

**ISSUES OF IDENTITY IN OLE KULET'S: IS IT  
POSSIBLE? AN1) TO BECOME A MAN** ^

**BY**

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***A PROJECT PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF ARTS  
IN LITERATURE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI***

**2004**

## DECLARATION

This project paper is my original work and has not been submitted for a degree in any other university.

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## **DEDICATION**

This project is dedicated to my parents, David Mbugua and Lucy Wairimu, for their prayers and steadfast dedication to my improvement.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I owe an immense debt of gratitude to my supervisors. Professor Henry Indangasi and Mrs Masumi Odari for their steadfast guidance through the writing of this project. My gratitude also goes to Professor Hellen Mwanzi for her initial comments and insights in shaping the proposal of this project.

To the chairman Department of Literature, Dr.D.H.Kiiru, goes my sincere gratitude for recommending me for the award of a University scholarship, which enabled me to pursue a masters degree in literature. Special thanks also go to Dr Knru for his encouragement and unwavering interest in my work.

I cannot forget the intellectual nurturance and encouragement I have received from the staff members in the Department of Literature. These include Professor Chesaina, Dr. Wasamba, Dr Evan Mwangi, and Dr Rinkanva. Particularly my immense gratitude goes to Mwalimu Waigwa Wachira for his friendship and helping me to realize the intellectual and creative potential in me.

I wholeheartedly thank Mr. Henry Ole Kulet for his warm reception and enriching interviews. I am deeply indebted to Ole Kulet for his encouragement and willingness to help me.

My sincere gratitude goes to my class-mates, Omuteche, Lucy Mwangi, Beatrice Masibo, Ann Baraza, Onyancha, Larry Ndivo, and Mugo Mote, for their moral support. In the same spirit I am grateful to Jenifer Muchin and Collins Ocham for their constant words of encouragement. It would be dishonest if the M.A1 class goes unacknowledged. I am particularly indebted to Velma, Phylis Omuphila, Lydia Angogo, Madam Maitho and Mwairumba for their friendship and moral support.

My sincere thanks go to my family for their unwavering love, their prayers, and encouragement throughout the period of writing this work. Special thanks go to my uncle, Francis Njoroge for standing by me all along, and Bro. Karanja Boro for all the sacrifices he has made to ensure the completion of this work. Finally, I will live to treasure the spiritual nurturance I have received from the Tuesday Bible Study and Fellowship, which shed some light to the beacons in my voyage.

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates issues of identity of the Maasai community as reflected in Ole Kulet's works. This is by focusing on his first two novels: *Is It Possible?* and *To Become a Man* with a view to establish the extent to which the encroachment of Western values has caused a shift in Maasai identity.

The study has used library research as its methodology. Moreover, It has been enriched by some information collected from Ole Kulet. The postcolonial theoretical framework guides the study. These approach foregrounds the aftermath of the interaction between the indigenous cultures and a Western lifestyle in Colonialism. The interaction is ensued by a synthesis of the cultures and its products have a hybrid identity, which is enshrouded by ambivalences.

The work primarily analyses how the foreign formal education influences the Maasai identity. The Maasai pupils who acquire the Western education suffer from a loss of their Maasai cultural identity. The study also demonstrates the difficulties of achieving the status of a man. This is because the traditional parameters of defining Maasai manhood are no longer viable in a modern social set up.

Finally, the conclusion reveals that the intrusion of a Western culture on the indigenous Maasai culture leads to a shift in their identity. Furthermore, the Western values emerge as agents of emasculating the Maasai man.

## INTRODUCTION

Henry Rupes Ole Kulet is the pre-eminent Maasai creative writer. He is one of Kenya's most prolific writers with six novels written in English and one written in Kiswahili. Yet, despite this broad Kuletian canon that spans for approximately three decades, it remains in the periphery of literary scholarship, his literary accomplishments have received inadequate critical attention.

Ole Kulet's fiction predominantly focuses on his Maasai community. He seizes every opportunity to portray the Maasai cosmology and culture. This fascinating community has been perceived diversely by the world. Their past glory is legendary. This is demonstrated by their ability to prevent Arab trade caravans and other Kenyan ethnic groups from penetrating their territory. This is expressed in the article: "Establishing the "Pax Lenana" in Maasailand". It says, "These ivory -seeking caravans never challenged the Maasai but were often ambushed by them. The Maasai truly appeared to have only two interests in life - - cattle and warfare"(23).

The Maasai are still regarded as glorious: They have been considered as embodying the authentic image of indigenous Kenya. No wonder a cross-section of Kenyans has considered the Maasai attire as a possible national dress. We get the impression that the attire transcends the Maasai identity to encompass a national one.

Moreover, the West also has a glorified image of the Maasai, which is best presented to us by Ernest Hemingway in his memoir Green Hills of Africa. This memoir gives a record of his experiences during a hunting expedition in East Africa. His crew consisted of members from different Kenyan ethnic groups like the Kikuyu and the Kamba

However, they did not fascinate him as his encounter with the Maasai did. He reveals his **fascination by the Maasai thus:**

They all were tall, their teeth were white and good, and their hair was stained a red brown and arranged in a looped fringe on their foreheads. They carried spears and they were the very handsome and extremely jolly, not sullen, nor contemptuous. They were the tallest, best built, handsomest people I had ever seen and the first truly light-hearted happy people I had seen in Africa. (168)

This idyllic image from, an outsider's perspective, explains why the Maasai attract tourists. From the above quote, the Maasai physique and character is presented as the epitome of perfection. This can further be exemplified by the following description:

They looked like no Negroes I had ever seen. Their faces were a grey brown, the oldest looked to be about fifty, had thin lips, an almost Grecian nose, rather high cheekbones, large, intelligent eyes. He had great poise and dignity and seemed to be very intelligent. The younger man had the same cast of features and I took him for a younger brother. He looked about thirty-five. The boy was as pretty as a girl and looked rather shy and stupid. I had thought he was a girl from his face for an instance when he first came up, as they all wore a sort of Roman toga of unbleached muslin gathered at the shoulder that revealed no line of their bodies (172)

The presentation of the Maasai by Hemingway echoes the "noble savage"; people full of innocence and grandeur. However, the features manifest in the presented Maasai like: the Grecian nose", "high cheekbo and "thin lips" are characteristics of the Caucasian ace v

Opposite to this hyperbolic stereotype is Rider Haggard's relegated presentation of the



Vlaasai warriors when the forces of white imperialism engaged them in a battle:

Faster and more famous grew the fighting. Single Maasai would spring upon the dead bodies of their comrades and engage one or other of the axeman with their long spears, but, thanks chiefly to the mail shirts, the result was always the same. Presently there was a great swing of the axe, an erasing sound, and other dead Maasai. That is if the man was engaged with sir Henry (104)

In this case the Maasai have been portrayed as inferior

Ngugi wa Thiong'o conveys the Gikuyu's prejudiced attitude towards the Maasai in The River Between. This is when his fictitious community attributes Wachiori's heroism to leading "the whole (Gikuyu) tribe against the Ukabi, Masai" (2). He further portrays the isolated space (in the periphery of Gikuyuland), which the "Ukabi" occupy: "The ridges were isolated. The people there led a life of their own, undisturbed by what happened outside or beyond .. The Ukabi would never come here" (3). Thus, the Maasai becomes the outsiders, or "the others" from a Kikuyus perspective. Moreover, in Petals of Blood, the arrival of Ilmorog peasants in the city shocks the residents, who associate the peasants "backwardness" to "Maasainess". The city drivers wonder, "who are these Masai<sup>9</sup> These Dorobo and their donkey-carts should be banned from the city!" (157) This relegated image reduces the Maasai to the periphery of the Kenyan social milieu. Actually, for most Kenyans the term Maasai is synonymous with "Backwardness". However, Kulet's writing attempts to evoke Vlaasai identity from their Worldview.

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The process of social transformation of the Maasai community as portrayed in the Kuletian canon is also peculiar: a community that strictly upholds its traditional heritage, and yet ambivalently seems to be embracing Western values. It is this ambiguity that

inspires this study. However, we will focus on how education impacts on identity. Moreover, we will probe into the ambivalence evident in the identity of the Maasai **community** as reflected in Kulet's works

The dominant cause of the social change and shifts in identity can be attributed to the interaction between the indigenous Maasai cultural heritage and the imperial culture. We will pay keen attention to the significance of Western education in influencing the identity of the Maasai community portrayed in Ole Kulet's works. Particularly, we will illuminate on these issues through focusing on Ole Kulet's first two bildungsromans: Is it Possible<sup>0</sup> and To Become a Man. However, his other novels will also be consulted to reinforce our argument.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This study is predicated on the recognition that there exists a dearth of critical commentaries and study on the creative works of Henry Ole Kulet. This has essentially meant that his portrayal of the various issues of Maasai identity has not received adequate critical attention. Therefore, we propose to contribute to the critical discourse on Henry Ole Kulet by attempting a systematic study on his novels paying a special attention on how he portrays his Maasai community's identity.

The infiltration of a foreign culture into an indigenous culture has both adverse and positive impacts. Therefore, this study attempts to explore how Kulet's works portray the impact of Western culture on the indigenous Maasai culture. We will pay a keen attention to the shifting parameters of defining Masasai manhood.

## **Hypotheses**

The study makes an assumption that Ole Kulet as a postcolonial writer, who writes as an insider in the Maasai community, expresses the magnitude of socio-cultural transformations inflicted by colonialism on the community that he depicts. The social-cultural transformations are triggered by colonial education, and they cause severe identity crisis.

It also presupposes that the selected works Is it Possible? and To Become a Man, tackle the problems of identity which are between a society that upholds its traditional cultural heritage, against the forces of colonialism, Westernization and modernization.

## **Objectives**

This study aims to demonstrate how Ole Kulet portrays the change of identity of the Maasai in his novels, paying a close attention to Is it Possible and To Become a Man.

My approach will be thematic.

The other motive is to illuminate on how Ole Kulet portrays Western education and how it impacts on Maasai identity.

It sets out to examine how Ole Kulet's creative works explore the problem of Maasai identity, and specifically the double identity that arises from the interaction between a traditional Maasai community and colonialism, and other forces of modernity, like Western education and urbanisation.

## **Justification**

•t

Despite the fact that Henry Ole Kulet is one of Kenya's most prolific creative writers, he is neglected: he has not been given adequate critical attention. An examination of his

writings is relevant not only in enhancing our understanding of postcolonial African literature, but also in enriching our knowledge of the creative trends in Kenyan literature. The other reason of justification is that Ole Kulet reflects on a peculiar community: the Maasai. His writings depict a community that adamantly embraces its traditional cultural heritage, and simultaneously endorses modernity. This ambivalence deserves critical consideration in informing our understanding of the issues of identity in postcolonial literature.

The study is also socially significant in enhancing our understanding of the intricacies of the process of social transformation and the Maasai identity as depicted in Ole Kulet's writings.

Ole Kulet's writings deserve our keen attention because he is an outstanding Maasai writer, who articulates the Maasai spirit and conveys a consistent picture of the Maasai from an insider's perspective.

### **Literature Review**

There is a dearth of research and critical commentaries on the writings of Henry Ole Kulet despite his enormous contribution to Kenyan literature. Critics of Kenyan literature have overwhelmingly applauded the author under this study. Nevertheless, they have denied his work adequate critical attention. For instance, some newspaper articles have mentioned about his invitations abroad, because of his novel To Become a Man, and other reviews dwell on his biographic details failing to shed light on the major concerns in his writings. Noteworthy is the fact that, his novels are taught in secondary schools and the Universities

In her newspaper article "Writing is His Life" Elizabeth Wanja hails Ole Kulet as a "fictional guru" with a "Herculean achievements in fictional writing" (16). Even though Wanja's article provides biographical information, tracing the influences in Ole Kulet's creative venture, she shuns from giving his novels a critical eye. Nevertheless, her article will come in handy in informing us about Ole Kulet's background as a writer

Francis Imbuga, one of Kenya's most acclaimed playwrights and an esteemed scholar of Kenyan literature, acknowledges Ole Kulet as a creative writer to reckon with in the Kenyan literary scene. He considers him as "one of Kenya's leading novelists" (128). Yet, despite this amiable recognition, he does not proceed to pay adequate attention to what forms Ole Kulet's writing.

Both Karsten Scroder and Charles Kulundu report on Kulet's exploits abroad. In the article "Kenyan Writer Makes Headway in Germany", Karsten Scroder informs us about the positive reception that Ole Kulet has been given by his German audience. Is it Possible? Has been translated into German as Feurprobe (1981). The novel has also been translated into Swedish and French. Commenting in the same article, Ole Kulet asserts the universal significance of the novel and says: "My book can be read and understood everywhere in the world. Young people growing up are always faced with the same problems just as I described them in my book" (16).

In Charles Kulundu's article "Kenyan Author Shines in Switzerland" we also realize the honour that has been accorded to Ole Kulet. This is when he was awarded the 1985 Third World Children's

Books award for his novel To Become a Man. This novel has been

translated into German and Swiss. Kulundu points out to the cultural conflict that ensues the interaction between a traditional mode of life and a Western lifestyle. A phenomenon that is well depicted in the novels under our scrutiny. However, Kulundu does not delve into Ole Kulet's writings. Kulundu's insight on cultural conflict is shallow and uncritical. Hence our study will investigate how Ole Kulet portrays the contradictions, the crisis, cultural coalition, and the ambivalences that ensue the interaction between the traditional Vlaasai customary ways and a Western lifestyle, epitomized by formal education, and how they impact on Maasai identity.

John Thuo in his article "Will the Maasai Culture Survive<sup>0</sup>" acknowledges the praiseworthy efforts that Ole Kulet has made towards the development of Kenyan literature. Apart from stating the titles under Ole Kulet's authorship, Thuo interviews him concerning what inspires his writing. In the interview, Ole Kulet says:

I had a natural interest in writing.

My other consideration was the Maasai culture and folklore because in my opinion the Maasai culture and mode of life will soon (sic) become a thing of the past especially in view of the changing times and the community's assimilation into modern life" () 1)

This study will explore the author's fear of the extermination of the Maasai traditional heritage due to the encroachment by modernity. We will examine this by exploring how he has reflected it in his works.

Evan Mwangi has cogently studied Ole Kulet's novels. His article "Whose House has it Become<sup>0</sup>" makes remarkable insights into Bandits of Kibi. Moreover, the article also

provides us with pertinent comments on the broad Kuletian Canon. In the article, Mwangi correctly notes, "exile and social ambivalence in the turbulence of history are the major themes of Kulet's fiction" (13) These postcolonial subjects are some of the major concerns that we will delve into.

In "I to I in the Narrative Mirror Fictional Autobiography and the Problem of Maasai Identity in Henry Ole Kulet's Writings" Evan Mwangi notes how Ole Kulet's fiction draws a lot from the author's real life experiences. The scholar begins with bemoaning the way literary scholars have marginalized Ole Kulet's writing This is despite being "one of the most culturally aware imaginative writers in East Africa" (17). Mwangi's study explores the Kuletian canon in general. He elucidates on the combination of Maasai traditions and modernity.

The article also sheds light on the problem of Maasai identity, another major concern in the postcolonial discourse. The critic has at length discussed the aftermath of the colonial education, which has been forcefully imposed on the Maasai, he exposes its alienating and emasculating effects. In line with Mwangi's argument we will discuss education as portrayed in Ole Kulet's novels. Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed will be an influential text when we will be discussing the colonizer's forced education on the Maasai as 'immobilizing and fixating'(65). The fact that Western education is imposed on the Maasai who staunchly embrace their traditions, it becomes an agent of oppression, which Freire regards as "necrophilic" (58). As Mwangi has noted, the products of the education system are a crossbreed between the "spear" and the "book". A synthesis of traditions and modernity, that causes ambivalences and adverse mutations of a rootless



**generation.** Hence, Mwangi's work supplies a foundation from which we **will** be **anchored as** we discuss identity in Ole Kulet's novels.

.Another scholar who has incisively appraised the writings of Ole Kulet is David Dorsey. Even though the essays I have referred to are unpublished, they provide us with authoritative insights on the creativity that has gone into Kulet's writings. The four essays are: "The Novel as Political Discourse: Is it Possible" "Vice, Virtue and their Cost: To Recome a Man." "The Kinds of Love in Ole Kulet's Daughter of Maa" and "The Cancer in H R Ole Kulet's Moran no More". In these essays, Dorsey goes beyond making a brilliant exposition of each of the mentioned texts: he attempts to analyze them in the light of the cultural environment from which they emerge.

In his exploration of Is it Possible? Dorsey cogently elucidates on the unique images of the Maasai: on one hand, a valorous and culturally natural, or indigenous people, hence idolized by Europeans; and on the other hand, a consternation to some other Kenyan ethnic groups, who regard them as "primitive". In this essay Dorsey addresses the paradox of embracing modernity and still upholding traditional customs. He pursues this issue further in the essay "Vice, Virtue and their Cost: To Become a Man". He points out the encroachment of Maasai manhood, which is characterized by circumcision and epitomized in the institution of Moranhood. Whereby valour is exhibited by the killing of a lion, and wealth is acquired through cattle raids. Colonial education and other forces of modernity threaten this. This essay will come in handy in our discussion of the issues of Maasai identity. Dorsey correctly notes, "its resolution cannot be adequately comprehended within the Western concepts of justice or determination" (1). This

observation supplies a guiding premise to the study, that a postcolonial perspective is the most appropriate approach in analysing the novels under our study. This is because **Western** parameters can neither capture, nor articulate the African worldview.

Further, Dorsey illuminates on the ambivalence that ensues the interaction between the Ylaasai customary ways and the Western lifestyle. He notes that it leads some characters into "holding a syncretic allegiance to two worldviews"(1). Hence, we will pursue the issue further as we discuss hybridity and the problematics of Maasai identity. He seems to be particular on the question of education; he posits, "the students receive an alternative, incompatible indoctrination"(4). We will drive this argument further in line with Paulo Freire's thinking in Pedagogy of the Oppressed.

In the essay "The Kinds of Love in Ole Kulet's Daughter of Maa," Dorsey views the novel as dealing with the plight of the evolving status of the educated, or modern women in Kenyan society. He points out to ridicule as one of the prominent devices employed by the novelist, this is appropriate in addressing the issue of the destabilized conventions regarding courtship and marriage. Dorsey aptly posits that: "All the uniquely Maasai institutions governing love and marriage are expunged from the novel"(8). This can be attributed to the encroachment of Maasai customs by Western values, and ultimately, this leads to a shift in Maasai identity. In this essay, Dorsey notes the crisis experienced by the Maasai community as a result of the synthesis, and the clash between traditional conventions and forces of modernity.

**Moran no More** according to David Dorsey in "The Cancer in H R Ole Kulet's Moran no Vfore" Portrays the malaise that has infected post-independence African states Dorsey **cogently** states that "in Moran no More Maasai identity is stripped of all its contents as a way of life" (4). The moral obligations that have sustained the Maasai community have been ignored. In line with Dorsey's view, the characters in the novel are unapologetic for Maasai traditions

Dorsey's criticism of Ole Kulet's novels is informed by the new criticism theoretical framework or formalism. This theory demands a critic to be strictly textual bound. Hence, limiting him from analysing the text in relation to the society from which it emanates Our study departs from Dorsey's approach by making a postcolonial criticism of Ole Kulet's works. This will help us to appraise the texts in relation to the historical experiences of the society as reflected in Ole Kulet's works

Up to this point, the foregoing literature review reveals that Ole Kulet's fictional works deserve more critical attention. Beside Evan Mwangi's and David Dorsey's invaluable articles that have given Ole Kulet's works some serious scholarly attention, the other works lack deep insights of Ole Kulet's works

### **Theoretical Framework**

The **study** proceeds from **the** postulates articulated by the postcolonial literary theory It is informed by Rajeswari Mohan **jp** the essay "Dodging **the** Crossfire: Questions for **Postcolonial** Pedagogy" who posits **that** theorists using **the** postcolonial epistemological frameworks see "postcoloniality neither as a backward-looking attempt to retrieve a lost

cultural purity, nor a clean and complete suppression of colonialism, but as an **engagement** with the history of colonialism" (270). This is in line with what Bill Ashcroft et al articulate in *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practices in Post-Colonial Literatures*, that, **the** postcolonial literary theory covers "all **the cultures affected** by the **imperial** process from the moment of colonisation to the present day" (2) Thus the theory interrogates the aftermath of colonial domination, and the on-going neocolonial relationships.

A study of literature from a postcolonial position means attempting to unveil what the writer is saying about life from the standpoint of the colonised. The colonised is a trope for marginalisation, or a metaphor of being thrown to the periphery of the mainstream social set-up, or the subaltern. This perspective is a rejection of what Peter Barry terms as "the universalist claims once made on behalf of literature by liberal humanistic critics" (191). Barry illuminates on this idea by saying that "whenever a universal signification is claimed for a work, then, white Eurocentric norms and practices are being promoted by a sleight of hand to this elevated status, and all others correspondingly relegated to subsidiary, marginalized roles" (192).

Ole Kulet's works exhibit many of the concerns of postcolonial theory. Foremost, the Maasai community reflected by Ole Kulet is in a state of flux as an aftermath of the influence and interference by the forces of colonisation, Westernisation and modernisation. This leads to the ambivalences that this study attempts to interrogate. Secondly, the portrayed Maasai community's mode of production pastoralism, and their

insisting on upholding their traditional cultural heritage relegates them to the periphery of the Kenyan social- economic milieu.

At this juncture, Edward Said's Orientalism, becomes pivotal to this study. It is an exposure of the reductive ideology upheld by the "universalist critics": The ideology entrenches an asymmetrical binary division, which is embodied in the Manichean allegory that distinguishes the "orient" from the "occidental" The "superior" Westerners, who are favoured, while non-European peoples are relegated to the subaltern status. This binary division portrays the white as civilized, rational and the legitimate ruler of the world. While at the other pole of this racial and cultural otherness is the non- white who is portrayed as the surrogate offspring. A conniving, instinctive, and irrational, mystical, and the West: "big brother", to beat the path, watch over him. and bear some of his hefty burdens.

However, the postcolonial epistemological framework not only rejects this reductive ideology that is used to reinforce domination, but it attempts to correct the distorted image of the marginalized. Thus a study of Ole Kulet's work from a postcolonial perspective will expose the reality from the marginalised^ or the subaltern s perspective. It is right to view Ole Kulet as voicing the "empire writing back". Ole Kulet's work evokes or attempts to recreate a precolonial version of the unpolluted Maasai past, rejecting the current world, which is tainted with the stains of imperial immorality. This fact is well illuminated on in Moran no More and Bandits of Kibi

Another facet of postcolonial literary theory is the depiction and celebration of hybridity. In Henry Ole Quiet's novels we discover an amalgamation of the indigenous Maasai culture and Western cultural values. This cross-cultural interactions leads to

ambivalences: foremost, this cultural syncretism is not entirely negative, just like biological cross-fertilization; it produces a richer dual breed. Moreover, the colonial legacies cannot be shed off, they contribute to the doubleness of the identity of the postcolonial generation. On the other hand, the cultural syncretism leads to confusion. This is what Homi Bhabha perceives as mimicry or the ambivalence of "the white-masked black men" (62). This ambivalent identification cannot be divorced from the syncretic culture, or the postcolonial heritage, aptly conveyed in both Is it Possible<sup>0</sup> and To Become a Man. Homi Bhabha bemoans the plight of the indigenous people, whereby "the colonised come to achieve a kind of 'pseudo-petrifaction", thereby making the coloniser-colonised relations oscillate between fixations and phantoms and thus generating uncontainable paranoia on the part of the coloniser" (93). This is as quoted by Kyong-Won Lee in "Is the Glass Half Empty or Half Full<sup>9</sup> Rethinking the Problem of Post Colonial Revisionism."

Interrogating the language employed by Ole Kulet, we realize a synthesis of English and Maasai language: Ole Kulet draws from the rich resources of Maasai orature, often using phrases, idioms, songs and sayings in Maasai language. We also encounter an indigenisation of English. Alaka Holla elucidates this phenomenon in his article "Post Colonial Residue", he uses the term subversion, which entails "the postcolonial writers adoption of the colonial language to local needs by constructing it into a very different linguistic vehicle " (3). However, this syncretic nature of Ole Kulet "s language enriches the aesthetic value of Ole Kulefs fiction that is accessible to a wider audience

However, despite the Kuletian canon emerging from the postcolonial Kenyan experiences, it draws our attention to the socio-economic, political, and cultural realities

of the reflected society. Therefore a sociological approach will also come in handy in our **analysis** of Ole Kulet's novels.

### **Methodology**

This study involves library research as its methodology. It focuses on Ole Kulet's writings as the primary texts of concern. Emphasis is laid on his earlier texts: Is it Possible<sup>0</sup> and To Become a Man. We have also used Internet facilities to download articles on the postcolonial literary theory. To enrich the study, Henry Ole Kulet will be interviewed. This is in an attempt to capture what informs his creative impetus, and to get his insights concerning the issues under this investigation.

### **Scope and Limitations**

In an attempt to remain focused, this study limits itself to a thematic appreciation of issues of identity in Ole Kulet's fiction. The study will pay a keen attention on Ole Kulet's earlier texts, Is it Possible<sup>0</sup> and To Become a Man. His other texts shall be referred to where appropriate to show how he has addressed the process of change of the Maasai community as reflected in Ole Kulet's writings.

## **Chapter Breakdown**

This is an introduction of the whole study.

The first, chapter: "Ole Kulet and his Writings" is a kind of a literary biography. It introduces the novelist and addresses some fundamental issues in his works.

The second chapter "Formal Education as an Agent of Shifting Identities in Is it Possible<sup>0^</sup>" examines how Western education impacts on Maasai identity.

The third chapter "Quest for Manhood in To Become a Man" discusses how Ole Kulet discusses the parameters of defining Maasai's manhood. The encroachment of Westernization on Maasai customs leads to a shift in the definitions of manhood.

And finally, a conclusion that sums up the pertinent issues addressed in the study.



## CHAPTER TWO

### Ole Kulet and His Writings

#### Introduction

Henry Rupes Ole Kulet hails from a traditional Maasai family. His first name Rupes is rarely used because according to Maasai customs the first name disappears when one is growing up. He picked up the baptism name, Henry, after his encounter with Rider Haggard's Allan Quartermain. Ole Kulet informed me that it is due to his admiration for the novel's main character that he decided to borrow his name.

He was born in 1946 at Enkare Ngusur village, which is better known as Siyiapei in Narok District. The Enkare Ngusur seasonal river is a natural beacon near their home. The Siyiapei mission house is another landmark adjacent to his birthplace. Ole Kulet derives from this environment for his fictional environment in Moran no More. In an interview with me he said that he attended Siyiapei Primary School. Similarly, the narrator in Moran no More attended Siyiapei Primary School. Then Ole Kulet proceeded to Kilgoris for his intermediate, or upper primary education.

His father, Lemomo Ole Kulet, was hailed for his prowess as a Moran. The author informed me that his father was praised as the man who "brought home an ox as big as a hill" after raiding the Chagga "of Tanzania". As an elder, Lemomo Ole Kulet was an esteemed arbitrator during disagreements. His community respected his opinions. Moreover, just like the fellow elders, he was polygamously married to two wives.

Some of Ole Lemomo's traits are manifest in Ole Sururu the Protagonist's father in Is it possible<sup>0</sup> Just like his fellow elders, who are the custodians of Maasai custom and traditions; he was opposed to the imposition of Western education on Maasai. In an interview with Elizabeth Wanja, Ole Kulet says " I badly wanted to record my experiences of growing and going to school despite immense pressure from my parents and clansmen to embrace our Maasai traditions'^ 16). He recalls instances when he would connive with his father to feign illness as an excuse of avoiding school. He also narrated to me of an instance when his father would send him on an errand when the teacher and the government officials visited their village with a mission to collect the boys who failed to go to school and take them back. Some of these personal elements are alluded to in his creative works. For instance, in Moran no More, we encounter Topoika Ole Mugie conniving with his son Roiman, so that the boy can feign illness in order to distract the teachers and the government officials.

The school in Kilgoris is located far away from Ole Kulet's village; it is also a boarding school. This alludes to the school in Arusha that Lerionka attended. After his intermediate school, Ole Kulet proceeded to Narok High School. It is at this stage that he discovered his talent as a creative writer. This is after writing an article, which was inspired by President Kenyatta's visit to Narok High School. The article was published in a major local newspaper

it

Though Ole Kulet seizes every opportunity to portray the traditional Maasai heritage, he is not a die-hard traditionalist. Actually his character embodies the hybrid identity. He is

a heavily built man, and he is also bespectacled. His first impression does not give one a clue of his Maasai identity. Incidentally, he is rarely in the Maasai traditional attire, his ears are not pierced like the other Maasai men of his age. However, in an interview with Francois Michel, he testifies about his spiritual attachment to his Maasai roots thus: "I've all along been Maasai at heart" (97). Hence, we can say that he has a Maasai spirit, and at the same time has some traits of Westernisation.

After clearing his secondary school education, Ole Kulet proceeded for career training and obtained a diploma in personnel management. The Kenya Farmers' Association, which later changed its name to Kenya Grain Growers Corporation, employed him. He is currently retired from employment in the formal sector, and he is preoccupied in his farm.

Ole Kulet is a monogamist. He is married to Janet Kulet. His wife is an avid reader, and Ole Kulet considers her as his first critic. He does not regard her as a "house wife" because she is the pillar of the family and she has been managing their farm.

He is a father of six children who are also pertinent in his creative venture because they read and critic his works before they are published. His daughter Harriet Tianda and his son Edwin Lamayan, have shown interest in creative writing. He has also modeled some of his fictional characters after his children. For instance, the beautiful traditional girl in Daughter of Maa. Seleina, shares a name with one of his daughters.

Ole Kulet is a realist writer. The contemporary issues in his society inspire his writings. Therefore, as a writer who reflects on a postcolonial Kenya he is most likely to address postcolonial subjects arising from his society. He has addressed the ambivalence that

ensues his community's attempt to embrace modernity and at the same time uphold its traditions.

In an interview with Elizabeth Wanja, Ole Kulet articulates his philosophy as a writer in the following words: "the role of a writer is not to change society but to dissect it so that the society can reflect on it and see itself as it is, and then change itself." (16) Therefore, he views his art as a model that the society can emulate

Ole Kulet's first novel, Is it Possible? Was published in 1971, when he was twenty-five years Old In 1972 his second novel To Become a Man was published. His first two novels portray the Maasai community's response to the encroachment of their traditions and customs by Western values His third novel: The Hunter was published in 1985. It portrays the rot corroding the nation; this malaise is embodied in poaching. Moran no More was published in 1990. It pronounces the demise of moranhood Rampant corruption has invaded the postcolonial nation and in the process endangered the traditional values that have sustained the community since time immemorial Daughter of Maa was published in 1990. It portrays the emerging status of the educated or the modern woman. Bandits of Kibi is his latest novel to be published in 1999. It was inspired by the tribal clashes that plagued some parts of Kenya. Beckon of Fate is Ole Kulet's forthcoming novel; it is at an advanced stage in the process of publication. He has also written a Swahili novel: Maisha va Hatari.

In his writings, Ole Kulet targets young readers .And, for effective communication he uses accessible language. His aim is to teach them about their past, and the contemporary issues in their society.This is in order for them to mould the favourable traditional values

to fit in their current circumstances. This echoes Chinua Achebe's argument in "The Novelist as Teacher" when he says, "the writer cannot expect to be excused from the task of re-education and regeneration that must be done. In fact he should march right in front" (4). Ole Kulet succeeds in this task by seizing every opportunity to portray the **Maasai** cosmology and culture in his novels.

In an interview with Francois Michel, Ole Kulet says that his mission is to preserve Maasai traditions for posterity. He articulates it in the following words: "So to me it is keeping alive the Maasai traditions and perpetuating customs that I would like to see that they are not just lost, in this changing pattern of life" (98).

Apart from Ole Kulet drawing from his Maasai cultural heritage for materials in his novels, his other sources of inspiration are his life experiences. The contemporary issues affecting his community and the nation are other influential sources for his creative works.

In an interview with this writer Ole Kulet says that Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Camara Laye are the African writers who have influenced his presentation of Maasai culture. Ernest Hemingway and Rider Haggard are the other writers who have inspired the sense of adventure in his earlier works.

However, there is evidence of numerous borrowings between Ole Kulet's Moran no More and Howard Spring's These Lovers Flew Away. There are discernible similarities between the two novels. For instance, some paragraphs in Moran no More are derived from These Lovers Flew Away. The extracts below attest to this fact. In Moran no More we are shown Roiman's room, which is presented thus:

I left them and went into my small bedroom. From the smell of it, I could tell that it was newly decorated. I looked at the walls painted in Pale Pink, the gleaming white of the woodwork, the new curtains that draped the window, mainly blue but with red flowers scattered upon it, and a similar cloth that formed the bedspread. I realized that the decoration and furnishing had cost my mother quite a lot of money. .. (70)

In Howard Spring's These Lovers Flew Away the narrator says:

I left my mother there and went into my small bedroom. From the smell of it I could tell that it was newly decorated. Looking at the walls painted in pale pink, and the gleaming white of the woodwork, ... I realized that it had all cost uncle Arthur a pretty penny... (57).

More occurrences of this nature are evident in the two novels. To substantiate our argument, we will consider some more instances. In Moran no More the protagonist tells us:

On the other side of the narrow road, there was another gate, and behind me a pathway led to a farm house. A herd of milk-cows with heavy udders were coming through the field towards the gate facing me, and guessing that the cows being driven for milking, I got up and threw the two gates open. The cows walked past me through one of the j^tes. A man walking behind the cows with a stick in his hand came closer to me and said.

"Thank you young man "(42)

The equivalent of this extract in These Lovers Flew Away is presented thus:

On the other side of the narrow road there was another gate, and behind me a pathway led to a farm. A herd of milch-cows, with heavy udders, was coming through the fields towards the gate facing me, and guessing that they were being driven for milking I got down and threw both the gates open. They knew their way, and lolloped across the road. A boy walking behind them with a hazel switch in his hand grinned at me and said: "Thank you".(64)

To reinforce our case, we will consider the episode of the boys who are fighting during a hike. In Moran no More we are told:

What followed was neither boxing nor wrestling. They knew nothing of either. They just went for one another like two cockerels trying to hurt one another. They looked ill-matched, for, though they were nearly of the same height, it was evident that Karane had had good feeding from the start and that Petita Legis was just recovering from the rough life he had before joining Pastor Stephano Tajeuo's household. But where Petita Legis was a little weak in body, he made it up in agility which enabled him to dodge Karane's deadly blow skilfully.(60- 61)

The equivalent to this episode in These Lovers Flew Away is articulated thus:

What followed was neither boxing nor wrestling. They knew nothing of either. They just went for one another like two furious tom-cats, trying to knock down, trying to throw down, trying\* in every possible way to hurt one another. They looked ill-matched, for though they were much of a height. Greg had a life of

good feeding behind him, and Billy had been more or less starved from birth. But they were not so ill-matched in fact, for Billy had the agility of a whipcord (98)

**These** are evidence of plagiarism, and they raise the question of the authenticity of Moran  
no\_More

The next part of this chapter entails a discussion on each of Ole Kulet's novels. However, we will not concentrate on Is it Possible<sup>0</sup> and To Become a Man because they will be discussed in their respective chapters.

### **The Poacher as a Rootless Renegade**

In The Hunter, Ole Kulet reflects on the wanton destruction of the Maasai's habitat. Both the fauna and the flora around the Maasai are endangered by human activities. In the novel's opening statements, we encounter a young man, Leseiyo, bemoaning the dreadful state of devastation of the natural environment. In a monologue, Leseiyo says this about the vegetation, which he is surveying:

Across the valley on the hillside, amid billowing smoke, stood black skeletons of trees with their bare branches raised, pointing to the sky as if pleading for mercy.

(1)

The vegetation is portrayed as wretched "the previous night's fire .. reduced the vegetation to the desolate scene'^1) This shows how destructive human activities and droughts endanger the natural environment, v\*



**Richmond** Sipaya, a callous poacher is portrayed as ostracized from his community. This is because by poaching, he destabilizes the harmony between the Maasai and their natural **environment**. The poacher threatens the harmonious co-existence between the Maasai, their livestock, the fauna and the flora

Maasai's habitat forms part of their identity. This is because a person is identified by the place he inhabits. When Sipaya endangers his community's habitat, his community rejects him, it spews him out, and this is ensued by his loss of a Maasai identity.

The traditional Maasai are the custodians of the natural environment. Maasai's livestock browse blissfully together with wild animals. Leseiyo recalls the harmony between his community and wildlife during his childhood:

Ever since I was young, I have lived with these wild animals. They have become so common to me that I see them the same way I see these bushes.... When I was a small boy I enjoyed watching the zebras, the giraffes, the antelopes and other animals co-existing in the plains (84)

The poachers threaten this harmonious co-existence between man and his natural environment. The licensed hunter, Mr. Cahlen, exclaims: "poaching is a disease" (87). Hence, Sipaya, the poacher, suffers from this malaise and like a leper he is ostracized from his community.

Sipaya recalls his mother's reaction when he went for his first hunting expedition, he narrates to us thus: "she put her old hands on her bulging hips, "Go - go to your bloodthirsty companions Go swearing **with** them, go drinking **with** them and continue torturing your father and mother Twist your hunting knife in them" (97). The reference to the poachers as "bloodthirsty" identifies them with vermin. Sipaya's mother's satirical **outburst is** a premonition of his dispossession The "Twisting of the hunting knife in his parents" implies the severing of his family roots. This amounts to his loss of kinship identity

When Sipaya decides to work for Elube, a firm that is involved in clandestine poaching activities, his community is disenchanted. On hearing the news, his mother seemed as if "she was going to have a stroke" (98). When he obstinately decides to serve the hunters as a guide, his family dispossesses him He testifies thus: "when I was out of the house I looked back and I saw my mother tearing her dress asunder" (99). The tearing of a mothers dress exposes her nakedness; it is symbolic of a curse that can never be atoned, it marks Sipaya's total uprootment from his family This is ensued by his loss of Kinship identity, which is anchored in his family Moreover, the umbilical cord that attaches Sipaya to his community is statured.

As a poacher, Sipaya is not only alienated from his family but he is also dislocated from it and its natural environment. Hence, he becomes a rootless renegade. This is in contrast to the Maasai who preserves his ^natural environment, he is portrayed as deeply entrenched in the Maasai cosmology Mr. Edwin Setia, the Chief Game Warden, is depicted as "a Maasai to the marrow" (127) This can be attributed to his conservation of

the natural environment. Moreover, he has still preserved the Maasai spirit within himself; he still possesses a Maasai aura. We are informed that his house has a "friendly **atmosphere** that he associated with Maasai huts and it had the same smell (127). From this quote, it is evident that the Game Warden still retains his Maasai identity.

Sipaya epitomizes wickedness. He leads a gang of poachers, and apart from his displacement from his community and its nature, he is also uprooted from the dignified human values. A corrosive lust for wealth drives him, and it leads him to malaise. His parameters of manhood are determined by wealth. Even his "bravery was in his money" (52). As a result he becomes corrupt, which eventually dehumanizes him.

According to him "A man... is one who when he sees another driving a limousine asks himself why he himself is not driving one" (98). He yearns to possess property that is associated with the "high culture" class in his society. We are informed, "Sipaya detested simplicity and imported all his furniture from England. This stamped him amongst his friends and associates as a man of great taste" (42).

Thus, he aspires to acquire the status of the former colonial masters by importing "furniture from England". He also yearns to be identified as modern and sophisticated.

Because of identifying with the exploiters, he is dislocated from his family. In a passionate outburst he says: " I am ashamed of them (his family) and their virtues, I never want to be like them" (96). Even on his dying bed he is unwilling to be identified with

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his family. Even though the family visits him to console him, and express their spirit of belonging to their "Prodigal son" he rejects them and screams to the doctor: "Tell them to

go away! I don't want to see anybody!" (176) Therefore, even at the moment of his death Sipaya is not reconciled with his family

The poacher's life in the reflected Maasai community is characterized by estrangement from the community and its natural environment. Sipaya is not only ostracized from the community but he is dehumanized. He lives and dies as a rootless renegade, devoid of a Maasai identity.

### Moran No More: The Demise of Moranhood. and Integrity

The title Moran no More pronounces the death of the institution of Moranhood. David Dorsey suggests "in Moran no More Maasai identity is stripped of all its content as a guiding way of life" (4). The novel develops a thesis that the dignified values that have governed the Maasai people since time immemorial have outlived their days.

Evan Mwangi posits "Moran no More mourns the loss of pre-colonial tranquility to a corrupt modernity, while celebrating the world of new values to which the narrator has to adjust in order to forge a new identity" (15). All the characters in the novel except Romian's (the narrator's) grandfather are unapologetic for the Maasai cultural heritage. They have lost their Maasai cultural identity.

The grandfather in the African context is esteemed as the patriarch of the whole extended family. A strong bond of attachment binds the whole family especially the grandparents

and their grandchildren. However, in Moran no More the grandchildren are dislocated from their grandfather. This portrays a loss of identity among the youth. It also portrays the youth's rootlessness. Roiman narrates about their brief moment with his grandfather

We walked to my grandfather's home in the evening. He was the only one who seemed to have aged. He welcomed us warmly, but regrettably my stay in town seemed to have put distance between us. After a formal greeting and enquiries about the health of my mother and uncle, there was nothing else to discuss and there followed an embarrassing silence. "We have to go," I said. "Go well my grandsons", he said "and may God lead you." We left him. I did not see him again. (95)

The fact that the grandfather welcomes his grandsons warmly shows that he still regards kinship bonds. This is unlike the estranged youth who never saw his grandfather again. The fact that: "there was nothing else to discuss" implies a severe loss of identity, or dislocation. They have little in common.

Moreover, the young generation is not only estranged from their grandfather, they are also estranged from their parents. On a visit to Roiman's mother and uncle, Petita Legis, Mary Auma, Sereya, Ledama and Maron, all now employed, emerge as alienated from their parents. Maron's uncle laments saying: "you have become strangers in a home that had got used to your frequent visits" (190). This portrays the weakening of family bonds and the subsequent loss of identity, which is based on kinship

This can be attributed to the individualistic nature of the modern society. This is as **opposed** to the celebration of the communal spirit in traditional societies. Maron's mother **attests** to this fact when the young men claim that they are still morans, and she says thus

Come in my daughter and prove to these old men that there are morans no more. Not by age and not by retirement of their age-group but it is by the way they behave. They have become so individualistic that they have to be formally invited to come and visit us. A moran never did that. He was a child of the community, and he was always visiting his elders" (189). Due to their individualistic nature, the young men have lost their identities as morans.

Moran's father, Topoika Ole Mugie, suffers from an even worse dislocation. His uprootment from his Maasai environment to work in a European's ranch reduces him to an exile. His father regards him as a "rogue" (3). This name identifies him as a rootless renegade.

Topoika Ole Mugie is portrayed as suffering from disillusionment, and as an escapist. He attempts to escape from the society into an idyllic world; an ideal world, free from social conventions. He is neither willing to honour Maasai traditions and customs, nor pledge allegiance to the laws governing the Kenyan state. Instead, he yearns to be "free in his own way, away from town, away from authority, roam the woods and the forests, nibble at foliage and wild fruits like a gazelle, and like a Ndorobo take a pot-shot now and then at the game" (8). These yearnings are both romantic and futile. Interesting it is in this wilderness that Jie dies a lonely death. He is devoid of a traditional Maasai cultural

**identity**. Furthermore, he is displaced from the national Kenyan identity because of his **failure** to honour its authority.

\Inran no More is an affirmation of nationhood. Ole Kulet transcends ethnic **consciousness** to encompass a national consciousness. This is illustrated by Mr Sopia's advice to his nephew, Malon, in the following words: "You are a Kenyan first; anything else is peripheral" (88). Hence the youth's national identity becomes paramount, while his other identities for example, kinship and ethnic, are at the periphery

A national identity is characterized by the weakening of tribal affiliations, and replaced by a strong sense of belonging to Kenya. The merging of these ethnic groups occurs in Nakuru town - an urban centre . On the premise that the urban centre is not an ancestral home for any ethnic group, it becomes a favourable blending environment for the different ethnic groups. Ole Kulet depicts this merging by the intermarriage between the Maasai and the Luo. This is embodied in the marriage between the Onyango's family and the KimanTs family Uncle Sopia, a Maasai and Ruth, a Luo. A marriage bond also ties the Onyango's family — Luo, and the Kimani's family— Kikuyu The amalgamation of these families through marriages is symbolic of the nature of the Kenyan nation Which Indangasi in his article " The Kenyanness of Kenyan literature" considers as "evolving out of an amalgam of tribes who to borrow the words of Chinua Achebe "had hitherto gone their several ways" (1). The identity of the characters in the novel is determined by their Kenyan nationality. ^

Ole Kulet portrays a society that has evolved from a traditional society to a modern society. This is characterized by vast social transformations. The standards for defining identity **have** also shifted. The age-group system was traditionally a source of identity for its members. For instance, in Is It Possible<sup>9</sup> Lenonkas father informs his son "my name is **Kanankei**. My family name is Ole Sururu. My age-group — Iitalala — called me **Osokoni**"(3). We realize that one's age-group identifies him, for instance— Iitalala, we also learn that age-mates gave one a praise name, for instance Ole Sururu's age mates named him Osokoni. However, these parameters are no longer viable in the modern set up as portrayed in Moran no More. Roiman has no age-group. He testifies that when he was circumcised "there was no ceremony... there was only a simple operation done on me with only a doctor and me in the room" (70)

Circumcision, the rite of passage that permits one into manhood and identifies one with fellow initiates, has lost its cultural significance. It is "now a hygienic measure" (70). Hence, it is not used as a forum for inculcation of Maasai cultural values, nor does it usher the initiate into moranhood. Actually, the title Moran no More proclaims the death of moranhood. A thesis that is advanced by Onyango, who says: "what we have is a ceremonious fellow who puts on a shuka, shoes and carries a transistor radio as he looks after cattle"(49).

This synthesis of a traditional Maasai lifestyle and modern values leads to a hybrid identity. It suggests that the traditional identity does not entirely die, but it is amalgamated with modernity to produce a hybrid identity. In an interview with Ole Kulet, he informed me that he does not foresee the death of the institution of moranhood,



(instead it should be restructured to fit in the modern social set up similar to the National Youth Service.

The "death of Moranhood" is an aftermath of **its** encroachment by modernity. The evolution of the traditional societies to modern societies is accompanied by rampant **corruption**. Wealth in terms of material gain is glorified, and the new parameters of defining one's identity are determined by one's social class and the level of affluence

Roiman reveals to us that his uncle "was secretly proud of his massive appearance which he thought enhanced his air of dignity" (83). His physical appearance is a marker of his rising status. His newly acquired identity as a wealthy man is pronounced by the attire he adorns himself. The expensive suits distance him from the traditional Maasai who is adorned in a shuka - the traditional attire. Thus, dressing becomes a marker of one's identity

The quest for prestige, and a luxurious lifestyle as a symbol of rise in one's social class compels some characters to be corrupt. Highest on the hierarchy, which is determined by affluence, is Mzee Za Kale. Mzee za Kale epitomizes evil. His lust for wealth dehumanizes him. Beast images have been used to identify his traits. Za-Kale has a "gorilla — like figure" (138). He turned "his stiff neck like rhino" (138) and interestingly he conveys himself in a beastly manner, this is evident when the narrator informs us "Za-Kale gave his gibberish speech about how he undermined others" (139). Thus, Za-Kale's image is closer to a beast than a human being. The image of his physical appearance also attests to his dehumanization

the narrator posits thus:

He was a bulky, thick, large-framed person, with such an extended pot-belly that he was forced to sit astride. His hands hung sideways like the wings of an injured bird. His dry face was the colour of an old-over used hide, with warts dotting all over it (136)

Za-Kale is presented in an image of petrification. When the narrator shook his hand, it felt "like a lifeless limb"(137). This reinforces Za-Kale's sense of estrangement from humanity. Thus, corruption is portrayed as a threat to human sanctity and dignity, and those who engage in it lose their human identity.

Meja Mwangi, a contemporary of Ole Kulet, in his novel *The Cockroach Dance* has created a character, Tumbo Kubwa, who has similar traits as Mzee za Kale. Tumbo Kubwa is portrayed in the following imagery: " He was a head shorter than Dusman and three times as heavy, with rings of blubber round his neck and middle, and old-timer whom fate, in his most unreasonable quirk, had thrust into the realms of affluence when the big money world was still relatively new to Africans^ 164). Both Mzee za Kale and Tumbo Kubwa's massive sizes signify' how they have embezzled from the society. They can be defined as the neocolonial plunderers, who have replaced the white colonialists

Materialism seems to be the driving force in the society. For one to be identified with the prestigious social class, one must be luxurious, and willing to compromise one' integrity  
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by engaging in Magendo. David Dorsey takes Ole Kulet to task over his presentation of corruption. David Dorsey's concluding remarks are that: "There is no suggestion of any

possible counter- force or reform. Even the conclusion is an inadequate vindication of honesty" (9). Dorsey views Moran no More as ineffective in attacking corruption.

Dorsey concludes his essay thus:

An **issue**, such as corruption here, an eloquently voiced objection to some facet of the social order does not mitigate the narrative's conservative effect. On the contrary, by suggesting that the evil is "natural" and "inevitable" and particularly by showing that personal "survival" and familial responsibility morally require complicity, such fiction **serves to relieve the reader any sense of guilt, mollify** any sense of outrage. And teaching us to accept what is, is the most insidious and persuasive office of art. (9)

From the ensuing discussion, it is evident that Ole Kulet portrays how the values that have sustained the Maasai community since time immemorial have lost their significance. The communal spirit manifest in the traditional society has been replaced by egocentrism and rampant corruption. The Kenyan government has waged war against corruption, which is entrenched in the country.

### **Woman Reborn In Daughter Of Maa**

Ole Kulet's Daughter of Maa is a sustained representation of the place of the modern or educated woman in a Maasai Community that is transforming from a traditional way of

**Ifc to a modern lifestyle. The novel portrays women who are striving to emancipate themselves from patriarchal domination.**

Maasai traditions and customs sanction men to subjugate women. This unbalanced relationship can be analyzed from a perspective of colonisation. In his article "The Metaphorical Use of Colonialism and Related Terms" George Landow states "Colonialism... is any relation involving exploitation" (1). He further exemplifies this argument by drawing from Gaytraí Spivak, thus: "Women in many societies have been relegated to the position of "other", marginalized and in a metaphorical sense colonized" (1). Hence, the modern woman strives to liberate herself from victimization by her society that is governed by the patriarchal ideology.

Anna Nalangu, the community educator, epitomizes the liberated woman; the woman who has overcome patriarchal domination. The woman who is economically empowered, and also in control of her own, and her society's destiny.

Though modern, the enlightened woman is still a custodian of her community's cultural heritage. Old Olodalu commends Anna Nalangu for her keen attention to the wisdom of the sages. He says that " Many young people will not listen to the elders nowadays and when I see one so tender, so young and learned wanting to listen, my heart jumps with joy" (37). Thus, as she spearheads the improvement of her society's living standards, she is foremost anchored in her community's cultural heritage

In the essay 'The Kinds of Love in Ole Kulet's Daughter of Maa' David Dorsey views the novel as dealing with the plight of the evolving status of the educated, or modern women in Kenyan societies. Ole Kulet's earlier works have not been sensitive presentations of the image of women. There are instances where he presents his female characters as voiceless, victimized, suppressed and overwhelmed

In Is it Possible? Lerionka's mother is presented as impotent when her son is faced by challenges. This is when her son is forced to go to school. When school closes, and Lerionka returns home, his mother "fainted" (33) because she was overwhelmed by emotions on seeing him. We are further told that Lerionka's family migrated from the village because his mother was constantly sick since he left for school.

In To Become A Man, we encounter equally overwhelmed female characters. In our first encounter with Leshao's aunt she becomes "unconscious"(41). When she regains her consciousness, she emerges as disgruntled. The image of an overwhelmed woman is figuratively presented when Leshao hits a dog and "it grunted like a dissatisfied woman" (41). The simile of an offended dog grunting "like a dissatisfied woman" demeans women. This portrays the author's and his society's prejudiced attitude towards women.

The traditional Maasai customs privilege men, and in the process suppress women. Women are rendered voiceless and inconsequential when major decisions are being made. When Leshao's uncle, Meteunj, and his father, Ole Merresho, are deliberating on his Son's circumcision, his aunt is expected to behave as a silent spectator. It is not her right to speak among elders but a privilege: "She had to speak soothingly to appeal to the

^ of the elders" (61) Ole Merresho is shocked because this is contrary to the **traditional** customs. We are told: "if she were his wife he would have flatly refused to let her talk" (61). However this traditional, voiceless, woman gradually becomes assertive  
m Daughter of Maa

While deliberating on their daughter's marriage, Nalotuesha, Ole Mugie's wife, out rightly confronts her husband thus: "Hee, my husband, what has become of you<sup>0</sup> You have always been responsible and considerate, but of late, I do not know what has gone wrong. You do not seem to care a hoot. And you ask me whether that is all, my husband..." (78). Even though the woman respects her husband, she is not entirely dependent on him. She takes the initiative to ensure the well-being of their family. Her boldness can be attributed to her association and the enlightenment that she has received from Mwalimu Anna Nalangu.

The Maa community identifies Anna Nalangu according to her career as a teacher. The name Mwalimu points out to her prestigious status in her community. However, her community perceives her ambivalently. On one hand, in an admirable manner, and on the other as a threat. We are informed, "to a number of the village women, the teacher was just miraculous" (10). On the other hand, the same women complain: "she has the worst charms"(15). They regard her as a threat to their marriages.

The presence of Anna Nalangu in Maa village endangers the courtship process and the marriage between Joseph Malon and Seleina. Joseph Malon is respected by the society

because he "had learned all there was to be learnt and that he was the most learned in the whole of Maasailand" (5), while seleina is the ideal Maasai girl. The narrator wonders -who else would have matched the beauty of Seleina, the daughter of Ole Mugie°... **Seleina** was a tall young lady, with a beautiful figure, which some of Joseph Malon's **friends** had once compared to that of the goddess of love"(5). She is the best trophy that they can give to their educated son.

However, Malon's attention drifts towards Anna Nalangu, a similarly educated or modern woman Malon yearns for Anna Nalangu for his sexual fulfillment. He lusts for her. When she visits him at his house, Malon "groaned inwardly" (54). When he gets a chance to observe her, he is captivated by her sexuality, and he lusts after her What attracts him most is "the inviting mouth with those moist lips" (57). His attraction towards Anna Nalangu is contrary to his repulsive attitude towards Selena. Even after their marriage he behaves in a morose manner.

Daughter of Maa jeers at patriarchal ideology and male chauvinism. This is portrayed when Joseph Malon competes with his father-in-law, Ole Mugie, in wooing Mwalimu Anna Nalangu. Traditional morality concerning marriage is thus discarded.

Malon is indifferent towards his wife Seleina. By rejecting her and betraying her love, he metaphorically betrays his traditions. This is because Seleina symbolizes traditions Their marriage is a trope of the synthesis between Maasai traditions and modern values Old Olodalu's analysis of their marriage articulates this hybridity. It is presented to us thus:

Olodalu thought what a Solemn and beautiful thing it was to witness the marriage of these two young persons who had it in their power to perpetuate the culture of Maa. He could not help being uplifted by the thought that, in their healthy young bodies Seleina and Joseph Malon held the seeds of the proud futures and knowing that the groom was learned while the bride was not, the old man thought the two would bridge the two worlds (113)

The syncretism of traditions and modernity as presented in the metaphor of marriage has also been presented in Is it Possible? However, in Is it Possible<sup>9</sup> Ole Kulet employs the metaphor of a book and a spear to represent modernity and tradition respectively. The author asserts the possibility of synthesizing traditional practices and modern values

In Daughter of Maa the synthesis of a traditional way of life and a modern lifestyle seems futile. This is symbolized by the crises in the marriage. The "daughter of Maa" Anna Nalangu has a dual identity, a heritage from her Maasai traditions and modernity.

### Severed Family Bonds in Bandits of Kibi

Bandits of Kibi reflects on the national decadence in post independence Kenya.

This decadence is epitomized by the tribal clashes that plagued some sections of Kenya between 1993-1995. In an interview with Ole Kulet, he informed me that Bandits of Kibi

is inspired by the incomprehensible gullibility that leads his Maasai community to butcher its neighbouring ethnic groups. Actually, Ole Kulet was prompted to migrate



from his home in Mau, which is in Enosupukia, to Ndunduri near Nakuru town in protest because he could not tolerate the idea of his community's leaders persuading the people to attack their neighbouring tribes

To portray the treachery of tribal animosity, Ole Kulet shows the aftermath of the intra-ethnic conflicts that have traumatized the community living around Kibibiare valley. To capture the weight of this tribal animosity, he focuses on Ras Mento's family. Thus, this family becomes a trope for the nation, which is affected by the tribal clashes.

The intra-ethnic conflicts have severed asunder the links that tie together the family. We are introduced to Mama Manta planning to leave because her husband, Ras mento, is about to return home from jail for aiding banditry. Mama Manta is haunted by shame, due to her family's involvement in banditry. She is reluctant to welcome visitors in the family. Hence, when inspector Dele is about to visit his friend, Sam Lang, a member of the family, Mama Manta complains saying: "nowadays we can't even keep our shame to ourselves. Must some wretched outsider always force himself in staring and interfering?"

(2) From Mama Manta's lament we realize that she considers her family ostracized; placed in the periphery of the community because of some of its members involvement in banditry.

This family is not only severed from the rest of the community, but its members are severed from each other. This makes it very amorphous. Ottis Mopel betrays his brother Harry Lanto to bandits because of Lanto's attempt to unearth his father's involvement in banditry. Mama Manta is determined to purge out the evils that have plagued her family,

Which culminates in the murder of her son Harry Lanto. While her husband, Ras Mento, is incarcerated because of corroborating with John Mere's in spearheading the bestial activities of the bandits

Inspector Daniel Dele visits this tormented family after his arrival from a United Nations peace keeping mission in Bosnia. Dele is persistent in the quest for truth and justice over Harry Lanto's murder because he was not only his best friend, but because Lanto died in his company. They shared a strong sense of belonging, and this makes inspector Dele integral in the quest for justice.

Ras Mento emerges as the epitome of evil; he is a villain who connives in his own son's murder. After his release from prison he is unaccepted by his family members except Mopel. He considers the room that is prepared for him as "a more pleasant isolation than my cell in prison" (72). We further realize his sense of unbelonging to his family when he reveals to us that he felt like a leper who is "cut out of the body of the family" (78). His sentiment reveals his loss of identity as the head of this family. And his uprootment from the family, and just like a leper; his ostracization from his family we are told that he suffers as "an outcast in his own home" (90). This portrays his dispossession by his family.

Ras Mento is not only alienated from his family, but he is also estranged from himself. This is manifested in his split personality. When Mama Manta interrogates him about their son's murder, Ras Mento shifts his personality: "he did not know whether he was thinking his own or the other's thoughts" (102).

He acquires the "sense of not belonging to himself" (102) in prison. Thus, Ras Mento has a double identity, which enables him to camouflage himself from his interrogators, and to escape from the anguish of betraying his own son

However, despite Ras Mento's camouflaging tactics, Mama Manta coerces him into **retrieving** the truth and in the process he is devastated to death. Mopel is the other culprit in Harry Lanto's murder. Even though he is still a student in Nairoua University he owns a Merc and leads a lavish lifestyle" (142).

Moreover, he is still unemployed. His wealth can only be attributed to his clandestine activities with the bandits. His wicked activities culminate in the betrayal of his brother Harry Lanto, who is murdered by bandits. Initially he was Mama Manta's favourite child. However, after the realization that he betrayed his brother, Mama Manta disowns him. This disownment is best expressed by Mama Manta's words thus: "Don't call me Mama again," she said, " I only had one son who you helped to be murdered" (186). Therefore, Mama Manta fractures the bond that links her to her son, Mopel. This spells out his loss of identity

The whole family eventually disintegrates when Sam Lang deserts the homestead. He seeks for exile away from this traumatizing environment. He flees together with his love, Lilian Soila. This conveys a message of hope. Bandits of Kibi is an affirmation of life. This is because despite the three grisly deaths in Ras Mento's family, we are informed, "there was still something worth celebrating in life" (236). This is because the purging process of the perpetrators of banditry has been successful

from the ensuing discussion, we can see that the bonds that bind together Ras Mento's family are fractured. However, Sam Lang's elopement with Lilian Soila is a glimpse of hope for the posterity of this family. Metaphorically, it can be viewed as a hope for the nation after going through the traumatizing tribal clashes.

## SUMMARY

In the ensuing discussion, we have paid attention to Ole Kulet's life and how it has **influenced** his creative works. We have attempted to explore the pertinent concerns in his novels. We have encountered Ole Kulet's masterful evocation of Maasai culture. He has also reflected on the community's attempt to fit into the national social milieu.

As the Maasai community undergoes a process of social transformation, consequently, a change of identity ensues. The synthesis between Maasai traditions and a modern lifestyle leads to a hybrid identity. Hence, it is justifiable for us to contest the idea of Maasai cultural purity. This is because the Maasai community as described by Kulet is gradually losing its Maasai traditional identity

It is possible for us to trace the transitional trend in the identity of the Maasai community as portrayed in Ole Kulet's novels. Is it Possible<sup>0</sup> and To Become a Man depicts the onset of the syncretism between Maasai traditions and modernity which produces a hybrid identity. The Hunter portrays the wanton destruction of Maasai's environment by poachers, and the poacher's ostracization from the community. The poacher emerges as one dislocated from his Maasai identity. Daughter of Maa celebrates the empowerment of women. The modern woman is emancipated from the shackles of patriarchal domination, which is reinforced by . traditions. Moran no More pronounces the demise of "moranhood". The craving for a luxurious lifestyle and the lust for wealth leads to corruption.

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**This** malaise culminates in the demise of the traditional Maasai identity. Finally, Bandits of J.C. Ihi portrays shattering asunder of the kinship ties that bind together the community. Tribal clashes lead to the fragmentation of the reflected community.

In the next chapter we look at how Western education impacts on the identity of the Maasai community as reflected in Is it Possible?<sup>0</sup> The emphasis will be on how the text presents the ambivalence that ensues the syncretism between Maasai traditions and a modern lifestyle.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **formal Education as an Agent of Shifting Identities in Is it Possible<sup>0</sup>**

In his Is it Possible? Ole Kulet explores the possibilities of synthesizing the Maasai **cultural** heritage with Western cultural values. He proposes a cultural syncretism; and its products would acquire a dual identity— the hybrid. Evan Mwangi posts that " the question in its title is both interrogative (begging an answer from the reader) and rhetorical expecting from us an affirmation of the speaker's point of view)" (20). The title is derived from Ole Sururu's dilemma, if it is possible to merge the spear, a symbol of traditions, and the book- a symbol of western values.

The Maasai elders are opposed to the idea of embracing the foreign formal education enforced on their boys by the colonial government. Ole Sururu responding to the compulsory education says:

I do not see how I can let this boy, my only son, leave me I know they are going to be taught to defy orders. They will be taught that cattle are nothing. After all, how do you expect a man to be able to hold the heavy spear in one hand, the sticks with the other, and books at the same time? It is impossible Impossible I say. (13)

From Ole Sururu's point of view, Western education would estrange the pupils from their traditional lifestyle. The fact that "they are going to be taught to defy orders" implies that they would disregard these traditiona-h conventions. Also by being "taught that cattle are nothing", they would be uprooted from the Maasai cultural heritage that revolves around cattle

from a traditional Maasai perspective both Henry Lerionka and Livingstone Lerionka remain uneducated because they are both ignorant of their society's customs, and the **sage's** wisdom that has sustained the community from time immemorial. Hence, they both emerge as dead in the cultural ways. The formal education they have acquired is irrelevant to Maasai ways. An old man points out to this cultural death during a meat-eating feast. Referring to Henry Lerionka, the old man says, "people who go to school stink" (41). The image of stench implies rottenness; it reflects the cultural death caused by the foreign education to Maasai traditions. Therefore, the pupil appears as estranged from his traditions.

This uprootment is further exemplified when Henry Lerionka points out that "Livingstone had forgotten the usual greetings passed when one meets people slaughtering" (92) Hence, an elder proposes to Livingstone in the following words "may we suggest to you that you learn Maasai customs again?" (92) The elder's suggestion illuminates Livingstone Lenonka's uprootment from his Maasai cultural heritage. The fact that he cannot recall the manner of greeting people who are slaughtering is evidence of his estrangement from his traditional society. It also implies that he has lost his cultural identity.

The elder's sentiments echo Lawino's lament when she bemoans the plight of her husband, Ocol, thus:

Ocol has lost his head

it

He has read extensively

And the reading



Has killed my man  
I feel like vomiting!  
For all our young men  
Were finished in the forest.  
Their manhood was finished  
In the classrooms (113)

Therefore, the protagonist, Lerionka, and his mentor, Livingstone Lerionka, can be described as suffering from a similar emasculation as Ocol. This implies their lost identity—the smashed manhood caused by their deviance of the community's expectations of manhood. The society is suspicious of Livingstone's sanity, and we are told, "People in the village laughed at him. Some said he had been bewitched, others said he had been driven mad by intensive reading" (97).

This echoes Ocol who "has lost his head due to his extensive reading". This marks out their estrangement from their respective communities.

Ambivalently, Is it Possible<sup>9</sup> endorses the synthesis of African traditions and Western social perspectives. This is embedded in both Livingstone Lerionka and Henry Lerionka. Through the protagonist's perspective we are able to perceive Livingstone Lerionka thus:

When I came back he (Livingstone) was standing leaning against his spear, his right leg crossed over his left hand. His right hand held his spear firm, while in his left he held his two sticks and a book, which he was reading. His club was tucked under his belt. My mind went immediately back to the first time I heard my father talk of school. I remembered what he said: "It is impossible to hold a Spear and a book "

But that versatile Maasai was reading leisurely and he had all his weapons with him. He was still a Maasai, regardless of the fact that he was learned. (95)

Henry Lerionka's identification of Livingstone Lerionka as a "Maasai regardless of the fact that he was learned" points out to Livingstone's dual identity or what Francois Michel refers to as the "divided identity" (66). This hybrid identity is as a result of synthesizing a Maasai heritage and a Western lifestyle, which is epitomized by formal education.

The reference to Livingstone Lerionka by his mother as "Olashumpai" (90), meaning a Europeanized Maasai, also points out to the ambivalence in his hybrid identity. An old man attests to this fact when he says "Her son (Livingstone Lerionka) looks like a European I saw at Gilgil some time ago" (85). Thus, the pupils who are a product of the western education are associated with European values

Lekakeny also observes the Europeanisation of the protagonist, Lerionka. He tells him: "You have been changed by those Sunday School teachers. You no longer seem to be the Maasai boy I know. You are now Olashumpai" (46). These point out his Europeanisation and the consequent isolation from his traditional society.

The Europeanisation of both Henry Lerionka and his mentor, Livingstone Lorionka, echo the plight of Jean Marie Medza in Mongo Beti's Mission to Kala. His name, Jean Mane Medza, points out to his identity as a black French man. One who has been uprooted from his ancestral African heritage, and instead he has assimilated a French lifestyle. The Kala community is conscious of his Europeanisation. And an elder pleads with him thus:

"Listen to me my boy", said an old man, getting to his feet and interspersing his remarks with placating gestures, as though he were soothing a baby. "Listen, it doesn't matter if we don't understand. Tell us the same. For you the whites are the real people, the people who matter, because you know their language. But we can't speak French, and we never went to school. For us you are the white man/' (65)

Thus, the Kala community identifies their educated boy with the Europeans. Similarly, the Maasai community identifies the educated pupils with the Europeans, because culturally the pupils have picked some traits of the European's lifestyle. When Lekakeny associates his friend Henry Lenonka with the Europeans, and Livingstone Lerionka's mother refers to her son as Olashumpai, it indicates their estrangement from their traditional heritage. It also portrays their acquisition of some of the Europeans' identity. In this case the foreign formal education which is enforced on African pupils becomes an agent of shifting identities.

The black pupils who go through Western education suffer from a severe identity crisis. This is attested to in Henry Lenonka's dilemma when he asks his mentor, Livingstone Lerionka, "how can one live in two worlds<sup>0</sup> ...How can one be learned and at the same time fit in with uncivilized people<sup>9</sup>" (94)

It is evident that the limited formal education that the protagonist has received has already confused him. It has indoctrinated him to perceive his traditional heritage as "uncivilized". We also realize that he is aware of the fact that he is "a child of two worlds"—a traditional Maasai ancestry and a Western heritage.

**This** can be exemplified by considering Livingstone's perception of their space as intellectuals in the community. He says that "we are left in some place between foreign culture and our own" (94). From this quote we realize that they are located in the periphery of both their Maasai community, and the Western culture. Hence, like any other hybrid character they occupy what the postcolonialists refer to as the third space. Their hybrid identity is also enshrouded in ambivalences and confusion. Echoing Homi Bhabha we can refer to this as the paradox of "the white-masked black men" (62).

We can observe hybridity in the two names: Henry Lerionka and Livingstone Lerionka. Their baptism names attest to their acquisition of a new identity. The source of the baptism name that Livingstone chooses for himself can be traced to the history of European intrusion into Africa. In his book *Eastern African History*, Collins Robert writes as follows: "The great British missionary David Livingstone was also one of the foremost explorers of East Africa" (18). This portrays his identification with the European missionaries and explorers who paved the way for the colonialists. In a letter to the protagonist, Lerionka, Livingstone accords him the name Henry thus

Have you by chance read a book by Rider Haggard entitled "Allan Quatermain"<sup>9</sup> If you have, you must have come across the name Henry, which belonged to a strong brave man. Why don't you take that name<sup>9</sup> I think it will match your present name (136)

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Livingstone admires Allan Quatermain's Henry because he is a "strong brave man". He fails to recognize that Henry's strength is used to crush Maasai warriors. Thus by

ascribing this identity to the protagonist, the protagonist becomes identified with the Europeans. Incidentally, Henry is also the artist's baptism name and this points out to the novel's autobiographical nature.

Livingstone compares baptism to the traditional rite of being "brought out of the house" (88), whereby "a child was being given a new name which differed from the one it was give when it was born. It was done when a child was seven or so" (89). During the ritual, Livingstone was named Lenonka, while initially he was known as KelaL This Teminds us of the Kikuyu naming ceremony in the River Between . This is when Waiyaki is being named " and the women who had come to wait for the birth of a child, shouted with joy:

" ali-li-li-li-li-li-lii  
old waiyaki is born  
Born again to carry on  
the ancient fire."( 12)

These traditional naming ceremonies create a sense of the child's belonging to the whole community. While the names ascribed are engendered with a responsibility of perpetuating the family's identity to posterity. The child is also anchored in its ancestral roots. However baptism which is its European counterpart is meant to mark out the individuals acquisition of a Christian identity, which is a Western phenomenon. Therefore both Lerionka's. have names that point out to their European heritage and their African ancestry. Their names indicate their hybrid identity.

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The protagonist's father, Ole Sururu, is an embodiment of the purely Maasai heritage. He is firmly anchored in Maasai traditions, and his identity is purely Maasai. His identity is **exposed** to us when he attempts to inculcate it in his son using the following words:

"My name is Kariankei. My family name is Ole Sururu. My age-group—Iltalala— called me Osokoni, meaning that my actions were bitter, like the fruits of the tree called Osokoni"(3)

These names are indications of his traditional Maasai identity. Ole Sururu is a family name, which is hereditary. Lerionka is supposed to perpetuate it, and this is supposed to continue to immortality. Osokoni is a praise name, and it embodies Ole Sururu's trait of bitterness, which is associated with valour. Lerionka aspires to be like his father, and his aspiration is fulfilled after beating Lekakeny, while the boys are herding calves. As an indication of imitating his father, his peers call him Osokoni. To emphasize Lerionka's success in perpetuating his father's identity, they sing for him a praise song thus:

Ole Sururu is Osokoni  
his eyes were becoming full of tears  
but he is Osokoni  
he ought to be praised laleiyo  
he ought to be praised Osokoni. (6)

Thus, the boys identify Lerionka with his father. So far, the protagonist is still anchored in the Maasai traditions. He still perpetuates his father's legacy and carries out the cultural activities that Maasai boys of his age normally carry out. However, this traditional identity is threatened by the foreign formal education

The compulsory education enforced on the Maasai by the colonial government leads to the pupil's uprootment from their traditional heritage. The pupil is also estranged from the family. Lerionka is conscious of this estrangement. He swears to his father saying: "if they force me with all their might I will let them use the fire they have to destroy me. They will take my body when I am dead" (10). This portrays the protagonist's allegiance to his Maasai heritage. However, this is short lived because the community eventually complies with the government's orders of taking one boy from each family to school.

As evidence of the estranging effect of the forced education, the protagonist's mother falls sick. She faints when she sees her son for the first time after their first school holiday (33). Thus, Western education emerges as alienating, fatal, fracturing the family and hence undesirable. Saidimu's son, Lekakeny, who flees from school is embraced as "a gentleman" (35) by the community. While Lerionka is regarded as "a coward" (35) because of his attachment to the Western education. Cowardice is a vice, which is abhorred by the Maasai. It is not associated with manliness. Hence, by Lerionka being associated with it, it portrays how Western education has emasculated him.

To portray Lerionka's estrangement from his family and community, he spends a night in the wilderness on his journey home after the schools closed. In his article "African Literature and the Pleasures of Home", Evan Mwangi discusses the protagonist's uprootment in the following words:

In African literature, the destruction of home symbolically marks the end of one's identity and erasure of the pleasures that come with one's sense of self-definition. When in the novel Is it Possible<sup>9</sup> by Henry Ole Kulet, the Maasai boy Lerionka is

uprooted from his culture through enforced foreign education, his alienation is figuratively captured as inability to find his parents' home when he returns on holiday, his nomadic family having shifted without him from the only home he knew. Although he arrives at the physical spot where the family had constructed its home, he doesn't belong and he must move to their current space to gain a semblance of reconnection. The novel seems to be saying that even if home and identities are ever in motion as the nomadic life of the Maasai, one must physically move with one's community. Any rupture means a split of one's spiritual and physical wellbeing. (12)

The rupture in the family is magnified by the protagonist's attachment to school. When Lerionka expresses his preference of going to school rather than seeking for exile from the forced education at his uncle's place in Arusha, his mother threatens to ostracize him using the following words:

"If you want to go to school I will ask your father to let you go, but do not use his name. You will no longer be his son, and not my son either".  
(44)

If Lerionka insists on going back to school he risks severing the umbilical cord that binds him to his family. As part of this disownment, or ostracization, Lerionka should not "use his father's name" implying that he risks losing his identity which is embedded in the name



**Orlando** Patterson points out to the significance of names in embodying one's identity.

This is in his book Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study, he writes that:

"A man's name is of course more than simply a way of calling him, it is the verbal sign of his whole identity, his being-in-the-world as a distinct person. It also establishes his relation with kinsmen"(22).

Thus Ole Sururu is firmly anchored in the Maasai community, this is attested by the family name, which he perpetuates. He is also anchored in his age-group This is symbolized by the name Osokoni, which is ascribed to him by his age-mates. This is unlike his son who is being warned by his mother against "using his father's name" if he insists on going to school. This would not only entail his loss of identity, which is based on Maasai culture and kinships, but an uprootment from the community.

To reinforce our argument on the influence of names on one's identity, we draw from Marie Kruger in her article "Just a Brilliant Disguise: Postcolonial Identities and the Performance of Gender", she argues as follows:" Names provide one with a sense of belonging: who could be named could also be identified in relation to a larger social entity; being named meant being claimed by a community"(28). Therefore, when Lenonka's mother threatens to withdraw the family name from her son, it signifies his disownment. This is ensued by his loss of identity. It also culminates in his disownment by his community

This kind of dispossession is evident when Livingstone Lerionka returns to his village after going through formal education in Arusha. We are informed that when he arrived:

The dogs barked fiercely. The cows and goats ran away from him as he approached. That was the strangest figure they had ever seen. Children ran away .. the dogs ran to the gate of the village to keep him out (84)

Worse still, there is a moment of misrecognition by his own mother We are told " she recognized me (the protagonist, Lerionka) before she recognized her own son" (84) This portrays that the traditional community does not claim him The hyperbolic image of cows and goats running away from him indicates his severe estrangement from the Maasai heritage, which is centred on livestock Lerionka's misrecognition is exemplified when his mother misnames him. Instead of calling him Livingstone, she calls him " Lipson"(90). This misrecognition of her son's name depicts his estrangement from his ancestral roots.

In his book Becoming Kenyans. Mukhisa Kituyi articulates the pupil's estrangement in the following words:

The native intellectual who comes back to his people... wishes to attach himself to the people; but instead he only catches hold of the outer garments. And these outer garments are merely the reflections of a hidden life, teeming and perpetually in motion. (180)

This implies that his return is not complete because he cannot be fully reintegrated in his traditional society Livingstone Lerionka, the prodigal son who can no longer fit in the traditional social set up, epitomizes this estrangement. His mother attests to this fact when she says: "Now you are a big boy, Olashumpau who does not want to be smeared

with red ochre. I wish you knew how much I hate those stinking garments you are wearing" (91). This shows that even his own mother cannot fully embrace him. This is because the metamorphosis he has gone through has caused a permanent rupture between him and his kinsmen.

The protagonist's, Lerionka's, metamorphosis takes place gradually after joining school in Narok. The new pupils have strong kinship affiliation. The boys identify themselves according to their clans and each boy "took his clanmate as a brother"(20). However, as their stay in school prolongs the pupils get in a dilemma between prioritizing their allegiance towards their kinship, or school. Hence in a parade meeting they laugh at an old parent instead of responding to his greetings. This portrays their confusion and estrangement from the traditional community.

As Lerionka gets more enticed by school, his affiliation towards his family weakens, while his allegiance to school strengthens. This could be explained by his new status as the prefect of Standard One. The new rank raises his self-pride and he reveals that: "I felt big, as big as Amos, our teacher" (26). We can recall that he had experienced a similar self-pride when his peers sang for him a praise song after beating Lekakeny. His feelings are articulated thus: "I felt as if I was as big as Mpoke. I jumped for joy and told myself my father can now be proud of me"(7). Comparing these two moments of the protagonist's exhilaration, we realize that when he beats Lekakeny, he identifies himself with his father and inherits his praise name Osokoni. While, when he is promoted as a

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class prefect, he identifies with the teacher. This indicates that school provides him with alternative sources of identity.

The Maasai community is aware of the new roles awaiting the pupils. This is attested to when an old man greets the protagonists thus: "supa 01karani"(40), the old man refers to him as a clerk. Therefore, by the old man identifying the pupil with the white collar job of a clerk that the intellectuals aspire for, it implies that the community does not expect him to join the institution of Moranhood after finishing school, instead they expect him to be working in an office. This points to the intellectual's estrangement from the Maasai's life philosophy. It would also defy the Maasai heritage and their culture since the time they "ascended the Kerio valley" (41)

Hence, to prevent his son from further encroachment by the Western values, which are conveyed through the formal education, Ole Sururu decides to exile him to Arusha. Lerionka's exile to Arusha is engendered by ambivalence. On one hand he is fleeing from foreign formal education while on the other hand he is going to acquire the foreign formal education. He reveals to us that he "felt a mixture of anger and happiness, anger because I was fleeing from education, which I liked, and happiness because probably I was to get another chance of education at Arusha" (52). Therefore, Lerionka acquires a new identity: that of an exile, who is detached from the Maasai community's original homeland. Leong Yew discusses exile in the following words:

Exile can take place in different cultural spaces, especially through processes like colonization and modernization. In this case by living in a place that has become culturally transformed through<sup>^</sup> colonialism, it is possible for exile to occur particularly-when one realizes that a traditional language, way of life, religion, tribal practices can no longer be articulated or experienced without the mediation of

modernity. This causes a sense of loss and displacement from a traditional homeland.

(1)

Livingstone teaches the protagonist some Swahili words in order to prepare him for his life as an exile. This is meant to enhance his communication in Arusha. His acquisition of some Swahili words indicates that his space will now be broadening to encompass other communities who are unfamiliar with the Maasai language.

Ironically at Arusha the protagonist acquires education, which he is fleeing from. Lenonka forms a strong bond with David Parit, a fellow tribesman. This shows the strength of the ethnic boundaries. However at school he suffers from marginalization by fellow pupils because of coming from a traditional background. This is when he wears his Maasai sandals to school and the pupils associate them with backwardness. We are told thus:

The sandals were not at all comfortable, but they were at least better than bare feet. Their shape was awkward, and I admitted at school that they were out of fashion. I did not at first think they were odd at all. I walked to school in them and at first the boys did not notice them. But when they did, they laughed until tears rolled down their faces. Some said I was still in the "stone age".(130)

This is the same prejudiced attitude that some Kenyans have towards the Maasai community. They associate the Maasai's allegiance to their traditional culture with backwardness, or what some schoolboys refer to as still living in the "stone age"(14).

Lenonka is further humiliated when he greets his teacher's wife, Mrs Asmanu in the Maasai customary way. He bends his head and the lady is supposed to pat it. However, the lady mistakes the protagonist's sign of respect and courtesy - by bending his head -

she interprets it as an abnormal behaviour. This marginalizes the Maasai boy. In the postcolonial discourse it portrays how the metropolitan perceives the subaltern. They attribute their unfamiliarity with the cultures of the indigenous people with abnormality, instead of attempting to understand them.

The formal education that Lerionka has gone through at the school in Arusha prepares him to fit in the national location. It also arms him with skill to replace the colonial administrators in the newly independent state. We are told thus: "What we are trying to teach the people is to have pride first for Kenya and let the tribal pride come next. We want people to regard the tribes as brothers of one mother Kenya" (146).

Thus, the protagonist is attaining a national identity, a Kenyan. The protagonist's mentor, Livingstone, and Mr Asmani join in the national politics.

So far, our discussion has illuminated the influence of the foreign formal education on Maasai's identity. It is evident that the pupil's acquisition of the formal education is ensued by a shift in their identity. The pupil is estranged from his kinsmen. In an attempt to persuade his parents that Western education is compatible with Maasai ways, Livingstone lends the protagonist some money to buy some calves so that he can manipulate his parents into believing that the foreign formal education is compatible with the Maasai lifestyle.

In an interview with Francois Michel, Ole Kulet says that the ideal that Is it Possible<sup>0</sup> embodies is the synthesis between a\*Maasai heritage and a modern lifestyle. The artist articulates the idea thus:

When I was thinking of this novel, I was saying that to myself: Is it possible for the Maasai to change a little bit, you know put themselves in the mainstream of the development of this country without losing their customs, traditions as Maasai<sup>9</sup> And I think it's the theme of the story all through And I was trying to show at the end that it was possible to hold two worlds. And the fears of the elders that their children are going to get lost if they went to school I was trying to allay those fears, that they didn't really get lost. What they did was that they changed a little bit, but they were still Maasai at heart. I've always been saying I wish this could be true, that the Maasai would be able to maintain their identity as Maasai and at the same time move with the times, so that they are not lost in between.

(99)

Roger Kurtz in his book *Urban Obsessions, Urban Fears: The Postcolonial Kenyan Novel* sums up this idea thus:

Ultimately however both novels [Is it Possible<sup>0</sup> and To Become a Man] suggest, "a successful integration of the two worlds is in fact possible through balancing allegiances to both, but only when each is subsumed to a broader ideal of national intertribal unity"(41).

Kurtz articulates the author's vision of a Maasai community that fits in the Kenyan national matrix.

The modernized Maasai who are epitomized in the novel by both Lerionkas have a hybrid identity. This phenomenon is characteristic of all the postcolonial subjects, who exhibit some traits of their traditional heritage and the traits of modernisation and westernisation that they have embraced. Therefore they have a dual identity.

In the next chapter we will explore the search for manhood in To Become a Man. We will emphasize on how the traditional rite of passage—circumcision—is endangered by modernity as a parameter of defining Maasai manhood



## CHAPTER FOUR

### Quest for Manhood in To Become A Man

Just like its predecessor Is it Possible? To Become a Man is a bildungsroman. J. A. Cuddon defines the bildungsroman as "an upbringing" or "education" novel... it refers to a novel which is an account of the youthful development of a hero or heroine. It describes the process by which maturity is achieved through the various ups and downs of life" (81-82). In his book Urban Obsessions .Urban Fears: the Postcolonial Kenyan Novel Roger Kurtz notes that this is a manifest trait of the Kenyan novels written during the 1970's. Kurtz says that the novels explore:

The tradition/modernity conflict in post independence era Often structured as a bildungsroman, the typical plot present a child or youth facing increasingly complicated decisions about how to reconcile (or choose between) family traditions and a new "modern" reality, which is most often accessed through formal education (39)

This is a major phenomenon in To Become a Man, which tells the story of Ole Merresho's only son, Leshao, who is in a dilemma; he is torn in between being loyal to his Maasai heritage, and paying allegiance to the modern lifestyle which he is gradually embracing.

In his essay "Vice, Virtue and their Cost: To Become a Man" David Dorsey points out that some of the characters in the novel hold a "syncretic allegiance to two world views" (1). They have a hybrid identity, which is engendered by ambivalences. Leshao epitomizes this hybridity. David Dbrsey points out to the confusion that the hybrid character experiences. He informs us that the hybrid character "is unaware of the

inconsistencies, incompatibility, and errors inherent in his conception of the duties and aspirations that his allegiances entail" (1).

Leshao is torn between his Maasai community's expectations of all their boys who are initiated into manhood through the traditional rite of passage—circumcision—after which the initiates are secluded, then they graduate to join the institution of moranhood. However, Leshao contemplates the possibility of being circumcised in the hospital, then abscond Moranhood and go back to school to study for his "final examinations in intermediate school" (1).

In the foreword to Mukhisa Kituyi's Becoming Kenyans, Paul T.W Baxter demonstrates how formal education is gradually gaining prominence over the traditional customs like circumcision and the institution of Moranhood. He articulates it thus:

Initiation into Moranhood with ones age-mates has been the central event in every Maasai man's life. No Maasai escapes the initiation, but it is reported here that: "in many places the youth are increasingly reluctant to drop out of school to go through Moranhood." Indeed an instance is given of a local leader of a women's group who prevailed on a father to remove his son from the moran camp and send him back to school. A school leaving certificate rather than circumcision may yet become the mark of moranhood. (be)

To some extent, the above scenario has a close semblance to Leshao's predicament. He is more deeply attached to school than to the Moran's lifestyle that entails cattle raids. Hence, he deserts their manyatta at night "to avoid going on the cattle raid" (114). Leshao

eschews cattle raids despite his father's threat of cursing him if he refuses to join fellow morans in cattle raids

In a perturbed monologue, Ole Merresho swears that, "If I circumcise him and he refuses to go on a raid, I will curse him" (48). He is also against his son's adoption of the Western lifestyle. Ole Meiresho's standpoint echoes Chege's advice to his son Waiyaki in The River Between, thus

"Arise, heed the prophecy. Go to the mission place. Learn all the wisdom and all the secrets of the white man. But do not follow his vices. Be true to your people and the ancient rites". (20)

Therefore both Leshao and Waiyaki are expected by their fathers to embrace the foreign education, yet still, uphold their traditions. This is the paradox inherent in hybridity.

The elders limit the extent to which their sons should adopt the Western lifestyle. Ole Merresho cautions his son thus: "Let me warn you, the day I hear that you have any association with Waka and his henchmen, if I am still strong I will finish you with a sword. And if I am not strong enough I will curse you" (86). Cursing is the elder's most potent weapon for deterring deviance. It is a tool of social control that ensures that the latter generation is loyal to traditions. Ole Merresho's wish is to see his son loyal to Maasai tradition, and particularly cattle raids. Hence, he intimidates his son with a curse thus: "And if I seat you and you let me down by refusing to go on cattle raids and bring back those cattle you wasted by giving them to Waka's brothers, I will curse you"(87). A similar threat is issued by Ole Kejo<sup>^</sup>nga, an esteemed medicineman. The sage issues his threat in the following manner:

You are the only pillar of Ole Merrosho's name. When you are shaved, you must join the other young men in the manyatta. You must revive the name of your father. You know where his cattle went. Follow them. Bring them back. Never go back to the Ilashumpa. If you defy us you will face our anger. You know me and you must have heard of my reaction. Especially when I am provoked. Please heed our advice. Do you hear? (69)

Therefore, Leshao's desertion of the life in the manyatta and the cattle raid makes him susceptible to both his father's and the elders' curse. It amounts to his dispossession by his kinsmen, and this is ensued by his loss of his tribal identity. This is according to his father's earlier warning, which is articulated thus: "You will either go (to raid cattle) or never call me father again. I don't want to be called the father of a coward" (6). From a traditional Maasai perspective, Leshao's rejection of cattle raids can be interpreted as cowardice. This puts his manliness into doubt because Maasai men are supposed to be brave.

This is because it is their role to protect their livestock and their community from wild animals and raiders. They should also be brave to raid wealth from other tribes.

Ole Merresho challenges Leshao's manliness. He is aware that his son abhors cattle raids and attributes it to cowardice. Therefore, he reprimands him thus: "But you-you are a useless coward who cannot even take away an after birth from a she-goat-you-" (5). This reproach portrays Ole Merresho's perception of his son's emasculation. Leshao is not a Maasai man because he is not a good steward of his community's wealth-livestock. His father refers to him as "a useless coward" implying that he fails to qualify as a Maasai man because he is not brave.

Leshao's emasculation can be attributed to the foreign formal education that he has been exposed to. Even though Ole Merresho is a staunch traditionalist, he is easily persuaded into accepting his only son to go to school because he foresees formal education as a key to wealth. Ole Merresho is convinced that his son will be employed after completing school and he "would make him rich again" (17). Ole Merresho's vision is inspired by his encounter with Reverend Walker who is simply called "Waka" by the Maasai. Waka assures the old man saying: "when your son completes school ... He will buy a car like this and double the numbers of your cattle" (18). Ole Merresho's perspective towards the foreign formal education echoes Ezeulu's attitude towards the whiteman's education in Arrow of God. Ezeulu says: "I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eye there. If there is nothing in it you will come back. But if there is something there you will bring home my share" (46). Thence, the two elders: Ole Merresho and Ezeulu anticipate wealth after their son's complete school.

Paradoxically Ole Merresho curses "the day he gave consent to his son to go to school" (67). His hope of regaining wealth through his son's education is dashed when Leshao suggests that he would prefer to be circumcised in the hospital. Such an action would mean his estrangement from his community. It is such an abomination that it would amount to his dispossession by the community. Leshao is aware of the disownment effect of such an action and we are informed thus:

He (Leshao) knew it was not only shameful to go to hospital for circumcision but also a disgrace to the family of his father, his clan and probably to all Maasai. But

on the other hand, he knew of a few who went to hospital but fled to other places after they were healed (40)

The elders are also conscious that circumcision in the hospital has a more estranging effect than the foreign formal education that has been imposed on Maasai boys. Circumcision in the hospital denies the initiate a chance to learn the Maasai culture and the expectations of Maasai adults. These values are inculcated in the initiates during their seclusion phase, after this traditional rite of passage. They are further sensitized on the Maasai philosophy during their Moranhood. Therefore a Maasai boy who is circumcised in the hospital lacks the Maasai sensibilities. He is also devoid of a Maasai tribal identity. An elder reinforces our agreement thus:

"This is a new danger," one old man says after a long pause..." when we first sent our sons to school, we thought they would get lost and we would never see them again. The white men were unable to lure them away. They are still Maasai. But this new threat is dangerous Pushuka's son has been circumcised in that place He has never come home again " (66)

Worse still the traditional Maasai considers Pushuka's son as totally estranged from his Maasai roots, because as one elder points out "he no longer wants to speak our language" (66). Hence, from their perspective he is not only devoid of his manliness, but he has also lost his Maasai identity.

The fact that Pushuka does not want to speak the Maasai language indicates his displacement from his ancestral roots. His dislocation from his Maasai community is magnified by the fact that "He ne^r came home again." In the article "Post-colonial Literally Theory", Bridget sees this as a manifestation of postcolonialism, whereby "a person has physically or mentally been pulled out of an environment in which they can

communicate in their own language. The concern of displacement is similar, but it is broken up into two categories. First is dislocation in which a person's sense of self is lost due to enslavement or migration, where the intentional or unintentional actions of the supposed superior culture oppresses the indigenous population: second is cultural denigration, where the intentional or unintentional actions of the supposed superior culture oppress the indigenous population" (1). This quote articulately conveys Pushuka's situation.

Pushuka becomes a rootless renegade who is detached from the Maasai cosmology. He celebrates when Leshao joins him in town after deserting the Maasai lifestyle. Pushuka welcomes Leshao to town thus: " I am happy that I am no longer the only outcast of our village" (120). Hence, he has come to terms with his outcast status. To reinforce the idea of Pushuka's outracization from his Maasai roots, Leshao poses to him the following question:

"Do you know that people at Elnai think you are no longer a Maasai?" (22) Pushuka answers in the affirmative, confirming that he is aware of his estrangement from the Maasai heritage. This points out to the loss of his tribal identity.

The modern lifestyle, which is characterized by urbanisation, has prompted Pushuka to be individualistic. This negates the traditional Maasai's communal spirit. Leshao realizes Pushuka's selfishness and egocentrism after staying in his house for a while, and when his search for a job proves futile, Pushuka decides to deny him food. Leshao exposes Pushukas's egocentric spirit and emasculation that amounts to dehumanization, thus:

I can now see the wisdom of the elders of Elnai village. They said a man who is circumcised in the hospital is not circumcised. He acts like a boy. Since when does a circumcised Maasai hide when he eats? (128)

Therefore, in Leshao and the traditional Maasafs perspective, Pushuka remains an uncircumcised boy. Leshao has encountered what his father, Ole Merresho, has been yearning to see when he says: " I would like to see an old uncircumcised man, or is he an old boy<sup>9</sup>" (63) Thus Pushuka emerges as emasculated. He cannot fight like a Maasai man to assert his manliness. We are told: "Leshao loathed Pushuka, a circumcised man who took the smallest grievances which could be settled by a fight to the authorities" (129). Thus, Pushuka's adoption of a modern lifestyle does not only reduce him to a coward, but emasculates him. His behaviour deviates from the Maasai parameters of defining manhood

Reverend Waka s assistant, Stefano Malon, suffers from a similar emasculation as Pushuka. When Waka commissions him to go and inquire why the Maasai boys no longer attend school, Ole Merresho assails him. Instead of striking back, Stefano is docile because of his indoctrination by the foreign religion, Christianity. Witnesses say that they heard him say: "The Lord said, if one strikes your right cheek, give him your left cheek too" (85). From a traditional Maasai perspective he has been immobilized by the Western values he has acquired. Another elder analysis Stefano's predicament thus: "Surely there is stupidity in being a black Olashumpai" (85). The term "black Olashumpai " refers to the Europeanized African, or the "black white man". This points out to his hybrid  
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identity. This is as a result of the synthesis between a traditional Maasai heritage and a Western lifestyle



Nevertheless, Westernisation has not entirely corroded the Maasainess in the Maasai people who have decided to become "Reverend Waka's henchmen" David Dorsey posits that "Leshao is... instinctively, profoundly Maasai but does not understand what it means to be Maasai" (4). This implies that Leshao has been confused by the indoctrination he has experienced in the process of acquiring the foreign formal education. As Dorsey says: "the students receive an alternative incompatible indoctrination" (4). Even as Leshao contemplates acquiring wealth in terms of cattle as any other Maasai man, he does not come to terms with cattle raids because it is an abomination from the Christian perspective. Therefore he has a vision of getting a job in the urban environment, and then buy a high quality breed of cattle, to prove his manliness.

This deviates from the Maasai's life philosophy that demands all the Maasai young men to conduct cattle raids. In a monologue Ole Merresho says: "The boy must go on cattle raids. Why is a man born? In order to bring back his right: the cattle which belong to him are currently owned by gentiles" (72). Even the Iltorobo man Ole Sulunye, who is considered as inferior to the Maasai testifies to the fact that "the Maasai have been going on cattle raids since they ascended Kerio valley" (99). Hence any Maasai who disregards the Maasai ancestral custom of raiding cattle tarnishes his tribal identity.

However, Ole Merresho foresees the possibility of the Maasai boys who are acquiring the Western form of education still retaining their Maasainess. But, this is only if they combine the formal education with cattle raids. Ole Merresho articulates the idea thus:

It should be made compulsory that before a moran becomes an elder, he must have gone to three or four successful cattle raids. Surely that would be a good

idea If they go to school, but come back and go on cattle raids, and after that return to school, no Maasai would question going to school. (72)

Therefore, Ole Merresho foresees the possibility of a synthesis between the Maasai customs of cattle raids and the foreign formal education. However, any Maasai boy who goes to school and then ignores cattle raids loses his Maasai identity. That is why before Leshao is circumcised, his uncle, Meteurr, advises him thus:

"When you become a moran, join others. Go on cattle raids and bring back cattle, at least twenty, and you can then go and leave them with the old man. You can then go and look for a job"(53).

This portrays the centrality of cattle raids as the Maasai's way of acquiring wealth. The size of a Maasai man's herd of cattle determines his status. Hence, even though Ole Merresho is a reputed Maasai elder, who is able to give "the counsel of men who are circumcised"(32) in the assembly of elders, his status is low because of his impoverishment. This is magnified by the fact that all his wives have passed away, and he has no cattle to pay the bride price for another wife. However, he epitomizes the Maasai tradition because he adheres to its conventions.

The antithesis of Ole Merresho is Ole Nikipida, Mbulung's father. Even though Ole Nikipida is a Maasai elder who is esteemed for his wealth, he is willing to embrace modernity. He \*was known to be a staunch supporter of the abolition of Moranship and the starting of compulsory education for all the boys in Maasailand"(80). This is the same

attitude that Leshao has. In a conversation with Mbulung, Leshao fails to see the significance of moranship. He argues that its role in providing security has been replaced by government soldiers.

Mbulung emerges as more loyal to his Maasai heritage than his father, Ole Nikipida, and his friend Leshao. He proclaims his tribal identity in the following manner: "I am a Maasai. I have to fulfil what a man has to fulfil. I want to be circumcised, become a moran"(81). Mbulung is enthusiastic about cattle raids; after all, according to him this is the best way of asserting his manliness as a Maasai. He attempts to spell out the Maasai's attachment to cattle raids to Leshao thus:

Cattle raids have been the Morans' pastime since the Maasai ascended Kerio Valley. After all, it is the only way people recognize you. When you are old and you are invited to a beer party, you mention the cattle you brought from the raids. (82)

From this quote, we realize that cattle raids are not only moran's occupation, but they are a source of one's identity and reputation among fellow Maasai. Thus, Mbulung has a similar standpoint as Ole Merresho in regard to Maasai traditions. They both propagate the conservation of Maasai traditions. While Ole Nikipida and Leshao advocate for the abolition of some Maasai traditions especially cattle raids.

The traditional rite of passage into adulthood - circumcision is another parameter that determines one's manliness. The morans refer to Leshao as "The overgrown, uncircumcised boy"(23) before his circumcision. In an interview with Francois Michel, Ole Kulet says^ "before one is circumcised, in the eyes of the elders one is still a child"(129). Ole Merresho reinforces this idea when he informs his son "there is no

property of an uncircumcised man. He is a child no matter how big he is" (15). Leshao becomes a man after he is circumcised. It is Ole Sulunye, the surgeon, who first declares Leshao's manliness. This is after he completes circumcising him, he tells him: "Stand Now you are a man"(109). To reinforce Leshao's achievement of the status of a man, the surgeon repeats the command, but now he refers to him as "the pillar of Merresho"(110).

Leshao's manliness is manifested during the lion hunt. It is evident when he is expected by his fellow morans to kill the lion. The narrator acknowledges Leshao's manliness, and he narrates the episode to us thus: "At last it (the lion) saw an easy direction to face. There was only one man in that direction The man was Leshao Ole Merresho"(111). Thus, Leshao's manhood is manifested by his bravery during the lion hunt. However, he is soon emasculated when he decides to desert fellow morans on the eve of a cattle raid.

Incidentally, the person who moulds Leshao into a man through circumcision, Ole Surunye, is doomed to remain a "boy" due to his inferior ancestry. The Maasai regard the Itorobo as inferior to them. In the Oral Literature of the Maasai, Naomi Kipury has collected the narrative "The Origin of Cattle" which is a myth that justifies the subjugation of the Itorobo (Dorobo) by the Maasai. The story goes like this:

Very early next morning, Maasinta went to wait for what was to be given to him. He soon heard the sound of thunder and God released a long leather thong from heaven to earth. Cattle descended down the thong into the enclosure. The surface of the earth shook so vigorously that his house almost fell over. Maasinta was gripped with fear, but did not make any move or sound. While the cattle were still descending, the Dorobo, who was a house-mate of Maasinta, woke up from his sleep. He went outside and on seeing the

countless cattle coming down the strap, he was so surprised that he said: "Ayieyieyie...!", an exclamation of utter shock. On hearing this, God took back the thong and the cattle stopped descending. God then said to Maasmta. thinking he was the one who had spoken: "Is it that these cattle are enough for you? I will never again do this to you, so you had better love these cattle in the same way I love you." That is why the Maasai love cattle very much.

How about the Dorobo? Maasinta was very upset with him for having cut God's thong. He cursed him thus: " Dorobo, are you the one who cut God's thong<sup>9</sup> May you remain poor as you have always been You and your offspring will forever remain my servants. Let it be that you will live off animals in the wild. May the milk of my cattle be poison if you ever taste it." This is why up to this day the Dorobo still live in the forest and they are never given milk.(31)

After the two boys Leshao and Mbulungu capture Ole Sulunye, they mishandle him and humiliate him by telling him: "We are not Iltorobo like you" (94). The narrator reveals to us: "Even though Ole Surunye was an old man, he came from an inferior clan unworthy of respect"(99). As the oral narrative informs us, the Dorobo and his offspring are doomed to remain the Maasai's servants. Hence it is his role to carry out the undignified duties, for instance circumcising Maasai boys. The fact that Ole Sulunye descends from a

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"clan unworthy of respect" implies that there is nothing he can do to acquire the status of a man from a Maasai's perspective. Hence, he remains "the other" from the Maasai

cosmology, who is located in the periphery of the Maasai's world. David Dorsey makes the following observation: "The man (Ole Sulunye) is portrayed with all the stereotypical prejudices Maasai accord them, honey-gatherer, elusive, deceitful, cowardly, submissive, tearful, short in stature and supportive of Maasai ideals like cattle raiding - in short a fit object of contempt, abuse and exploitation'(5). From the postcolonial perspective this resembles the plight of the colonized. The colonizers subvert all their negative attributes to the colonized or "the other", and ultimately "the other" is portrayed as inferior. This is why Ole Sulunye, even though an old man is devoid of the masculine attributes. It appears that Mbulung and Leshao, who are still uncircumcised, are superior to Ole Sulunye, an old Ilorobo man, on the premise that they have descended from a superior caste - the pure Maasai. This argument draws from Edward Said's idea of the Manichean dichotomy, whereby the Oriental is perceived as inferior by the colonizer

Some Kenyan ethnic groups stereotype the Maasai as backward. This is because the Maasai uphold their traditional heritage. The Maasai also fascinates some Western tourists. They romanticize them perceiving them as the "noble savages" who are close to nature and untarnished by modernity. The Maasai are prejudiced against the Ilorobo. They stereotype the Ilorobo as their inferiors. This is attested by the boys' humiliation of the Ilorobo man, Ole Sulunye, when they scorn him saying: "We are not Ilorobo like you"(94). Hence, his status is even lower than that of the uncircumcised boys.

Leshao and Mbulung's celebration of their manliness is short lived. Leshao is emasculated when he decides to flee from the Maasai environment to town on the eve of

a cattle raid. However, after his disillusionment in town, he decides to return to the village to regain his manliness. He persuades his age mate Mbulung to "organize a cattle raid and I will show the whole of Maasailand that I am also a man" (131). This would enable him to overcome his people's contempt.

This contempt from his community points out to his disownment by his community, which is presented to us thus:

Everybody had heard that Leshao had escaped by night so as to avoid going on a cattle raid. Even though they all had previously praised him for his courage in the lion hunt, now everybody took him to be a coward. Other men passed without greeting him. Others greeted him but didn't add any other word after the greetings. His age group teased him. They composed songs which deplored his desertion. Girls held their noses, blocking them when they came near him for they said he smelled of soap which they did not like. (130)

The above quote attests to Leshao's emasculation and loss of his tribal identity. However, he strives to regain it by taking part in a cattle raid. He feels like "a Maasai moran again" (131) in the eve of a cattle raid that contributes to his eventual emasculation.

Mbulung's ultimate emasculation is pronounced in death. His quest for manhood turns futile when an arrow pierces him during a cattle raid that turns fatal. Leshao's quest for manhood is also difficult. This is because he is spewed out of his modern environment, where he attempts to acquire wealth to prove his manliness. Yet still, his attempt to be reintegrated back to his traditional community proves futile when he loses one of his legs in the fateful cattle raid. His father pronounces his emasculation when he is being dragged to prison for committing a crime - cattle raid. His father laments saying: "But

what is a man without a leg?"(136) Ole Merresho's rhetorical question alludes to his son's emasculation.

So far, our discussion has attempted to join Ole Kulet in his quest for the parameters of defining Maasai's manhood. The title To Become a Man promises to inform us of the process of achieving manhood. Ole Merresho's rhetorical question: 'But what is a man without a leg?'(136) forms the novel's ending statement. This statement echoes the title of the novel and seems to portray the difficulties of achieving manliness. The protagonist, Leshao, embodies emasculation, which is caused by the Western values that he has embraced. He is unable to redeem himself out of the Pariah status to which he has been consigned after betraying his traditional heritage. He suffers from a severe uprootment from his Maasai traditional heritage, and probably this is due to his father's and the elder's curse. Therefore, he dies like a rootless renegade: "a man without a leg". This symbolizes his immobilization. It is also a trope of the emasculation of the Maasai young men who blindly follow a Western lifestyle.



## CONCLUSION

In our study, we have endeavoured to discuss issues of Maasai identity as portrayed in Ole Kulet's works. The study has focused on his first two novels Is it Possible<sup>0</sup> and To Become a Man. The point of departure of the study was in highlighting the various perspectives from which the world has perceived the Maasai. We have realized that the Maasai have on one hand been perceived as a glorious people, who embody the authentic image of Kenyans. And on the other hand, they have been perceived as "backward" because of their allegiance to their traditions. However, our concern was in examining the ensuing identity after the interaction between the indigenous Maasai culture and a Western lifestyle.

In Is it Possible? Ole Kulet demonstrates the possibility of merging the Maasai traditions, which are signified by the spear, and a Western lifestyle, which is presented in the trope of a book. We have noted that the Maasai pupils who go through the Western form of education lose some aspects of their Maasai identity. Moreover, they embrace some elements of the Western culture. We can therefore say that they have a hybrid identity. The hybrid identity is enshrouded in ambivalence, because the hybrid character is neither an indigenous Maasai nor a Westerner. Hence he can appropriately be considered as "the child of two worlds", or as we learn from the novel "the black Olashumpai" meaning a Europeanized Maasai.

We have also observed the difficulties the Maasai young men who have gone through Western education experience in their quest for manhood. We have realized that the traditional rite of passage—  
it  
circumcision — as a parameter of defining Maasai's manhood, is endangered by formal education. However, the Maasai who prefer pursuing the Western values over their

traditional values are ostracized from their ancestral roots. Both Pushuka and Leshao epitomize this dispossession. They emerge as dislocated from the Maasai community because of ignoring the traditional customs. Therefore, they emerge as emasculated because of their failure to honour Maasai conventions. They also fell to fulfill the Maasai's expectations of all their young men, and this is embodied in their failure to engage in cattle raids.

Throughout this study we have shown how the Maasai are gradually transcending the ethnic identity in order to fit in the national milieu. Their national identity is manifested when they are employed in the formal sector. They reside in the urban centres, and they are more affiliated to the Kenyan identity than their Maasai identity. This is embodied in the two Lerionkas in Is it Possible<sup>9</sup> and Pushuka in To Become a Man.

This study contributes to the postcolonial discourse. It enriches our understanding of the aftermath of the interaction between the indigenous cultural values and a Western lifestyle. The interaction leads to the syncretism of the two cultures and its members have a dual identity.

We have arrived at the conclusion that in the two novels under our study, Ole Kulet develops the thesis that it is not wise for Africans to blindly embrace a Western lifestyle. However, they should cautiously select the Western values that contribute to human improvement, and at the same time uphold their traditions.

It is hoped that this study will pave the way for future intellectual debate on the creativity that goes in the rest of Ole Kulet's works.-This will enhance our understanding of the situation of the postcolonial Kenyan state, and Ole Kulet's vision of the future of the Maasai community.

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