened (rare)"
Karimojong: *akuryan* "to be afraid"
Toposa: *nyakuryan* "to fear"
Turkana: *akuryanu* "nervousness, cowardice"
Lotuxo: *naghore* "hunger"
Maasai: *ure* "fear"
Bari: *magor* "hunger"

Reconstruction Number: 16
Gloss: to herd, to care for livestock
Root: *-kyok- or *-cok-[1]
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: derived from PEN *kyok "to herd animals" (cf. Vossen 1982, 457)
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *ekecokon* "shepherd" *acok* "herding and watching over livestock"

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[1] See Vossen 1982, 239-241. Note that in the "non-pastoral" cultures (Lotuxo, Lopit, Kakwa) the reflex only exists designating a group of people, not as a verb. This would always require a prefix. Because Vossen does not reconstruct a medial /ky/ in PEN, it is possible that the true medial sound correspondence is /y/ in each of these three cases, /c/ is offered as an alternate in order to explain the Ateso reflex. Vossen tentatively reconstructs /c/ for PT with a function similar to /ky/ but does not identify non-final correspondences in Ateker. Again, this could be word-initial sound correspondence with this intermediate phoneme and Teso, in addition to the alternate pronunciation in Maasai.

Karimojong: *akiyok* "to herd cattle" *ekeyokon* "herder"
Turkana: *akiyok* "to rear, tend to, herd cattle"
Lotuxo: *leyaxani* (*leyak* pl.) "shepherd"
Lopit: *hayiohoni* "shepherd"
Maasai: *shoo/coo* "herding, pasture, grazing ground"
Kakwa: *kayukuni* "people who herd"

Reconstruction Number: 17
Gloss: to go
Root: *-lo-
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: note that the /s,t/ ending in Ateker is morphological in an irregular verb
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *alosi* "to go"
Karimojong: *akilot* "to go"
Nyangatom: *akilot* "to go"
Turkana: *alosit* "journey"
Toposa: *nyakilot* "to go away"
Maasai: *a-lo* "to go"

Reconstruction Number: 18
Gloss: beginning of dry season
Root: *lolong
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: from *-kolong- "sun"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Karimojong: *lolongu* "September October"
Nyangatom: *alongan* "September October"
Turkana: *lolong* "September October"
Toposa: *nyalolongo* "sunny season"
Lotuxo: *lolong* "November, beginning of winter"

Reconstruction Number: 19
Gloss: to be together (verb)
Root: *-maVɲ
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *aimaɲ* "to marry"
Karimojong: akimaɲ "to have sex with"
Turkana: akimaɲ "to have sex with"
Maa: (Payne) *a-maŋ* "to dwell"; *e-maŋata* "village of warriors"???
Lotuxo: (Raglan, 1922) *amaiɲa* "to dwell"; (Grub, 1992) *amaŋat*? "village of people together"

Reconstruction Number: 20
Gloss: to lick

Root: * -me(j)
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: word-final /j/ lost in Ateker, Ehret PNS #110
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *aime* "to lick"
Karimojong: *akime* "to lick"
Toposa: *nyakime* "to lick"
Turkana: *akime* "to lick"
Maasai: *amej* "to lick"

Reconstruction Number: 21
Gloss: old age
Root: * -mojong
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: from PEN *-modyong "old age". Note that there are no reflexes in Lotuxo-Maa, but Bari sound correspondence confirms antiquity in PEN.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *amojong* "old age, old woman"
Karimojong: *amojong* "old age, old woman"
Turkana: *amojong* "old age, old woman"
Toposa: *nyamojong* "old age, old woman"
Bari: *modong* "old, aged"

Reconstruction Number: 22
Gloss: to mix
Root: * -mor-
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: from PEN *-mor- "to mix" (no PLM reflex)
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *aimori* "to put two or more things together," *aimorikikin* "to become mixed"
Karimojong: *akimorikin* "to add, to come together"
Toposa: *nyakimor* "to mix"
Turkana: *emorimor* "mixture, salad, tangle"
Bari: *mor* "to mix, to mingle"
Kakwa: *momore* "to come together"

Reconstruction Number: 23
Gloss: to insult
Root: * -mor-
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: from PEN *-mor- "quarrel"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Karimojong: *akimor* "to insult, abuse"
Toposa: *nyakimor* "to insult"
Turkana: *akimor* "to abuse, scold, insult"
Lotuxo: *omoryo* "to insult"

Maasai: *amore* "to insult, to abuse, to blaspheme"
Bari: *moro* "to fall out, dispute, quarrel, fight," *mor* "to mock, abuse, insult"
Kakwa: *imoro* "to fight"

Reconstruction Number: 24
Gloss: sandal
Root: *-muk-
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: from PEN *-muk "sandal"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Karimojong: *amukat* "sandal"
Turkana: *amukat* "sandal"
Lotuxo: *amuxa* "sandal"
Maasai: *enamuka* "sandal"
Bari: *kamoka* "sandal"
Kakwa: *kamuka* "sandal"

Reconstruction Number: 25
Gloss: stone, mountain
Root: *-moru
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: Inherited from Proto Eastern Nilotic *-meor "mountain/stone." Note that this root has only the meaning "old" in Maasai. This same conceptual connection is found between *doŋe* "mountain" in Lopit/Lotuko and *tomodoŋa* "to become outdated" in Kakwa and *tomodoŋan* "old age" in Bari.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *amoru* "stone" *emoru* "mountain"
Karimojong: *amoru* "stone" *emoru* "mountain"
Turkana: *amoru* "stone" *emoru* "mountain"
Lotuxo: *amoru* "stone"
Kakwa: *mere* "mountain"
Bari: *mere* "mountain"
Lopit: *morwo* "stone"
Maasai: *moruo* "old"

Reconstruction Number: 26
Gloss: thigh of hind leg
Root: *-muro
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *amuro* "thigh"
Karimojong: *amuro* "hind leg, thigh"
Turkana: *amuro* "hind leg, thigh"
Lopit: *e-muro* "thigh"
Maasai: *e-muro* "hind leg"

Reconstruction Number: 27
Gloss: *Cynodon dactylon*
Root: *-murrya
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *emuria* "C dactylon"
Karimojong: *emuria* "C dactylon"
Dodos: *emuria* "C dactylon"
Maa: *aimurrua* "C dactylon"

Reconstruction Number: 28
Gloss: to share (together)
Root: *-ngar-
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: from PEN *-ngar- "to share"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *aingarakin* "to help, to assist"
Karimojong: *akingarakin* "to aid, to help"
Toposa: *nyakingarakin* "to help"
Turkana: *akingarakin* "to aid, to help"
Maasai: *angar* "to share"
Bari: *ngar* "to partake, to share, to do together"

Reconstruction Number: 29
Gloss: woman, women
Root: *-ngor-
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: possibly Ehret PNS #536; Also see Vossen 1982, 455
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *angor* "women"
Maasai: *engoroyioni* "woman, wife"
Lotuxo: *nangoru* "women"

Reconstruction Number: 30
Gloss: *Cenchrus pennisetiformis*
Root: *-nuk-
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Karimojong: *etanuko* "C pennisetiformis"
Dodos: *etanuko* "C pennisetiformis"
Samburu: *n-anuka* "C pennisetiformis"

Reconstruction Number: 31

Gloss: to bury
Root: *-nuk-
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: From PEN *-nuk- "to bury"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *ainuk* "to cover with soil, to fill a hole"
Toposa: *akinuk* "to bury, cover with soil, fill hole"
Karimojong: *akinuk* "to bury, to fill up a hole"
Maasai: *anukaa* "to cover, to hide away, to bury, to inter"
Lotuxo: *onoxa* "to bury"
Bari: *anuk* "to inter"

Reconstruction Number: 32
Gloss: to roast in open flame
Root: *-pej-
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: from PEN *-pedy- "to roast" NOTE: *dy > ø word-finally in Ateker
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *aipe* "to roast over open flame"
Karimojong: *akipe* "to roast"
Turkana: *akipeyo* "to roast"
Toposa: *nyakipe* "to roast"
Maasai: *apej* "to burn, bake, roast"
Kakwa: *pe'u* "to roast" (word finally, PEN dy > ø in Kakwa)

Reconstruction Number: 33
Gloss: *Euphorbia spp*
Root: *-popong
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *epopong* "Euphorbia candelabrum"
Karimojong: *epopong* "Euphorbia candelabrum"
Dodos: *epopong* "Euphorbia candelabrum"
Turkana: *eŋipong* "Euphorbia"
Maa: *ol-popong-i* "Euphorbia candelabrum"
Samburu: *l-popong-i* "Euphorbia heterochroma"
Lotuxo: *napopongi* "Euphorbia"

Reconstruction Number: 34
Gloss: social leadership
Root: *-rik-(o)
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: PNS "to tie up" > PT/PEN "to lead with a stick or rope" > "to lead people"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *airik* "to lead with a stick or rope"; *arikosit* "link in chain"

Karimojong: *ekarikon* "leader"; *akirik* "to lead with a stick or rope, to lead (generic)"; *erikot* "chain"
Turkana: *akirik* "to lead"; *ekarikon* "leader"
Lotuxo: *aririk* "chain"
Maa: *a-rik* "to lead, to guide"; *e-rikore* "leadership"
Ik: *torik* "to lead" (perhaps borrowing from Karimojong?)

Reconstruction Number: 35
Gloss: grinding stone
Root: *-r(i)ya-
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: unkown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *airiet* "grinding stone"
Karimojong: *akiryar* "to grind flour," akiryeet "grinding stone"
Nyangatom: *akiriyes* "grinding stone"
Turkana: *akiryas* "grinding stone"
Toposa: *nyakiryeet* "grinding stone"
Lotuxo: *neriai* "grinding stone"

Reconstruction Number: 36
Gloss: hump on zebu
Root: *-r(r)uk
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *aruk* "zebu hump"
Karimojong: *aruk* "zebu hump"
Turkana: *aruk* "zebu hump"
Lotuxo: *eruk* "humpbacked"
Maasai: *erruk* "hump"

Reconstruction Number: 37
Gloss: Buffel Grass
Root: *-rukw-
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *lorokwe* "Buffel Grass"
Maasai: *amerukwa* "Buffel Grass"

Reconstruction Number: 38
Gloss: watering point where rain collects
Root: *-tapar
Protolanguage: Tung'a

Etymology: Unclear. -ta- is unproductive in all languages but Ongamo, where it can refer to past tense. Because of Turkana *akipaar* "to flow" it is possible that etymology is "place where water flowed," but that doesn't explain the double vowel. It is probably not a loan word.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *atapar* "pond"
Karimojong: *atapar* "artificial water hole"
Turkana: *atapar* "pool, puddle, pond"
Nyangatom: *atapar* "clay depression catching rain"
Lotuxo: *natapara* "pool of rainwater"
Maasai: *ol-tapar* "well"

Reconstruction Number: 39
Gloss: to measure, consider, test
Root: *-tem-
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: Inherited from PEN *-tem "to measure"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *aitem* "to measure"
Karimojong: *akitem* "to try, to measure"
Toposa: *nyakitem* "to measure, to test a person"
Lotuxo: *okeymyo* "to measure"
Maasai: *atem* "to measure, to think, to imagine"
Bari: *tem* "to measure, to fit, to adapt"

Reconstruction Number: 40
Gloss: voice
Root: *-toil
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *e/a-toil* "ghost"
Karimojong: *etoil* "throat, voice"
Nyangatom: *etoil* "voice"
Turkana: *etoil* "voice"
Toposa: *nyetoil* "front of throat, voice"
Maasai: *ol-toilo* "voice, sound"

Reconstruction Number: 41
Gloss: owl, generic
Root: *-tuk-
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *etukuri* "owl"
Maasai: *toosho-to-ltukus* "owl"

Proto Ateker Reconstructions

Reconstruction Number: 1
Gloss: mushroom
Root: *-baale
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: from Western Nilotic (Anywa?)
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *ebaale* "mushroom"
Karimojong: *ebaale* "kind of mushroom"
Teso: *ebaale* "mushroom"
Anywa: *obuole* "mushroom"

Reconstruction Number: 2
Gloss: accuracy
Root: *-bei
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: PNS #42
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *ebeikin* "to specify, to be precise," *abeit* "valid, positioned, right"
Karimojong: *abeikin* "to be exact (of words)"
Toposa: *nyabeikin* "to hit a target, to speak truly"
Teso: *aibe* "to go straight towards," *abeit* "truth, accuracy, factual"

Reconstruction Number: 3
Gloss: herding stick
Root: *-bela
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: from Tung'a *-bel "to beat"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *abela* "herding stick"
Turkana: *abela* "herding stick"
Karimojong: *abela* "herding stick"
Maasai: *abel* "to beat"
Murle: *nyabeela* "stick or club"

Reconstruction Number: 4
Gloss: woman
Root: *-ber(u)
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: innovated on Ateker root *-ber- "to go early, display initiative" or borrowed from Rub *ber "to build, to mold," or borrowed from WN *ber* "good."
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *aberu* "woman" *ngaber* "women," *aberun* "to come early, to reach early"
Karimojong: *aberu* "woman" *nyaber* "women," *aberar* "to go early"

Toposa: *nyaberu* "woman" *nyaber* "women," iberana "to be diligent, hardworking (of women)," *nyakiber* "to be first"
Teso: *aberu* "woman" (pl. is retained as *angor*), *aberakinet* "initiative," *aberar* "to go early"
Ik: *ber-es* "to build, to mold"
So: *ber* "to build, to mold"
Acholi: *beer* "good, nice"
Luo: *ber* "goodness, beauty"

Reconstruction Number: 5
Gloss: small fishing spear
Root: *-biti
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: Borrowed from Dinka-Nuer *bith* "fish spear." Based on fairly obscure reflexes in Bari - *bitet* "small fish-hook" - and Acholi - *bito* "to entice" – as well as broader meanings in the sentence *bito reec ki gooli* "to fish with a hook" and the term *labit-reec* "fisherman," it is possible that this is derived in Dinka-Nuer from a Proto Nilotic term *bit "fish hook." However, there is no Southern Nilotic reflex to confirm this. Either way, the word in Ateker is semantically the same as in Dinka, and likely an Ateker borrowing because of the /e-/ prefix.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Dinka: *bith* "fish-spear"
Anywa: *bith* "to fish"
Teso: *ebiti* "fish-spear"
Toposa: *nyibiti* "type of spear"
Karimojong: *ibiti* "small-headed spear"
Dodos: *ibiti* "very small spear used only for sacrifice"

Reconstruction Number: 6
Gloss: to hurl, hurled club
Root: *-bir-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: from PT (or PEN) *-bir- or *-bara "to hurl"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *abiro* "knobkerrie"
Karimojong: *abiro* "knobkerri"
Turkana: *akibiirio* "to throw, to hurl, to launch, to pitch"
Nyangatom: *abiro* "walking stick with head"
Dodos: *abiro* "knobkerrie"
Lotuxo: *ibiro* "to throw away"
Bari: *gu'bara* "to throw, to sling"

Reconstruction Number: 7
Gloss: small homestead
Root: *-boot
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: Possibly borrowed from Lwo. Certainly Teso and Lwo today share a sense of a newly started home

DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *eboot* "new homestead with one house"
Karimojong: *eboot* "temporary herding camp"
Dodos: *eboot* "temporary home"
Toposa: *nyeboot* "temporary/abandoned camp"
Turkana: *eboot* "poverty, beggary"
Acholi: *obooto* "a newly started homestead"

Reconstruction Number: 8
Gloss: shield
Root: *-buku
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: From EN *-buku "shield"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Nyangatom: *ebuku* "small shield"
Teso: *ebuku* "shield"
Bari: *buku* "shield"
Didinga: *nyabukuc* "small shield" (borrowed because of Ateker prefix)
Kakwa: *buku* "shield"
Lotuxo: *nabughu* "shield"

Reconstruction Number: 9
Gloss: water place in rocks or on hill
Root: *-bur
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: most likely from Nuer-Dinka *bur* "hole," although may be undetermined areal spread
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *ebur* "deepest part of river or lake, pool of water on top of a rock"
Dodos: *ebur* "pool of water on top of a rock"
Turkana: *ebur* "barranca, canyon"
Nyangatom: *ebur* "pool, rock pool in mountain areas"
Rendille: *bur* "hill"
Somali: *buro* "small container for water or milk"
Oromo: *burqa* "ground spring"
Kakwa: *suburi* "water body"
Nuer: *bur* "a hole dug in the ground near the water, a pitfall"

Reconstruction Number: 10
Gloss: grain step #1 – head hidden inside leaf
Root: *-butun-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: from *-but- "to undress, uncover"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *aibutun* "grain step #1: head hidden inside leaf"
Dodos: *akibutun* "grain step #1: head hidden inside leaf"

Karimojong: *abutunge* "grain step #1: head hidden inside leaf," akibut "to slough off skin (of snakes)"
Nyangatom: *abutunkis* "grain step #1: head hidden inside leaf," *abutun* "to peel"
Toposa: *nyabutun* "to put off, to undress"
Turkana: *abutun* "to undress, remove"

Reconstruction Number: 11
Gloss: poverty, annoyance
Root: *-can
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: polysemy from PN or WN borrowing *-can "poverty"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *akican* "to trouble, disturb, afflict, bother," *icana* "wretched, worried, suffering," *akicanakin* "to lack, suffer," *acanakinet* "pain, lack," *acananu* "obduracy, stubbornness, rudeness"
Teso: *aican* "to pester, annoy, trouble," *aicana* "to be poor," *aicanakin* "to become poor," *aicanio* "to be lethargic," *aiticanio* "punishment," *ecanit* "poverty"
Karimojong: *ngican* "hardship, suffering," *akican* "to trouble, disturb, annoy, pester"
Nyangatom: *ngican* "problems"
Toposa: *nyakican* "to bother, trouble, disturb," *nyakicana* "to suffer, be destitute"
Luo: *chan* "poverty, need, destitution"
Lango: *can* "poverty, want, indigency"
Acholi: *caano* "to trouble, annoy, torture" *caan* "poverty, need, misery"
Lotuxo: *cang* "poor"

Reconstruction Number: 12
Gloss: porcupine
Root: *-cec
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *ecec* "porcupine"
Jie: *ecec* "porcupine"
Turkana: *ecec* "porcupine"
Dodos: *ecoc* "porcupine"
Toposa: *ecoc* "porcupine"
Nyangatom: *ecec* "porcupine"

Reconstruction Number: 13
Gloss: oasis
Root: *-coa
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *ecoa* "oasis, morass"

Karimojong: *ecoa* "spring of water"
Turkana: *ecoa* "oasis, spring"

Reconstruction Number: 14
Gloss: well
Root: *-cor
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: from PEN *-corr (see: Ehret, 931)
DISTRIBUTIONS
Toposa: *ecor* "water-hole, section of a dry riverbed"
Karimojong: *ecor* "well, water-hole, swamp"
Turkana: *ecor* "water-hole, well"
Teso: *ecor* "lake"

Reconstruction Number: 15
Gloss: cow urine
Root: *-coto
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: possibly from Southern Lwo *codo* "mud, mire" (produced by cows urinating on the ground)
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *acoto* "cow urine"
Turkana: *ngacoto* "urine of livestock"
Karimojong: *ngacyoto* "urine of cattle"
Toposa: *ngacoto* "urine of cows"
Lango: *coto* "mud"
Acholi: *coto* or *codo* "mud, mire"
Luo: *chuodho* "mud, mire"

Reconstruction Number: 16
Gloss: to fan the flames (using bellows), to incite to action, to produce iron implements
Root: *-cuk-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: borrowed from Nuer-Dinka *-cuk "foot" and develops into "stomping feet" (there is already a Proto Tung'a "foot"). Then, there are two options. Either, the practice of stomping feet is associated with inciting people to action, and then blacksmiths are considered as "inciting" the flames with the bellows, or, people would stomp their feet on the bellows to produce greater flames, thereby creating a metaphor of "fanning the flames" analogous to English.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *ecukean* "inciter, intriguer," *aicuk* "to agitate, to aerate furnace" *acukut* "bellows,"
Nyangatom: *akicuk* "to work iron," *ekecukon* "blacksmith"
Turkana: *akicuk* "to incite, to motivate, to stimulate," *acukakin* "to plod"
Toposa: *nyakicuk* "to stamp feet (especially to motivate)," nyakicukucuk "to pump bellows"
Dinka: *cok* "foot"
Nuer: *cuk* "foot"

Reconstruction Number: 17
Gloss: to graze (of an animal)
Root: *-dak
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: PNS *ndak "to chew," and then Tung'a *-dak "to graze." Probably lent to Shilluk (see: Ehret, #360)
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *adak* "to graze"
Toposa: *nyakidak* "to graze"
Karimojong: *akitadak* "to graze," *adaka* "fodder"
Nyangatom: *adaka* "to graze"
Turkana: *adaka* "to graze, to browse"
Shilluk: *dak* "herd (n.)"

Reconstruction Number: 18
Gloss: brain
Root: *-dam
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: borrowed from Rub (see: Ehret, #167)
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *adam* "brain"
Karimojong: *ngadam* "brain"
Turkana: *ngadam* "brain"
Toposa: *ngadam* "brain"

Reconstruction Number: 19
Gloss: vervet monkey
Root: *-doko-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *edokolet* "vervet monkey"
Turkana: *ekadokot* "vervet monkey"
Toposa: *ekodolu* "vervet monkey" (metathesis)
Jie: *ekadokot* "vervet monkey"

Reconstruction Number: 20
Gloss: glottis
Root: *-dokol-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *edokole* "epiglottis"
Karimojong: *edokole* "throat, esophagus"
Turkana: *edokole* "throat, esophagus"

Turkana: *edokole* "throat"
Toposa: *nyadokole* "uvula, pharynx"

Reconstruction Number: 21
Gloss: cow bell
Root: *-dongot
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: onomatopoeia
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *edongot* "gourd"
Turkana: *ekadongoi* "bell"
Karimojong: *ekadongodongot* "ox-bell"
Nyangatom: *akadongot* "cow bell"
Toposa: *kadongo* "bell"

Reconstruction Number: 22
Gloss: salt lick
Root: *-doot
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *akadot* "salty clay licked by cattle"
Turkana: *edoot* "saltlick, salty clay"
Karimojong: *edoot* "dead anthill where cows suck salt"

Reconstruction Number: 23
Gloss: cloud
Root: *-dou
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: inherited from Tung'a *-dou "cloud" (Vossen 1982, 450)
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *edou* "cloud"
Karimojong: *edou* "cloud"
Turkana: *edou* "cloud"

Reconstruction Number: 24
Gloss: granary
Root: *-dula
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: Borrowed from Ma'di
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *edula* "granary"
Karimojong: *edula* "granary"
Jie: *edula* "granary"
Ma'di: *dula* "granary"

Reconstruction Number: 25
Gloss: *Dactyloctenium aegyptium* (Egyptian Crowfoot Grass)
Root: *-duudu
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *ewuduwudu* "D aegyptium"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *ewuduwudu* "D aegyptium"
Karimojong: *ekaududu* "D aegyptium"
Dodos: *edudu* "D aegyptium"

Reconstruction Number: 26
Gloss: skin apron for adult women
Root: *-dwal
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: possibly derived from Ateker *adwar-un "to reach puberty'
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *adwal* "skin apron for adult women"
Turkana: *adwal* "skin apron for adult women""
Karimojong: *adwal* "skin apron for adult women"
Toposa: *nyadwal* "skin apron for adult women"

Reconstruction Number: 27
Gloss: to foretell, prophecy, see clearly, have vision
Root: *-dwar-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: Mostly likely borrowed from WN -*dwar* "to hunt, to look for," although possible Maasai reflex may indicate that this is an inherited Proto Nilotic root. Either way vision is the underlying concept. This is the same root that produces ***adwarun**
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *aidwar* "to prophesy, to foretell" *ekadwaran* "prophet"
Turkana: *akidwar* "to forecast, to foretell, to prophesy," *ekadwaran* "soothsayer, diviner, prophet"
Karimojong: *akidwar* "to predict, to foretell," *ekadwaran* "prophet, foreteller"
Toposa: *nyakidwar* "to prophecy, to predict," *nyekadwaran* "prophet"
Maasai: *aduaa* "to be seen, seen"
Lotuxo: *itadwara* "to sanctify" *odwa* "holy," *adwaran* "ability"
Luo: *dwaro* "to look for, to hunt, to seek, to find"
Shilluk: *dwar dhok* "to cross examine, to pry into, to draw out"
Dinka: *duar* "luck, fortune, ability"

Reconstruction Number: 28
Gloss: puberty, adolescence
Root: *-dwar-un
Protolanguage: Ateker

Etymology: from Proto Ateker *-dwar "vision." Presumably, one who reaches adolescence "sees" things more clearly. In all Ateker cultures, age and wisdom are linked.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *adwarun* "adolescence," *adwarun* "to reach puberty"
Karimojong: *adwarun* "adolescence, to be cheeky, stubborn," *akadwarunan* "spinster," *ekadwarunan* "bacheolor"
Turkana: *adwarun* "prognosticate, anticipate, conjecture, grow, mature," *adwarunet*, "reaching adolescence, growth, maturation"

Reconstruction Number: 29
Gloss: to chant (or pray/curse?) in unison
Root: *-gat(a)-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: Teso likely lost sense of "pray/beseech," but it may have on been innovated in the Karimojong-Turkana group after the initial split. This is an areal spread with an undetermined borrowing relationship with WN and/or Surmic.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *aigat* "to curse, to speak in unison, to roar loudly (of fire)"
Toposa: *nyakigat* "to pray"
Karimojong: *akigat* "to pray, to invoke, to chant cursing prayers against enemy or disease"
Dodos: *akigat* "to pray by chanting repeatedly" agata "to pray or plead"
Turkana: *akigat* "to wish, to pray, to plead"
Labwor: *akigat* "to pray"
Didinga: *gatan* "to bless"
Acholi: *gato agata* "to pronounce a blessing (an elder) with correlative curse against evil, an enemy, and the assembly answering in chorus"
Shilluk: *agat* "to flare up (of a conversation)"
Lango: *gato* "to consecrate, to bless, to chase away an evil spirit"

Reconstruction Number: 30
Gloss: to castrate by cutting
Root: *-gelem-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: inherited from Proto Tung'a *-gelem "to castrate by cutting" (Vossen 1982, 450)
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *agelem* "to castrate by cutting"
Turkana: *agelem* "to castrate by cutting"
Toposa: *nyakigelem* "to castrate by cutting"

Reconstruction Number: 31
Gloss: thunder
Root: *-gir-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: inherited from Tung'a *-dou "cloud" (Vossen 1982, 450)
DISTRIBUTIONS

Teso: *agirokin* "to thunder and threaten"
Karimojong: *agiro* "to thunder"
Turkana: *agirokin* "rumble, thunder"
Toposa: *nyagirokin* "to thunder"
Ik: *kiron* "thunder"

Reconstruction Number: 32
Gloss: fish-hook (on a handle)
Root: *-gol-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: from Surmic *-golo* "fish-hook" (cf. Ma'di *goli* "fishing hook")
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *egolo* "fish-hooking stick"
Karimojong: *egolu* "small curved finger knife"
Nyangatom: *egolu* "hooked fishing stick"
Turkana: *egolu* "hook used to remove teeth"
Acholi: *goli* "fish hook"
Murle: *agolo* "fish-hook"
Baale: *oggolo* "fish-hook"
Ma'di: *goli* "fishing hook"

Reconstruction Number: 33
Gloss: to bleed cattle by shooting arrow
Root: *-gum
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: from PN *-gum "to hit" and then PEN *-gum "to throw." Instrument may be influenced by Madi *guma* "harpoon."
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *aigum* "to shoot and arrow and bleed cattle"
Karimojong: *akigum* "to shoot and arrow and bleed cattle"
Turkana: *akigum* "to shoot and arrow and bleed cattle"
Lotuxo: *oguma* "to hit with fists"
Bari: *gum, gumba* "to throw"
Kakwa: *gumadu* "to throw"
Shilluk: gumo "to slam"
Madi: *guma* "harpoon"

Reconstruction Number: 34
Gloss: to trade
Root: *-gwel-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: a person (masculine prefix /lo/) who is one, or alone (root /pei/). The Ateker add another personal prefix (e-/a-), to create "owner." An "owner" in Proto Ateker was, literally, he or she who is a person who is alone, one, or otherwise segregated.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *agwelar* "to sell," *agwelun* "to buy"

Karimojong: *akigyel* "to buy, to sell"
Turkana: *agyelar* "to sell, exchange"
Toposa: *nyakigyel* "to exchange"
Luo: *gwelo* "to beckon a person"
Shilluk: *gwel* "to beckon, to call"
Acholi: *gwelo* "to beckon"
Nuer: *gwel gwel* "to talk in mixed languages," *gwel* "to attain something"

Reconstruction Number: 35
Gloss: to wail (esp. in mourning)
Root: *-gwor-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: most likely from PEN/PT *-gworo- "throat or throat sounds" (Vossen doesn't reconstruct a word initial /gw-/ and there are few examples)
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *aibworo* "to wail" (Usuku, Ngora) *aigworo* "to wail" (Pallisa, Tororo)
Karimojong: *akigworo* "to cry, weep"
Toposa: *nyakigor* "to weep, wail, mourn, cry"
Turkana: *akigor* "cry, squall, ululate, weep"
Dodos: *akigworo* "mourning"
Bari: *gworo* "throat, windpipe"
Kakwa: *gboro* "throat"
Lotuxo: *i-goro-to* "to snore"

Reconstruction Number: 36
Gloss: head-carrying pad
Root: *-ik-it
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: "head-thing" from Rub *ik "head" + /-it/
DISTRIBUTIONS
Toposa: *nyaikit* "head-ring (to carry loads)"
Karimojong: *aikit* "carrying-pad, head-pad"
Turkana: *aikit* "pad used by females to transport by head"
Teso: *aikit* "grass pad"
Ik: *ik* "head"
So: *ik* "head"

Reconstruction Number: 37
Gloss: to live (physically; i.e. to subsist, or have bare life)
Root: *-jar-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: Innovated from Proto Tung'a *-jar- "to extend"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *aijar* "to be alive"
Karimojong: *akiyar* "to be alive"
Turkana: *ayaria* "subsist, live on" *eyari* "living" *akiteyar* "to rescue"

Toposa: *nyakiyar* "to live" *nyararari* "to save one's life by migrating"

Reconstruction Number: 38
Gloss: honeyguide bird (*Indicator indicator*)
Root: *-jeje
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: form borrowed from Rub, but originally onomatopoeia based on calling sound
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *ajeje* "honeyguide"
Turkana: *ajeje* "honeyguide"
Dodos: *aaje* "honeyguide"
Ik: *tsitsi* "honeyguide"
So: *cece* "honeyguide"

Reconstruction Number: 39
Gloss: axe
Root: *-jep
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: Borrowed from Dinka-Nuer (no reflexes in Lwo). Note: Ehret (2003) says this is from SN, but I disagree.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Dinka: *yep* "axe, to cut down"
Nuer: *jop(b)* "axe, to cut wood"
Teso: *aep* "axe"; *aijep* "to chop down a tree"
Toposa: *nyaepe* "axe"; *nyakiyep* "to chop"
Karimojong: *aep* "axe"; *akiyep* "to cut with axe"

Reconstruction Number: 40
Gloss: *Crateva adansonii* (Sacred Garlic Pear)
Root: *-joroit
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Ngora etc.): *ejoroi* "C adansonii"
Karimojong: *eyoroit* "C adansonii"

Reconstruction Number: 41
Gloss: permanent arrangement for lending livestock
Root: *-jok-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: derived from PEN *-dyok "gift". No Lotuxo-Maa reflexes found, but reconstructed to PEN on the basis of Bari and Kakwa reflexes (/j/ > /k,g/ sound correspondence confirm antiquity). Note that the sense of "free-gifting" is replaced with lending relationship.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *aijokokin* "to transfer to another place (esp. livestock)" *ajokokon* "donor, lender, giver" *aijokor* "to lend cattle"

Karimojong: *akijokokin* "to entrust"
Turkana: *akijok* "to 'hide' one's livestock by putting them in the charge of others"
Toposa: *nyakijok* "to commit a thing to a person's care"
Nyangatom: *akijokokin* "to lend cattle"
Bari: *do'ka* "present, gift" *do'kakin* "to freely give"
Kakwa: *'doga* "to freely give"

Reconstruction Number: 42
Gloss: star
Root: *-(k)acer-it
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *aacerit* "star"
Karimojong: *ekacerit* "star"
Toposa: *nyakacerit* "star (rare form)"

Reconstruction Number: 43
Gloss: affine
Root: *-ka-mur-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: Literally /ka-/ "my" + /mur-/ "hind thigh (of slaughtered animal)." Likely originates from sharing of roasted hind leg during marriage ceremony. The term "my thigh" to imply close relations is also found in "thigh of the grandmother," although this is probably related to a metaphorical expression of affinal rather than agnatic relationship.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *e/a-kamuran* "in-law"
Karimojong: *e/a-kamuran* "in-law"
Turkana: *e/a-kamuran* "in-law"
Dodos: *e/a-kamuran* "in-law"

Reconstruction Number: 44
Gloss: *Carissa spinarum* (AKA *Carissa edulis*)
Root: *-kamuriV
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *amurie* "C spinarum"
Tesyo: *akamuriat* "C spinarum"
Karimojong: *ekamuriei* "C spinarum"
Turkana: *ekamuria* "C spinarum"

Reconstruction Number: 45
Gloss: malevolent witch
Root: *-ka-pil-an
Protolanguage: Ateker

Etymology: literally "person who is my pain"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *ekapilan* "malevolent witch"
Toposa: *elado* "tail, arm-mounted flywhisk"
Karimojong: *e/akapilan* "witch"
Turkana: *e/akapilan* "witch," *ekapilana* "malevolent, evil, wicked"

Reconstruction Number: 46
Gloss: gourd rattle for diviner
Root: *-kaye
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: likely metathesis (with vowel shift) on *-yek-* "to shake rattle" to form noun
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *akae, akayei* "rattle"
Karimojong: *akaee* "little gourd used by witch doctors"
Jie: *akaiye "rattle"*
Lotuxo: *akeyekkeyek* "rattle-gourd"

Reconstruction Number: 47
Gloss: doorway to house
Root: *-kek
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: Perhaps there is some irregular sound change shifting /kak/ > /kek/ and then a masculinization of the noun by adding an /e/ frontally, thereby implying that this is an inherited word, or it was borrowed from somewhere else (perhaps the Sor of Mt. Moroto?). The question is especially relevant because the word "ekek" carries an additional meaning of "lineage" in Ateso, and because "kaka" is the word for "clan" in Labwor. Note that in Kakwa, the word *kaka* has the same polysemy as Katakwi Teso. No reflex is found in Lotuko-Maa. Possibly, the use of door was borrowed from WN into Ateker as "door" (see acholi keka). This etymology is so unclear and variably distributed that I do know rely on the usage of *ekek* for social units to support any arguments in the dissertation.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Ngora etc.): *ekek* "doorway" also "lineage of patriarch"
Teso (Katakwi): *ekek* "doorway" also "family of single woman"
Karimojong: *ekek* "door"(as rare, alternate word)
Turkana: *ekek* "door" (as rare, alternate word)
Sor: *akek* "door, gate"
Labwor Lwo: *kaka* "clan"
Kakwa: *kaka* "door" also "family of single woman"
Lango: *kaka* "clan, lineage"; *kika* "door shutter"
Mondari: *kakat* "door, clan"
Acholi: *kaka* "clan"; *keka* "door"

Reconstruction Number: 48
Gloss: fireplace
Root: *-keno

Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *ekeno* "fireplace, kitchen"
Karimojong: *ekeno* "fireplace, kitchen"
Turkana: *ekeno* "fireplace, kitchen"

Reconstruction Number: 49
Gloss: gourd for churning milk
Root: *-kere-t
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: from PNS *kereh "bottle gourd" (Ehret #1120) located in PEN, and borrowed into Madi. Semantic innovation is specific reference to churning milk.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *ekeret* "gourd for churning"
Turkana: *ekeret* "flask, gourd"
Karimojong: *ekeret* "churning gourd"
Nyangatom: *ekeret* "gourd for churned milk"
Toposa: *nyekeret* "gourd for churned milk"
Bari: *kere* "gourd bottle"
Madi: *kere* "long-necked gourd used for carrying water on a journey"

Reconstruction Number: 50
Gloss: stool, headrest
Root: *-kicolong
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: from *akicolong* "to rest one's head"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *ekicolong* "chair"
Toposa: *ekicolong* "stool, headrest"
Karimojong: *ekicolong* "stool, headrest"
Turkana: *ekicolong* "stool, headrest"
Dodos: *ekicolong* "stool, headrest"
Jie: *ekicolong* "stool, headrest"

Reconstruction Number: 51
Gloss: milk (noun)
Root: *-kile
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: Inherited from Proto Tung'a *-le. unclear why infinitive verb prefix /aki-/ was first attached and then later became an unproductive part of the root noun.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *akile* "milk"
Karimojong: *akile* "milk"
Turkana: *akile* "milk"

Reconstruction Number: 52
Gloss: adult man
Root: *-kile
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: innovated from Tung'a *-le "man," retaining association with milk
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *ekile* "adult man"
Karimojong: *ekile* "adult man"
Turkana: *ekile* "adult man"
Maasai: *ol-lee* "man"
Lotuxo: *lale* "man"

Reconstruction Number: 53
Gloss: finger millet
Root: *-kima-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: from Proto Tung'a *kima "millet" (Vossen 1982, pg. 395)
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *akimai* "finger millet"
Karimojong: *ngakima* "finger millet"
Toposa: *ngakima* "finger millet"
Ongamo: *o-kima* "millet"
Lotuxo: *o-dhima* "millet"
Kakwa: *kima* "reddish variety of sorghum"

Reconstruction Number: 54
Gloss: old woman
Root: *-kimat
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: probably derived from Ateker *akima* "millet flour" or "*akim*" fire" (as in, the fire of the home)
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *akimat* "old woman"
Turkana: *akimat* "old woman"
Karimojong: *akimat* "old woman"
Toposa: *nyakimat* "old woman"

Reconstruction Number: 55
Gloss: good grain seed kept for planting
Root: *-kinyom-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: Inherited from PEN (Vossen 1982, 152)
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *ekinyomit* "choice seed"
Karimojong: *ekinyomit* "seed kept for planting"
Toposa: *nyekinyom* "seed"

Nyangatom: *ekanyumut* "seed"
Didinga: *kinyomo* "seed"
Ik: *kinyom* "seed"
So: *kinyom* "seed"

Reconstruction Number: 56
Gloss: lightning (bolt)
Root: *-kipy-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: from PEN *-kipy- "lightning" (Not retained in PLM, and not related to *-pe "to roast")
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *ekipyei* "lightning"
Turkana: *ekipe* "elf, ghost, goblin, spirit, rainbow, devil"
Karimojong: *ekipye* "lightning, spirits"
Toposa: *nyekipe* "nature spirit, lightning, rainbow, whirlwind"
Bari: *kipya* "lightning"
Kakwa: *piya* "lightning"

Reconstruction Number: 57
Gloss: flour
Root: *-ki-r(i)ya-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: from Proto Tung'a *-r(i)ya- "grinding stone"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *ngakirya* "flour"
Teso: *akiria* "flour**"**
Toposa: *ngakirya* "flour"
Karimojong: *ngakirya* "flour"
Nyangatom: *ngakiriya* "flour"

Reconstruction Number: 58
Gloss: rain
Root: *-kiru
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: derived from PEN *ru "to water plants or animals." /aki-/ prefix incorporated into noun, so rain is conceptually shifted from being a natural phenomenon to an active process of feeding animals. Replaces PEN *kudyu.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *akiru* "rain (rare)";
Karimojong: *aki-ru* "to water cattle" *akiru* "rain"
Turkana: *akiru* "rain"; *aki-ru* "to water cattle"
Toposa: *nyaku-ru* "to water cattle" *nyakuru* "rain"
Bari: *ru* "to water"
Kakwa: *ruruju* "to water plants"

Reconstruction Number: 59
Gloss: *Acacia hockii* (White-Thorn Acacia)
Root: *-kisim
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Ngora etc.): *ekisim* "A hockii"
Teso (Katakwi): *ekisim* "A hockii"
Karimojong: *ekisim* "A hockii"

Reconstruction Number: 60
Gloss: cow, cows
Root: *-ki-teng, *ki-tuk
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: Inherited from PEN *ki-teng (Vossen 1982, 452). The word-final /-ng/ irregularly disappears in Northern Ateker (perhaps because cows were discussed so much!). Nonetheless, it is reconstructed to Proto Ateker, because it was retained in Teso and also existed in Tung'a. The retention of the irregular plural /-uk/ ending in Northern Ateker confirms that these words are all cognate.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *akiteng* "cow," *akituk* "cows"
Karimojong: *aate* "cow," *ngaatuk* "cows"
Toposa: *nyaate* "cow," *ngaatuk* "cows"
Turkana: *aate* "cow," *ngaatuk* "cows"

Reconstruction Number: 61
Gloss: flank or section of an army
Root: *-kod-et
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology:
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Ngora etc.): (Okalany, 1973) *ekodet* "flank of an army"
Karimojong: *ekodet* "flank of an army"
Nyangatom: *akodet* "flank of an army"

Reconstruction Number: 62
Gloss: smallpox
Root: *-kodoe
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *ekodoi* "pox outbreak"
Karimojong: *ekodoe* "smallpox"
Turkana: *ekodoe* "smallpox"
Toposa: *ekodoe* "smallpox"

Reconstruction Number: 63
Gloss: chicken
Root: *-kokor
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: Inherited from Proto Tung'a *ko-kor (Vossen 1982, 451)
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *akokor* "chicken"
Karimojong: *akokor* "chicken"
Toposa: *nyakokor* "chicken"
Turkana: *akokor* "chicken"

Reconstruction Number: 64
Gloss: child
Root: *-koku
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: borrowed from So kuku "grandson (and grandfather)? does not explain /o/
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *ikoku* "child"
Karimojong: *ikoku* "child"
Jie: *ikoku* "child"
Toposa: *nyikoku* "child"
Turkana: *ikoku* "child'
Nyangatom: *ikoku* "child'
So: *kuku* "grandson, grandfather"

Reconstruction Number: 65
Gloss: fish
Root: *-kol-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: From Rub *kol*
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *ekolia* "catfish" (generic fish is *agaria*)
Turkana: *ekolia* "fish"
Toposa: *nyekoliya* "fish"
Tesyo: *ekolia* "fish"
Karimojong: *ekolya* "fish"
Ik: *nkolia* "fish"
So: *kole* "fish"
Nyang'i: *koleat* "fish"

Reconstruction Number: 66
Gloss: white ants
Root: *-kong-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: innovated from PEN *-kong "termite" (Vossen 1982, 452)
DISTRIBUTIONS

Teso: *ekongot* "white ant"
Turkana: *ikong* "white ants"

Reconstruction Number: 67
Gloss: to snatch
Root: *-kop-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *akikop* "to grab, to snatch"
Karimojong: *akikop* "to snatch, to dash at"
Toposa: *nyakop* "to grab, to snatch"
Teso: *aikop* "to snatch"

Reconstruction Number: 68
Gloss: he-goat
Root: *-kori
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: Inherited from Proto Tung'a *-kor- (Vossen 1982, 453)
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *ekori* "he-goat"
Turkana: *ekori* "he-goat"
Karimojong: *ekori* "he-goat"
Toposa: *ekori* "he-goat"

Reconstruction Number: 69
Gloss: sky
Root: *-kuj-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: from PEN *-kudy- "rain." There is some question about whether -kuj- also meant "High God" in Teso. In Kitching's 1915 Ateso dictionary, he translates God as Elohim, and akuju as "sky." Later missionaries translated God as Edeke, from "disease," (Anglican) and Lokasuban, from "creator" (Catholic). Following Lawrance, the Gullivers mention that some Iteso may remember a remote God called Akuj, but that this was rare by the 1950s.[2] Given the sparse information on the translation of "High God" as "Akuj" – or indeed if there was even such a concept in precolonial Teso – it is impossible to determine whether this cognate exists in Ateso. What is clear, though, is that attachment of the gloss "High God" to Akuj is robust and widely distributed in Northern Ateker. If the notion of a Sky God does indeed date to the Proto Ateker era, it was only later maintained by the Northern Ateker.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *akuju* "sky"
Karimojong: *akuj* "High God (to whom one gestures by pointing at the sky)"
Turkana: *akuj* "High God (to whom one gestures by pointing at the sky)"
Toposa: *akuj* "High God (to whom one gestures by pointing at the sky)"

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[2] Gulliver & Gulliver, Central Nilo-Hamites (1953)

Reconstruction Number: 70
Gloss: chyme
Root: *kuj-it
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: inherited from PEN "grass"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *ikwijit* "chyme"
Karimojong: *ngikujit* "chyme"
Jie: *ngikujit* "chyme"
Dodos: *ngikujit* "chyme"
Toposa: *ngikujit* "chyme"
Turkana: *ngikujit* "chyme"
Maasai: *olkujit* "grass"

Reconstruction Number: 71
Gloss: threshing club
Root: *-kujuk
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Karimojong: *akujuk* "axe handle"
Toposa: *nyakujuku* "threshing club"
Turkana: *akujuk* "pestle"

Reconstruction Number: 72
Gloss: scabbard, sheath
Root: *-kurar-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: borrowed from Surmic languages
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *akuraru* "sheath"
Karimojong: *akuraru* "leather sheath, scabbard"
Toposa: *naykuraru* "scabbard"
Turkana: *akararu* "scabbard"
Didinga: *ghurara* "scabbard"

Reconstruction Number: 73
Gloss: to dig a hole, straight digging stick (Ateker)
Root: *-kut-
Protolanguage: Tung'a
Etymology: Unclear; may equally be inherited from Tung'a or borrowed from Surmic.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *akutor* "to dig out" *akuta* "straight digging stick"; *aikut* "to burrow"
Turkana: *akikut* "to dig, excavate, exhume" *akuta* "hoe, planting rod"
Karimojong: *akikut* "to make holes"

Toposa: *nyakikut* "to dig up"
Nyangatom: *nyakutan* "straight planting stick"
Maasai: *akut* "to make a lair"
Murle: *lukut* "deep"
Didinga: *xutan* "to dig a well in the sand"; *kukuto* "well in riverbed"

Reconstruction Number: 74
Gloss: wind
Root: *-kwam-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *ekuwam* "wind"
Karimojong: *ngikuwamin* "wind"
Toposa: *nyekwaam* "wind"
Teso: *ekwam* "wind"

Reconstruction Number: 75
Gloss: iron-tipped spear
Root: *-kwara
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Ngora etc.): *akwara* "iron-tipped spear"
Karimojong: *akwara* "iron-tipped spear"
Turkana: *akwara* "iron-tipped spear"
Nyangatom: *akwara* "iron-tipped spear"

Reconstruction Number: 76
Gloss: tail
Root: *-lado
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: also means "arm-mounted flywhisk" in every Ateker language with an alternate word in every language: *eula*. Likely borrowed
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *elado* "arm-mounted flywhisk"
Toposa: *elado* "tail, arm-mounted flywhisk"
Karimojong: *elado* "tail, arm-mounted flywhisk"
Turkana: *elado* "tail, arm-mounted flywhisk"
Jie: *elado* "tail, arm-mounted flywhisk"

Reconstruction Number: 77
Gloss: happiness, freedom (synonymous)
Root: *-lak-ar-
Protolanguage: Ateker

Etymology: from Tung'a *-lak- "to release, to pay a debt, to untie " (from PEN "to untie, unfasten"). The root *-lak- also gains meaning "to divorce" in Proto Ateker
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *elakara* "happy, joyful," *akilak* "to divorce," *alakakinet* "liberty, freedom"
Karimojong: *akilak* "to untie, disown, divorce," *alakara* "to be glad"
Toposa: *nyakilak* "to untie, redeem, let go, divorce, demand back," *nyalakarit* "joy, happiness"
Teso: *alakar* "to become loose or free, to disentangle," *alakara* "happiness, joy," *ailak* "to divorce"
Maasai: *alak* "to loosen, to untie, to pay, to compensate"
Bari: *lak* "to loosen, to unbind, to free"

Reconstruction Number: 78
Gloss: *Flueggea virosa* (White Berry Bush)
Root: *-lakVs
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Ngora etc.): *elakas* "F virosa"
Tesyo: *elakas* "F virosa"
Turkana: *elakis* "F virosa"

Reconstruction Number: 79
Gloss: *Ximenia caffra*
Root: *-lamait
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Ngora etc.): *elamai* "X caffra"
Teso (Katakwi): *elamai* "X caffra"
Tesyo: *elamait* "X caffra"
Karimojong: *elamai* "X caffra"
Turkana: *elamai* "X caffra"

Reconstruction Number: 80
Gloss: tossing sandals for divination
Root: *-lam(lam)
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: onomatopoeia
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *ailamlam* "tossing sandals for divination"
Karimojong: *akilamlam* "tossing sandals for divination"
Turkana: *akilamlam* "tossing sandals for divination"

Reconstruction Number: 81
Gloss: moon
Root: *-lap

Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: inherited from Tung'a *-lap "moon" (Vossen 1982, 454)
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *elap* "moon"
Turkana: *elap* "moon"
Karimojong: *elap* "moon"

Reconstruction Number: 82
Gloss: to take, to collect harvest
Root: *-lem
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: from PEN *-ilem "to take, to demand"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *ailem* "to pick up, to reap cotton", *alemar* "to take away"
Karimojong: *akilem* "to harvest, to reap", *alemar* "to take away"
Toposa: *nyakilem* "to harvest, to take"
Turkana: *akilem* "to reap, to harvest, to take, to remove teeth"
Maasai: *ailem* "to demand something"

Reconstruction Number: 83
Gloss: hornless
Root: *-lem(u)
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: from Proto Tung'a "to cut"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *alem* "hornless"
Karimojong: *nalemu* "hornless"
Toposa: *lolemu* "hornless, horns removed"
Maasai: *alem* "to cut"

Reconstruction Number: 84
Gloss: to milk
Root: *-lep,
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: verb inherited from Proto Tung'a *-lep, which was in turn innovated from PEN *-le "milk (noun)" (Vossen 1982, 453)
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *ailep* "to milk"
Karimojong: *akilep* "to milk"
Turkana: *akilep* "to milk"

Reconstruction Number: 85
Gloss: milking can
Root: *-lepit
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: from *-le "milk"

DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *elepit* "milking can"
Turkana: *elepit* "milking can"
Karimojong: *elepit* "milking can""
Nyangatom: *elepit* "milking can"
Toposa: *nyelepit* "milking can"

Reconstruction Number: 86
Gloss: to trap small animals or fish
Root: *-lok
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: inherited from PEN *lok "to angle" and *lok-et "trap" (Vossen 1982, 453-454)
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *ailok* "to set traps, snares, or bait"
Karimojong: *akilok* "to lay a snare or trap animals"
Turkana: *akilok* "to ensare, trap, hook"

Reconstruction Number: 87
Gloss: owner
Root: *-lo-pe(i)
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: a person (masculine prefix /lo/) who is one, or alone (root /pei/). The Ateker add another personal prefix (e-/a-), to create "owner." An "owner" in Proto Ateker was, literally, he or she who is a person who is alone, one, or otherwise segregated.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *e/alope* "owner," *a/e-lope*, "by oneself, live alone," *edio-pe-t* "one"
Karimojong: *e/alope* "owner," e*pei* "one"
Turkana: *e/alope* "owner," *akipe* "escape," *apei* "one, single"
Toposa: *nyepei* "one," *lopei* "only one," *nyelope* "owner"
Nyangatom: *elope* "owner"

Reconstruction Number: 88
Gloss: threshing area
Root: *-los
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *alos* "threshed grain"
Karimojong: *alos* "threshing floor"
Nyangatom: *alos* "cleared area"
Turkana: *alos* "threshing site"

Reconstruction Number: 89
Gloss: arrow
Root: *-mal-
Protolanguage: Ateker

Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *emal* "arrow"
Karimojong: *emal* "arrow for extracting blood"
Turkana: *emal* "arrow, bullet, dart"
Nyangatom: *emal* "arrow, bullet"
Toposa: *nyemali* "arrow, bullet"

Reconstruction Number: 90
Gloss: garden
Root: *-man-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: from Surmic *mana* "garden." Lotuxo may have borrowed *namana* from Ateker
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *amana* "garden"
Karimojong: *amana* "garden"
Turkana: *amana* "garden"
Lotuxo: *namana* "crops"
Murle: *mana* "cultivation, plantation, garden"
Didinga: *mana* "field"
Laarim: *mana* "farm, field"

Reconstruction Number: 91
Gloss: very young calf
Root: *-manangit
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *imanangit* "calf"
Karimojong: *imanangit* "very young calf"
Turkana: *imanangit* "adjective to describe a cow who is a new mother"
Toposa: *nyimanangit* "small calf (1-2 months)"

Reconstruction Number: 92
Gloss: to count
Root: *-mar
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *aimar* "to count"
Toposa: *nyakimar* "to count"
Karimojong: *akimar* "to count"
Turkana: *akimar* "to count"
Dodos: *akimar* "to count"
Jie: *akimar* "to count"

Reconstruction Number: 93
Gloss: large mushroom
Root: *-maru-k
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: from PEN *-maru- "mushroom"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Dodos: *nyemaruk* "large mushroom"
Karimojong: *emarukit* "large edible mushroom"
Teso: *emarukit* "large white mushroom"
Kakwa: *maru* "large mushroom"

Reconstruction Number: 94
Gloss: bull
Root: *-masanik
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: Unknown, but borrowing into Didinga with /s/ indicates original phonology.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *emasenik* "choice bull"
Karimojong: *emaanik* "bull"
Toposa: *nyemaanik* "bull"
Turkana: *emanik* "bull"
Didinga: *masenit* "bull"

Reconstruction Number: 95
Gloss: to drive livestock
Root: *-me
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: derived from PEN *me "to drive livestock"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *aime* "to drive livestock, prisoners"
Karimojong: *akime* "to lead cattle to pasture"
Turkana: *akime* "to steer, to drive"
Toposa: *nyakime* "to drive cattle"
Bari: *me* "to drive, to lead"
Kakwa: *meyadu* "to drive a herd"

Reconstruction Number: 96
Gloss: to take shelter or refuge
Root: *-mec
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *aimec* "to shelter, to take refuge"
Karimojong: *akimec* "to take shelter, refuge"
Toposa: *nyakimec* "to seek shelter, refuge"
Turkana: *akimec* "to take shelter, refuge, lodge"

Reconstruction Number: 97
Gloss: iron hoe
Root: *-melek-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: borrowed from Surmic languages
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *emeleku* "iron hoe"
Karimojong: *emeleku* "iron hoe"
Jie: *emeleku* "iron hoe"
Toposa: *nyemeleku* "iron hoe"
Turkana: *emeleku* "iron hoe"
Nyangatom: *emeleku* "iron hoe"
Didinga: *melek* "iron pick-axe"
Murle: *melek* "iron pick-axe"

Reconstruction Number: 98
Gloss: Pleaides
Root: *-merekek
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: Literally "sheep"; the constellation is traditionally considered a flock of sheep moving together through the night sky.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *amerekek* "sheep, Pleaides"
Nyangatom: *ngariko-mesekin* "Pleaides (literally, 'leading sheep')"

Reconstruction Number: 99
Gloss: sorghum
Root: *-momw-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown, but clearly an Ateker innovation
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *ngimwa* "sorghum"
Teso: *imomwa* "sorghum**"**
Karimojong: *ngimomwa* "sorghum"
Nyangatom: *nguumwa* "sorghum"
Dodos: *ngiumwa* "sorghum"

Reconstruction Number: 100
Gloss: ox
Root: *-mong
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: inherited from Proto Tung'a *-mongo "ox." (Vossen 1982, 454)
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *emong* "ox"
Toposa: *nyemong* "ox"

Karimojong: *emong* "ox"
Dodos: *emong* "ox"
Nyangatom: *emong* "ox"

Reconstruction Number: 101
Gloss: Bushland
Root: *-moni
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *amoni* "thicket" *ekamonit* "tsetse fly"
Turkana: *amoni* "backwood, forest, thicket, bush, woods"
Karimojong: *amoni* "forest, jungle, thicket"
Toposa: *nyamoni* "forest, bush"
Nyangatom: *amoni* "forest, wilderness"

Reconstruction Number: 102
Gloss: to share
Root: *-mor-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: from Proto Tung'a *-mor- "to mix together " (polysemy, with *-mor- "to mix" retained in morphologically complex words)
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *akimor* "to share, partake, divide"
Karimojong: *akimor* "to share alike"
Toposa: *nyakimor* "to share"
Teso: *aimor* "to share"

Reconstruction Number: 103
Gloss: haft
Root: *-morok
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: borrowed from Surmic
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *amorok* "haft"
Karimojong: *amorok* "haft"
Jie: *amorok* "haft"
Toposa: *nyamorok* "haft"
Turkana: *amorok* "haft"
Nyangatom: *amorok* "haft"
Didinga: *morok* "haft"
Murle: *morok* "haft"
Lotuxo: *namorok* "spear shaft"

Reconstruction Number: 104
Gloss: mountain, stone

Root: *-moru-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: From EN *-mor "stone"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Tesyo: *emoru* "mountain," *amoru* "stone"
Karimojong: *emoru* "mountain," *amoru* "stone"
Turkana: *emoru* "mountain," *amoru* "stone"
Toposa: *emoru* "mountain," *amoru* "stone"
Maasai: *ol-moru* "stone, hard stone," *a-mor* "old age"

Reconstruction Number: 105
Gloss: python
Root: *-moru toto
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: Literally "mother of the mountain."
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *emorototo* "python"
Turkana: e*morotot* "python"
Karimojong: *emorotot* "python"
Jie: *emorutot* "python"

Reconstruction Number: 106
Gloss: tooth-extracting device, needle
Root: *-mutV
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *emutu* "tooth-extracting device, needle"
Karimojong: *emutu* "tooth-extracting device, big needle"
Dodos: *emuto* "tooth-extracting device, needle"
Jie: *emutu* "tooth-extracting device, needle"
Turkana: *emutu* "needle, awl"
Toposa: *nyemutu* "awl, pricker, injection needle"
Nyangatom: *emutu* "metallic wire used as needle"
Lango: *mutu* "tooth extractor, sharp metal object"

Reconstruction Number: 107
Gloss: duiker
Root: *-mur
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: inherited from Proto Tung'a *amur "duiker"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *amor* "duiker"
Turkana: *amur* "yellow-backed duiker"
Karimojong: *amur* "duiker"

Maasai: *enawuamuro* "duiker"

Reconstruction Number: 108
Gloss: doctor-diviner
Root: *-muron
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: From PT "hind leg" *-muro, because this person was charged with supervising the slaughter of a bull and incision of the hind leg is the *emuron* "doctor-diviner" (Novelli 1999, 51). This word completely eclipses PEN *-bon-it "ritual expert" in Ateker.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Karimojong: *e/amuron* "doctor-diviner"
Turkana: *e/amuron* "doctor-diviner"
Teso: *e/amuron* "doctor-diviner"
Lotuxo: *amuroni* "sorcerer" (borrowed from Ateker, *contra* Vossen 1982, 413)

Reconstruction Number: 109
Gloss: hot, greedy, mean
Root: *-mwan-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *amwanus* "heat, warmth, greed"
Karimojong: *emwana* "hot, greedy"
Toposa: *nyemona* "hot, greedy, stingy"
Turkana: *amonis* "avarice, hotness, meanness"

Reconstruction Number: 110
Gloss: skin for back-carrying baby
Root: *-napet
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: noun formed from *-nap- "to stack, to carry"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *anapet* "skin for back-carrying baby"
Karimojong: *anapet* "skin for back-carrying baby"
Toposa: *nyanapet* "skin for back-carrying baby"
Teso: *anapet* "skin for back-carrying baby"

Reconstruction Number: 111
Gloss: raid
Root: *-ngat-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: Possibly from Proto Tung'a -na-ngat- "to hit, to strike, to bruise"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *angatar* "to rob and take away," *angangat* "impatience, youthful headlong rushing"
Turkana: *angatar* "to aquire, to loot, to procure, to raid"
Toposa: *nyangatar* "to raid, to loot," *nyakingat* "to encourage." *nyengatuna* "captive child"

Karimojong: *akingat* "to divide booty," *angat* "to incite to fighting"
Maasai: *enangata* "bruise"

Reconstruction Number: 112
Gloss: to help, aid
Root: *-ngar-ak-in
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: derived from PEN *ngar "to share"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *aingarakin* "to help, aid, assist"
Karimojong: *akingarakin* "to help one another, to defend"
Turkana: *akingarakin* "to help, aid, assist"

Reconstruction Number: 113
Gloss: riverbed
Root: *-ngolol
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *angolol* "riverbed"
Turkana: *angolol* "riverbed"
Karimojong: *angolol* "riverbed"

Reconstruction Number: 114
Gloss: to assess, measure
Root: *-ning-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: derived from EN and Tung'a *-ning- "to understand, to agree on an issue"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *aining* "to lift for the purpose of measuring weight"
Turkana: *angakiningokinet* "experiment, attempt, trial"
Karimojong: *akining akiro* "to assess" (note: fossilized phrase implying speech)

Reconstruction Number: 115
Gloss: to bury (something)
Root: *-nuk
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: inherited from Proto Tung'a
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *akinuk* "to cover, to bury"
Karimojong: *akinuk* "to bury, fill up (a hole)"
Toposa: *nyakinuk* "to bury, to cover with soil, to fill hole"
Teso: *ainuk* "to cover with soil, to bury"
Maasai: *anuk* "to cover, to plug, to close, to fold, to seal"

Reconstruction Number: 116

Gloss: to anoint someone (especially initiating a woman into a clan after marriage)
Root: *-nyonyo
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *ainyonyo* "to initiate a newly married woman into the clan by smearing her with ghee," *ainyonyoikin* "to anoint someone, to smear on"
Toposa: *nyakinyonyo* "to change clans (as in bride at wedding)"
Karimojong: *akinyonyo* "to anoint, to carry out clan initiation of a woman upon marriage"
Dodos: *akinyoynyo* "to initiate new bride into clan"
Nyangatom: *akinyonare* "to initiate new bride into clan"

Reconstruction Number: 117
Gloss: anger
Root: *-nyunyur-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: PNS #393
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *anyunyur* "to be angry, enraged"
Karimojong: *anyunyura* "to be angry, in a bad temper"
Toposa: *nyanyunyura* "to bear a grudge"
Teso: *anyunyura* "to be angry, annoyed,"
Ik: *inyunyuron* "to feel annoyed"
Bari: *anyunyuri* "tender-hearted, compassionate, empathetic"

Reconstruction Number: 118
Gloss: to quench thirst, to moisten
Root: *-pap
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *akitapapal* "to dampen, to make wet"
Karimojong: *akipap* "to moisten, sprinkle with water, quench thirst"
Toposa: *nyakipapare* "to make wet, to moisten"
Teso: *aipapa* "to revive someone by pouring water on"

Reconstruction Number: 119
Gloss: to be a high achiever
Root: *-pedor
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unclear, possibly related to Luo *pedhore* "ignorant"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *apedor* "ability, competence, legal right, power from position"
Turkana: *apedoret* "effort, capacity, competence, ability"
Karimojong: *apedor* "to be able to"

Nyangatom: *apedor* "to push through"
Toposa: *nyapedor* "to push through, force through"
Dodos: *apedor* "to be able to"

Reconstruction Number: 120
Gloss: *Tamarindus spp* (Tamarind Tree)
Root: *-pedurut
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Ngora etc.): *epeduru* "T indica"
Teso (Katakwi): *epeduru* "T indica"
Tesyo: *epedurut* "T indica"
Karimojong: *epeduru* "T indica"
Turkana: *epeduru* "T indica"

Reconstruction Number: 121
Gloss: visit
Root: *-pejV-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: Innovated from Proto Tung'a *-pej- "to roast over open flame" /j~y/ is retained because addition of suffix to create new word shifts phoneme to medial position
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *apejonon* "visitor" *aipejo* "to visit a far place"
Karimojong: *akipeyokin* "to visit"
Turkana: *epeyonon* "sojourner, guest, newcomer, visitor" *akipeyo* "to roast meat, to visit" *epeyonon* "exotic, far-visiting, sojourning"
Toposa: *nyapeyon* "to visit" *nyakipeyo(re)* "to host guests, to kill animal for elders"
Nyangatom: *epeiyenon* "guest"
Dodos: *epeyonon* "visitor"

Reconstruction Number: 122
Gloss: *Acacia oerferta* (White-Thorn Acacia)
Root: *-petet
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Ngora etc.): *epetet* "A oerferta"
Teso (Katakwi): *epetet* "A oerferta"
Karimojong: *epetet* "A oerferta"

Reconstruction Number: 123
Gloss: pain
Root: *-(pi)pil-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown – possible onomatopoeia

DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *epipil* "painful"
Karimojong: *epipilu* "painful"
Toposa: *epipil* "to be painful"
Teso: *apipilu* "pain"
Nyangatom: *epipil* "pain"

Reconstruction Number: 124
Gloss: ivory bangle
Root: *-po(g)k-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: Borrowed from WN
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *apokot* "bangle, bracelet"
Karimojong: *apokot* "ivory bangle"
Toposa: *nyapokodya* "ivory decoration"
Teso: *apogot* "ivory bangle"
Nyangatom: apokot "decorative legging made of white skin only"
Acholi: *pogo* "ivory armlet"
Dinka: *apiok* "ivory bracelet"

Reconstruction Number: 125
Gloss: to ensnare in a trap
Root: *-pok-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *akisipok* "to ensare in trap"
Teso: *aipok* "to be caught in a trap"
Ik: *pokes* "get stuck"

Reconstruction Number: 126
Gloss: big, big in status
Root: *-pol-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: borrowed from WN "many." This is most likely a WN borrowing and not a PEN inheritance because Tung'a and Ateker have both /p/ and /b/ word-initially. If it was inherited, there is no reason for it to have the unvoiced bilabial stop. Therefore, it is likely borrowed from WN.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *epol* "big" *apolon* "elder" *apolou* "authority"
Karimojong: *epol* "big" *apolon* "elder" *apolou* "authority"
Turkana: *epol* "big" *apolon* "elder" *apolou* "authority"
Lotuxo: *obolo* "big"
Acholi: *pol* "many, numerous"

Nuer: *pool* "numerous, specifically of small dotted clouds in the sky"
Bari: *bulo* "strong, powerful, able"
Maa: *abul* "to grow, to prosper"

Reconstruction Number: 127
Gloss: *Grewia villosa* (Mallow Raisin)
Root: *-pongaV
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Ngora etc.): *epogai* "G villosa"
Teso (Katakwi): *eponga* "G villosa"
Karimojong: *epongae* "G villosa"
Turkana: *epongae* "G villosa"

Reconstruction Number: 128
Gloss: throat
Root: *-porot-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *eporoto* "throat, voice"
Karimojong: *eporoto* "throat, voice"
Turkana: *eporoto* "wind-pipe"
Dodos: *eporoto* "throat, voice"

Reconstruction Number: 129
Gloss: to plaster a house, seal a leak
Root: *-puc
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *akipuc* "to smear, ratten, paint, plaster"
Karimojong: *akipuc* "to seal off, block up with clay (as in a leaky pot)"
Toposa: *nyakipuc l* "to polish, to sand"
Teso: *aipuc* "peace/harmony," *aipuc* "to seal completely," *aipuc* "to be peaceful"
Nyangatom: *akipuc* "to plaster (as in a granary)"

Reconstruction Number: 130
Gloss: government
Root: *-pukan
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: derived from Proto Ateker *-puk "to uncover, uncork, release, to broach a topic" because assembly and discussion-based governance "uncovered" issues. The root /puk/ produces a number of other reflexes in Ateker languages, but the only meanings shared across all languages are "government" and "opening." Another possibility is that government "fanned"

issues, because /puk/ produces reflexes in Teso and Toposa for "fanning air." The /g/ in Teso *apugan* "government" is, as best as I can determine, one of a small number of irregular /k/ > /g/ sound changes for which I have not been able to define a consistent phonetic conditioning factor. Another is *eriga* "to hunt."

DISTRIBUTIONS

Karimojong: *akipuk,* "to open, reveal, uncover," *akipuk* "to govern," *apukan* "government"

Turkana: *apukan* "government," *apukor* "broach (as in a topic), open"

Toposa: *nyakipuk* "open, uncork," *nyapukpuk* "to fan"

Teso: *aipuk* "to keep opening (books, boxes, etc.)," *aipuk* "to fan" *aipukpuk* "to palpitate," *apugan* "government"

Maasai: *apuku* "to emerge, come out," *apukur* "to cover with a lid"

Lotuxo: *nepuxita* "bellows" (this may be, but likely is not, connected to "fanning")

Reconstruction Number: 131
Gloss: ceremony of sacrifice for mourning death
Root: *-puny-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: from PEN/PT "to arrive suddenly (with surprise)" (NOTE: the below translations of "funeral" are misleading – this ceremony occurs well after burial)
DISTRIBUTIONS

Teso: *apunya* "funeral rites"

Karimojong: *apunyas* "funeral rites"

Toposa: *nyapunya* "killing of animal after someone's death"

Lango: *apuny* "death remembrance ceremony"

Turkana: *apunyaet* "funeral"

Jie: *apunyas* "funeral rites"

Dodos: *apunyes* "funeral rites"

Bari: *'bunyokin* "unexpected action"

Lotuxo: *'puny* "unexpectedly" *fany puny* "to arrive suddenly"

Maasai: *apuny* "to arrive early, to hurry"

Reconstruction Number: 132
Gloss: to listen and understand
Root: *-pup-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: Borrowed from Western Rub, using ɓ > p rule
DISTRIBUTIONS

So: *ɓuɓ* "hear, understand, obey" (also see Ehret, 2003)

Teso: *aipup* "to hear, to listen, to obey"

Toposa: *nyakipup* "to listen"

Karimojong: *akipup* "to listen, understand"

Turkana: *akipup* "to listen, understand"

Reconstruction Number: 133
Gloss: warthog

Root: *-putir
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: inherited from Proto Tung'a *-putir "warthog"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *eputir* "warthog"
Toposa: *nyeputir* "warthog"
Turkana: *eputir* "warthog"
Karimojong: *eputir* "warthog"
Maasai: *olbitir* "warthog"
Lotuxo: *afotir* "warthog"

Reconstruction Number: 134
Gloss: to winnow
Root: *-pyet
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: borrowed from Proto Lwo (not Nuer-Dinka)
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *aipyet* "to winnow"
Turkana: *akipyet* "to thresh, to winnow"
Karimojong: *akipyet* "to winnow"
Acholi: *pyeto* "to winnow, to fan"
Anywa: *pieth* "to winnow"
Shilluk: *pyeth* "act of sifting dura up and down in a sieve"
Luo: *piedho* "to winnow grain"
Lango: *pyeto* "to sift, to winnow"

Reconstruction Number: 135
Gloss: to beat with a stick
Root: *-ram
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: from Proto Tung'a *-ram- "to beat with a stick"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Nyangatom: *akiram* "to drive cattle, to beat"
Toposa: *nyakiram* "to beat, to drive cattle"
Karimojong: *akiram* "to drive cattle, to beat"
Teso: *airam* "to beat, thresh"
Lotuxo: *arama* "to fight with sticks"

Reconstruction Number: 136
Gloss: to fish by cutting our grassy area at shoreline and exposing fish to spear
Root: *-re-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology:
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *aire* "to fish by cutting our grassy area at shoreline and exposing fish to spear"

Turkana: *akirege* "to fish by cutting our grassy area at shoreline and exposing fish to spear"

Reconstruction Number: 137
Gloss: home compound
Root: *-re
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *ere* "home"
Karimojong: *ere* "home, village"
Dodos: *ere* "home, village"
Turkana: *ere* "home, village"

Reconstruction Number: 138
Gloss: equal (size, height, etc.)
Root: *-rian-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *akitirian* "to align, to equalize," *arian* "parity, equality"
Karimojong: *erian* "equal," *akiirian* "to cause to become similar"
Toposa: *nyakitiriyan* "to equalize," *eriyan* "equal in size or quantity"
Teso: *aitiirian* "to make equal, level," *arian* "equality in size or length," *arian* "to be equal"

Reconstruction Number: 139
Gloss: to encircle, to hunt by encircling
Root: *-rik-(a) OR -rig
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: Option 1: semantic innovation on borrowed word from WN in S Sudan prior to Ateker migration south. "crowding in, packing tightly" was used to describe the effect of this hunting technique, which was then innovated upon to make a general word "encircle" (or, this was already in the sense, as per Acholi "to wrap around" Pros: explains question of voiced/unvoiced in Ateso/Karimojong and unusual verb prefix /e-/ in "to hunt" gloss. Cons: no reflexes of "to hunt" meaning in WN means this would have to have been borrowed and then innovated (and then again innovated for the ceremonial meaning of airiget/akiriket, which is proto-Ateker because of Ateso sound change). That's assuming lot of steps. Option 2: borrowed directly from Rub with all meanings intact. Pros: explains all semantics, and Rub societies were expert hunters so it is reasonable that this hunting technique would be borrowed by migrating Ateker. Also, it is plausible that Rub speakers made this innovation, because other PNS languages also did. Finally, distribution in Ik and Kadama indicates antiquity of meaning. Cons: does not explain Ateso voicing (but still explains unusual vowel prefix) and it is highly plausible that the strong correlation of meaning between Rub and Karimojong is a result of borrowing INTO rub, which is widespread reflecting Karimojong's dominant social position. Option 3: internal innovation directly from PNS root, in conjunction with other "tie up" gloss described above. Pros: all of these languages are innovating on the same PNS root, so this would be possible. Cons: no other EN reflexes of any semantic similarity, does not explain Ateso voicing

or unusual vowel prefix, still requires triple-semantic innovation only in Ateker. Option 3b. Same, except "airiget" was borrowed into Katakwi Ateso later. Pros: explains lack of airiget reflex elsewhere in Teso (but doesn't explain Lango reflex) Cons: strongly suggested against by regular sound correspondence for dropping "k" in verb prefix. Note that Knighton (87) leans towards the hunting origin.

DISTRIBUTIONS

Teso: *eriga* "to hunt large game by encircling"; (Katakwi only) *airiget* "circle of elders"

Karimojong: *erika* "to hunt large game; to hunt (generic)"; *akiriket* "circle of elders"; *akirik* "to surround, besiege"

Turkana*:* *erika* "to hunt"; *akiriket* "circle of elders"; *akirikare* "to surround, besiege"

Ik: *irik* "to hunt, to round up animals"

Kadama: *torik* "to form a circle when hunting or for celebration"

Dholuo: *rigo/riko* "to squeeze together"

Nuer: *riɣe* "to crowd in, pack tightly"

Lango: *riko* "to encircle, to place things close to one another, to furnish something with a border"

Acholi: *riyo* "to round, to wrap around"

Kalenjin: *rik* "to come near"; *rikta* "to go near"

Reconstruction Number: 140

Gloss: adze

Root: *-rokon

Protolanguage: Ateker

Etymology: possibly a shortened (physically and linguistically) form of the morokon (spear haft) borrowed from Surmic

DISTRIBUTIONS

Teso: *erokon* "chisel"

Karimojong: *erokon* "adze"

Turkana: *elamai* "adze, chisel"

Reconstruction Number: 141

Gloss: path, to spy

Root: *-rot-

Protolanguage: Ateker

Etymology: from WN *rot(o) "to search for"

DISTRIBUTIONS

Teso: *erot* "path," *airot* "to spy, to reconnoiter" airot "

Karimojong: *erot* "path," *akirot* "to spy"

Dodos: *erot* "path" *akirot* "to spy"

Toposa: *nyerot* "path," nyakirot "to spy, to scout"

Jie: *erot* "path," *akirot* "to spy"

Turkana: *erot* "path," *akirot* "to spy, to reconnoiter"

Nyangatom: *erot* "path," *akirot* "to spy, to reconnoiter"

Acholi: *aroto* "to search for, investigate, explore"

Lango: *aroto* "to inspect"

Reconstruction Number: 142
Gloss: youthful boy/young man
Root: *-sap-at
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: most likely inherited from Proto Nilotic root meaning "to grow," likely related to "fat" as a noun. There are also connotations for "deception" that must date to Proto Nilotic (b/c it is shared between Shilluk and Maasai), but rather there is any connection is unclear.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *esapat* "boy"
Turkana: *esapat* "boy"
Karimojong: *esapat* "boy"
Toposa: *esapat* "boy," *asapae* "fatty tissue around intestines"
Nyangatom: *esapat* "boy," *asapae* "fatty tissue around intestines"
Kalenjin: *isap* "to grow"
Maasai: *sapuk* "to grow big, fat" *isapo* "loins" *asap* "to deceive"
Shilluk: *thap* "deception"

Reconstruction Number: 143
Gloss: pack-saddle
Root: *-saaja-Vt
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: from *-ja- "to collect and take away," saa- prefix is unclear.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *asajait* "pack-saddle" *aija* "to collect, to take"
Karimojong: *asaajait* "spring of water" akijaar "to receive (in the hand)"
Nyangatom: *asajait* "pack-saddle"
Turkana: *asaajait* "pack-saddle" *akijaun* "to receive"

Reconstruction Number: 144
Gloss: to search
Root: *-sak-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: from Southern Nilotic *-sak- "to search"; possibly borrowed into PT
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *akisak* "to search, to want, to look for, to demand"
Karimojong: *akisak* "to look for, to search"
Toposa: *nyakisak* "to look for, to search for"
Sabaot: *sakaas* "to hunt," *sakan* "to look for," *sakay* "to find"
Pokot: *keesakaas* "to look for, to search for, to hunt"
Maasai: *asak* "to approach stealthily, to ambush"

Reconstruction Number: 145
Gloss: cliff
Root: *-se
Protolanguage: Ateker

Etymology: Note that I am suggesting Tesyo -swi is cognate with Karimojong -se because of a number of added /w/ sounds in Tesyo that change later vowels, including "chyme" ngikujit > ngikwijit. There seems to have been a sporadic vowel shift following the introduction of medial /w/ in Proto Teso, but I haven't pinned down any regular correspondences.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *aose* "cliff"
Karimojong: *aese* "cliff"
Tesyo: *eswi "cliff"*

Reconstruction Number: 146
Gloss: to select
Root: *-se
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *akise* "to discriminate, select, choose"
Karimojong: *aseun* "to choose"
Toposa: *nyakise* "to choose, select, pick out"
Teso: *aise* "to pick out, choose, select"
Nyangatom: etoil "throat"

Reconstruction Number: 147
Gloss: donkey
Root: *-sigiria
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: from borrowed from early Proto Surmic into both Tung'a and Proto Kalenjin (per Ehret, does not originate from PSN), note lack of prefix in Surmic languages, indicating Surmic-speakers did not borrow this word.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *esigiria* "donkey"
Karimojong: *esigiria* "donkey"
Turkana: *esigiria* "donkey"
Nyangatom: *esikirya* "donkey"
Lotuxo: *nasigiria* "donkey"
Sabaot: *sikiryeet* "donkey"
Didinga: *sigir* "donkey"
Laarim: *thigireec* "donkey"
Kalenjin: *sigiriet* "donkey"

Reconstruction Number: 148
Gloss: ritual feast with supernatural consequences
Root: *-suban
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: from Ateker *-sub- "to create, to make, first cause"; earlier etymology unclear, but because of initial /s/ cannot date earlier than Tung'a. Possibly borrowed from areal spread of root

which is also found here: (So) *sub* "to follow" and (Sabaot) *sub* "be next, stand behind, come after, follow." Also in So as "grave."

DISTRIBUTIONS

Teso: *asuban* "to perform a ritual, to sacrifice," asubun "to create, to mold," Lokasuban "God, the Creator" (Catholic Missionaries)

Karimojong: *ngasuban* "feast banquet," *akisub* "to create, to repair, to bewitch," *asubakin* "to put things in order"

Nyangatom: *akisub* "to make, to create," *asubanot* "magical thing"

Turkana: *asubanit* "ritual feast" *asubanot* "witchcraft," *akisub* "to create, to make, to perform witchcraft against," *asubakin* "to accomplish, to rehabilitate, to repair"

Toposa: *nyakisub* "to make, to cast a spell," *nyekesuban* "maker, creator, sorcerer" nyasubakin "to repair"

So: *sub* "to follow"

Sobaot: *sub* "to be next, to stand behind, to come after, to follow"

Reconstruction Number: 149
Gloss: root
Root: *-ta-kakor-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: From EN *-kokor "root". -ta- is a defunct EN infix, possibly with past tense connotation.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Tesyo: *atakagor* "root"
Karimojong: *ataagoriot* "root"
Jie: *ataagorete* "root"
Kakwa: *kokurityo* "root"
Bari: *kokorite* "root"

Reconstruction Number: 150
Gloss: bread, thick porridge
Root: *-tap-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: from PT "cereal, generic"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *atap* "bread"
Dodos: *nyatap* "bread"
Toposa: *nyatapa* "thick porridge"
Turkana: *atap* "stiff porridge"
Nyangatom: *atap* "thick porridge"
Maasai: *en-tapa* "millet, bulrush, grain, flour, dough, maize"

Reconstruction Number: 151
Gloss: heifer
Root: *-taok-
Protolanguage: Ateker

Etymology: Inherited from Proto Tung'a *-tagw (Vossen 1982, 456)
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *atak* "heifer"
Karimojong: *ataok* "heifer"
Turkana: *ataok* "heifer"

Reconstruction Number: 152
Gloss: blacksmith
Root: *-tat
Protolanguage: Ateker (possibly later)
Etymology: from Southern Lwo *tat/tet "blacksmith" (see Ehret, NS prehistory pg. 47). May have been borrowed from Lwo more recently, because not found in LNA.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *ekatatan* "blacksmith"
Karimojong: *eketataan* "blacksmith," *atataun* "to forge"
Dinka: *thath* "to work iron"
Acholi: *latet* "blacksmith"
Labwor: *atat* "blacksmith"

Reconstruction Number: 153
Gloss: open land; political territorial division
Root: *-tel-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: from EN "open land/conquered land"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Karimojong: *ekitela* "territorial section, sandy stretch of land"
Jie: *ekitela* "territorial section"
Nyangatom: *ekitela* "territorial section, open grass plain, sandy ridge"
Teso: *eitela* "parish (colonial), dry land between swamps"
Bari: *-tel* "conquer"
Lotuxo: *natel* "uninhabited or open country"

Reconstruction Number: 154
Gloss: root/branch
Root: *-ten
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: From Proto Tung'a *-ten "root/branch"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *atenu* "branch"
Turkana: *ateni* "root, branch"
Karimojong: *atenit* "branch"
Toposa: *nyateni* "root, branch"
Jie: *atenit* "branch"
Maasai: *entanai* "root"

Reconstruction Number: 155

Gloss: bride/groom
Root: *-teran
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: literally /te/ - /ra/ - /n/ "she (or he) who causes fruitfulness" from Proto Ateker *ra "to plant or bear fruit"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *ateran* "bride" *eteran* "groom"
Karimojong: *ateran* "bride" *eteran* "groom"
Toposa: *nyateran* "bride" *nyeteran* "groom"
Teso: *ateran* "bride" *eteran* "groom"

Reconstruction Number: 156
Gloss: voice
Root: *-toil
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *etoil* "voice, tone, sound"
Karimojong: *etoil* "throat, voice"
Toposa: *etoil* "voice, throat"
Teso: *etoil* "ghost"
Nyangatom: *etoil* "throat"

Reconstruction Number: 157
Gloss: morning star, bright star
Root: *-top
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: Borrowed from Rub *toɓ* "star." Direction confirmed using Ehret's ɓ > p rule.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *etop* "star"
Karimojong: *etop* "star, morning star, comet"
Teso: *etop* "morning star"
Toposa: *nyetop* "morning star, planet"
Nyangatom: *etop* "morning star"
So: *toɓ* "star"

Reconstruction Number: 158
Gloss: *Commiphora campestris*
Root: *-topojo
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Ngora etc.): *etopojo* "C campestris"
Turkana: *etopoco* "C campestris"

Reconstruction Number: 159

Gloss: mother
Root: *toto
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: innovated from Tung'a *-to "mother"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *toto* "mother"
Turkana: *toto* "mother"
Karimojong: *toto* "mother"
Maasai: *ngoto* "mother of"

Reconstruction Number: 160
Gloss: gourd bottle
Root: *-tuo
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *etuo* "gourd"
Turkana: *etwo* "gourd, flask"
Karimojong: *etwo* "gourd, bottle"
Nyangatom: *etiyo* "gourd, round, bottle-shaped calabash"
Toposa: *nyetwo, nyetyo* "gourd-bottle"
Dodos: *nyetio* "gourd"

Reconstruction Number: 161
Gloss: trough
Root: *-tub(w)a
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: from PNS tub "wooden bowl" (Ehret, #764) or Rub (Ik) *itúɓ* "water trough";
implosive /ɓ/ explains alternate /bw/ ending in LNA
Teso: *atuba* "wooden trough, manger"
Turkana: *atubwa* "boat, bowl, canoe, water-trough, tub"
Karimojong: *atuba* "wooden bowl, trough, boat"
Nyangatom: *atubwa* "boat, wooden vessel of any size"
Toposa: *nyatubwa* "trough, boat"
Ik: *itúɓ* "water trough"

Reconstruction Number: 162
Gloss: to heap, to pile up, to collect together (esp. people)
Root: *-tuk-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: from Ik *ituk* "to heap"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Nyangatom: *atuket* "meeting place"
Toposa: *nyatukokin* "to pile up," *nyatukot* "pile, heap, meeting, assembly"
Teso: *atukokin* "to gather," atukot "assembly, committee, heap, pile"

Tesyo: *atukit* "granary made of reeds"
Turkana: *atuk* "meeting," *atukokin* "to heap, to gather," *atukot* "assembly, conference,"
Ik: *ituketes* "to heap"

Reconstruction Number: 163
Gloss: to collect together
Root: *-udak-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Nyangatom: *akuudakin* "to gather, assemble"
Karimojong: *akiudakin* "to drive cattle to enclosure, to gather together, to assemble"
Teso: *ainyudakin* "to put things close together"
Turkana: *akuudakin* "to heap, to enclose, to assemble, to gather, to centralize, to comprise"

Reconstruction Number: 164
Gloss: to generate, produce children
Root: *-uri-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *aurianakin* "to bear (children) for, to impregnate"
Karimojong: *auri* "to give birth," *aurikin* "to impregnate"
Turkana: *aurikin* "to impregnate"
Toposa: *nyaurere* "to get pregnant (esp. illegitimately)"
Nyangatom: *aurianet* "social generation, generation-set"

Reconstruction Number: 165
Gloss: to sing
Root: *-wor-e
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *aiworo* "to call for somebody"
Turkana: *aeore* "to sing"
Karimojong: *aeore* "to sing"

Reconstruction Number: 166
Gloss: cow dung
Root: *-wo(a)r-et
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: Inherited from Proto Tung'a *-woro (Vossen 1982, 457)
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *aaret* "cow dung"
Turkana: *aoret* "cow dung"

Karimojong: *aoret* "cow dung"
Toposa: *nyaworet* "cow dung"

Reconstruction Number: 167
Gloss: kraal
Root: *-(w)uyy-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: final /yy/ changes to /j/ in Teso
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *awuj, auj* "kraal"
Karimojong: *auwi, awi* "kraal"
Turkana: *awi* "home, settlement"
Toposa: *nyawiye* "seasonal grazing settlement"
Nyangatom: *awuyi* "home, settlement"

Reconstruction Number: 168
Gloss: to shake, to move far
Root: *-yek-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: borrowed from Nuer-Dinka (Note: not found in LNA). Dated to Proto Ateker because of loss of /y/ in Karimojong and geographical distance between Teso and Nuer-Dinka.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *aiyek* "to shake a rattle, to move beyond reach"
Karimojong: *akiek* "to go in advance, to shake a gourd by a diviner"
Jie: *akiekiek* "to divine with rattles"
Dinka: *ayek* "to shake, to move"
Nuer: *yiek, yieɣ* "to shake the gourd with pebbles to call up the spirit of the dead"
Shilluk: *yek* "to shake the gourd" (possibly borrowed from Nuer-Dinka)

Reconstruction Number: 169
Gloss: to hear
Root: *-(y)irar-
Protolanguage: Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Pallisa): *aiyirar* "to hear"
Tesyo: *akiirar* "to hear"
Toposa: *nyakiirar* "to hear"
Karimojong: *akiirar* "to hear"
Turkana: *akiirar* "to hear"

Reconstruction Number: 170
Gloss: honey, bee
Root: *-(y)u
Protolanguage: Ateker

Etymology: inherited from PEN. Because there was no word-initial /s/ in PEN, various modern prefixes including an /s/ sound do not date to the PEN period and would not have been inherited by the Ateker. This root is reconstructed to Proto Nilo-Saharan by Ehret, #1507

DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *ao* "bee"
Karimojong: *ao* "honey, bee"
Turkana: *aoo* "honey, bee"
Toposa: *nyau* "honey, bee"
Kakwa: *siwu* "honey"
Lotuxo: *nesyu* "honey"
Lopit: *isio* "honey"

Proto Teso Reconstructions

Reconstruction Number: 1
Gloss: shrine, diviner's hut
Root: *-bila
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: Borrowed from S Lwo. Also borrowed into Jie, and Madi
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *abila* "shrine, mudfish hole"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *abila* "shrine"
Teso (Pallisa): *abila* "shrine"
Tesyo: *abila* "shrine"
Lango: *abila* "shrine"
Acholi: *abila* "ancestral shrine entry"
Luo: *abila* "small hut"
Jie: *abila* "shrine"
Madi: *abilaa* "shrine used for 'faking' offerings to the ancestral spirits"

Reconstruction Number: 2
Gloss: to claim a debt
Root: *-bura
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: from Ateker *-bura "to quarrel"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *aibura* "to claim a debt," *aiburakin* "to become anxious"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *aibura* "to claim a debt," *aiburakin* "to become anxious"
Teso (Pallisa): *aibura* "to claim a debt," *aiburakin* "to become anxious"
Tesyo: *aibura* "to claim a debt," *aiburakin* "to become anxious"
Karimojong: *akibura* "to quarrel"
Turkana: *aburare* "brawl, dispute, quarrel"

Reconstruction Number: 3
Gloss: a single, stand-alone new home for a new family (positive connotation)
Root: *-boot

Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: derived from Proto Ateker *-boot "isolated hut"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *eboot* stand-alone new home for a new family (positive connotation)
Teso (Ngora etc.): *eboot* stand-alone new home for a new family (positive connotation)
Teso (Pallisa): *eboot* stand-alone new home for a new family (positive connotation)
Tesyo: *eboot* stand-alone new home for a new family (positive connotation)

Reconstruction Number: 4
Gloss: river/stream
Root: *-cilet
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: from aicil "to tear (cut) a path, cut mark in ground"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *ecilet* "river/stream"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *ecilet* "river/stream"
Teso (Pallisa): *ecilet* "river/stream"
Tesyo: *ecilet* "river/stream"

Reconstruction Number: 5
Gloss: Guinea Grass (*Panicum maximum)*
Root: *-dinyo
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: Borrowed from a Southern Lwo language
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *edinyo* "Guinea Grass"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *edinyo* "Guinea Grass"
Teso (Pallisa): *edinyo* "Guinea Grass"
Tesyo: *edinyo* "Guinea Grass"
Luo: *edinyo* "Guinea Grass"

Reconstruction Number: 6
Gloss: Elephant Grass (*Pennisetum purpureum*)
Root: *-gada
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: Borrowed from a Southern Lwo language
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *egada* "Elephant Grass"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *egada* "Elephant Grass"
Teso (Pallisa): *egada* "Elephant Grass"
Tesyo: *egada* "Elephant Grass"
Luo: *egada* "Elephant Grass"

Reconstruction Number: 7
Gloss: enemy
Root: *-ka-surup

Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: Possibly from "milk left in udder for calf to re-suckle?" Replaces *emoit* which is restricted to "foreigner"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *lokasurup* "enemy"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *lokasurup* "enemy"
Teso (Pallisa): *lokasurup* "enemy"
Tesyo: *lokasurup* "enemy"

Reconstruction Number: 8
Gloss: speaker (leader) of group
Root: *-keraban
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: from Proto Teso *rab "to speak" (*rab etymology is undetermined)
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *eraban* "speaker of group," *airab* "to discuss, to debate," *airabis* "local parliament"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *eraban* "speaker of group," *airab* "to discuss, to debate," *airabis* "local parliament"
Teso (Pallisa): *eraban* "speaker of group," *airab* "to discuss, to debate," *airabis* "local parliament"
Tesyo: *ekeraban* "speaker of group"

Reconstruction Number: 9
Gloss: all
Root: *kere
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: Borrowed from So into Ateso. So cosmology conceptualizes all things in the universe as "things of God (Belgen)" or "things of the earth (Bokotan)". This reflex only exists in Ateso.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *kere* "all"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *kere* "all"
Teso (Pallisa): *kere* "all"
Tesyo: *kere* "all" (Note: Vossen records *kijokis* for "all" in Tesyo)
So: (Heine, 1988) *kere belgen* "things of God"; *kere Bokotan* "things of the earth"

Reconstruction Number: 10
Gloss: prosperity
Root: *-ke-rian-ut
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: causative prefix /ke-/ plus Proto Ateker *-rian "equal," so literally "thing that causes equality."
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *akerianut* "prosperity"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *akerianut* "prosperity"

Teso (Pallisa): *akerianut* "prosperity"
Tesyo: *akerianut* "prosperity"

Reconstruction Number: 11
Gloss: Sibling
Root: *-ki-nac
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: From Proto Ateker *-nac* "to pass by, avoid"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *o/inac* "sibling," *ainac* "to avoid someone or something"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *o/inac* "sibling," *ainac* "to avoid someone or something"
Tesyo: *o/kinac* "sibling," *akinac* "to avoid someone or something"
Toposa: *nyakinac* "to pass by, to pass close to,"
Turkana: *akinac* "to meander, diverge, avoid, escape"
Karimojong: *akinacar* "to bypass"

Reconstruction Number: 12
Gloss: to borrow or lend
Root: *-kop
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: From Proto Ateker "to snatch away"
DISTRIBUTIONS
All Teso: *aikopa* "to borrow money," *aikopaar* "to lend money out," *aikopaikin* "to lend money to," *aikopakin* "to hand one, to pass on," *aikop* "to snatch away (as in eagle of chicks)"

Reconstruction Number: 13
Gloss: plot for cultivation; act of cultivating
Root: *-kor-
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: from Proto Ateker *-kor-* "to distribute, divide up shares" – cultivation plots were distributed
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *akor* "to cultivate," *akorio* "allocation, distribution," *akorisit* "cultivated land"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *akor* "to cultivate," *akorio* "allocation, distribution," *akorisit* "cultivated land"
Teso (Pallisa): *akor* "to cultivate," *akorio* "allocation, distribution," *akorisit* "cultivated land"
Tesyo: *akor* "to cultivate," *akorio* "allocation, distribution," *akorisit* "cultivated land"

Reconstruction Number: 14
Gloss: tail
Root: *-kori
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *ekori* "tail"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *ekori* "tail"

Teso (Pallisa): *ekori* "tail"
Tesyo: *ekuri* "tail"

Reconstruction Number: 15
Gloss: ancestor spirits
Root: *-kwamin
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: from Proto Ateker *-kwamin "wind"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *ekwamin* "ancestor spirit"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *ekwamin* "ancestor spirit"
Teso (Pallisa): *ekwamin* "ancestor spirit"
Tesyo: *ekwamin* "ancestor spirit"

Reconstruction Number: 16
Gloss: heavy (in weight)
Root: *-langir
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: from Proto Ateker *-lang- "thick (porridge, etc.)
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *elangir* "heavy (weight)"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *elangir* "heavy (weight)"
Teso (Pallisa): *elangir* "heavy (weight)"
Tesyo: *elangir* "heavy (weight)"

Reconstruction Number: 17
Gloss: envy
Root: *-lili-
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: innovated from Ateker *-lili- "anger"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *ailili* "to covet something with the intention of stealing it," *aliliikin* "to envy"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *ailili* "to covet something with the intention of stealing it," *aliliikin* "to envy"
Teso (Pallisa): *ailili* "to covet something with the intention of stealing it," *aliliikin* "to envy"
Tesyo: *akilili* "to covet something with the intention of stealing it," *aliliikin* "to envy"
Karimojong: *alilit* "to be angry"
Toposa: *nyalilit* "anger"
Maasai: *elisa* "anger"

Reconstruction Number: 18
Gloss: long fishing spear
Root: *-macar
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: from the implement of the same name used for branding cattle (perhaps it was sharpened), "cattle brand" meaning predates "fishing spear," as confirmed by Maasai reflex /c/ > /sh/ sound change

DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *emacar* "fishing spear,**"**
Tesyo: *emacar* "fishing spear"
Turkana: *emacar* "cattle brand"
Toposa: *nyemacar* "cattle brand"
Karimojong: *emacar* "cattle brand"
Maasai: *amishir* "to brand cattle"

Reconstruction Number: 19
Gloss: to marry
Root: *-many
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: from Proto Ateker *-many "to have sex with OR to dwell together"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *aimany* "to marry"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *aimany* "to marry"
Teso (Pallisa): *aimany* "to marry"
Tesyo: *akimany* "to marry"

Reconstruction Number: 20
Gloss: banana plant
Root: *-mugogot
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: From Great Lakes Bantu source
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *amugogot* "banana plant"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *amugogot* "banana plant"
Teso (Pallisa): *amugogot* "banana plant"
Tesyo: *amugogot* "banana plant"
Runyoro: *omugogo* "banana stem"
Lusoga: *lugogo* "banana plant fiber/bark"

Reconstruction Number: 21
Gloss: animal hide for wearing
Root: *-mukule
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: from Proto Ateker *-muk "to cover" NOTE: meaning has extended to mean skin generally in some idiolects
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *emukule* "hide (worn)"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *emukule* "hide (worn)"
Teso (Pallisa): *emukule* "hide (worn)"
Tesyo: *emukule* "hide (worn)"

Reconstruction Number: 22
Gloss: friend

Root: *-pap-er(o)
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: innovated from Ateker *-pap "to provide water to another, to quench thirst"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *e/apapero* "friend," *aipapa* "to revive someone by pouring water on him"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *e/apapero* "friend," *aipapa* "to revive someone by pouring water on him"
Teso (Pallisa): *e/apapero* "friend," *aipapa* "to revive someone by pouring water on him"
Tesyo: *e/apapero* "friend," *aipapa* "to revive someone by pouring water on him"
Karimojong: *akipap* "to moisten, to sprinkle water on, to quench thirst"
Turkana: *epapal* "wet, moist, soaked"

Reconstruction Number: 23
Gloss: *Grewia tenax*
Root: *-paris
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: Unclear
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *eparis* "Grewia tenax"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *eparis* "Grewia tenax"
Teso (Pallisa): *eparis* "Grewia tenax"
Tesyo: *eparis* "Grewia tenax"

Reconstruction Number: 24
Gloss: whirlwind
Root: *-pipiru
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: innovated from Ateker *-pipi "to cause pain"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *etapipiro* "whirlwind"
Tesyo: *etapiro* "whirlwind"

Reconstruction Number: 25
Gloss: person with toxic and selfish pride
Root: *-poget
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: innovated from Ateker *-pog "to boast." The custom of naming ivory armlets representing wealth (a widespread regional practice) with the root /pog/ may have originated with the early Teso, and then been borrowed by Jie and Acholi-speakers.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *epoget* "person with toxic and selfish pride," *apog* "to boast," *apogot* "bangle"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *epoget* "person with toxic and selfish pride"
Teso (Pallisa): *epoget* "person with toxic and selfish pride"
Tesyo: *epoget* "person with toxic and selfish pride"
Turkana: *apogakin* "to exclaim"
Karimojong: *akipog* "to boast"
Jie: *apogot* "armlet"

Acholi: *apogo* "ivory armlet, elephant tusk"

Reconstruction Number: 26
Gloss: to make peace
Root: *-puc
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: from Proto-Ateker *-puc "to plaster over a house"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Usuku): *aipuc* "peace/harmony," *aipuc* "to seal completely," *aipuc* "to be peaceful"
Teso (Pallisa): *aipuc* "peace/harmony," *aipuc* "to seal completely," *aipuc* "to be peaceful"
Teso (Ngora): *aipuc* "peace/harmony," *aipuc* "to seal completely," *aipuc* "to be peaceful"
Tesyo: *akipuc* "to make peace"

Reconstruction Number: 27
Gloss: banana variety
Root: *taget
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: Borrowing from Central Kenya Bantu source
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *etaget* "banana plant"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *etaget* "banana plant"
Teso (Pallisa): *etaget* "banana plant"
Tesyo: *etaget* "banana plant"
Kikuyu: *mageth* "unripe banana"
Meru: *motagato* "large banana"

Reconstruction Number: 28
Gloss: to possess (as in a spirit)
Root: *-rum-it
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: from Proto Ateker *-rum "to inherit"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *airumit* "to possess spiritually," *airumun* "to inherit"
Tesyo: *akirumit* "to possess spiritually," *akirumun* "to inherit"
Karimojong: *akirum* "to inherit"
Turkana: *akirum* "to inherit"

Reconstruction Number: 29
Gloss: honey
Root: *-sik*
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: from Rub (Ik) *ts'ik* "honey"; note that in Proto Ateker, "honey" and "honey bee" used them same word, and the semantic narrowing represents a Proto Teso innovation.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Nuclear Teso: *esik "honey"*
Tesyo: *esik "honey"*

Ik: *ts'ik* "honey"

Reconstruction Number: 30
Gloss: communal work for beer party
Root: *-tai
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *etai* "communal work for beer party"
Tesyo: *ekitait* "communal work for beer party"

Reconstruction Number: 31
Gloss: process for initiation women and new babies into patriclans
Root: *-tal
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: derived from Proto Ateker *-tal "custom, rite (generic)"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *etal* "process for initiation women and new babies into patriclans
Teso (Ngora etc.): *etal* "process for initiation women and new babies into patriclans
Teso (Pallisa): *etal* "process for initiation women and new babies into patriclans
Tesyo: *etal* "process for initiation women and new babies into patriclans

Reconstruction Number: 32
Gloss: boy
Root: *-telepat
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: literally, "he who causes milking (of cows)" – meaning is unclear, could just be a task for young boys
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *etelepat* "boy"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *etelepat* "boy"
Teso (Pallisa): *etelepat* "boy"
Tesyo: *etelepat* "boy"

Reconstruction Number: 33
Gloss: grave
Root: *-tes
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: Borrowed from So into Ateso. Today in So, *tes* refers specifically graves spoken of with regard to the Kenisan cult. Note that in Ngora and Pallisa, *elibo* (borrowed from North Nyanza *-limbo*) is used predominately for "grave" and *ates* is restricted to "dead body.") In Ngora and Tesyo, *ailit* is used for the grave hole without a body in it.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *ates* "corpse, grave"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *ates* "corpse"
Teso (Pallisa): *ates* "corpse"
Tesyo: *ates* "corpse, grave"

So: *tes* "grave, as discussed by members of Kenisan cult"
Ik: *tas* "grave"

Reconstruction Number: 34
Gloss: drum (for music)
Root: *-tenus
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: borrowing from So *tenus* "beehive, drum"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *atenus* "drum"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *atenus* "drum"
Teso (Pallisa): *atenus* "drum"
Tesyo: *atenus* "drum"

Reconstruction Number: 35
Gloss: ghost
Root: *-toil
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: from Proto Ateker *-toil "voice"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *etoil* "wraith, ghost"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *etoil* "wraith, ghost"
Teso (Pallisa): *etoil* "wraith, ghost"
Tesyo: *etoil* "wraith, ghost"

Reconstruction Number: 36
Gloss: to build a strong home (as of a newly married man)
Root: *-wo
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: From Proto Ateker *-wo "to stand up/stand firm"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *aibwo* "to build a strong home, to stand firm"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *aibwo* "to build a strong home, to stand firm"
Teso (Pallisa): *aigwo* "to build a strong home, to stand firm"
Tesyo: *akiwo* "to build a strong home, to stand firm"

Reconstruction Number: 37
Gloss: age-set initiation
Root: *-wor-one-
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: from Proto Ateker *-wor "to wail (esp. in mourning)" because age-sets were directly linked to the remembering the dead.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Ngora etc.): *egworone* "age-set/initiation"
Teso (Pallisa): *egworone* "age-set/initiation"
Tesyo: *ekiworone* "age-set/initiation"

Lango: *eworo* "age-set/initiation"

Reconstruction Number: 38
Gloss: named age-group of men
Root: *-woye
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: from Proto-Ateker "to sing"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Usuku): *ewoe* "age-set"
Teso (Pallisa): *egworone* "age-set/initiation"
Tesyo: *ewoye* "age-set"

Reconstruction Number: 39
Gloss: to pay bridewealth
Root: *-yit
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: innovated from Ateker *-yit "to drip"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *aiyit* "to pay bridewealth," *aiyit* "to leak, to trickle"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *aiyit* "to pay bridewealth," *aiyit* "to leak, to trickle"
Teso (Pallisa): *aiyit* "to pay bridewealth," *aiyit* "to leak, to trickle"
Tesyo: *akiyit* "to pay bridewealth," *akiyit* "to leak, to trickle"

Reconstruction Number: 40
Gloss: to address (a group)
Root: *-yog-
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: Borrowed from Luganda *-yogera* "to address, talk to" and forming modern Ateso *aiyogan* "to greet" and *yoga*! "greetings!" OR irregular sound change from *ejoka*!
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *aiyogan* "to greet" *yoga*! "greetings!"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *aiyogan* "to greet" *yoga*! "greetings!"
Teso (Pallisa): *aiyogan* "to greet" *yoga*! "greetings!"
Tesyo: *aiyogan* "to greet" *yoga*! "greetings!"
Luganda: *-yogera* "to address, to talk to"

Reconstruction Number: 41
Gloss: fear
Root: *-yong
Protolanguage: Teso
Etymology: Possibly borrowed from a Southern Nilotic languages. Does not displace Proto Ateker *-kurian.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *aiyong* "to fear"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *aiyong* "to fear"
Teso (Pallisa): *aiyong* "to fear"

Tesyo: *akiyong* "to fear"
Sobaot: *-yong'oos* "very fierce looking"

Proto Kyoga-Bisina Teso Reconstructions

Reconstruction Number: 1
Gloss: famine
Root: *-beli
Protolanguage: Kyoga-Bisina Teso
Etymology: From *aibel* "to break apart" NOTE in Tesyo *ebeli* means "selfishness"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *ebeli* "famine"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *ebeli* "famine"
Teso (Pallisa): *ebeli* "famine"

Reconstruction Number: 2
Gloss: fish
Root: *-garia
Protolanguage: Kyoga-Bisina Teso
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *agaria* "fish"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *agaria* "fish"
Teso (Pallisa): *agaria* "fish"

Reconstruction Number: 3
Gloss: to milk
Root: *-(k)i-cil
Protolanguage: Kyoga-Bisina Teso
Etymology: Unclear. Sound correspondences with Maasai *ashil* "to check, select, choose carefully" and Karimojong/Turkana *akicil* "to tear, rend"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *aicil* "to milk"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *aicil* "to milk"
Teso (Pallisa): *aicil* "milk"

Reconstruction Number: 4
Gloss: grave
Root: *-libo
Protolanguage: Kyoga-Bisina Teso
Etymology: borrowed from North Nyanza Bantu *-limbo* "cemetery." Except for in Pallisa, Teso has no /mb/ consonant cluster.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *elibo* "grave"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *elibo* "grave"
Teso (Pallisa): *elimbo* "grave"

Luganda: *limbo* "cemetery"
Lusoga: *eirimbo* "cemetery"

Reconstruction Number: 5
Gloss: forest, wild forest
Root: *-magoro
Protolanguage: Kyoga-Bisina Teso
Etymology: unknown, but not found in Tesyo
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *amagoro* "forest, wild forest"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *amagoro* "forest, wild forest"
Teso (Pallisa): *amagoro* "forest, wild forest"

Reconstruction Number: 6
Gloss: mountain with sharp cliff, cliff
Root: *-rongat
Protolanguage: Kyoga-Bisina Teso
Etymology: from Ateso *airong* "to form clouds, darken (of sky)" presumably because clouds form around mountains. Whether this derives from *-rion* "black" is unclear, but no other reflexes in any languages searched exist. Lent from Teso into Dodos as "cliff" only (not reconstructed as Proto Ateker because it does not appear anywhere else and is unknown in Tororo).
DISTRIBUTIONS
Dodos: *erongat* "cliff"
Teso (Katakwi): *erongat* "cliff"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *erongat* "cliff"
Teso (Pallisa): *erongat* "cliff"

Proto Nuclear Teso Reconstructions

Reconstruction Number: 1
Gloss: to scatter in all directions (of people)
Root: *aisyarakin(a)*
Protolanguage: Nuclear Teso
Etymology: reflexive form of Ateker verb *a(k)i-sya* "to begin (esp. for the first time)". Note that in one stage of Teso, this intransitive verb also created a transitive form *aisyaar* "to wear down/exhaust." Not found in Pallisa/Serere, where Ateker verb *a(k)i-(y)el* is retained.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Katakwi): *aisyarakin* "to scatter in all directions (of people)"
Teso (Ngora etc.): *aisyarakin* "to scatter in all directions (of people)"
Teso (Bukedea): *aisyarakin* "to scatter in all directions (of people)"

Reconstruction Number: 2
Gloss: large fishing basket
Root: *ekodo*
Protolanguage: Nuclear Teso
Etymology: from Luo *ekodo* "large basket"

DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso (Ngora etc.): *ekodo* "large fishing basket"
Luo: *ekodo* "large basket"

Proto Northern Ateker Reconstructions

Reconstruction Number: 1
Gloss: generation set
Root: *anyamet
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: those who ate together (during initiation feast) from Ateker *anyam "to eat"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *anyamet* "generation (generic)"
Nyangatom: *anyamet* "eating group, men who eat together at meat-feasts"
Karimojong: *anyamet* "generation set"
Jie: *anyamet* "generation set"
Labwor: *ameto* "age group"
Didinga: *nameto* "age group"
Pokot: *ameto* "ritual punishments during sapana initiation" (Peristiany, 1951)

Reconstruction Number: 2
Gloss: age-grading initiation ceremony
Root: *asapan
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: from Ateker *esapat "young man"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *asapan* "age-grading initiation ceremony"
Karimojong: *asapan* "age-grading initiation ceremony"
Nyangatom: *asapan* "age-grading initiation ceremony"
Teso (Katakwi only): *asapan* "age-grading initiation ceremony" (borrowed late)
Toposa: *nyasapan* "age-grading initiation ceremony"

Reconstruction Number: 3
Gloss: temporary herding camp
Root: *-bor-
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: from PEN "break away," sense of stock-keeping area in Proto Ateker
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *abor* "outpost, subsidiary"
Karimojong: *abori* "cattle settlement (where there are no women)"
Nyangatom: *abor* "temporary or seasonal grazing-camp"
Teso: *abor* "fold n." *abor* "goat pen"
Maasai: *abor* "to cut away (for oneself)"
Bari: *bora* "to depart (as in woman upset)"

Reconstruction Number: 4

Gloss: large-mouthed gourd bottle, center force during military attack
Root: *-busy-
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: latter derived from former
DISTRIBUTIONS
Toposa: *nyabusya* "gourd-bottle (spherical)"
Karimojong: *abusya* "big-mouthed gourd, rear line in ring-hunting"
Dodos: *abuthia* "center force during attack, wide-mouth gourd" (EMT personal notes)

Reconstruction Number: 5
Gloss: stirring stick for mixing blood
Root: *-gec
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: unclear
DISTRIBUTIONS
Toposa: *nyegeci* "twirling-stick, whisk"
Karimojong: *egec* "stirring stick"
Nyangatom: *egec* "whisk for stirring blood"
Turkana: *egec* "stirrer"

Reconstruction Number: 6
Gloss: boy, male teen
Root: *edya
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: from inherited PT root *-dyak- "to err," applied to young men who are prone to err. Loss of word-final stop in common vocabulary item through apocope. Prior to apocope of final /k/, noun form was borrowed into pre-Ik as "baby."
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *edya* "teenager, boy, lad, youth," *akidyak* "err, miss," *edyakak* "erroneous, defective"
Karimojong: *edya* "boy, young man," *ekadyakan* "one who often missed the target"
Dodos: *edya* "young man"
Jie: *edya* "young man"
Toposa: *nyakidyak* "to make a mistake"
Teso: *aidyak* "to miss the mark"
Ik: *diaak* "infant, baby"
Maasai: *adiaak* "to miss the intended target"
Lotuxo: *odyak* "to miss, to fail to hit"

Reconstruction Number: 7
Gloss: social elder
Root: *e-ka-suk-out
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: possibly from Tung'a *-suk "to bend over, to hunch," but ending is irregular
DISTRIBUTIONS
Toposa: *nyekasukout* "social elder,"

Karimojong: *ekasukout* "social elder"
Nyangatom: *ekasukowut* "social elder"
Turkana: *ekasukout* "social elder," *akisuk* "to bend, to twist"
Teso: *asukokin* "to fold up, to crumple"
Maasai: *ashuk* "to bend"

Reconstruction Number: 8
Gloss: pearl millet
Root: *erau
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: likely borrowed from Shilluk or other Lwo source
DISTRIBUTIONS
Karimojong: *erau* "bulrush millet"
Turkana: *erau* "pearl millet"
Toposa: *erau* "millet"
Shilluk: *rawo* "pearl millet"

Reconstruction Number: 9
Gloss: small spear
Root: *ibiti
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: derived from Proto Ateker *ebiti "fish spear" losing fishing connotation, with given diminutive prefix /i-/ to emphasize smallness. Unclear what the relationship with Didinga is.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Toposa: *nyibiti* "type of spear"
Karimojong: *ibiti* "small-headed spear"
Dodos: *ibiti* "very small spear used only for sacrifice"
Nyangatom: *ibiti* "small spear"
Didinga: *biit* "javelin"

Reconstruction Number: 10
Gloss: *Commiphora Africana*
Root: *-ka-deli
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Karimojong: *ekadeli* "C. Africana"
Turkana: *ekadeli* "C. Africana"
Toposa: *nyekadeli* "C. Africana"
Nyangatom: *ekadeli* "C. Africana"

Reconstruction Number: 11
Gloss: cousin
Root: *-kaaya
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker

Etymology: from Proto Ateker /ka-/ "mine" + *-yya- "aunt"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Toposa: *lokaeya* "cousin," *eya* "aunt"
Karimojong: *nakaaya* "cousin," *eya* "aunt"
Turkana: *-kaaya* "cousin"
Teso: *ija* "aunt"

Reconstruction Number: 12
Gloss: pawned person, pauper
Root: *-ka-yar-an
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: from Proto Ateker *-jar "to live" NOTE: this was borrowed into Teso from Karimojong, because the inherited sound would be /j/, as in *aijar* "to live"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Toposa: *nyekayaran* "parasite, sponger, survivor, refugee"
Karimojong: *ekayaran* "slave, servant" *akayaran* "one who lives on someone (not working)"
Turkana: *ekayaran* "slave, servant"
Teso: *aiyaror* "to beg sorrowfully"

Reconstruction Number: 13
Gloss: blacksmith, to forge iron
Root: *-ke-tyek-
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: from Shilluk *tyek* "to hammer out (a spear)"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Toposa: *nyeketyekan* "blacksmith," *nyakityek* "to forge iron"
Karimojong: *eketyekan* "blacksmith"
Dodos: *ekatyekan* "blacksmith"
Turkana: *akityek* "to forge iron"

Reconstruction Number: 14
Gloss: dancing place
Root: *-kero
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: causative /ke-/ plus *-ro "vertisol, outward grazing land"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Toposa: *nyakeru* "dancing place"
Karimojong: *akero* "dancing place"
Turkana: a*kero* "dancing place"
Nyangatom: *aker* "dancing place"

Reconstruction Number: 15
Gloss: age-peer
Root: *-ke(V)s
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker

Etymology: from Proto Ateker *-kees "colleague, fellow" (itself derived from "bundle (as in grass)"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Karimojong: *ekesit* "bundle of grass"
Teso: *ekes* "colleague," *ekesit* "bundle of grass"
Nyangatom: *ekes* "age-mate"
Toposa: *nyekeas* "age-mate"

Reconstruction Number: 16
Gloss: door in fence for cattle
Root: *-kidor
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: unknown (but a good example of a false cognate with English!)
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *ekidor* "entrance, main gateway to home"
Toposa: *nyekidori* "gate, door in fence," "animal killed after bride-price payment"
Dodos: *ekidor* "kraal entrance"
Karimojong: *ekidor* "large door, cattle gate"
Nyangatom: *ekidor* "gate, entrance into settlement"

Reconstruction Number: 17
Gloss: circle of elders initiated into *asapan*
Root: *-ki-rik-et
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: from Ateker *-rik "to encircle"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Toposa: *nyakiriket* "circle of elders initiated into *asapan*"
Karimojong: *akiriket* "circle of elders initiated into *asapan*"
Dodos: *akiriket* "circle of elders initiated into *asapan*"
Nyangatom: *akiriket* "circle of elders initiated into *asapan*"
Jie: *akiriket* "circle of elders initiated into *asapan*"
Turkana: *akiriket* "circle of elders initiated into *asapan*"

Reconstruction Number: 18
Gloss: sun
Root: *-kolong
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: inherited from Tung'a *kolong "sun" (Vossen 1982, 453)
DISTRIBUTIONS
Teso: *akolong* "sun"
Turkana: *akolong* "sun"
Toposa: *nyakolong* "sun"
Dodos: *akolong* "sun"
Karimojong: *akolong* "sun"
Nyangatom: *akolong* "sun"

Reconstruction Number: 19
Gloss: poor person
Root: *-kulyak-it
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *ekulakit* "wretch, indigent, berry-picker"
Toposa: *nyekulwokit* "poor person (no cattle)"
Karimojong: *ekulyakit* "poor man with no cattle"

Reconstruction Number: 20
Gloss: gourd for carrying cow urine
Root: *-ku-wos(i)-
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: from Proto Ateker *–(w)os "vagina, urine orifice (esp. of cow), anus."
DISTRIBUTIONS
Toposa: *kuwosi* "gourd-bottle to keep urine of cows," *nyewosin* "anus, bottom"
Karimojong: *ekuwos* "gourd for storing cow's urine," *eoosin* "vagina"
Nyangatom: *ewosin* "anus, vagina, urine orifice"
Teso: *aosinoit* "vagina and rectum of cow," *ewosit* "buttock"

Reconstruction Number: 21
Gloss: *Hyphaene compressa*
Root: *-kVngol
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Karimojong: *ekingol* "H. Compressa"
Turkana: *engol* "H. Compressa"

Reconstruction Number: 22
Gloss: *Bothriochloa insculpta*
Root: *-let
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Karimojong: *elet* "B. insculpta"
Dodos: *elet* "B. insculpta"

Reconstruction Number: 23
Gloss: desolate wilderness, desert
Root: *-longis-
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: unknown

DISTRIBUTIONS
Dodos: *alongisat* "desolate wilderness, desert"
Karimojong: *alongisat* "uninhabited place, wilderness"
Turkana: *alongisat* "desert, wilderness, jungle"
Jie: *olongelu* "isolated place, something branched off"

Reconstruction Number: 24
Gloss: generation, as an abstract noun
Root: *-lungura(t)
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: from Proto Ateker *(lu)lung "to make whole, develop, round out, become plump"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *alungurat* "group age, generation," *akibulung/akilulung* "to become round, plump, filled out"
Karimojong: *alungura* "generation, race"
Dodos: *alungurat* "generation"
Toposa: *nyakilulung* "to make round, to drive a herd together"
Teso: *ailung* "to make round lumps of clay or bread"
Maasai: *alulunga* "to be whole, complete, without defect"
Kakwa: *agbulunga* "to reach puberty (of a girl)"

Reconstruction Number: 25
Gloss: grave
Root: *lyel
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: Borrowed from Southern Lwo (not in Shilluk) after split with Teso. Note that this is derived from Proto Lwo *lyel "to shave" and may be related to head-shaving rituals that are done to mourn the dead? It is possible, then, that the practice of burial was innovated internally among Southern Lwo-speakers upon reaching Uganda/Kenya.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Toposa: *nyalyel* "grave"
Karimojong: *alyel* "grave"
Dodos: *aliyel* "grave"
Nyangatom: *asiyel* "grave"
Acholi: *lyel* "grave"
Luo: *liel* "grave"

Reconstruction Number: 26
Gloss: debt
Root: *-mic
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: borrowed from Lwo *-mic "gift"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Karimojong: *ekemican* "creditor," *amica* "credit," *ngamicae* "to pay off debt"
Turkana: *amica* "credit/debt"

Toposa: *nyakimicare* "to demand payment," *nyamica* "debt"
Luo: *mich* "gift, offering"
Acholi: *mic* "gift"

Reconstruction Number: 27
Gloss: to offer a cleansing sacrifice
Root: *-mook
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: unclear. Possibly borrowed from Dinka-Nuer *amok* "abomasum"; less likely from Surmic *amok* "to persuade" or inherited from Bari/PEN *mok* "to seize, catch"; No reflex in Teso.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Dodos: *amook* "individual sacrificial ceremony"
Turkana: *amook* "to purify, to cleanse ritually"
Toposa: *nyamook* "to sacrifice animal after breach of taboo"
Karimojong: *amook* "to carry out a cleansing ritual"
Murle: *amok* "to press, to persuade, to weigh down, to surpass"
Dinka: *amok* "anus, abomasum"
Bari: *mok* "to seize, to catch"

Reconstruction Number: 28
Gloss: lake
Root: *-nam
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: from Proto Lwo (or later)
DISTRIBUTIONS
Toposa: *anam* "river (perennial), lake, sea"
Karimojong: *anam* "lake, sea"
Dodos: *anam* "lake, sea"
Nyangatom: *anam* "large permanent river"
Turkana: *anam* "lake, sea"
Acholi: *naam* "big river"
Anywa: *naam* "river"
Shilluk: *nam* "river, any stream, lake or large body of water"
Luo: *nam* "lake, big river"

Reconstruction Number: 29
Gloss: opening in fence
Root: *-puke
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: from Proto Ateker verb *-puk- "to open"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Toposa: *nyepuke* "opening or hole in fence"
Karimojong: *epuke* "entrance for sheep and goats"
Turkana: *epuke* "gap, gate, opening"
Teso: *aipuk* "to keep opening"

Reconstruction Number: 30
Gloss: to drive cattle any distance
Root: *-ram
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: from Proto Ateker *-ram "to beat with a stick" or *-ramat "to tend livestock"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Nyangatom: *akiram* "to drive cattle, to beat"
Toposa: *nyakiram* "to beat, to drive cattle"
Karimojong: *akiram* "to drive cattle, to beat"
Teso: airam "to beat, to thresh"
Maasai: aramat "to tend livestock"

Reconstruction Number: 31
Gloss: vertisol (black cotton soil land – good for grazing but not cultivation)
Root: *-ro
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: from ro(t?) "to search for" cf. *akirot*
DISTRIBUTIONS
Nyangatom: *aro* "cracked land"
Karimojong: *aro* "black cotton soil," akiro "to observe, explore, go and see"
Turkana: *aro* "plain, veld, open space, field," *akiro* "to probe, examine, search"
Toposa: *nyaro* "savanna, black cotton soil, desert," *nyakiro* "to look down, check," *nyero* "grazing grass"
Teso: *airo* "to pore over, examine"

Reconstruction Number: 32
Gloss: organized group united for action
Root: *-sepic
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: possibly Tung'a *sep "to accompany"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Toposa: *nyasepic* "generation-set, age-set"
Turkana: *asepic* "crowd, group, mob, gang"
Nyangatom: *asepic* "crowd, group, generation-set"
Karimojong: *asepic* "crowd, group of warriors, large gathering"
Maasai: *ashep* "to pursue, to accompany, to follow"

Reconstruction Number: 33
Gloss: *Salvadora persica*
Root: *-s(i)ekon
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Karimojong: *esiokon* "S. persica"

Turkana: *esekon* "S. persica"
Nyangatom: *esekon* "S. persica"

Reconstruction Number: 34
Gloss: ground spring
Root: *-tanit
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: possibly from "nipple" or "source of flow"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Dodos: *eitanit* "ground spring"
Turkana: *eitanit* "spring, source of flowing water"
Teso: *eitanit* "nipple (rare), opening in teat or pump"

Reconstruction Number: 35
Gloss: leader
Root: *-tuk-on
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: from Ateker *-tuk- "to heap, assemble people"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Nyangatom: *ekatukon* "influential orator"
Toposa: *nyekatukon* "influential orator"
Karimojong: *ekatukon* "sub-chief, organizer, military leader"
Turkana: *ekatukon* "chief"
Jie: *ekatukon* "military leader"
Dodos: *ekatukon* "military leader"

Reconstruction Number: 36
Gloss: owl
Root: *-tul-
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology:
DISTRIBUTIONS
Toposa: *tulia* "owl"
Karimojong: *etulo* "owl"
Turkana: *etulo* "owl"

Reconstruction Number: 37
Gloss: broad-headed spear
Root: *-tum
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: from Proto Ateker *-tum- "fat, wide-bodied" OR borrowed from Southern Lwo
DISTRIBUTIONS
Nyangatom: *atum* "sword, large spear head"
Karimojong: *atum* "spear with a large blade"
Turkana: *atum* "broad-bladed spear, cleaver"

Jie: *nyatum* "ritual spear"
Acholi: *atum* "large spear"

Reconstruction Number: 38
Gloss: to drive cattle (away)
Root: *-twa-r
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: From a Proto Ateker root *-tuar formed by combining directional preposition /-tu(a)/ and transitive verb suffix /-r/. Note that this is the same root which, with a different suffix, forms the basis for the PEN verb *-tuan- "to die," which is retained as a fossil form in Maasai as irregular subjunctive form of *ye* "to die," while otherwise the root refers to "blessings, beauty, goodness" in Maasai. Taken together, this indicates that death in PEN may have been considered an act of "going away," and that in Maasai's language history, a euphemistic shift took place.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *atwarar* "to drive away"
Toposa: *nyakitwar* "to drive cattle"
Karimojong: *akitwar* "to herd cattle (esp. near village)"
Teso: *aitwar* "to say goodbye"
Maasai: *atuarie* "to send away (well)," *-tua* "suffix indicated directionality"
Bari: *tu* "preposition indicating directionality, towards"

Reconstruction Number: 39
Gloss: ceremonial gathering of cattle, for releasing cattle at start of dry season
Root: *-ud-akin
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: from Proto Tung'a/Ateker *-ud- "to prod (as in cattle, or into a hole)" with "prepositional verb" affix /-akin/. Later re-analyzed as verb root "to assemble" in Turkana-Nyangatom-Toposa. Speculation that the purpose of this cattle-gathering ceremony was to "release" cattle for the dry season is that this is the dominant reason according to ethnographic data for which such a gathering is conducted. See: Gulliver (1953), 161-162; Dyson-Hudson (1966), 132; Celina (1994), 94; Toposa Interview, 03 November 2017, Kaabong.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Toposa: *nyaki(w)udokin* "ceremony for releasing cattle," nyakuud "to collect"
Karimojong: *akiudakin* "assembly of cattle" *akiudar* "to drive cattle together" (note: no verb stem -ud)
Turkana: *akiudakin* "to assemble, to converge, to centralize," *akiud* "to amass, to gather"
Nyangatom: *akuudakin* "cattle assembly"
Teso: *aiwud* "to prod, to poke, to stick into"
Maasai: *aud* "to bore, to pierce, to stick into"

Reconstruction Number: 40
Gloss: to decorate with feathers
Root: *-wal
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker

Etymology: Unclear origin. However, borrowing into Usuku Teso (with no /b/), where it was used during Usuku Teso asapan ceremonies, supports hypothesis that asapan was borrowed only recently into Teso, and restricted to Usuku.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *akiwal* "to wear a charm"
Toposa: *nyakiwal* "to decorate oneself with feathers"
Dodos: *akiwal* "to decorate with feathers"
Jie: *akiwal* "to decorate with feathers"
Teso (Usuku only): *aiwal* "to decorate with feathers" (this is borrowed, because no /bw/)

Reconstruction Number: 41
Gloss: to smear (as blessing), to anoint & to migrate
Root: *-wos-
Protolanguage: Northern Ateker
Etymology: from Proto Ateker verb *-wos- "to migrate, to let go, to carry away"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *awosit* "to migrate, to shift," *akiwos* "to smear"
Karimojong: *akiwos* "to smear, to anoint," *awosit* "journey of cattle to kraal, to migrate"
Jie: *akiwal* "to decorate with feathers"
Teso: *awosikin* "to let go," *loewosikitai* "one which is left over," *aibwos* "to haul away"

Proto Lowland Northern Ateker Reconstructions

Reconstruction Number: 1
Gloss: drum (musical instrument)
Root: *-bul
Protolanguage: Lowland Northern Ateker
Etymology: borrowed from WN
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *abuli* "drum"
Nyangatom: *abul* "drum"
Luo: *bul* "drum"
Nuer: *buul* "drum, dance"
Shilluk: bul "drum, dance"

Reconstruction Number: 2
Gloss: Ficus sycomorus
Root: *-coke
Protolanguage: Lowland Northern Ateker
Etymology: undetermined
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *ecoke* "Ficus sycomorus"
Toposa: *nyecoke* "Ficus sycomorus"
Nyangatom: *neceke* "Ficus sycomorus"

Reconstruction Number: 3
Gloss: Boscia coriacea
Root: *-dung
Protolanguage: Lowland Northern Ateker
Etymology: undetermined
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *erdung* "Boscia coriacea"
Toposa: *nyeedung* "Boscia coriacea"
Nyangatom: *eedung* "Boscia coriacea"

Reconstruction Number: 4
Gloss: star
Root: *-kanyer-
Protolanguage: Lowland Northern Ateker
Etymology: From Mening, or some language related to Lopit? Note that this may be the same /ny/ > /ng/ sound change from Proto Tung'a to Proto Lotuxo that would make Teso -many "marriage" Karimojong -many "sexual intercourse," Maasai -manyatta "warrior's secluded village," and Lotuxo -mangat "village" all cognate.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *ngakanyer* "stars (pl. only)"
Toposa: *nyakanyerit* "star" (*nyakacerit* is also present)
Nyangatom: *akanyerit* "star"
Mening: *kangereti* "star"
Lolongo (Lopit): *hangerio* "star"

Reconstruction Number: 5
Gloss: storage space
Root: *-keru
Protolanguage: Lowland Northern Ateker
Etymology: undetermined
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *ekeru* "granary, grain store, vault, rack"
Toposa: *nyekeru* "hut with storage" (*edwula* is also present)
Nyangatom: *ekeru* "attic for storing grain, honey, dried meat, etc."

Reconstruction Number: 6
Gloss: skin container for carrying oily substances
Root: *-ku-tam-
Protolanguage: Lowland Northern Ateker
Etymology:
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *akutom* "vat, skin container for carrying oil"
Nyangatom: *akutam* "skin container for carrying cooked butter"

Reconstruction Number: 7

Gloss: Boscia angustifolia
Root: *-mejen
Protolanguage: Lowland Northern Ateker
Etymology: undetermined
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *emejen* "Boscia angustifolia"
Nyangatom: *emejen* "Boscia angustifolia"

Reconstruction Number: 8
Gloss: age group (some variation per system)
Root: *-naket
Protolanguage: Lowland Northern Ateker
Etymology: "those who suckled together"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *anaket* "age-set"
Toposa: *nyanaket* "children's play group"
Nyangatom: *anaket* "subdivision of age-set"

Reconstruction Number: 9
Gloss: bullock
Root: *-pasakan
Protolanguage: Lowland Northern Ateker
Etymology: borrowed into Dodos
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *epasakan* "bullock"
Nyangatom: *epasakan* "bullock"
Toposa: *epasakan* "bullock"
Dodos: *epasakan* "bullock"

Reconstruction Number: 10
Gloss: umbilical cord
Root: *-pusit
Protolanguage: Lowland Northern Ateker
Etymology: undetermined
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *apusit* "umbilical cord"
Toposa: *apusit* "umbilical cord"
Nyangatom: *apusit* "umbilical cord"

Reconstruction Number: 11
Gloss: to migrate, shift grazing land for a long time
Root: *-ram-akin
Protolanguage: Lowland Northern Ateker
Etymology: from Ngiro *-ram "to drive cattle"
DISTRIBUTIONS

Turkana: *aramakin* "to shut, to close, to bang; to migrate."
Nyangatom: *akiram* "to drive cattle, to beat, to migrate homes"
Toposa: *nyaramakin* "to beat, to drive cattle, to migrate"
Karimojong: *aramakin* "to drive cattle (over short distance)"

Reconstruction Number: 12
Gloss: *Balanites aegyptiaca*
Root: *-roronyit
Protolanguage: Lowland Northern Ateker
Etymology: undetermined
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *eroronyit* "Balanites aegyptiaca"
Toposa: *nyeeronyit* "Balanites aegyptiaca"

Reconstruction Number: 13
Gloss: *Calotropis procera*
Root: *-tesuro
Protolanguage: Lowland Northern Ateker
Etymology: undetermined
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *etesuro* "Calotropis procera"
Toposa: *nyetesuro* "Calotropic procera"

Reconstruction Number: 14
Gloss: to marry, bridewealth
Root: *-ut- ; *-kuut-
Protolanguage: Lowland Northern Ateker
Etymology: from Proto Ateker **-ut** "to pull out, remove"
DISTRIBUTIONS
Turkana: *akuuta* "wedding"; *akuut* "to marry"; *akiut* "to extract, remove"
Toposa: *nyakuut* "to pay bride-price"; *nyakuut* "to pull out"; *nyautori* "to leave from a group"
Nyangatom: *akuuta* "bridewealth"; *akiut* "to transfer cattle for marriage"
Dodos: *akiut* "to marry"
Karimojong: *akiut* "to pull out, to uproot (note: not to marry)"
Teso: *aiwut* "to pull out"

Proto Highland Northern Ateker Reconstructions

Reconstruction Number: 1
Gloss: to provide the first part of bridewealth
Root: *-dopar
Protolanguage: Highland Northern Ateker
Etymology:
DISTRIBUTIONS
Karimojong: *adopar* "to provide the first part of bridewealth"

Jie: *adopar* "to provide the first part of bridewealth"
Dodos: *adopar* "to provide the first part of bridewealth"

Reconstruction Number: 2
Gloss: small thatched hut
Root: *-kodo
Protolanguage: Highland Northern Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Jie: *ekodo* "small thatched hut"
Dodos: *akodo* "small thatched hut"
Karimojong: *ekodo* "small thatched hut"

Reconstruction Number: 3
Gloss: *Cenchrus pennisetiformis*
Root: *-tanoko
Protolanguage: Highland Northern Ateker
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Jie: *etanoko* "C. pennisetiformis"
Dodos: *etanoko* "C. pennisetiformis"
Karimojong: *etanoko* "C. pennisetiformis"

Reconstruction Number: 4
Gloss: large shared granary
Root: *-tukit
Protolanguage: Highland Northern Ateker
Etymology: From Proto Ateker *-tuk-it "to heap together, assemble". Note that this item is found it a different reflex in Nyangatom.
DISTRIBUTIONS
Jie: *atukit* "granary outside single homestead"
Dodos: *atukit* "granary outside single homestead"
Karimojong: *atukit* "grain barn, temporary field granary"

Reconstruction Number: 5
Gloss: to graze cattle on a hill side
Root: *-rwa-kin
Protolanguage: Highland Northern Ateker
Etymology:
DISTRIBUTIONS
Karimojong: *arwakin* "to graze cattle on a hillside"
Dodos: *arwakin* "to graze cattle on a hillside"

Non-Ateker Reconstructions

Reconstruction Number: 1
Gloss: territorial boundary
Root: *keu
Protolanguage: Western Nilotic
Etymology: unknown
DISTRIBUTIONS
Shilluk: *kew* "border (of field, etc.)"
Luo: *kiewo* "border"
Nuer: *kei* "boundary"
Dinka: *akeu* "boundary"

Appendix V – Clan Names and Traditions

Section One: Distribution of Ateker Clan Names in Eastern Nilotic Languages

This section includes clan names that appear in at least one Ateker group, and are also shared by at least one other Eastern Nilotic group (Ateker or otherwise). These data can be used to postulate the antiquity of any particular group, using the same comparative logic as historical linguistics. So, for example, the fact that a "logir" clan appears among the Teso, Lotuxo, and Bari (from three separate linguistic branches of Eastern Nilotic), suggests that there was a "logir" clan during the Proto Eastern Nilotic period. Of course, because clan names are subject to a different set of influences than lexemes, this method is limited in its application. I have only included here clan names that I have judged to be likely "cognates" – but this is inherently subjective except in cases (such as especially the Ateker Karuwok clan listed below) where phonetic sound changes confirm a clan name's antiquity. The reader is thus advised to interpret this data with due caution, and the list is certainly subject to revision.

Eastern Nilotic

Clan Name	Attested Languages
bilo	Teso, Kumam, Bari
goria	Teso, Tesyo, Kumam, Bari
gwolo	Teso, Bari
konyum	Teso, Bari
logir	Teso, Tesyo, Kumam, Lotuxa, Bari
lorokushu	Samburu, Bari
moru	Teso, Lotuxo, Bari

Tung'a

Clan Name	Attested Languages
tirai	Dodos, Lotuxo
ser	Jie, Dodos, Tesyo, Maasai
lobwara	Teso, Lotuxo

Ateker

Clan Name	Attested Languages
caak	Karimojong, Teso, Kumam, Jiye
jie	Teso, Toposa
kadanya	Karimojong, Dodos, Teso, Turkana, Toposa
kalobur	Jie-Lokorwakol, Dodos, Teso, Tesyo, Kumam
karuwok	Karimojong, Jie-Rengen, Jie-Lokorwakol, Dodos, Teso, Tesyo, Turkana, Toposa, Jiye
katekok	Karimojong, Teso, Teyo, Turkana, Toposa, Jiye
kirenya	Dodos, Teso (Amuria only)
kolitaka	Dodos, Teso, Toposa
kuruk	Jie-Lokorwakol, Teso, Tesyo

mukuru	Jie-Lokorwakol, Teso
nariwo	Jie-Rengen, Teso
ngariama	Karimojong, Teso
nom	Teso, Turkana, Nyangatom, Kumam
nwee	Karimojong, Teso
rarak	Teso, Tesyo, Turkana, Kumam
sogolo	Dodos, Teso
tengor	Karimojong, Teso, Tesyo, Turkana, Kumam
toroi	Jie-Lokorwakol, Dodos, Teso, Nyangatom
woropom	Karimojong, Teso
yape	Dodos, Teso

Northern Ateker Only

Group Name	Attested Languages
cakalomun	Jie-Lokorwakol, Dodos
doca	Jie-Lokorwakol, Dodos, Turkana, Nyangatom, Jiye
dodoso	Nyangatom, Toposa
jimos	Jie-Lokorwakol, Jo-Akwa
kadukany	Jie-Lokorwakol, Toposa
katap*	Karimojong, Jie-Lokorwakol, Jie-Rengen, Turkana, Nyangatom, Toposa, Jiye
kolio	Dodos, Toposa
lobal	Karimojong, Jie-Lokorwakol, Turkana, Nyangatom, Toposa, Jiye
lukumong	Karimojong, Dodos
macarmukata	Turkana, Nyangatom
mamteker	Dodos, Toposa
meris	Jie-Lokorwakol, Dodos
meturuana	Turkana, Nyangatom
miyoki	Dodos, Nyangatom
ngelepo	Jie-Lokorwakol, Toposa, Jiye
ngolereto	Dodos, Turkana, Nyangatom
ponga	Jie-Lokorwakol, Turkana
puco	Dodos, Turkana, Nyangatom
raputa	Nyangatom, Toposa, Jiye
ribo	Karimojong, Dodos, Toposa
rosia	Dodos, Toposa
siger	Karimojong, Turkana, Nyangatom, Toposa, Jiye
teso*	Jie-Rengen, Jie-Lokorwakol, Turkana

* Both Katapa and Teso likely refer to "Agricultural Paranilotes" (i.e. the Pre-Teso). It is therefore significant that the only groups Jie-Rengen shares with other non-Teso Ateker are these two. Essentially, Jie-Rengen therefore shares no clan names exclusively with other non-Teso Ateker.

Note: Jiye (South Sudan) sections are: Ngimodokol, Ngitarakabun, Ngirithae, Ngikurono.

Section Two – Percentages of Shared Clan Names

The following is a count of the percentages of clans which one Ateker group shares with another, with the constraint that only clan names that are shared by at least two groups are counted. The chart should only be read from left to right. To take the top example, out of all the clan names that the Karimojong share with at least one other group, they share 7% of those with the Jie-Rengen, 31% with the Jie-Lokorwakol, and 31% with the western Dodos. Two points are important here. First, the numbers will not add up to one hundred, because many names are shared between more than two groups. Second, this is only a useful source of comparative data for measuring the relative degree of shared clans of a single group. Some groups have many more clans than others, leading to higher or lower average rates of sharing. What can be determined is, returning to the previous example, that the Karimojong share more clan names with the Lokorwakol section of the Jie than with the Rengen section. However, because the Karimojong have more clans overall than the Jie-Rengen, the same number of shared clans generates a higher shared percentage of the total number of Jie-Rengen clans. For this reason, we can say that the Karimojong share 7% of their clans with the Jie-Rengen, while the Jie-Rengen share 33% of their clans with the Karimojong.

	KA	JI-R	JI-L	DO-W	DO-E	TE-K	TE-A	TE-N	TE-P	TY	TU	NY	TO	KU	BA
KA	x	7	23	31	7	38	15	54	15	23	46	31	38	23	0
JI-R	33	x	66	16	0	16	16	16	16	16	33	16	16	16	0
JI-L	17	22	x	28	22	11	0	28	11	0	28	22	22	11	0
DO-W	27	13	33	x	40	13	7	13	7	7	27	27	20	7	0
DO-E	7	0	29	43	x	0	14	14	0	7	14	36	28	0	0
TE-K	45	9	18	18	0	x	27	81	63	63	36	9	18	45	9
TE-A	22	11	0	11	22	33	x	44	22	22	11	0	11	22	22
TE-N	29	4	17	8	8	38	16	x	38	38	16	8	13	38	25
TE-P	22	11	22	11	0	77	22	100	x	77	33	11	22	55	22
TY	27	9	27	9	9	63	18	81	54	x	36	9	9	54	22
TU	40	7	33	27	13	27	7	27	20	27	x	60	33	33	0
NY	29	0	29	29	36	7	0	14	7	7	64	x	36	7	0
TO	33	7	27	20	20	13	7	20	23	7	33	33	x	0	0
KU	33	11	11	11	0	55	22	100	55	66	33	11	0	x	33
MA	0	0	50	0	50	0	0	0	0	50	0	0	0	0	50
BA	0	0	0	0	0	13	25	75	25	25	0	0	0	38	x

KA = Karimojong; JI-R = Jie Rengen; JI-L = Jie Lokorwakol; DO-W = Dodos West; DO-E = Dodos East; TE-K = Teso Katakwi; TE-A = Teso Amuria; TE-N – Teso Ngora; TE-P = Teso Pallisa; TY = Tesyo; TU = Turkana; NY = Nyangatom; TO = Toposa; KU = Kumam; BA = Bari

Section Three – Maps of Shared Ateker Clan Names

The following are maps of Ateker clan names that are shared between at least two Ateker groups. There are two basic maps – one without Teso clans and one with Teso clans. Names are highlighted in each map according to their the categories defined on the center-left of the map.

Toposa
kadukany ngelepo
kolio raputa
lobal ribo
mamteker rosia
miyoki siger

Nyangatom
ngolereto miyoki
puco doca
raputa lobal
siger macarmukata
nom meturuana

Dodos
cakalomun puco
doca ribo
kolio rosia
lukumong
mamteker
meris
ngolereto

Turkana
puco
doca
lobal
macarmukata
meturuana
ngolereto
ponga
siger
nom

Pastoral
Ateker clan
distributions
(without Teso)

Jie
cakalomun ngelepo
doca ponga
jimos
kadukany
lobal
meris

ribo
lukumong
lobal
siger

Teso

Karimojong

Distribution of Turkana-Nyangatom Shared Clans (without Teso)

Toposa
- kadukany
- kolio
- lobal
- mamteker
- miyoki
- ngelepo
- raputa
- ribo
- rosia
- siger

Nyangatom
- ngolereto
- puco
- raputa
- siger
- nom
- miyoki
- doca
- lobal
- macarmukata
- meturuana

Dodos
- cakalomun
- doca
- kolio
- lukumong
- mamteker
- meris
- ngolereto
- puco
- ribo
- rosia

Turkana
- puco
- doca
- lobal
- macarmukata
- meturuana
- ngolereto
- ponga
- siger
- nom

Jie
- cakalomun
- doca
- jimos
- kadukany
- lobal
- meris
- ngelepo
- ponga

Teso

Karimojong
- lukumong
- lobal
- ribo
- siger

Distribution of Toposa-Nyangatom Shared Clans (without Teso)

Toposa
- kadukany
- kolio
- lobal
- mamteker
- miyoki
- ngelepo
- raputa
- ribo
- rosia
- siger

Nyangatom
- ngolereto
- puco
- raputa
- siger
- miyoki
- doca
- lobal
- macarmukata
- meturuana

Dodos
- cakalomun
- doca
- kolio
- lukumong
- mamteker
- meris
- ngolereto
- puco
- ribo
- rosia

Turkana
- puco
- doca
- lobal
- macarmukata
- meturuana
- ngolereto
- ponga
- siger

Jie
- cakalomun
- doca
- jimos
- kadukany
- lobal
- meris
- ngelepo
- ponga

Teso

Karimojong
- lukumong
- lobal
- ribo
- siger

Nyangatom

Toposa

kolitaka
kadanya
karuwok
katekok

nom
toroi

Dodos

kadanya
kalobur
karuwok
kolitaka
sogolo
toroi
yape

Turkana

kadanya
karuwok
katekok
nom
rarak
tengor

Distribution of Toposa-Karimojong Shared Clans (with Teso)

Jie

kalobur
toroi
karuwok
kuruk
mukuru
nariwo

kuruk
mukuru karuwok   rarak
nariwo   kalobur   sogolo
ngariama kadanya   tengor
nomu   toroi
nwee   katekok   woropom
         kolitaka   yape
                    caak

tengor
karuwok
kadanya
caak
katekok
ngariama
nwee
woropom

Teso

Karimojong

Toposa

kadukany ngelepo
kolio   raputa   ribo
lobal
mamteker rosia
miyoki   siger

ngolereto miyoki
puco   doca
raputa   lobal
siger   macarmukata
           meturuana
           nom

Nyangaton

cakalomun puco
doca   ribo
kolio   rosia
lukumong
mamteker
meris
ngolereto

Dodos

Turkana

puco
doca
lobal
macarmukata
meturuana
ngolereto
ponga
siger
nom

Distribution of Toposa-Karimojong Shared Clans (without Teso)

Jie

cakalomun ngelepo
doca   ponga
jimos
kadukany
lobal
meris

ribo
lukumong
lobal
siger

Teso

Karimojong

Distribution of Karimojong – Turkana Shared Clans (with Teso)

Diagram 1:

Toposa
- kolitaka
- kadanya
- karuwok
- katekok

Nyangator
- toroi

Dodos
- kadanya
- kalobur
- karuwok
- kolitaka
- sogolo
- toroi
- yape

Turkana
- kadanya
- karuwok
- katekok
- rarak
- tengor

Jie
- kalobur
- toroi
- karuwok
- kuruk
- mukuru
- nariwo

Teso
- kuruk
- mukuru karuwok rarak
- nariwo kalobur sogolo
- ngariama kadanya tengor
-   caak toroi
-   woropom
- nwee yape
- kolitaka katekok

Karimojong
- tengor
- karuwok
- kadanya
- caak
- katekok
- ngariama
- nwee
- woropom

Diagram 2:

Distribution of Karimojong – Turkana Shared Clans (with Teso)

Toposa
- kadukany ngelepo
- kolio raputa
- lobal ribo
- mamteker rosia
- miyoki siger

Nyangatom
- ngolereto miyoki
- puco doca
- raputa lobal
- siger macarmukata
- nom meturuana

Dodos
- cakalomun puco
- doca ribo
- kolio rosia
- lukumong
- mamteker
- meris
- ngolereto

Turkana
- puco
- doca
- lobal
- macarmukata
- meturuana
- ngolereto
- ponga
- siger
- nom

Jie
- cakalomun ngelepo
- doca ponga
- jimos
- kadukany
- lobal
- meris

Karimojong
- ribo
- lukumong
- lobal
- siger

Teso

Karimojong

Section Four – Jie Clan Survey Responses

This section includes tabulated results of a survey of clan traditions among the two major Jie territiorial sections – Lokorwakol and Rengen – throughout 2017. Akipudun and Aruun are child-bearing rites.

Section	Minor Section	Clan	Sub-Clan	Taboo Animal	Food Before Akipudun	Substance for Aruun
Lokorwakol	Kanawat	Kadoca	Karewok	Ederit	Sorghum	Milk
Lokorwakol	Kanawat	Merithiae	Lokatap	Echeleku	Sorghum	N/R
Lokorwakol	Kanawat	Lokwor	N/A	Ederit, Egete, Echeleku	N/R	Alcohol
Lokorwakol	Kanawat	Losogot	N/A	Amor	Millet w/ Tamarind	Milk w/ athanga
Lokorwakol	Kanawat	Lojoo	Jimos	Ederit	Ngamalera w/ Tamarind	Milk and Alcohol
Lokorwakol	Kanawat	Loonei	Lopongo	Ederit, Echeleku	Sorghum	Alcohol
Lokorwakol	Kanawat	Lomukuru	Thiokol	None	Sorghum	Millk and Tobacco
Lokorwakol	Kanawat	Thiokol	Nathinyon	None	Sorghum	Milk
Lokorwakol	Kanawat	Lokorok	Kalobur	None	Millet	Milk
Lokorwakol	Komukuny	Loposa	N/A	Ederit, Epirit	Sorghum	Alcohol OR Milk
Lokorwakol	Kotiang	Loonei	Oyarot	Ederit	Sorghum	Milk and Alcohol
Lokorwakol	Kotiang	Potongor	Lopao	None	Millet and Sorghum	Milk
Lokorwakol	Kotiang	Kadukan	Toroi	Ekolobai, Echeleku	N/R	Milk and Alcohol
Lokorwakol	Kotiang	Thiokol	Karewok	None	Sorghum	Tobacco
Lokorwakol	Kotiang	Lobal	Tesiyo	Ederit, Echeleku	Any Cereal	Milk
Lokorwakol	Kotido	Lobal	Nyakwai	None	Millet	Milk
Lokorwakol	Kotido	Mirethiae	Lodera	None	Tamarind (?)	Alcohol
Lokorwakol	Kotido	Lokatap	N/A	None	Sorghum	Milk
Lokorwakol	Kotido	Loser	N/A	Ekoloba, Ederik, Echeleku	Sorghum	Sorghum
Lokorwakol	Losilang	Oyapua	Longerep	Ederit, Echeleku	Sorghum	Milk
Lokorwakol	Losilang	Oyapua	Cakalomun	Ederit	Millet	Aruun Not Done
Lokorwakol	Losilang	Kadukan	Kadukok	None	N/R	Milk and Alcohol
Lokorwakol	Losilang	Lokore	Ngikakere	None	"feeds on nothing"	Milk
Lokorwakol	Losilang	Lodoca	N/A	Ederit	N/R	N/R
Lokorwakol	Nakapelimoru	Riamiriam	Sinotoi	Ederit	N/R	Milk
Lokorwakol	Nakapelimoru	Ngerepo	Nyakwai	Echeleku, Ederit	Sorghum	Etaba
Lokorwakol	Nakapelimoru	Ngerepo	Ngikalogwang	Ederit, Echeleku	Sorghum	Aruun Not Done
Lokorwakol	Nakapelimoru	Ngerepo	Ngikalogwala	Ederit, Echeleku	Millet	Aruun Not Done
Lokorwakol	Nakapelimoru	Thiokol	Lokore	None	Millet	Milk
Lokorwakol	Nakapelimoru	Thiokol	Kairwata	None	Blood and Milk	Milk
Lokorwakol	Nakapelimoru	Potongor	Longelep	Ederit, Echeleku	Sorghum	Milk and Alcohol

Lokorwakol	Nakapelimoru	Oyapua	Jimos	Ederit	Wild Fruits	Tree w/ Ekere Shavings
Lokorwakol	Nakapelimoru	Ngadakori	N/A	None	Sorghum	Milk
Lokorwakol	Nakapelimoru	Mirethiae	Toroi	Ederit	Millet w/ Milk	Alcohol
Lokorwakol	Nakapelimoru	Mirethiae	Mamulope	Ederit	Sorghum	Alcohol of red sorghum
Lokorwakol	Nakapelimoru	Ngikeinyak	N/A	Ederit	Water	Alcohol
Lokorwakol	Nakapelimoru	Longelep	N/A	Ederit, Echeleku	N/R	Alcohol
Lokorwakol	Nakapelimoru	Longelep	Tesiyo	Ekoloba	Milk	Milk
Lokorwakol	Nakepelimoru	Lokatap	N/A	None	Sorghum	Aruun Not Done
Lokorwakol	Panyangara	Toroi	N/A	None	"feeds on nothing"	Milk
Lokorwakol	Panyangara	Meriwala	N/A	None	Millet	Milk and Alcohol
Rengen	Caicaon	Nariwo	N/A	None	Millet	Alcohol
Rengen	Caicaon	Tesiyo	N/A	Ekolobai, Echeleku	Sorghum	Milk w/ ekeret
Rengen	Caicaon	Nayese	N/A	None	Millet	Milk
Rengen	Caicaon	Karewok	N/A	Ederit	Millet	N/R
Rengen	Kadwoman	Poet	N/A	Edereit, Echeleku	Millet	Alcohol and Tobacco
Rengen	Kadwoman	Lomejan	N/A	None	Millet	Milk and Alcohol
Rengen	Kadwoman	Lunguto	N/A	None	Millet	Milk
Rengen	Kadwoman	Kalolet/Lodoi	N/A	None	Millet	Milk and Alcohol
Rengen	Kadwoman	Wotokau	N/A	None	Millet	Milk and Alcohol
Rengen	Kapelok	Lobore	N/A	None	Millet	Milk and Alcohol
Rengen	Kapelok	Ladoket	N/A	Ekolobai, Echeleku	Sorghum	Milk
Rengen	Kapelok	Loperdu	N/A	Ekoloba, Ebwapet	Red Sorghum	N/R
Rengen	Lokatap	Kwaluro	N/A	None	Millet	N/R
Rengen	Lokatap	Cilapus	N/A	Ederit	Millet	Alcohol
Rengen	Lokatap	Ratai	N/A	Ekaidei	Millet	Alcohol
Rengen	Lokatap	Korimunyen	N/A	None	Sorghum	Milk and Alcohol
Rengen	Lokatap	Kapalokadong	N/A	Ederit, Aduka	Millet	Milk
Rengen	Lokatap	Orom	N/A	Ngaduka	Millet	Alcohol

Appendix VI – Record of Interviews

This appendix includes a list of interviews conducted in the course of my research. The names and other personal information of interviewees have been excluded from this publication in order to protect anonymity in accordance with directives of the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology. Interviews were conducted in both group and individual settings, with a range of people from diverse demographic groups, including men and women, young and old, urban and rural, formally educated and not, etc. Interviews generally fell along a spectrum of two types – linguistic and ethnographic. Some interviews fit clearly into one category, such as core vocabulary elicitations for the Teso dialect studies, or discussions with *asapan* elders about their experiences undergoing initiation rites. Most interviews, however, were a mixture of both. As research proceeded, my team and I found that a good strategy for eliciting semantically complicated cultural vocabulary was to begin a linguistic interview with an "ethnographic" discussion, take notes of particular words that came up in natural conversation, and then discuss those words' precise meanings with interviewees. This process helped improve and refine the cultural vocabulary lists with which I began my research. The table below includes a list of every field interview I conducted, including the language, date, location, and topics discussed.

In most cases interviews were recorded in their entirety using an iPhone 5, while handwritten notes were also taken during interviews. In addition, formal linguistic elicitations were recorded using a Zoom H4n Pro digital recorder, with steps taken to minimize external noise as much as possible. In the hours or days following any interview, my research collaborators and I would compare handwritten notes, our own memories, and audio recordings to compose a written final record of each interview. Recordings of linguistic elicitations were transcribed separately by me, with assistance from the Praat phonetic analysis software program. Written interview records are hundreds of pages long and are kept in the authors' possession, along with all audio recordings, and the list of the names of interviewees.

- The below table is cited in the text by reference to language, location, and date. Citations use the following language abbreviations:

DO	Dodos	JI	Jie
KA	Karimojong	KK	Kuku
KW	Kakwa	LB	Labwor
ME	Mening	NY	Nyangatom
PK	Pokot (Suk)	SO	So (Tepeth)
TE	Teso	TO	Toposa
TU	Turkana	TY	Tesyo

- All dates in the below table are for 2017.
- Most interview locations were in Uganda, and those are listed by town and then district. Interviews conducted outside Uganda are listed by town name and then country.

LG	DATE	LOCATION	TOPIC
TE	18 JAN	Oale, Katakwi	Core Vocab
TE	18 JAN	Abela, Katakwi	Clothes/Adornment
TE	19 JAN	Opuyonga, Usuku	Asapan
TE	20 JAN	Oale, Katakwi	Trees
TE	20 JAN	Keelim, Katakwi	Core Vocab, Etal
TE	21 JAN	Omodoi, Toroma	Amuron
TE	21 JAN	Ocep, Toroma	Amuron, Mukama Feast
TE	26 JAN	Opuyonga, Usuku	Asapan, Material Culture, Birds
TE	27 JAN	Katakwi Cattle Market	Cattle Colors and Horn Shapes
TE	27 JAN	Abela, Katakwi	Moru Abela History
TE	28 JAN	Olupe, Ngariam	Asapan, Categories of Persons
TE	30 JAN	Alanyakirus Swamp, Katakwi	Fishing Words
TE	31 JAN	Opeta, Magoro	Core Vocab, Asapan
TE	31 JAN	Apapai, Apujan	Core Vocab
TE	01 FEB	Guiaguia, Usuku	Emuron, Warfare, Herbs, Raindance
TE	01 FEB	Orungo, Usuku	Core Vocab
TE	02 FEB	Otujai, Usuku	Core Vocab
TE	02 FEB	Ongongoja, Katakwi	Core Vocab
TE	07 FEB	Abwanget, Katakwi	Core Vocab
TE	07 FEB	Abela, Katakwi	God's Footprint Apucet
TE	08 FEB	Oale, Katakwi	Various Cultural Vocabulary Lists
TE	08 FEB	Kelim, Kumi	Core Vocab, Age Words
TE	08 FEB	Otaaba, Kumi	Asapan
TE	09 FEB	Atapar, Ongino	Asapan, Etal
TE	09 FEB	Okata, Ongino	Gravesites
TE	10 FEB	Kanapa, Ongino	Emuron, Blacksmith

TE	10 FEB	Apuda, Aturtur	Etal, Spiritual Beliefs
TE	13 FEB	Mukongoro, Mukongoro	Core Vocab
TE	13 FEB	Orosoi, Mukongoro	Asapan, Age Words, Warfare Words
TE	14 FEB	Odukai, Ongino	Core Vocab
TE	14 FEB	Okoba, Kumi	Core Vocab, Etal
TE	14 FEB	L. Bisina, Okichira, Ongino	Fishing Words
TE	15 FEB	Akarukaei, Ngora	Etal, Asapan, Raindance, Core Vocab
TE	16 FEB	Oledai, Ngora	Dialect Sample of Cultural Vocab List
TE	16 FEB	Ngora Town, Ngora	Ngora Emoru Complex
TE	17 FEB	Kumel, Ngora	Raindance
TE	17 FEB	Koreng, Malera	Core Vocab
TE	17 FEB	Malera Town, Malera	Core Vocab
TE	18 FEB	Katekwan, Bukedea	Core Vocab
TE	18 FEB	Katekwan, Bukedea	Etal
TE	18 FEB	Katekwan, Bukedea	Emuron and Amuron
TE	18 FEB	Katekwan, Bukedea	Trees, Animals, Birds
TE	22 FEB	Madera, Soroti	Etal
TE	22 FEB	Madera, Soroti	Core Vocab
TE	23 FEB	Gweri, Soroti	Core Vocab
TE	23 FEB	Gweri, Soroti	Millet Words
TE	23 FEB	Ocuma, Soroti	Amuron, Raindance
TE	24 FEB	Gweri, Soroti	Hunting Words
TE	24 FEB	Soroti Town, Soroti	Trees and Herbal Medicine
TE	25 FEB	Agama, Soroti	Kumam Core Vocab and Cultural Sample
TE	25 FEB	Agama, Soroti	Kumam Emuron
TE	25 FEB	Agama, Soroti	Kumam "Etal"
TE	27 FEB	Madera, Soroti	Health and Disease
TE	28 FEB	Serere Town, Serere	Core Vocab, Birds, Watering Sources

TE	28 FEB	Atira, Serere	Twin Ceremonies
TE	01 MAR	Kagwera, Serere	Fishing Words
TE	01 MAR	Akwongate, Serere	Core Vocab
TE	01 MAR	Kichinjaji, Soroti	ICU Oral History, Clan Histories
TE	02 MAR	Soroti Town, Soroti	ICU Museum, Material Culture
TE	03 MAR	Olupe, Ngariam	Core Vocab
TE	03 MAR	Olupe, Ngariam	Animals
TE	03 MAR	Orungo, Usuku	Emuron, Stars, Animals, Hunting
TE	04 MAR	Oale, Katakwi	Core Vocab
TE	04 MAR	Oale, Katakwi	Farming
TE	04 MAR	Oale, Katakwi	Fodder Grasses
TE	05 MAR	Soroti Town, Soroti	General Wordlists, Age Words
ME	09 MAR	Opotpot, Kaabong	Mening Core Vocab
ME	09 MAR	Opotpot, Kaabong	Mening Fodder Grasses
ME	10 MAR	Nawiyaro, Kaabong	Mening Age Sets
ME	10 MAR	Lokabaya, Kaabong	Mening Core Vocab
TO	11 MAR	Kapoeta, South Sudan*	Toposa Core Vocab, Clans, Asapan
TO	12 MAR	Kapoeta, South Sudan*	Toposa Clans, Asapan
TO	13 MAR	Kapoeta, South Sudan*	Toposa Core Vocab, Etal
TO	13 MAR	Kapoeta, South Sudan*	Toposa Clans, Etal
NY	30 MAR to 5 APR	Jinka, Ethiopia	Comprehensive wordlist elicitation over 7 days with Nyangatom Dictionary Project
NY	06 APR	Kangaten, Ethiopia	Fishing Words
NY	07 APR	Lokorolam, Ethiopia	Asapan Rituals, Etem, Healing, Cursing
NY	08 APR	Lokorolam, Ethiopia	Material Culture, Structures
TE	19 APR	Ojeburon, Amuria	Core Vocab, Warfare, Etal
TE	19 APR	Moru Inera, Amuria	Etal
TE	20 APR	Oale, Katakwi	Minimal Pairs

TE	20 APR	Kapelebyong, Amuria	Core Vocab, Migration Practices, Etal
TE	21 APR	Atine, Amuria	Ajosi Dance, Musical Instruments
TE	21 APR	Oribabai, Acowa	Core Vocab, Sacred Grove Visit
TE	21 APR	Oribabai, Acowa	Aspan, Cursing
TE	22 APR	Usuk, Katakwi	Ekiriakiria Dance
TE	27 APR	Onyara, Pallisa	Core Vocab, Etal
TE	27 APR	Okuboi, Bukedea (In Pallisa)	Etal, Cattle, Migration
TE	28 APR	Agule, Pallisa	Core Vocab, Etal
TE	28 APR	Agule, Pallisa	Fishing Words
TE	29 APR	Aijepet, Pallisa	Core Vocab, Marriage
TE	29 APR	Oale, Katakwi	Stars, Asapan, Funerals
TE	01 MAY	Soroti Town, Soroti	Clan Migrations, Ateso Language
TE	02 MAY	Katakwi Town, Katakwi	Carpentry
TE	02 MAY	Oluupe, Ngariam	Pottery
TE	02 MAY	Aparisia, Usuku	Joining a New Clan
TE	03 MAY	Oale, Katakwi	Grains, Construction of Houses
TE	03 MAY	Kumi Town, Kumi	Minimal Pair Sentences
TE	04 MAY	Asinge, Tisai Island	Birds
TE	04 MAY	Asinge, Tisai Island	Core Vocab
TE	05 MAY	Pallisa Town, Pallisa	Minimal Pair Sentences
KA	18-22 JUL	Moroto Town, Moroto	Multiple Wordlists
KA	23 JUL	Ngilukumong, Moroto	Asapan
KA	23 JUL	Naciele Village, Moroto	Marriage and Clan Initiation
KA	24 JUL	Rupa, Moroto	Asapan and Clans
KA	24 JUL	Lokitelakapis, Rupa, Moroto	Matheniko Emuron
KA	25 JUL	Kaloi, Rupa, Moroto	Matheniko Horn shapes, clan, grasses
KA	25 JUL	Nabokat, Moroto	Matheniko Akiwor & Akinyonyo
KA	29 JUL	Kakingol, Moroto	Tepeth Asapan

KA	31 JUL	Lowoyakromai, Rupa, Moroto	Matheniko Emuron and Warfare
KA	01 AUG	Naro, Nadunget, Moroto	Child war-captive from Teso
KA	01 AUG	Locerep, Nadunget, Moroto	Woodcarving
KA	01 AUG	Nadunget, Moroto	Pottery
KA	03 AUG	Lokitelakapis, Rupa, Moroto	Haruspication of Goats
KA	03 AUG	Lokitelakapis, Rupa, Moroto	Age Words, Raid into Nyangatom
RB	05 AUG	Kaabong, Moroto (Tepeth)	General Tepeth Vocabulary
JI	08 AUG	Nakapelimoru, Kotido	Jie Akiriket and Asapan
JI	08 AUG	Kologwal, Kotido	Jie Amuron
JI	08 AUG	Nakapelimoru, Kotido	Jie Childbirth and Twins
JI	09 AUG	Nakongmutu, Kotido	Jie Cattle-Raiding and Warfare
JI	09 AUG	Longerep, Nakapelimoru,	Jie Childbirth Rituals
JI	09 AUG	Nakongumutu North, Kotido	Jie Structures
TU	10 AUG	Naturitotoi, Lokipoto, Koten	Turkana Reproduction Words
JI	11 AUG	Lokitelebu, Kotido	Jie Asapan
JI	11 AUG	Logom, Panyangara, Kotido	Jie Women and Akinyonyo
JI	12 AUG	Toror, Panyangara, Kotido	Jie-Bokora Peacemaking Site
JI	12 AUG	Kokumai Atapar, Panyangara	Jie Rainmaking
TU	13-16AUG	Koten, Uganda (Turkana)	Turkana Wordlists
JI	17 AUG	Lowoi, Kotido	Jie Asapan
JI	17 AUG	Lowoi, Kotido	Jie Age Words
JI	18 AUG	Lomuro, Kokeol, Rengen	Rengen Emuron
JI	19 AUG	Lokatap, Watakau, Rengen	Rengen Age-Sets, Firestarting
JI	19 AUG	Kotido Town, Kotido	Updating Lamphear's Book
JI	19 AUG	Kotido Town, Kotido	Stars
JI	22 AUG	Kalogwal, Kotido	Jie Akiriket
JI	22 AUG	Kalogwal, Kotido	Jie Clan Formation
KA	24 AUG	Katulem, Napak	Bokora Akiwor and Raindance

KA	24 AUG	Lopei, Napak	Bokora Asapan
KA	25 AUG	Matany, Napak	Bokora Amuron
KA	25 AUG	Lothanyanait, Napak	Bokora Asapan & Akiriket
KA	27 AUG	Nakapiripirit, Napak	Pian Asapan
KA	27 AUG	Nakapiripirit, Napak	Pian Akinyonyo, Childbirth
PK	28 AUG	Nakapiripirit, Napak	Pokot Sapana
RB	29 AUG	Mount Kadam, Napak	Kadama Interview
RB	30 AUG	Mount Kadam, Napak	Kadama Interview
RB	30 AUG	Mount Kadam, Napak	Kadama Interview
KW	20-25 SEP	Koboko Town, Koboko	Kakwa Vocabularies
KK	23 SEP	Koboko Town, Koboko	Kuku Core Vocab List
KW	24 SEP	Liru Hill, Koboko	Liru Hill History, Kakwa Sacred Groves
LB	29 SEP	Nyakwae	Jo-Akwa Age Initiations
LB	29 SEP	Nyakwae	Jo-Akwa Iron Working
LB	30 SEP	Kobulin, Nyakwae	Jo-Akwa-Karimojong Ritual Connection
LB	30 SEP	Opopongo, Nyakwae	Jo-Akwa Iron Smelting
LB	01 OCT	Abim Town, Abim	Jo-Abwor Childbirth and Clan Initiation
LB	01 OCT	Obwuro, Abim	Jo-Abwor Age Initiations
DO	02 OCT	Koputh, Kaabong	Dodos Asapan
DO	03 OCT	Kaabong Town, Kaabong	Dodos Asapan
DO	03 OCT	Sidok, Kaabong	Dodos Akiriket
DO	04 OCT	Kalapata, Kaabong	Dodos Asapan
DO	04 OCT	Lokooli, Kaabong	Dodos Asapan
DO	05 OCT	Kaabong Town, Kaabong	Dodos Asapan
DO	05 OCT	Kaabong Town, Kaabong	Dodos Emuron
RB	06 OCT	Tapach, Moroto	Tepeth Kenisan, General Vocabulary
TY	11-16 OCT	Tororo, Busia	Tesyo Vocabulary List
TY	13 OCT	Malaba, Tororo	Tesyo Age Initiations

TY	13 OCT	Mela, Tororo	Tesyo Sacred Groves, Clan Initiation
TY	14 OCT	Kwapa, Tororo	Tesyo Amuron
TY	14 OCT	Atiri, Tororo	Tesyo Migration and Groves
TY	15 OCT	Atiri, Tororo	Hunting, Fishing, Animals
TY	16 OCT	Atiri, Tororo	Trees
TU	20 OCT	Ajuluk, Loima, Kenya	Asapan and Akiriket
TU	21 OCT	Nariokotome, Kenya	Group Discussion
TU	21 OCT	Nariokotome, Kenya	Structures
TU	22 OCT	Nariokotome, Kenya	Hunting
TU	22 OCT	Nachukwi, Kenya	Fishing
TU	23 OCT	Nariokotome, Kenya	Paul's Asapan Day
DO	28 OCT	Loyoro, Kaabong	Dodos Asapan and Akirikets
DO	28 OCT	Loyoro, Kaabong	Later Migration into Nadodos
DO	29 OCT	Kaabong Town, Kaabong	Dodos Asapan and Akirikets
DO	29 OCT	Koputh, Kaabong	Dodos Akiriket, Awi, Grasses
DO	30 OCT	Kaabong Town, Kaabong	Women's Clan Initiation, Childbirth
ME	01 NOV	Telel, Karenga, Kaabong	Mening Akiriket & Asapan
DO	01 NOV	Kawalakol, Kaabong	Napore Akiriket & Asapan
DO	02-5 NOV	Kakamar, Kaabong	Dodos Cultural Vocabulary List
TO	02-6 NOV	Kaabong Town, Kaabong	Toposa Cultural Vocabulary List

*Note that South Sudan interviews were not conducted in person due to an ongoing civil war. These interviews were conducted through mediators over cell phones and by using recording devices that were returned to my location in northern Uganda.