

Elizabeth L
Cavendish 26

AIO

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND RITUAL ROLES
OF POKOT WOMEN

Dissertation submitted for the Degree of Ph.D.

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
AFRICA* STUDIES
LIBRARY.

University of NAIROBI Library

0548388 8

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
November 1981

Cambridge University, England.
© Elizabeth Meyemoff. 1981.

5gu ,

M i .
3>T

P6M48

Table of Contents	
Chapter I. Introduction	1
A. The Topic and Related Literature	1
I. Choice of Topic and Fieldwork Method	3
C. The Pokot Area and People	5
Chapter II. Social Relationships and Groupings	10
II.1. Significant Relationships defined by Kinship and Affinity	10
A. Husband and Wife	11
B. Parent and Child	U
C. Siblings	16
D. In-Laws	18
11.2. Categories Defined by Age and Sex	19
11.3. The Agricultural Pokot: Regions and Neighbourhoods and Areas of Social Organisation	25
11.4. The Household as the Unit of Production and Reproduction	30
A. The Household as a Unit of Reproductions its Composition over the Developmental Cycle	31
The Household as a Unit of Production: the Division of Labour within the Household	33
Footnotes Chapter II	39
Chapter III. Marriage	41
III.1. The Marriage Process	41
A. Rights and Obligations Involved in Karriage	42
B. Karriage Prohibitions and Preferences	43
C. Karriage by Negotiation	46

C(1). A Woman's Influence in Ecstlati [^]	48
D. Marriage by Capture and Elopement	50
E. Payment and Distribution of Brideswealth	53
E(1). Case Study 1t Complications involved in receiving and paying for bridewealth	57
F. Repayment of Bridewealth to Terminate Marriage	61
G. Instability of Marriages Divorce and Separation	63
G(1). Case Study 2s Woman getting out of a negotiated marriage	67
III.2. Acquisition of Rights over Property	70
A. Acquisition of Livestock and Land by a Man	70
B. Acquisition of Livestock and Land by a Woman	71
C. Legal Rights in Property	75
D. Management and Control of Resources in the Household	78
E. Male and Female Perspectives on Ownership	82
Footnotes Chapter III	91
 Chapter 17. Ritual Control of Female Sexuality and Fertility	 94
IY.1. Male Perspectives The Social Ideal Articulated in Public (emphasized by men, but accepted by both men and women)	 97
A. Menstruation	98
B. Childbirth	100
C. Sexual Intercourse	10J
IY.2. Women's Perspective or Point of View	107
A. Pollution Taboos Viewed as Advantageous to Women	108
B. Menstruation and use of Menstrual Blood	111
C. Childbirth	115

i). Sexual intercourse	116
£• Tumba cama: A Collective Statement of	
<i>i</i>	<i>i</i>
IT.3. An analysis of Kale and Female Perspectives	126
Footnotes Chapter IT	130
Chapter T» Women^ Initiation Bite	122
T.1. Women's Initiation Hits: A Description	133
A. <u>Botwa</u> (Knife): The Ceremony of	
Clitoridotoay	134
B. The Seclusion Period	139
C. The Conine-Out Ceremonies	142
T.2. Kale Perspective: Initiation as a Kechanism	
of Social Control	147
a. Social Control of Women*s Procreative	
Powers	148
B. aspects of Kale Initiation in Belation	
to Female Initiation	153
C. Old Women as Officiants	161
T.3. Female Perspective: Articulating and	
Reinforcing the Female Point of Tiew	163
A. Clitoridotony and Childbirth	163
B. Secrecy and Respect for Old Age	167
C. Unification of the Women of One	
Neighbourhood i ^ / I m	168
D. Women Expressing their Tiews about their	
own Sexuality	172
£• Older Women's advice to Girls:	
Articulating a Woman's Point of Tiew	175
Footnotes Chapter T	186
Chapter TI. Conclusion	189
Bibliography	206

List of Miscellaneous Items

Acknowledgements	v i i
Map of Pokot	x
Time Chart of a Woman's Work Load	58
Diagram of Prohibited and Preferred Marriage Partners	44
Table I: Property usually acquired by a Married Man in Katuw	89
Table II: Property typically promised and when usually acquired by a Wife in Katuw	90

Acknowledgements

There are a great many people who have helped me in various ways in the preparation of this thesis. There is not the time, or space, to thank each of them personally, but, nonetheless, I wish to acknowledge *my* thanks to those friends and colleagues who have given me support, and shown an interest in my work for many years. For myself, the research and preparation of this thesis has been a long journey. The Journey has spread over three continents, and at each junction there have been particular people whose influence and encouragement made the rest of the way possible.

To begin with, it should be said that none of this would have been possible without the continual personal and financial support of *my* parents, Katie and Warren Keyerhoff. To them I am most deeply indebted. The other person for whom it is difficult to find words to thank, is Jhirray Roberts. Perhaps it is best to simply say that I would never have learned what I have about Pokot, if Murray had not been there with me. Also, words alone could never paint the intimate beauty his photographs portray. Dr. Louis Leakey was the first to suggest that I go to Kenya, and later encouraged me in *my* desire to work with the Pokot. His enthusiasm and support demanded that I continued to listen and learn. I thank him for that.

My field research was made possible by the kind permission of the Kenya Government, and the backing of the Institute of African Studies, University of Nairobi. I received financial support from the L.S.B. Leakey Foundation and the National Geographic Society. I therefore wish to express my gratitude and appreciation to these institutions and organisations.

It is, of course, impossible to thank 'the Pokot', but I wish to express my thanks to them, and particularly to the people of Katuw. A special appreciation must be expressed for Paul Kamomi, Rachel Ndiomo, and Tohana Hanyang, who helped me as field assistants and in learning the Pokot language. Although Chermit is no longer alive, I wish simply to acknowledge

I would like to express my appreciation of his very special friendship. I hope his study will eventually be of some positive use to the Pokot especially in light of the recent changes brought about by increasing pressures of modernization.

One person in the field whose help and friendship made it possible, was Father Leo Staples of the Catholic Mission, Sigor. I thank him for his continual assistance. I also express my appreciation to Betty Soberts and Jonathan Leakey who always made me feel at home in Baringo. In Nairobi, Derek Morgan always made me welcome but, more importantly, it was he who originally insisted that I organise and compile some of my early field notes.

Professor Jean La Fontaine was the first person to see these notes, and encouraged me to apply to Cambridge. This thesis is the product of that initial support and advice. At Cambridge, my first thanks go to my two supervisors. Dr. Ray Abrahams gave me support and guidance in my studies, particularly of the East **African** literature. More recently, Dr. Marilyn Strathern has encouraged me to explore and express a number of new ideas, and I am very grateful for this.

I have profited from discussions of earlier drafts of this thesis with various friends and colleagues. In particular, I would like to thank Patricia Lantton, Dr. Ivo Strecker and Professor Neville Denson-Hudson for their helpful comments. Many of these discussions took place around the fire at Sawston Hall. This would not have been possible without the kindness and friendship of Major Tony Eyre.

I am especially thankful to Mrs. Angela Morgan for her meticulous care in typing the thesis. Jane Eyre was also meticulous in her typing and attention to detail. Her unfailing support as a friend, and her positive attitude are deeply appreciated. Finally, I wish to express my thanks to Joan Lydall. Her support as a friend and colleague was invaluable in making the completion of this thesis possible.

International Boundary: Kenya/Uganda

I I Official Pokot Boundary within Kenya

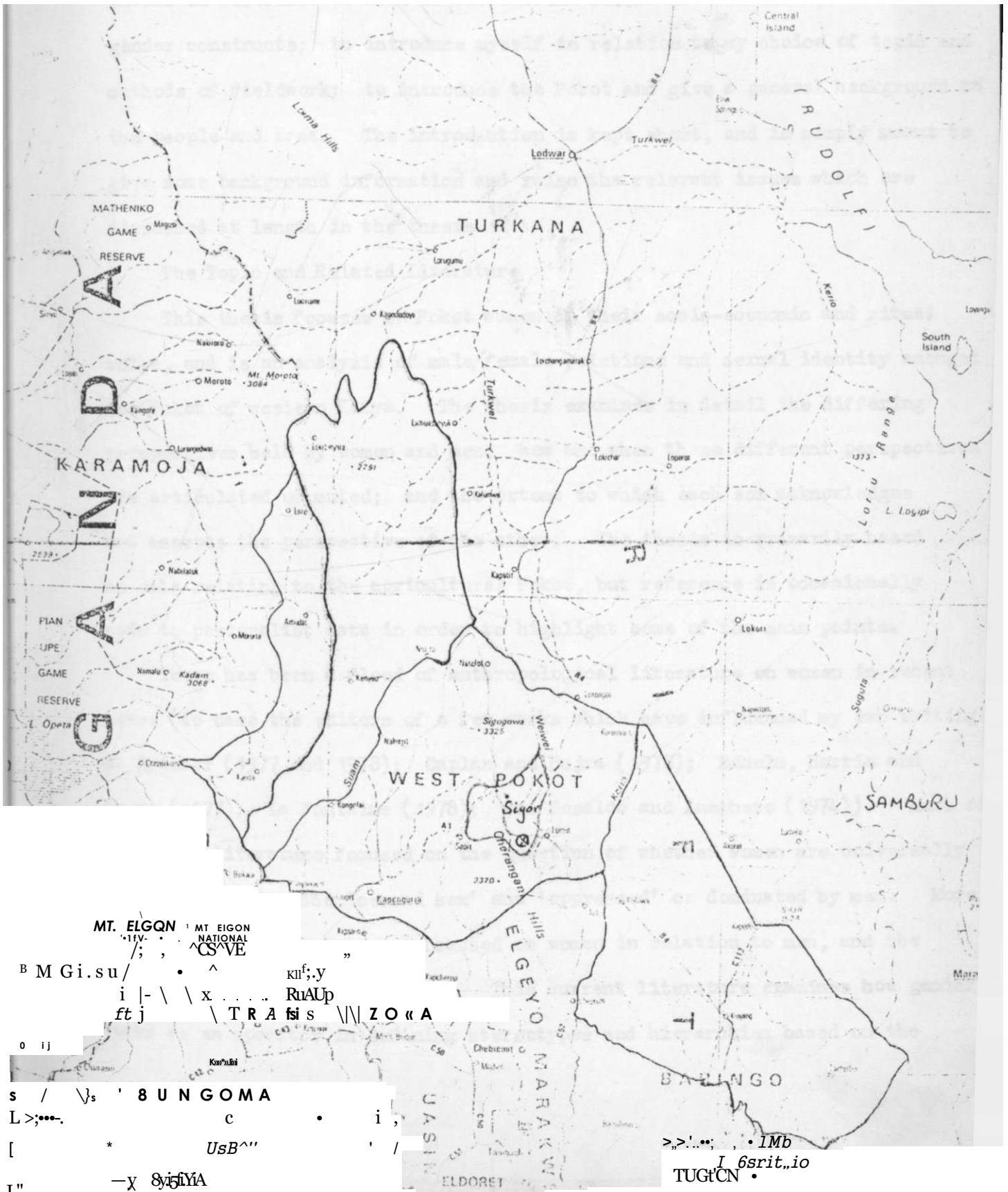
I | Pokot area within Uganda

L_j Wei Wei Location

fSTI Katuw Community

j-^j Concentration of Agricultural Pokot
(unshaded areas - Pastoral Pokot)

AST
DOLF
ON
AK



MT. ELGON MT. EIGON NATIONAL RESERVE
 B M Gi.su / i | - \ \ x RuAUp
 ft j \ T R A f s i s \ \ Z O « A
 s / \ s ' 8 U N G O M A
 L > ; c . i ,
 [* U s B ^ " ' /
 I " - X S y i M A

> > • I M b
 I 6 s r i t . , i o
 T U G C N •

Chapter I. Introduction

The aim of this introduction is threefold: to introduce the topic of this thesis in reference to some of the current literature written on women and gender constructs; to introduce *myself* in relation to my choice of topic and methods of fieldwork; to introduce the Pokot and give a general background to the people and area. The introduction is kept short, and is simply meant to give some background information and raise the relevant issues which are discussed at length in the thesis.

A. The Topic and Related Literature

This thesis focuses on Pokot women in their socio-economic and ritual roles, and is an analysis of male/female relations and sexual identity amongst the Pokot of western Kenya. The thesis examines in detail the differing perspectives held by women and men; how and when these different perspectives are articulated or muted; and the extent to which each sex acknowledges and accepts the perspective of the other. The thesis is primarily based on data relating to the agricultural Pokot, but reference is occasionally made to pastoralist data in order to highlight some of the main points.

There has been a flood of anthropological literature on women in recent years (to name the editors of a few works which have influenced *my* own writing: S. Ardener (1977 and 1978); Caplan and Bujra (1978); Edholm, Harris and Young (1977); Le Fontaine (1978); and Koslowski and Lachere (1970)). Much of the early literature focused on the question of whether women are universally regarded as being the 'second sex' and 'oppressed' or dominated by men. More recently, the literature has focused on women in relation to men, and the definition of gender constructs. This current literature examines how gender works as an operator in defining stereotypes and hierarchies based on the

not of masculine and feminine, and here individuals in different societies identify with these constructs. It is within this framework, or set of ideas, that I examine my own material on Pokot women, paying particular attention to questions raised by E. Ardener (1977), Ortner (1974), and more recently, HscCormack and Strathern (1980).

In 1972 (reprinted 1977), Edwin Ardener presented a challenge to women anthropologists by claiming that most anthropological literature is male biased. Ardener described the bias as an analytical and technical problem stemming from the fact that, in most societies, men are more articulate than women. Therefore, the anthropologist is more likely to record the male or dominant model of that society. Conversely, we could describe some of the literature which grew out of the women's liberation movement, dealing particularly with feminist issues, as being female biased. The idea of bias has also been discussed in a more specific sense by M. Strathern (1979), who argues that our own cultural formulation of the nature : culture construct may colour our understanding of how other societies regard gender differences, particularly when the formulation symbolises a western idea which is rooted in the denigration of domesticity. Both these arguments are valid and should be recognized and taken into account. In studying Pokot women, I have attempted to be as honest to the ethnographic data as possible, and have also tried to avoid imposing a cultural bias onto the data.

However, it is easy to understand why the published material on Pokot leans towards a male bias; firstly, all the anthropologists who have published on the Pokot to date are male (the more well-known publications are: Eeich 1911; Oonant 1965; Bdgerton and Conant 19⁴ and 1971; Peristiany 1951, 1954 and 1975; Schneider 1957 and 1959), and secondly, Pokot men definitely give the appearance that they are 'dominant', and it is Pokot men, rather than women, who continually emphasize their view and perspective of the world in public situations. For example, it is interesting that, although male and female initiation rites are equally elaborate ceremonies, there is hardly any reference

gated to female initiation in the Pclici li^Araturo. this cC 1 the core
liable oinoo r-cae of the beatfer.ormwork on Pokot is abcul
vitiation and the age-set system (Peristiany 1951). Similarly, it ia
Interesting that, although two-thirds of the Pokot population practices
cultivation as their primary mods of subsistence, almost all the literature on
the Pokot is about the remaining third of the population who practice
psstoraliam as their primary mode of subsistence. As audi, I hope that ay own
work which focuses on women and female Initiation among the agricultural Pokot,
will help to create a more balanced body of literature on the Pokot people.
Finally, the thesis is also meant to make a contribution to the aaaewhat
neglected topic of women In East Africa.

B. Choice of Topic and Fieldwork Method

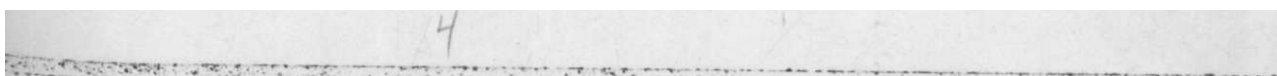
Why an anthropologist chooses to discuss a particular aspect of a certain
culture is Important for methodological reasons. It is not arbitrary and has
to do with the conjunction of, an the one hand, the time and place of the
observer (especially as this affects hisAer particular disciplinary
development), and, on the other hand, the time and place of the situation
observed. As a consequence, certain aspects of a society will strike
individual observers as seemingly more Important than others. As a woman
anthropologist accepted into the women's realm, I came to identify with those
things which were of importance to Pokot women. I discovered that the
relationship between wives and husbands (especially women'a rights within this
relationship), women's control of their sexuality, and women's initiation, were
topics for continual discussion and emphasis amongst the women themselves.
Furthermore, I found that within the oontext of Pokot society as a whole,
Importance is placed on maturity and gender identity by both men and women, as
ia demonstrated in the ritual elaboration of their respective initiation rites.

I first went to the Pokot agricultural area in the Cherengani hills (some
350 miles fran Nairobi; in 1972. Bather untypically, I began doing fieldwerk
Prior to my anthropological training. I was originally encouraged to go to

pokot by Dr L.S.B. Leakey, who asked me to make an indepth stucfy of the Pokot ndt©rial culture for the Nairobi National l&iseum. Vy interest and fascination with the Pokot people led me to explore various aspects of their culture, and, although Dr Leakey died shortly after I went to Pokot, I continued to stay in the area for over a year. During this year, I began to learn the Pokot language (helped by Pokot who spoke some English, having been educated in nission schools), and established comsunication and friendships with the people living in the Katuw region of the Wei Wei Location. Hy area of fieldwork was circumscribed and limited by the fact that I seldom had means of transport, because I was not funded by any large organisation. Ky introduction to Pokot society and culture was therefore on a personal rather than a scientific basis,

I returned to the area of Katuw in 1975 (to stay there a further four » years), after completing the Certificate of Social Anthropology at Canbridge University. At Canbridge my original interest in Pokot women was enriched by the general anthropological interest and literature on the subject of women. With a better understanding of anthropology, I went baok to Pokot to put my original observations into a broader scientific framework. I was welcomed back, and re-established the friendships I had formed previously, particularly with the women of the Katuw connunity. It is of significance to this discussion that by this time the Pokot themselves recognised me as a 'woman'. When I originally went to Pokot, I was considered more 'male' than 'female'. Early in 1973, a Pokot elder, and special friend, suggested that in order to become a 'woman', I should marry Murray Eoberts (the man who took the photographs), by performing nosio; the last stage of the Pokot marriage ceremony. It was only after marriage that I was expected, by Pokot men and wccen alike, to participate fully in the daily activities of Pokot women, and allowed, by women, to participate in the secret and more private aspects of their everyday lives ani rituals.

My discovery that Pokot women are neither 'muted' (as suggested by E. Ardener (1977)) in their expression of ideas which may be of special concern



grzanizatica of the two groups, is t\i r^erc. T^rr:! Is c:^ trading bet-eon the t^o groups end a dsgrco of intrs-sarriage exists, particularly In tha area whera the pastoralista and agriculturists border each other and there is every-day contact between the t*o groups.

Like many other East African groups, the Fokct idolize livestock, and especially cattle. This is not only true of the pastoral Pokot, but of the agriculturists as well, who keep small herds of goats, sheep and ooirs. The agriculturists see the pastoralists' way of life as one of ease because they do not hare to "bend over" and dig the soil, and also consider them as being far wealthier because of the large herds they own. On the other hand, the pastoralists regard the agricultural Pokot with respect on account of their occupying the ancestral homeland of the Pokot, and keeping up the essentially Pokot customs. The pastoralists come to the agricultural area in order to participate in certain annual rituals which are held there for all Pokot.

The Pokot speak a language closely related to Nandi, together with which it forms a language group within the larger Nilo-Maa group. Further linguistic research is necessary to establish Aether or not this larger group can be considered a language family in its own right. Nilo-Kaa includes, besides Nandi-Pokot (also known as Kalenjin), Nilotic, Bari, Otuho, Karimojong-Turkana, Ongamo and l!aa. Most of the neighbours of the Pokot speak languages belonging to this Nilo-i£aa group, for example, Karimojemg, Turkana, Samburu (who speak Haa) and Sebei (whose language falls in the ITandi-Pokot group)*

Several of the ethnic groups which surround Pokot have been studied and written about by social anthropologists. N. Dyson-Hudson has written on the Karimojong (1966); P.H. Gulliver on the Turkana (1955 and 196}); P. Spencer on the Samburu (1965 and 1973); and W. Goldsohmidt on the Sebei (1976). G.W.B. Huntingford made an ethnographic survey of the southern Nilo-Hamites (now referred to as southern Nilotes), which included the Pokot and their southern Neighbours (1953).

Several ethnic groups who live to the south of Pokot speak languages

losely related to Pokot, and also share a number of economic and cultural activities in common with them (they include Nandi, Kipsigis, Ogiek, Marakwet, Geyo and Tugun). In the 1960's, the politicians in these groups decided they should unite as a single political entity within Kenya and adopted the name of Kalenjin (see Kesby 1977: 83).

The official administrative area of Pokot encompasses two separate Districts, and these Districts are represented by Pokot who are elected as Members of the Kenya Parliament. The two Districts within which the Pokot area falls are: West Pokot District (which now includes the Kara Suk area, formerly administered by Uganda, and now a division within the West Pokot District); and to the east of this the Baringo District, only part of which is occupied by Pokot. Each District has a District Commissioner as its administrative head. The Districts are subdivided into Divisions, which are governed by District Officers. Divisions are further divided into Locations, headed by elected Chiefs who also have a number of elected sub-chiefs, who govern small regions. To give an idea of the size and population of these different areas here are some details about the Sigor Division, where I carried out my fieldwork. Sigor Division is approximately 1,980 square kilometres, and is made up of 6 Locations; two of which are pastoral, one is semi-pastoral and three are agricultural. There is a wide variation in population density and area between the agricultural and pastoral Locations. For example, Wei Wei Location is 253 square kilometres and has a population density of 21 per square kilometre, whereas the pastoral Location of Jelasol is 622 square kilometres and has a population density of five per square kilometre.

Since the early 1500's there has been influence from outsiders, both missionaries (especially the Catholic and Protestant missions), and the ruling Government (the British colonial government, followed by the Kenya government since independence). However, Pokot have always been noted for their paternal resistance to change and modernisation (Schneider 1959). In 1979, the

pressure on the Pokot to modernise began to increase at a mere rapid rate due

?

imilarly to the new roads being built through the Pokot area from east and west. The roads brought an influx of other tribes into the area, as well as part-time employment for many Pokot men. The roads are being built partially because of defence (especially because of increased raiding in the Pokot and Turkana areas, due to the influx of arms and because of war and famine in Uganda, Ethiopia and Somalia), and also because of governmental plans for more general development in the hope of eventually opening the Pokot area to tourism and trade (particularly that resulting from tapping Lake Turkana for fish).

The areas bordering Trans Ncoia (the southwest sector of the Pokot area), are far more westernized because employment on European farms nearby has been an important aspect of their lives since the mid-1900's. Conversely, the pastoral Pokot (in the southeast and northwest sectors of the Pokot area) have been less affected by change and development programmes, which are not concentrated in these more arid areas. The Katuw area lies somewhere in between these two, both geographically and in relation to modernisation. Generally speaking, the people of Katuw have remained stubbornly aloof from modernization (as is partially indicated by the photographs). This is not to say that they have not been affected by such changes, but it is to emphasize that the Pokot, in general, and the people of Katuw, in particular, have chosen to place more importance on their own indigenous system and values. In a very real sense, every Pokot is affected by the area rates that they must pay to the government every year. In most areas, although there are a number of schools and missions, there is a very low attendance. Either than taking their complaints to the government courts, most Pokot take their cases to be settled by the traditional council of elders. In a more subjective sense, they are beginning to value western goods and clothing, and will buy these material goods whenever possible. Money is becoming generally more available in these areas, as more men are being employed on constructing roads. This has allowed young men to have more influence than previously, which, in turn,

. d to * weaning of the indigenous systan.

Bering introduced the Pokot in general, let us now consider, in particular,
the Pokot, among whan most of my research was oonducted.

c L C ^ A l e T

(U J t ^LU *c^j)* r/Wt/Zo^ . it y^fctf/ tr A ac 7*/ r*_L/cfr
< Co l ^ /«- 'AL fro , faS
e^ Mi.y 4c cLlu Cdl'S ^ y tju. V
-flit ft x k. ^ ^ t c Y v / A1"< ^ yXt c J
iC<-S /He * Iv^cC /A.A /iecc Jlsct c t
L I' L. Ct << „ , ^ ^V^K 16 (1UJx A-

/ W / J / /* A- C/ 'vL S ^ * i SAR-JLK
u ,< fr / «rw c^t'i (it*** ^ <fy
* U u ^ / 'j v A c C^i/s^c-vect: fa^C ^ t ^ t c ^ '
^ti Li f/(tc /A. ^
C^- { U10 £rz_ rn fl^ LnWixS> rf } ^

Chapter II. Social Relationships and Grouping*

This chapter introduces the setting of ordinary day-to-day interactive life of the Pokot agriculturists by looking at:- those interactions which characterise the most important kin and affinal relationships; the way in which people are categorised by age and sex, and what behaviours these categories entail; the organisation and functions of the Pokot agricultural community; and the definitions and functions of the household as a unit of production and reproduction. In this way, I examine the most significant social relationships and social groupings which are operative among the agricultural Pokot and form the backdrop to the main focus of **this** thesis.

II. 1. Significant Relationships defined by Kinship and Affinity

The following descriptions of significant kinship and affinal relationships for Individual Pokot serve as an introduction and orientation to my detailed discussion about the relationship between the sexes and sexual identity. For every Pokot the most important ritual validation of sexual identity occurs at their initiation ceremonies which mark the transition from childhood to adulthood. Pokot themselves recognise the importance of this as taking place at one particular time in an individual's life cycle, and during the initiation rites they make many references to the social roles which have been expected of, each individual. In order to give a picture of continuity, this section reviews the significant sex related social roles of an individual over his/her life cycle.

In the same way that this section does not undertake a total inventory of social roles, it does not attempt a total inventory of Pokot kinship. Kinship is an important principle of social differentiation amongst the Pokot, but it is flexible and open to interpretation and manipulation. Some of the

Chapter U. Social Relationships and Grouping*

This chapter introduces the setting of ordinary day-to-day interactions among the Pokot agriculturist! by looking at:- those interactions which characterise the most important kin and affinal relationships; the way in which people are categorized by age and sex, and what behaviours these categories entail; the organisation and functions of the Pokot agricultural community; and the definitions and functions of the household as a unit of **production** and reproduction. In this way, I examine the most significant social relationships and social groupings which are operative among the agricultural Pokot and form the backdrop to the main focus of this thesis.

II.1. Significant Relationships defined by Kinship and Affinity

The following descriptions of significant kinship and affinal relationships for individual Pokot serve as an introduction and orientation to my detailed discussion about the relationship between the sexes and sexual identity. For every Pokot the most important ritual validation of sexual identity occurs at their initiation ceremonies which mark the transition from childhood to adulthood. Pokot themselves recognise the importance of this as taking place at only one particular time in an individual's life cycle, and during the initiation rites they make many references to the social roles which have been, will be expected of, each individual. In order to give a picture of continuity, this section reviews the significant sex related social roles of an individual over his/her life cycle.

In the same way that this section does not undertake a total inventory of roles, it does not attempt a total inventory of Pokot kinship. Kinship is an important principle of social differentiation amongst the Pokot, but the - 4 j is flexible end r.pr» to interpretation end manipulation. Some of the

inspect towards his wife.

The husband/wife relationship is the most important relationship defined in Pokot. The relationship forms the basis of the household and the production unit and, as such, is the foundation unit of the society. The relationship between the spouses is, however, less clearly defined than other relationships based on kinship and age (although there are of course degrees of manipulation in the kinship and age systems). A person is actually born into a kinship network, and his relationships are defined with particular regard to that group (his parents, siblings, grandparents, etc.) and to a degree with others outside it. Relationships based on age are also clearly defined and, as a person gets older, he naturally moves up in his position of seniority and status. Although a number of social rules exist, there is no exact specification of how a person will behave, how the relationship between husband and wife will be conducted, or whether a person's spouse will remain with him or her. None of these factors is absolute, yet for Pokot society to continue it is essential that couples marry, women reproduce and social relations are defined.

The factor of choice probably adds to the inherent flexibility which exists in the husband/wife relationship, but it is also important that this relationship is the foundation for the unit of production and reproduction among the Pokot agriculturists. This means that the husband/wife relationship must be sustained in order for the household to expand and prosper. As a social fact this is accepted by both men and women. There is an understanding that as husband and wife they need each other and there must be a degree of compromise and negotiation for the relationship to be sustained. However, individuals of opposite sex, dependent on each other, they inevitably have frictions and conflicts over the management and control of their property and children. This close dependency on each other may act as a factor in escalating the antagonism between husbands and wives, as well as the fact that there are few alternatives open to them as individuals. His conflicts over the

If the resources of labour, stock and land are not dissipated in any way as
 they might be in a larger polygynous homestead and, in the case of the
 traditional Pokot there are no acceptable social alternatives to Marriage and
 the family unit of production and homestead. In this discussion of the
 relationship between the spouses, a comment should be made on the relationship
 between co-wives. Polygynous households are rare among the agriculturists in
 contrast to the pastoralists. Among the agriculturists a man cannot marry
 another wife without the permission of his senior wives. Not only do they
 have to agree that another wife would be useful to the homestead, but there has
 to be a certain agreement on the choice of the woman involved. This is later
 confirmed by the fact that a man's wives have to give up some of their allocated
 herds, both to pay for the bridewealth of another wife, and also as direct
 gifts to her, which she then adds to her allocated herd. Although co-wives live
 in separate huts with allocated resources, each having a responsibility of
 caring for and feeding her own children, they are expected to cooperate with
 each other. They are supposed to help in the cultivation of each other's
 farms, as well as caring for each other's children whenever necessary. The
 children of one homestead refer to and address their own mother, as well as the
 other wives of their father, by the same term, yo; mother.

Amongst themselves, wives are ranked according to seniority, with the first
 wife being in the accepted position of authority over the other wives. From
 the case examples I have of polygynous households among the agriculturists, it
 appears that there is limited cooperation and respect between wives, and
 jealousies and conflicts quickly arise over the husband's distribution of stock
 and grain. Another source of conflict between wives is the amount of
 attention a husband gives to his different wives. It is a common complaint
 of the senior wives that their husband favours the youngest wife of the homestead.
 For these reasons the relationship between co-wives is often fraught with
 tension and it is not unusual for some of polygynous households to return to
 a parental home, and eventually set up a separate homestead with their grown

g Parent and Child

Both parents refer to their daughter as chepten; **JUT** daughter (the word used to refer to girls in general as well as referring to daughter*
glstera, etc.). The parents refer to their son as warinja; our son (the word
firl i» sometimes used to describe boys as well as sons, brothers, etc.).
Children usually address or refer to their Mother as *jo* (they can also use
or komot), and their father as papo or kwanda.

If Pokot are asked if they would rather have daughters or sons, they
usually answer with the ideal and say they would want to have both daughters
and sons

alternately: "like two different coloured beads" • However, when
questioned again, both men and women, but women in particular, usually say that
they would like to have at least one or two sons, but more daughters. From
the Pokot point of view, in simplest economic terms, parents receive wealth
because of their daughters, but have to expend wealth because of their sons.
On the other hand, all Pokot want at least one son to carry on the patriline
of the father, and ideally, to look after the parents and their property in

*ge.
*mother and her small children. Mothers are considered fully responsible
Probably the most openly affectionate relationship in Pokot is that between
their small children; a mother is responsible for socializing the children/
feeding and clothing them, and caring for their health (all women know
Verbal medicines although certain women specialise in the field and are known
as ghesaktln or doctors). The close relationship between mother and child is
strongly reinforced by a physical attachment which results because the child

remains until he or she is two to three years old. One of the most
striking examples of the attachment between mother and child, is the fact
that a mother will give her child a piece of her own umbilical cord to handle

so as to ensure that he/she will become a "polite" person (the cord is
cut out two to three inches from the baby's body at birth and when it
is given to her child when he/she is two to three years old. One of the most
striking examples of the attachment between mother and child, is the fact
that a mother will give her child a piece of her own umbilical cord to handle

ott*1). The close intimacy between mother and child continues until her
 children are approximately four years old. However, the mother maintains
 a close socialisation of her children, both sons and daughters,
 until they are approximately seven to eight when they begin to work and
 participate more fully in the wider public domain. A particularly close
 familiarity develops between mothers and daughters because they do most of
 their daily tasks together. This familiarity, as well as their identification
 with each other as 'women', becomes apparent at the daughter's initiation rite.
 Soon after initiation the daughter will marry, and although it is not
 recognised publicly, mothers have an important say in the choice of their
 daughter's spouse.

Although the relationship between mothers and sons is also intimate, it is
 marked more by deference and respect than by affection. After the age of
 eight, when boys become sex specific, a son will group together with other boys
 or work with his father doing various agricultural or herding tasks rather than
 being involved in domestic tasks. However, the close bond which exists
 between mother and son is revealed after the son marries and he brings his
 wife to the homestead. The mother is then in the respected position of
 authority in the homestead and, generally speaking, she can rely on the support
 of her grown sons if quarrels should arise between herself and her husband.
 As marriages are initially patrilocal and then neolocal, it is considered ideal
 that the last born son cares for his parents. The last born son is not only
 the mother's darling, but he should also inherit the bulk of her property.

The relationship between a father and his children is more distant, and
 both male and female children are taught to respect their father as head of the
 household. As adolescents, both girls and boys must leave the house and sleep
 in a different place away from their parents. Pokot emphasise that this is
 because daughters should not sleep in the same house as their fathers, but it
 applies to sons who should not sleep in the same house as their fathers.
 Although the relationship between daughters and fathers is distant, it is
 still very close.

in Pokot. it does not involve the same strict avoidance taboos as, for example,

exist amongst the Saaburu (Spencer, 1965: 212). Fathers have a closer relationship with their sons than they do with their daughters because, and fathers work together more often, fathers participate in the initiation rite of their sons, and also because sons are supposed to inherit their father's property. It is however, not unusual for fathers and sons to quarrel over property rights, particularly when the sons are older (I know of one such dispute in which the son actually beat his own father). The father usually marries his eldest son, who later inherits the bulk of his property.

Grandparents and grandchildren address and refer to each other reciprocally as kuko. In the interaction between grandparents and grandchildren is usually between older adults and children, there is no differentiation made between the sexes. The relationship between grandparents and their grandchildren is playful, with the grandparents often teasing and telling stories to their grandchildren.

o. Siblings

A sister addresses and refers to her brother as warlnyan; my brother, and a brother calls his sister cheptsnjm; my sister. The same terms are used within one sex as across the sexes. A woman's children call their mother's brother cherko; mother, and she addresses them as her sons and daughters. A woman's children call their mother's brothers ea^a, and the same vice versa. A man's children call their father's sister cherko, and the same vice versa. A man's children call their father's brother papo; father, and he addresses them as his sons and daughters.

The relationship between siblings is supportive and friendly. Generally speaking, as youngsters, siblings play freely with each other, although older siblings have the responsibility of caring for their younger siblings. When about eight years old, sisters and brothers often form separate groups, gradually becoming more involved with their own peers as they reach adolescence. As adolescents, they are not, however, taught to strictly avoid

other. In fact, unlike other close relatives, brothers and sisters are to dance with each other, as well as to see each other during their Periods of seclusion at initiation. m

The importance of the brother/sister relationship becomes more apparent after siblings have married. Brothers have little direct say in whom their gijars will marry, but they will most probably receive some of their sisters' brideprice after their father dies. Because of this, sisters are always welcome in their brothers' homes, and brothers are expected to support their sisters whenever necessary. Another particularly important relationship is that between mother's brothers' and sisters' daughters, which in turn reinforces the brother/sister relationship. Mother's brothers have a great deal of say in whom their sisters' daughters will marry (particularly the last born daughter) as well as receiving part of the bridewealth of their sisters' daughters. Sisters' daughters must respect their mother's brothers (who are said to have a particularly strong curse), but they can also expect their assistance whenever necessary. As one elder said, "they do not leave that child, whose property is at that home; the property they have eaten". ^j-^st ^

The relationship between a mother's sister and her sister's children is friendly, and as youngsters the children often play with their other "mother". The children must treat their fathers' sisters with respect, although the relationship between them is nonetheless friendly and without fear. A dowry gift is given to the father's sisters when their brothers' daughters marry, relationship between father's brothers and brothers' children is one of respect and respect towards their other "father". Father's brothers receive part of the bridewealth for their brothers' daughters, however, it depends largely on the relationship between brothers and whether listed each other in the past. Brothers' daughters must respect their fathers' brothers, although they do not fear them to the same extent as they do their Mother's brothers, nor can they count on their assistance if they are in need. ***

^h other. In fact, unlike other close relatives, brothers and sisters are **o ^jd to** dance with each other, as well as to see each other during their periods of seclusion at initiation.

The importance of the brother/sister relationship becomes more apparent when siblings have married. Brothers have little direct say in whom their sisters will marry, but they will most probably receive some of their sisters' bride-wealth after their father dies. Because of this, sisters are always obedient in their brothers' houses, and brothers are expected to support and help their sisters whenever necessary. Another particularly important relationship that between mother's brothers' and sisters' daughters, which in turn reinforces the brother/sister relationship. Mother's brothers have a great deal of say in whom their sisters' daughters will marry (particularly the last born daughter) as well as receiving part of the bride-wealth of their sisters' daughters. Sisters' daughters must respect their mother's brothers (who are said to have a particularly strong curse), but they can also expect their assistance whenever necessary. As one elder said, "they do not leave that child, whose property is at that home; the property they have eaten".

The relationship between a mother's sister and her sister's children is friendly, and as youngsters the children often play with their other "mother". The children must treat their fathers' sisters with respect, although the relationship between them is nonetheless friendly and without fear. A token gift is given to the father's sisters when their brothers' daughters marry. The relationship between father's brothers and brothers' children is one of deference and respect towards their other "father". Father's brothers should receive part of the bride-wealth for their brothers' daughters, however, this depends largely on the relationship between brothers and whether they have listed each other in the past. Brothers' daughters must respect their father's brothers, although they do not fear them to the same extent they fear mother's brothers, nor can they count on their assistance in the same way.

9.

daughter-in-law usually refers to and addresses her father and mother-
Ig^igw as potich, and they address her as potioh or by her olan name. The
tsr* of address changes, however, according to the gift of stock the parents-in-
4^{irt} their daughter-in-law when they bless her at marriage. If thiy give
tuair daughter-in-law a cow she addressaes then as potich; she addresses them
as fcg^o if >he is given an or; and pokor if she is given a sheep. The gifts
that **daughters**-in-law are given should relate to their order of seniority (the
first wife being given a cow, the second wife an ox, and so on), however,
aongst the agriculturists (where polygyny is rare) daughters-in-law usually
o*ll their parents-in-law potich as a term of respect no matter what gift of
atock they are given, even if it ia only a goat. A daughter-in-law Mist show
rtaped towards both of her parents-in-law. The mother-in-law is in the
accepted position of authority in her son's homestead. The daughter-in-law
should cooperate with her mother-in-law and they usually do their daily tasks
together; however, she must also do as she ia told and there are often
conflicta between them. A daughter-in-law must respect her father-in-law
to the extent of avoiding physical contact with him (for example, aha should
not shake tends with him).

As a term of respect, a son-in-law refera to or addresses his mother-in-
as potich and ahe addresses him in the same way. A son-in-law addresses
or refers to his father-in-law as agoi, a term of address which is used more
generally between elders or stock associates* Scns-in-lew should be careful
^ respectful towards their parents-in-law. Because they are the same sex,
tl*e relationship between a ecn-in-law end his father-in-law ia less servile and
•Gained than between a son-in-law and his mother-in-law. The actual

however, between an individual sen-in-law and his parents-in-law
^•Peada largely on whether he has been able to meet his bridewealth paymenta,
S&d
*asisted hia parents-io-^7

Categories Defined by Age and Sex

In the broader analysis of Pokot gender constructs, and specifically the simple binary opposition of male and female has little relevance. The category of 'female' is not really a meaningful one, and as such, are not an identifiable group. There are certainly values and hierarchies based on the notions of femaleness and maleness, as well as different perspectives stemming from their varying interests. However, the Pokot further define the larger categories of sex on the basis of age.

For women the age categories break down as follows:

Tipln; young girls before initiation

Chemeri; female initiates during their seclusion period

Mrar; women before the birth of their first child

tor; women after they have given birth

Kckon; old women (often referring to women past menopause)

The general age categories for men are as follows:

Karaoihin; boys before they are initiated

Tiyoa; male initiates during their seclusion period

Moren; young and middle-aged men

Poy; old men or elders

The social significance of these age categories is discussed throughout the thesis, but it is important to note from the beginning that, in Pokot, the actors' perceptions and roles are not only based on sex differences, but also on age differences. Therefore, the relation between different age groups has significant

effect on the relations within the same sex and between the sexes. It is interesting to note that, even from the brief description above, it is clear that, unlike the age categories for men, those for women are based on their sexuality and procreative powers.

Formalities of the Kale Age-Set System

J.G. Peristiany has already described in detail the complex age-set system of pastoral Pokot in two articles (1951). For purposes it is

necessary to review some of the main points here, concentrating on this age-set system is relevant to women and the control it gives to elders

tiorly orer marriage. In a discussion of the Pokot age-set system, it
 t first be pointed out that the pastoral Pokot hare adopted aspects of the
 gArsaojccg and Turkana age-set systems and blended them into the sore ancient
 t **system** of the Pokot agriculturists, where circumcision is the main rite
 rfeioh initiates men into adulthood. Ill Pokot acknowledge this and hold male
 gni ftoale oircumcision to be very important (mainly in terms of identifying
 them selves as Pokot, and different from surrounding pastoral groups who do not
 circumcise). In contrast to this, many pastoralist men living sear the Pokot
 borders (both in the Karasuk area bordering Karamojong and Turkana, and the
 j|jt pokot and Baringo areas bordering Turkana, Njemps and Tugun) either do not
 circumcise or delay circumcision for s»any years, and place more importance or
 the adopted initiatory rite of aapana and other related ceremonies. The
 details of rituals and ceremonies vary from one Pokot area to another; this
 is particularly true in relation to the male age-set cereaanies in which the
 t-jjing and ritual proceedings vary quite dramatically, not only between the
 agriculturists and pastoralists but also within each of the two ccaxaunities.
 I will use ay own material and that of Peristlany to review some of the main
 aspects of the male age-set system smong the agriculturists (in the Vei Wei and
 Muino Locations), comparing it briefly to that of the pastoralists (in the
 Baringo District near Tengulbei).

There are approximately eight or nine age-sets, known as pin in Pokot,
 •Rd these are cyclical.^ One pun is made up of approximately three or four
 circunciaiQjj groups and circumcision takes place approximately every three to
 9¹¹ J&rs. The age-set names thus change every nine to sixteen years.
 **eeh (1911: 6) claims that the circumcision set recruits members every
 fifteon years, while Peristlany (1951J 297) claims the duration of an age-set
 -en years. The Pokot themselves olaim that male circumcision tskes place
 frequently these days than it did long ago, which would make the duration
 of age-aet shorter, but they often argue about when a new age-set was formed
 Berber? xxxre recruited. This makes the duration of any particular

t difficult to locate, but it is likely that the duration of different
 actually vary, and are alightly different from one area to another,
 j^cng the agriculturists, after completing the three-month oircumoision
 a youth attains full sexual and social status (described in detail in
 <fc>~ter V.2:B). Some years after completing initiation a man usually
 Ftrfor«s sarara; an individual^ initiation into manhood which entails the
 g^u^itering of an ox or goat for the community. Among the agriculturists,
 »4T»S* ia not a prerequisite to marriage and I have known many oases where men
 kara performed sapana after marriage (in such cases it is considered
 lr^-s?icious for the wife to be present, so she simply stays at home). It is
 up to the initiate to deoide when he wishes to perform sapana, and among the
 agriculturists it is usually performed just before or after a man marries.
 The time period between circuncisicn and marriage varies according to the
 circiastances of each individual, so that the timing of sapana is also
 c hangeable. Whatever the case, among the agriculturists sapana is regarded as
 baing far less important than circumcision, and I would agree with Peristiany
 (1951: 201*) when he writes that, among the hill people, not to do sapana before
 aarriage only results in a loss of prestige.

The other ceremony, apart from initiation, which the agricultural elders
 regard as being extremely important is poro. It is a very secretive ceremony
 »wiiich the elders speak of in relation to the circumcision age-set cycle,
 chiming

it is an ancient tradition among the agriculturists and not
 f_P ca other pastoral tribes, as is sapara. Neither Peristiany nor
 Welder² cake reference to poro, but this may be due to the fact that they
 worked in Pokot pastoralist communities who do not practice poro. In
 from my own records Pokot pagtoralizts claim to know nothing about it.
 should take place sane three to six years after circumcision, usually
 r a man has married (the last poro which took plcco in Kntuw
 cx*oately six years ago, but the elders insisted that poro oould T>o
 ^onaed "whenever there was enough focd and the yeusg nen be/rge • ' . la

-eremony" oven if thia was only about three years after the previous
IB®
cfI«3cuy)*

kike oircumciaian, poro is held for a group of men belonging to one
Qjsainity who are instructed by the elders of that community. The
proceedings of poro last for approximately one week with the old men of the
foCS3unity staying in a cave where the ancestors are said to live, and the
young®* men camping near by. Every young man must provide the elders with a
geat and grain, and two to three goats are consumed by the elders and
participants each day. At poro elders teach the young men speoial ritual
tongs and how to invoke the ancestors, an important aspect of which entails
c»lling the ancestors (usually going back only three generations) of each of
the individual participants. Poro culminates when the men invoke all the
ancestors out of the cave and go around to the various houses of the
neighbourhoods. Women are said to be extremely frightened during this time
end lock themselves and their children in their huts. The ancestors - and
jeen - make a great deal of noise throwing sand and stones at the hut walls,
especially at the huts of women who are known to be difficult and disbelieving.
A nan who has completed poro is respected in the cominanity by wanen and
jounger men. After poro a man has the right to use the word porokck, said as
• nild curse and, more importantly, is able to invoke the ancestors and thus
Perform the blessing an^or cursing which takes place at most ceremonies and
rituals. Although Peristiary does not mention poro he makes reference to the
fact that the inhabitants of the hills (the agriculturists) are regarded as the
living repository of ancestral values (1951: 189) and that circuacision is
•^ociated with the attainment of extra-human or heavenly powers (1952: 190).
* *ould suggest that men only attain 'heavenly powers* after the completion of
when they have learnt how to control the ancestors, rather than at
^^acision. Eowever, poro cannot be regarded as completely separate from
Vision and would probably^e most accurately described as the last rite
in ↵
e circumcision age-set cycle among the agriculturists.

«actuz the agriculturista. It la held to be more important
 for def«»^{co} raaacna, and for eatabliahing oloae aooio-econcoio relations
 ma of men or age-nates over a wider geographical area. According
 tJ peri*⁴ M951j 189) aub-aeta are formed by men who have completed aapana
 . n to year period, A number of sub-seta form a munlan; colour
 within . two
 ^on (formed once every twelve yeara), and two of theae munlan form a aapana-
 get*¹ There are only two aapana-sets and theae are cyclical. Periatiany
 reporta (1951? ²⁸³) that the last munlan ceremony waa performed long ago,
 although it has left its mark on the present-day system. However, in 1979 the
 pokot pastoralista in the Baringo area told mo that munlan was performed fairly
 recently and were able to describe it in detail (even amongst the agriculturista
 an elder told me that "the words of munlan - amongst the pastoralista - had not
 finished"). * This indicatea that the highly formalised age-aet system is still
 operating among the paatorialista. The timing and organization of eaoth of the
 different atages of the age-set system is controlled by the elders of the
 alternate aapana-set. In this way, the power of the elders amongst the
 peatorialista is very strong and oovers a wide area. This would help to explain
 why moranhoo is far more important (both in a ritual and socio-economic sense)
 aaong the peatorialista than among the agriculturista. Also, amongst the
 piatorialiata, where the rate of polygyny la fairly high, the formalised age-aet
 V3t« allows the elders to delay the marriages of young men by delaying the
 dAfferent stages of moranhoo.

Amongst the agriculturista, the situation is very different. Schneider
 loicates the period of Pokot moranhoo as being after circumcision end before
 but as we have seen among the agriculturista this period varies with
 k individual and can be extremely short. Although young men are at their
 virile during this period, they are not recognised as a distinct group
 **** their own organization or responsibilities, For tho agriculturista*, it
 Probably be more accurate to describe the period between oircuncicion and
 *3 Pokot moranhoo because it io only cS' : ^ h«s«ae

full elders. Married men or heads of households, they do have full political rights. In the council, although they do not have the ritual authority and powers of persuasion and influence as full elders. In the case, there is little emphasis or importance placed on the period of morango amongst the agriculturists. This may be partially due to the fact that there is little need to have an organised group of warriors, since the neighbouring tribes are not particularly hostile, possibly because the herds of the agriculturists are relatively small and not really worth stealing, the fact that there is little emphasis placed on morango amongst the **agriculturists**, suggests that there is less control practised by a particular group of elders over the larger group (or groups) of young men, than there is amongst East African pastoralists. The power of the elders amongst the agriculturists appears to be far more localised, with the elders confining their ritual and political authority primarily to the neighbourhood or community in which they reside.

n.3. The Agricultural Pokot: Regions and Neighbourhoods as Areas of Social Organization

The agricultural Pokot live in the Charangani Hills lying to the centre of the wider Pokot area (see map). At a first glance, when one looks up at the Charangani Hills, they appear to be extremely steep, rocky, covered in lush bush and, generally, hidden in cloud or mist. On closer observation one notices that certain geographically distinct areas are dotted with huts (huts from 100 to 500 yds apart), with a number of farms running down the nearby slopes. Each of these areas is a separate region comprised of separate neighbourhoods.

The agricultural Pokot subdivide their area into a number of named regions or communities. The regions vary in size, but most range from one to three square miles in area. Each region is further subdivided into three

to five kecrok; named neighbourhoods. Neighbourhood boundaries are defined in terms of geographical features such as rivers and ridges.

^bourhoods vary both in size of area and population.

J lived in the Katuw region and carried out research in Katuw and nearby areas. Katuw is in the government location of Vei Wei, and lies in the foothills of the Charangani's at an elevation of approximately 3,500 ft. The area of Katuw is approximately one square mile of hilly terrain with a total of **thirty-seven** households, nine of which are temporary households (young men from the highlands grazing their cattle in the foothills). In 1978 the total **population** of the twenty-eight established households in the Katuw region was 142; 36 adults and 66 children (two of the households were single men without dependants).

Comparatively speaking, the households in Katuw and the surrounding regions in the foothills are fairly poor, with the basic unit of production being relatively small (discussed in detail in the next section and again in Chapter III). In other agricultural areas, particularly the highlands, households own larger herds (of small stock as well as cattle) as well as owning and using larger pieces of land. This is especially so in the locations of Kapenguria and Cheperaria (to the south-west of Katuw), where government and mission programmes have concentrated their efforts of modernization, and more sophisticated technology is used to cultivate larger tracts of land.

Throughout the agricultural Pokot area clan sections or lineages (usually two to three) are localized into korok or neighbourhoods. The Pokot are patrilineal with named exogamous clans and sub-clans which are further identified with totemic animals. Each clan or sub-clan is composed of a number of lineages of shallow depth. Individual Pokot remember their own patrilineal kin back to two or four generations only. They also remember the names of certain ancestors of the clan who lived long ago, but cannot specify how these ancestors are related to their own patrilineage as, for example, the Nuer do (Hartshorn-Pritchard 1974: 192).

Some land within a region and near the settlement area belongs to the clans in that region, but is not necessarily cultivated by people of these

el
two
In the region of Katuw most of the nearby irrigated land belongs to
olsns: Chepokwegho and Tullin. Of the twenty-eight established house-
holds in Katuw, seven use Chepokwegho land because the household head belongs to
the Chepokwegho olan; another six use Tullin land because the household head
belongs to the Tullin clan; nine use Chepokwegho land because the household
head has rights in it through his affines or matrilineal kin; four use Tullin
land for the same reasons; and two use Chepokwegho land because their
forefathers bought it (for a female goat) long ago. Is such, only half of
the male household heads are members of the olans the land is said to be owned
by.

Before the introduction of maize into the Pokot District in about 1920,
the Pokot mainly cultivated finger-millet and sorghum. Both of these crops
were cultivated on the hill slopes around their homes. Today, although a
variety of crops are cultivated, the staple subsistence crop is Maize. People
living in the foothills cultivate maize on the valley floor, while those
living in the highlands do so on the hill slopes near their homes. Finger-
millet is also cultivated on the hill slopes as a secondary subsistence crop,
as is sorghum to a lesser extent.

Essentially, cultivation in the Pokot District is dependent on adequate
rainfall, although the irrigation system is used in times of drought and
during the dry season to help bring on the maize in its later stages of growth.
The Pokot identify three seasons: Dry Season, from January to March; Rainy
Season, from April to July; "When the country is becoming dry", from August to
December. (This third season includes the short rains which normally fall
from October to November.) Normally the Pokot plant their crops at the
beginning of the rainy season, March-April, and harvest towards the middle of
the dry season, September-October. However, there is a great deal of
variation from year to year, not only because of the variation in the coming
the rains and the amount of precipitation, but also because of the wide
variation in altitudes throughout the District. The people in the M U a,



^ sXO feet, plant and reap their harvests much earlier In the year than
** the hl«hland8» UP to 9000 feet. To maximise this advantage,
Fckat try to cultivate in aeveral different eoo-acnes.

Ita Pckot endeavour to predict, and also try to oontrol, the amount of

, On the baaia of the predictions some people will decide the amount of fS J>'

ijl-J to cultivate. The relative position of the stars, in particular Mars

j Venus, ia interpreted to predict whether rain will fall or not (see also

j ^ r * ? t e r The annual ritual of alndagh provides another of
predicting the rain, as well as blessing the cultivation year. Certain

regarded as prophets are said to have apecial powers to be able to predict
the rain. A prophet will tell what the rains will be like, either from what
he has dreamt or from what he has "read" in the intestines of a slaughtered
goat or cow. , If the prophet is paid with beer or grain, he is said to be able
to "tie" the rain in times of flood, or for a short time when an important
cereaory is meant to occur, as well as having the power to make it rain in times
of circuit. The elders of the neighbourhood are also regarded as having a
•ignificant power over ilat; rain god or rain. Elders as a group can bless or
pray to ilat. either asking for rain or asking ilat to come "gently and slowly*.

Irrigation systems operate in various neighbourhoods and regions. In
the fei Wei and Muino Valley, much of the land is irrigated from the Wei Wei
Hiver. The Wei Wei River rises in the Cherangani Hills and flows northwards
d c w n the Rift Valley, eventually meeting other rivers before floring into
k & e Turkana. The Wei Wei flows all year round and to my knowledge has never
run dry. All along the river the Pokot have built irrigation canals to run

the water, and each main canal supplies one or more regions, while small
^ i ^ ation ducts running off the main canal supply individual farms. The
P o k o t construct the main canal by daaning the river Just belo* a small rapid.

Sr ® build a dam wall across the river, which is supported by trees and
of stones piled up and cemented together with tree rectc The

** directs soce of the river water into the main canal nh ^ ' i ~ t o the

ir b*nk.

In Katuw the main canal is about three feet wide and one to two feet deep, following the edge of the arable land of the Chepokwegho and Tullin clans on the valley floor. In most years the canal runs for about a half-mile distance along this line, but when it is necessary it can easily be extended for at least another half-mile. All the work involved in the maintenance, repair and pension of the irrigation system is done exclusively by the men of the region, and how much of the canal should be dug and reopened is decided by the council of elders. To rebuild the main wall in the river and reinforce the canal running along the bank, is a day's work for a group of 15 to 20 men. To clear out the main canal, which sometimes involves having to redig it, the main canal can require such a group of men a day for every 200-300 feet. To extend the irrigation, thus having to build virtually a new canal, is hard work and can take an entire day for every 100 feet.

All the water from the main canal is used for one to two days to irrigate one person's farm by opening the small irrigation ducts running off the main canal. These small ducts run along the edges of individual farms and in many places mark the farm boundary. The council of elders has to decide when, and for whom, the irrigation will be opened. If a person misuses the irrigation, for example, by opening the ducts to irrigate his land without receiving the prior permission of the council, he will be fined. I have never witnessed a case in which the men refused to open the irrigation furrows for either a man or a woman, but it is a significant affirmation of male control that permission to do so must be obtained through men from the elders of the region.

In addition to the work groups formed by men to maintain the irrigation households of one or more neighbourhoods often form into groups working on a neighbour's farms on a rotation basis or for a remuneration of beer and a goat. These work groups are usually composed of residents from one or two villages, and are often sex specific. An individual man or woman can announce his/her work party by announcing that they will provide beer or a

in order to get * particular tasks done, such as weeding, fencing or

|

^ it bouaeholders and elders within one neighbourhood, and often one region, are closely related through kinship and marriage. They are united by their joint responsibility for the irrigation system, and through their responsibility to act as a council. The council of elders not only takes decisions regarding the irrigation but also settles disputes, both those involving other neighbourhoods or regions and those between households within the neighbourhood. The elders of one neighbourhood have their own council meeting place (usually under a large tree), both of which are referred to as kokwo. There is also a larger kokwo which is held by the elders of one region. As a household head each man has the right to voice his opinion at the council meeting, and disputes are finally settled by communal consensus. However, elders have the most influence at kokwo, not only because of their ritual authority (discussed in II.2:A) but also because of their oratory skills and powers of persuasion, which are helped by their knowledge of previous cases. Although women have no legal voice at kokwo (unless called upon in special cases such as adultery), their powers of persuasion and influence through gossip and over their individual husbands, is an important factor in deciding the final outcome of any case.

The Household as the Unit of Production and Reproduction.

Among the agricultural Pokot the household is the basic unit of reproduction and production. This section examines the composition of the household and its change over the developmental cycle, as well as how the labour

* c t i n t i

ies of the household are divided by sex and age. In Katuw, households are relatively small units of production, and it is therefore beneficial for them to stay married, and together with their children work to acquire material property and building up a large herd.

Household as a Unit of Reproduction: its Composition over the Life Cycle

In the agricultural Pokot the household has, as its nucleus, a married couple and their unmarried children. Every marriage establishes the basis of a household and unit of reproduction. The marriage process is dealt with in detail in Chapter II. In this section we look at how, in general terms, the composition of a household changes over time and under different circumstances. To begin with let us review these changes with reference to Fortes' model of the developmental cycle (1962: 15). When a man first marries he brings his wife to live in his parents' home. Thus for the first few months of marriage the household or domestic group consists of a man, his wife, his younger siblings, and his mother and father. It is during the phase of 'expansion', when a man and his wife produce their children, that a man establishes his own household as a separate residential unit from that of his parents (initially in their compound and later in his own compound nearby). During this phase a man may marry more wives, building a separate house for each wife and her children. 'Fission' takes place and the domestic group becomes smaller, as sons and daughters marry and establish their own households elsewhere. 'Replacement' should ideally be by the last born son, who has the responsibility of taking care of his parents and their property during old age and until their death.

The composition of the household, however, varies greatly from this social model as the circumstances of individual families change over time. During the first phase of 'expansion' (and possibly through the later phases) there may be more people living in a single household than just the husband, his wife and the children they produce. To begin with, a man may marry a woman who already has a child by another man or previous husband. If the child is a girl will probably stay with her mother and her mother's current husband until she marries. If the child is a boy he will, in most cases, go back to his father when he is approximately eight years old, after which he starts a

^pifioant contribution to the labour resources of that domestic group.
4}fof *hen a man and his wife only hare one or two young children they will
igaClJ * young fmaale relative (often a mother's younger sister)
w otoe and take care of the children. is a resident babysitter, she may
^_ra with them for many years. It oan also happen that olose unmarried kin
(tipecially brothers) attach themselves to a flourishing domestic group rather
than attempting to estsblish one on their own (for example, In the oase of a
person who has had many unsuccessful marriages, is sterile or barren)*

The second phase of 'fission' is often not as smooth as it should be.
Instead of the domestic group becoming smaller it can, at times, actually
becaae larger and its size may change mary times before 'replacement' oocurs.
Marriages of sens and daughters do not always work out as they are supposed to,
end both sons and daughters might return to their parental home and stay there
aany years after their separation. When a woman feels that she haa been
sistrested by her husband she will run back to her parents' home, sometimes
viih aiiJ sometimes without children. Ideally, this should only be for a few
weeks during which time her husband should bring beer to her parents, settle
the <jiarrel and take his wife home. In practice, however, it is not unusual
for a daughter to run to her parents' home and stay for many years or even
Permanently (especially if she runs away many times from a nuaber of different
tosbands).

In practice, 'replacement' varies according to the circumstances of
^dividual families. Although the Pokot say that it is the responsibility of
k@ last born son to take care of and eventually replace his parents, this is
* always the case. In fact, this depends more on the individual characters
^lved and the relationships parents have with their sons, than on the social
Furthermore, if there are no sons, one of the daughters and her husband
"ill
with her agsjng parents, and take over the responsibility of their
^operty "hen the parents die.

Household as a Unit of Production: the Division of Labour within the Household

The **household** is not only a unit of reproduction **but** is also **the** basic **It** of **production** among **the** agriculturists. As **the** basic unit of production **household** is responsible for procuring its subsistence needs through **the** use of its own resources (land, labour and livestock). The production potential of each household, however, is not confined to the limits of its own resources but is interwoven with, and dependent on, a wide range of kinship, economic and political ties, primarily within the region but also beyond it. The acquisition, management and control of the household's property are dealt with in detail in Chapter 5. In this section we look at the division of labour within the household.

In one year a typical household will cultivate from four to six pieces of land, measuring from one to two acres of maize, and one-half to one acre of finger-millet or sorghum. Finger-millet or sorghum may be planted every other year, depending primarily on the yield of the previous harvest and rainfall. A household makes sure that the land they cultivate is in different areas and eco-zones. During any one cultivation period another five to ten pieces of land a household has access to are left fallow. By cultivating different crops in different eco-zones a household is assured of harvests at different times of the year. For example, the finger-millet harvest usually occurs in late August, the maize from the valley is ready by mid-October, and maize from the highlands is not harvested till late November. Even if one household does not actually cultivate crops in different eco-zones, they can arrange to trade grain with their relations living in different eco-zones. Some of these factors play a part in reducing the risk of hunger due to crop failure.

Each member of the domestic unit participates in the production for subsistence, and the various tasks are allocated on the basis of sex and age. Husband and wife make an almost equal contribution to the production

Whereas the husband generally concentrates his efforts
 on the **production** of maize (the staple food **in the** Pokot **diet**), his wife works
intensively on the finger-millet farms (the secondary subsistence crop).
 Men, more than women, are beginning to cultivate experimental crops (such
 as sweet potatoes, tomatoes, and bananas) which are sold or
 bartered in the weekly market. Although this is on an extremely small scale,
 the fact that men already have more opportunity of participating in the cash
 economy is more than women.

5

Work is done on the maize farms almost every day from mid-February to
mid-October. Clearing the maize fields, digging, planting, guarding the
 crop and harvesting is done by both husband and wife, although they often work
on the fields at different times of the day. For example, the wife usually
 goes to the field later than her husband after finishing her domestic chores
 in the morning. The wife and children guard the crop during the day while
 the husband sleeps in the fields to guard them against animals during the
 night. The hard labour involved, in the digging of maize fields and the
 clearing of all fields, both maize and finger-millet, is undertaken more by the
 husband than by the wife. His husband also does the fencing of all the
 fields, unless a very temporary fence is built by the wife, and builds the
storage huts, thatching them, however, with grass cut by the wife.

The one task related to the production of a subsistence crop which is
 done exclusively by the husband, is the maintenance, repair and extension of
 irrigation

canals which are used in the maize fields. Other subsistence
 activities which are done exclusively by males, are fishing (approximately once a
 month) and hunting as a group (done only during a drought, or if a larger wild
 animal comes into the area), and bee-keeping. If a household is
 large enough to have cattle, in addition to a herd of goats and sheep, the

husband and his older sons will herd and care for them.

In addition to **the** labour contribution **made** by a wife to the cultivation

of maize, she also does most of the **digging**, planting, tending, and guarding

t fr-®illet. Probably the most Important labour contribution made by a
tjvsrdi insuring the survival of the domestic group, is in other subsistence
jcaestic tasks. The wife and her older girls gather edible leaves and
• which are eaten almost every day along with the staple of cooked grain.
f®

and her children also care for, herd, water and milk the goats and
; «high provide the household with milk (given mostly to babies) and seat
(stock is usually only slaughtered on ceremonial occasions). Preparing food,
^ich includes the daily grinding, winnowing, and cooking of grain, as well as
collecting firewood, and fetching water, take up approximately three hours of a
wife*• day and are essential domestic tasks. During the intensive cultivation
period, the wife spends comparatively little time caring for her young children
and doing household chores (such as sweeping, repairing household implements,
ate*). On the other hand, she spends a good portion of her time on childcare
and household tasks during the few months when little or no cultivation takes
place. A woman also stays at home with her baby for the first few weeks after
the baby is born, and devotes all her time to childcare.

The tasks children undertake up to the age of approximately eight are not
•x specific, and do not involve the various cultivation tasks. A child's
labour contribution is important with regard to childcare; at a very young age
* child learns to take care of his/her younger siblings leaving the mother free
to work on the fields during the day. Only at approximately eight years old,
® a child is considered to be "clever", does a girl begin helping her mother
k* domestic and subsistence tasks and a boy begin working with his father. The
labour contribution made by children to the production of subsistence crops and
° herding livestock, increases as they get older. Young boys spend time
livestock, playing and hunting (small game, rodents and birds), and
5*Jllg girls spend time making beads and gossiping while gathering vegetables and
domestic tasks. As they get older, both boys and girls do more work in
the girls are often expected to take over some of the subsistence
^ ^ ostie tasks usually accomplished by their mother.

Although the husband, wife and their adolescent children spend an almost
 i --aunt of time and labour on cultivation, the wife does a great deal
 ^t daily work when one considers the other subsistence and **domestio** tasks
 has to perform. During the heaviest cultivation period the husband, wife
 adolescent children spend approximately six hours each working in the
 fitlda. In addition to this, the wife spends another six to seven hours on
 other subsistence and domestic tasks. As a result, during the intensive
cultivation period she may spend up to thirteen hours per day working on her
 ^rious tasks.

When the husband is not working in his fields he is usually sitting with
 » group of neighbours, resting, drinking, and discussing politics. Women
 of one neighbourhood also meet as a group and often do their tasks together.
 They meet almost daily to talk and grind their grain at a communal grinding
 •stone, but also prefer to gather wild vegetables or firewood together and do so
 whenever possible. When there are fewer cultivation tasks women meet as a
 group more often, especially because of the ceremonies and feasts which take
 place during this period.

In most cases, it is only after the children have reached adolescence
 «nd can make a full labour contribution, that a significant surplus can be
 Produced by the household. Until then, the household is doing extremely well
 ^ it can produce enough grain in one year to meet its subsistence needs and
 4 ^ U the

various ritual and social obligations it has. The amount of grain
 * household can produce is not solely dependent on the amount of labour it has
 ^s disposal, but depends also on the amount and quality of the land it has
 liable for cultivation and, more importantly, on the amount and timing of
 *n. After there had been too little rain in 1976, over half the house-
 111 the Katuw region finished their supply of maize by May 1977, five
 Wore the next harvest was due. The amount of grain which a household
 not only depends on the number of mouths that have to be fed, but also
 c^rial and ritual obligations it has to fulfil. These very over

of the menstrual cycle and according to various circumstances, such as when a woman has to pay a visit to a relative to settle a dispute.

In this section, I include a time chart to illustrate how a woman's daily load is divided between different tasks and how it varies at different times of the year. The chart is only approximate and applies to a woman with young children. It does not include how much time the woman spends on the farm of relatives, nor does it indicate the days when she is restricted in performing subsistence tasks because of menstruation or postpartum taboos.

The outer circle of the time chart shows how much time, in a total number of hours, women spend on subsistence tasks during the year. This total is calculated from the information provided in the inner circle of the chart: adding up the number of hours spent on cultivation, and what I have called 'other subsistence tasks' (including essential domestic tasks). The colours in the divisions of the inner circle show how much time a wife spends from 6 a.m. to 9 P.M. on the various tasks she performs during the days of the month. As the chart shows, a total of thirteen hours per day can be spent on subsistence tasks during the cultivation period in the months March to May, and again, from August through September: 6.5 hours on cultivation, and 6.5 hours on other subsistence tasks. During this time a wife devotes only approximately one hour directly to childcare, while another half-hour may be spent on household chores. From mid-October to mid-January, the bulk of the time which a wife spends on cultivation at other times of the year is instead spent on a combination of household chores and childcare, as well as handwork and

TIME CHART

j _____ Cultivation:

Other Subsistence Tasks:

Household Chores:

Child Care:

r t Handwork and Recreation:

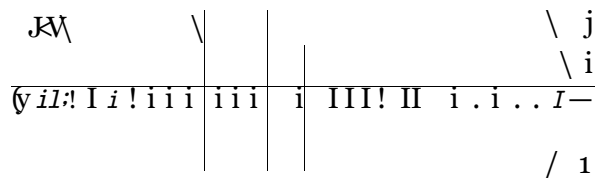
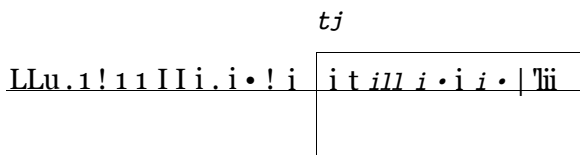
JAN

DEC

FEB

NOV

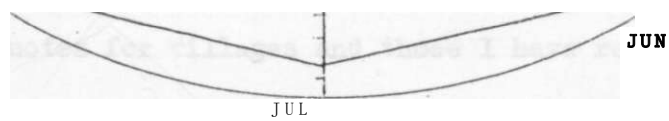
MAR



SEP

MAY

AUG



Chapter II

X tiara recorded as many as twelve named age-sets, although there are opinions as to which are simply nicknames that will later become incorporated into a larger age-set (thus being identified as the junior or senior section of the yun). Peristiany (1951: 169) reports on seven to eight circumcision age-sets, but I would suggest there are at least eight, probably nine. The following are the names which most of the elders agreed on as recognised circumcision age-sets. Individual elders also have different opinions about the order of the age-sets. The following order was recorded upon by most of the elders I spoke to, and is written from the youngest, recorded in 1978, to the eldest, whose members are now dead: kaplelach (still recruiting members when boys were initiated in 1978; generally agreed that by the next initiation the name would change); korongoro; kakapanga; kapsakas (the latter two possibly becoming grouped into one later); sowo; kolumong (one of the oldest living men); main; chumwoj aaragutwa and nyongu.

In his dissertation, H.K. Schneider (1953) discusses Pokot religious beliefs as well as initiation rites, but makes no reference to poro.

3. Unpublished paper by M. Llewelyn-Davies entitled 'Women, warriors and Patriarchs'.

Conant (1965) devoted an article to the discussion of neighbourhoods or regions, entitled 'Korok: A variable unit of physical and social space in the Pokot of East Africa'. Peristiany (1954) also discusses these units. What Peristiany (1954) refers to as a village corresponds to a neighbourhood, and his federation of villages refers to a kor; or community. However, there seems to be some discrepancy in the figures he quotes for villages and those I have recorded for korok. could v

De accounted for by the fact that the Pokot themselves use these and to some extent they overlap.

fettruf (1970) diacuaaes the implications of economic development cultural modernization for women, pointing out that it la the men, . the women, who reap the social and economic advantages.

Chapter III. Marriage

This chapter examines marriage; both the marriage process (here *mm* and *fgftQ* become married) and the alliance marriage establishes (the actual *flatlonsb^P* and Interaction between husbands and wives). Marriage in Pokot establishes the most significant of all relationships between women and men and forms the basis for the most important unit of social organisation, the household. For these reasons it is necessary to look in detail into the way marriages are determined, maintained and terminated. It is important to note from the outset that the marriage ceremonies are not ritually elaborate, and marriage is primarily a secular transaction which, amongst the agricultural Pokot, men and women go through fairly early. Ritual elaboration is instead concentrated on male and female initiation rites, which must be seen as part of the marriage process. Women are married almost directly after initiation, and the ritual elements of initiation are carried over into the marriage rites (»» Chapter V, p. This chapter focuses particularly on the different sorts of influence women and men have in determining their own marriage and those of their children, as well as the rights and influences husbands and wives have over the disposal and distribution of household resources.

*1. The Marriage Process

There are three alternative ways of getting married in Pokot: through *latlon*, where the marriage and bridewealth are discussed and agreed upon beforehand by the two families involved; through capture, in which the bride is captured and taken by force; and through elopement, where the couple take themselves to run away together secretly. The two latter methods are only resorted to when attempts at obtaining a wife through negotiation have

*-i eiths^r = * t h o d 4 j s f c n a f r a s d i s c b l i g e d* to begin

with negotiations as soon as possible after the bride has reached her

bridewealth negotiations are of the utmost importance because they

confirm the legality of marriage, and thereby confirm a commitment *at* socio-economic support between the two families involved. Once an agreement has **1353 reached** by the two families, and the bride has been taken to her husband's home, the couple are legally married. In a very general sense, the wife-receivers remain in debt to the wife-giver as long as the woman in question fulfils her duty as a wife, especially that of producing children, **marriage** gives a man certain rights with regard to his wife and her economic and reproductive capacities, and gives a woman, and her family, various rights and privileges with regard to her husband.

A. Rights and Obligations Involved in Marriage

To begin with, marriage gives a man the right of exclusive sexual access to his wife, whereas a woman has to share her right of sexual access to her husband with any other wives he might have. More importantly, marriage gives a man special rights in the children borne by his wife. All these children are said to be his and belong exclusively and inseparably to his patrilineal clan. In the event of separation or divorce when a man's young children go with his wife to live elsewhere, whether with one of her relations or with a new husband, the children remain members of their father's clan.¹ A woman has

¹¹¹ all the children she bears, whoever their father(s) might be. These children are said to be hers, but do not belong to her clan. As we will see below, both a man and a woman have rights in the bridewealth of their

partners, and both are responsible for providing their sons with livestock so they

¹⁰⁴¹¹ get married and begin a new domestic unit.

Marriage makes a couple mutually responsible for their joint and separate

work. Above all it obliges the man to provide his wife with

to milk and

land to cultivate, and to contribute his agricultural ⁴ for their mutual benefit. In a sense, a part of the bride is given to the

x agricultural and domestic labour and, if possible, acquire the use of scattered land owned by her kin (her parents and other matrilineal and patrilineal relations)« In addition she is also expected to produce children: an important source of labour to the household.

In order to remain married a man is obliged to pay at least some of the demands his affines ask of him whenever he is able to do so. Bridewealth should be paid in stock, but among the agriculturists, it can also be paid in the form of gifts, such as blankets, shoes, money or grain. Whatever the case, a man and his wife are obliged to provide his affines with agricultural assistance and the use of some of their land should either be requested.

3, Marriage Prohibitions and Preferences

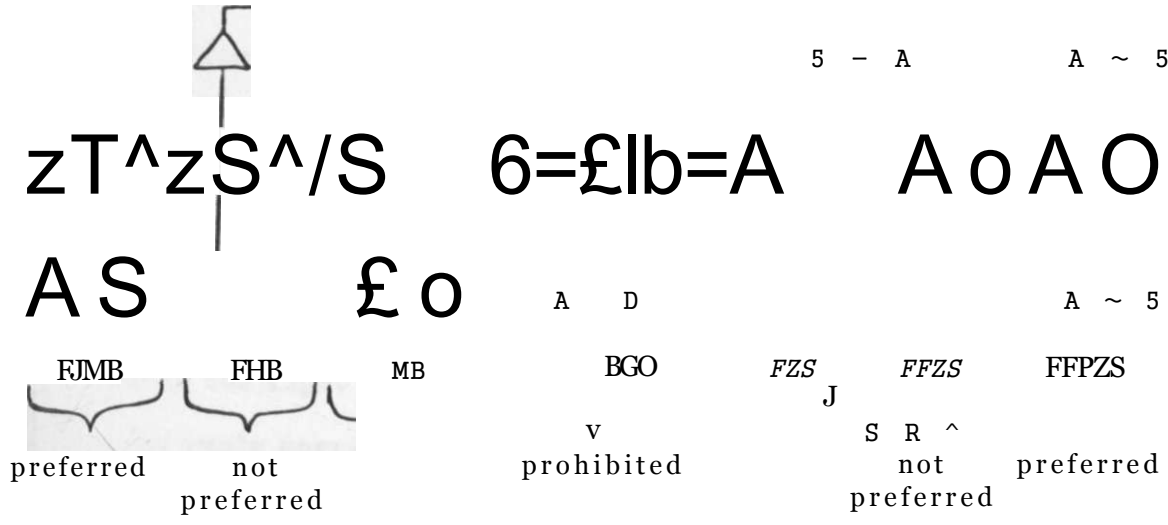
The first considerations of a suitor's eligibility concern his age set and kinship relations, rules about which are adhered to quite strictly. Fathers of the same age set (or pan) cannot marry each other's daughters. Marriage is not allowed between members of the same patrilineal clan. Furthermore, an individual (man or woman) may not marry members of his/her mother's brothers' patrilineage or his/her father's sisters' sons' patrilineage. Marriage is not prohibited, but at the same time it is not considered desirable with members of a person's father's mother's brothers' patrilineage or father's father's sisters' sons' patrilineage. Marriage is not only allowed, but actually preferred, however, with members of a person's father's father's mother's sisters' patrilineage and father's father's father's sisters' sons' patrilineage. In short, the ideal marriage is said to be between two patrilineages where there was a successful marriage at least three generations

The following diagram illustrates the range of kin which are prohibited,

* Preferred or preferred as marriage partners:-

K

3 - A



Marriage is rarely allowed with members of an individual's FFZS's patrilineage or FNB's patrilineage, but may take place if an alternative spouse cannot be found. Finally, it is not considered right for a man to take more than one wife from any one patrilineage*

One effect of these marriage prohibitions and positive and negative marriage preferences, is to create a well defined network of kin for each individual. It is interesting to note that the regulations concerning the distribution of bridewealth also define and help to maintain the same network as will be seen below.

Once the eligibility of a prospective groom has been established, other factors are then taken into consideration. A common response given by men and when asked what they look for in a groom, is kot, meaning "mouth", and that a groom should have a good character and be able to act and speak publicly. However, in reviewing the negotiations I have attended, the most important considerations seem to have been traditional residence. A man often accepts the suitor who can pay the highest amount of bridewealth

him daughter. This may be outweighed, however, by other factors such as a«
pgr**ts* desire to have at least one of their daughters living close by.

orinoipal reason for wanting such proximity is so that they can have use
fit r*

land belonging to their son-in-law Ind, in the majority of cases, so they
benefit from the labour of both their daughter and son-in-law as they
grow old. From the suitor's point of view the reverse of this may
be important if, for example, he does not have enough land of his own.

though a man always has access to the land of his patrilineage, he has many
options open to him by being and staying married. He does not, for
example, have the right to cultivate land he has begged from his wife's
relations if their marriage breaks up. As a result, it is often advantageous
for either, or both, parties if the marriage takes place between relatively
close neighbourhoods, especially if these areas encompass at least two
different ecological zones which produce harvests at different times of the
year. In fact, almost half of the wives came from nearby neighbourhoods and
cultivated land belonging to their own parents as well as that belonging to
their husbands.

Through the giving of brides and, conversely, the payment of bridewealth,
•trriage

establishes long-term commitments and obligations between two extended
families and, in a broader sense, between two korok; neighbourhoods. Because of

of exogamy and the fact that patrilineages, or sections of patrilines,
*rt ^oo*lised, men have to seek wives from outside their own neighbourhoods. As
* have seen, many men marry women from nearby neighbourhoods which has advantages
for both

parties. The Timber of patrilines local women came from is thus
clarified

which increases the kinship ties and relations found within and between
neighbourhoods.

Prohibited degrees of marriage are quickly reached
neighbourhood, and eventually between close neighbourhoods. When

^ Una-. -
*> *Cot trill otesn manipulate the "kinship system to fit their needs.

J 9 eA Woa uwtlwlu tesuxlfctgi Joc.i KOaewluerS OCCUT, flthotZgh

u v. JgAJci CJ'ii'ò v : "1 |< k-nfyV JL A

children are born.
gOf•

The fact that it usually takes a man a long time to pay off his bridevealth
£t\$# *oT ^aterer reasons, has the effect of strengthening the alliance
^^ his kin and that of his wife. The outstanding debt keeps the man and
It* kin obliged to his wife's kin and, therefore, willing to help them should
the/ aTar be in need. is long as good relations exist, and scae bridevealth
^ been paid, the wife's kin, in turn, are sore willing to help their son-in-law
fd.lt sane bridevealth payments reealn outstanding, for this will ensure that
thtf* parents will eventually be made.

Marriage negotiations are normally initiated by a prospective grocm and/or
his family. In one of the ten marriage negotiatlona which I recorded In
depth, there was an interesting reversal of this approach,whan a father made a
direct approach to the man he considered would be the most suitable husband
for his daughter. In most cases^egotiatcm for a girl's marriage begins as
•he shows signs of reaching puberty, one or two years before she goes through
Initiation (between the ages of 10 and 15). X man's first marriage is
negotiated after he has ocapleted initiation, when he has acquired sufficient
lirestock and/or money to be able to offer an initial bridewealth Instalment
(when he is between the ages of 15 and 30). Whereas most girls get married
•eon after their initiation, most men marry five or more years after their
Elation.³

*hen initiating marriage negotiations, a suitor will brew beer (approx-
***** Shs.50 vorth) and he

and his close male relations and neighbours will
this to the home of the girl he wishes to marry. Negotiations are
^^riably lcDg drawn out drunken affaira. In the Katuv region it appeared
that it

was partially because of people's desire to drink,that the emciait of
was not decided until beer had been brought between eight to ten
o the hone of the proposed afflnes. Marriage negotiations often amount
to t
WW expense for the suitor, especially as he can bring beer to a home as
** four times before he is clearly and finally refused, and then has to

iti*- bringing beer to another home. In most oases the actual negotiations finally carried out by the fathers of the prospective bride and groom, although other patrilineal relations are also involved. If the father of party is not alive, a senior member of his patrilineage (preferably the father's brother) should represent him at the discussions. Usually the occasion when matrilineal relations are involved is at the marriage of the last-born daughter, when the mother's brothers have the right to claim all the bride-wealth. Although the mother and bride, and their close women neighbours, are present at the negotiations, they are supposed to remain quiet and let the main 'public' agreement be arrived at by men.

At Bay one time there are more eligible bachelors looking for wives than available uninitiated girls. This means that the wife-givers usually have a number of suitors to choose from and are in a better bargaining position than are the suitors.

C(1). A woman's influence in negotiations

Although it may appear from the public negotiation sessions that men arrange and control the marriage agreements, this is definitely not the case. Mothers have a strong say in who may be chosen to marry their children, especially their daughters. The control and influence of a mother and daughter, whether individually or in cooperation, is not articulated and fitted publicly. Privately it is recognized and generally accepted, however, that if a mother and/or daughter do not agree with the father's choice, the marriage will not be successful. A mother's private influence over her husband and her daughter is also generally recognized and regarded as important in the negotiations. This is borne out by the fact that a bachelor will first

approach the girl's mother and try to persuade her in his favour by her token gifts or money. If he succeeds it is understood that she, in turn, will try to persuade her husband, thereby enhancing his chances of

It is also known that, should the father go completely against his own advice, she will surreptitiously direct her daughter to get rid of the

*fired husband when the daughter runs back to her parental home after

* *other's influence over her daughter is also extremely strong, and
may use her influence to persuade her daughter to agree with her choice of
% suitable spouse even if this goes against her daughter's wishes* A mother's
^fluence over her daughter stems from the close contact they have with each
#th<r* Throughout her daughter's childhood, a mother teaches her daughter
the agricultural and domestic tasks she should know, and they work together
e these tasks as long as the daughter remains at home. Through this process,
mother also builds up her authority with respect to her daughter, and has a
great deal of influence over her. This influence plus that of other women in
the neighbourhood, are expressed and reinforced through the ceremonies of
women's initiation, as we shall see in Chapter T.

A mother's influence over the negotiations of her son's marriage is not as
strong as it is over the negotiations of her daughter's marriage. However,
women often have a considerable influence over their husband's choice of
daughter-in-law, by providing information about any girl in question. Out of
all her sons, a mother has the strongest influence over the marriage of her
last born. Because the last born son inherits the largest portion of his
father's property, the bulk of the bride wealth payments are made from his
father's stock. In the words of Koko Siaata, "If my child (the last born son)
decided to just go by himself (i.e. decides to go with his male relations and
to handle the negotiations independently of her wishes), if I do not give out the
money, what will he do?".

Another important aspect of a woman's influence over the success of her
son's

¹ Carriage, is her role as a mother-in-law. If a woman does not agree with
** her son's choice of a daughter-in-law she can make things extremely
^ ^ t for her son and his wife. The mother and daughter-in-law have to
* to«ether on a daily basis doing many subsistence tasks for the household.
14 th. recognized fact that the mother-in-law is in the position of authority
^ household, and she can cause endless trouble for the ac^ ^irc c^i/o*

her influence over her son to cause discord between the newly married
, k

An uninitiated girl has little chance of influencing the outcome of negotiations as regards her own marriage. She may, and frequently will, however, cause a great deal of trouble once she has been brought to her husband's home, if she does not want to remain his wife (the ways in which a woman can get out of marriage are examined in the last section of this chapter). On the part of a prospective groom, he can terminate negotiations whenever he wishes. This is what one man did, for example, when he came to discover that his prospective father-in-law was a "person of stomach"; a greedy person who tried to get as much as possible from his daughter's various suitors*

D, Marriage by Capture and Slopement

Marriage by capture, kichutot; to pull, or be pulled, occurs when a man decides to enlist the help of a group of friends from his neighbourhood, to go and take a woman, by force, from another neighbourhood with the intention of making her his wife.

Marriage by capture usually occurs at a large public ceremony where more than one community is involved. It is always pre-arranged, sometimes between the abductors only, sometimes between the abductors and the woman's defenders, and sometimes even with the woman herself. Although marriage by capture is sanctioned by the community, the woman will always scream and put up a struggle, no matter what the previous arrangements may have been, as it is considered

shameful if the brideprice negotiations have not been concluded. Prior to the transition of a woman to her future husband's home.

The actual 'capturing' happens very quickly. The woman is usually picked up and subdued, she walks the rest of the way to the groom's home, flanked by a group of his men friends from the neighbourhood. When she arrives there, she is

Both should promise her a goat to persuade her to enter the hut, and a goat to persuade her to eat. If these promises are made they will

... assist the groom's family in convincing the woman to stay. These ceremonies would also be held in the groom's favour at the eventual, later, stages of negotiating with her parents. However, it must be taken into account, that marriage by capture is the forcible abduction of a woman and, on occasion, she is forced into the groom's hut.⁵

According to Pokot men, the groom and his neighbours have the right to compel the woman to stay for at least two to three days, unless her parents come to retrieve her, in which event she must immediately be released. If the groom manages to make her stay with him, then he should brew beer as quickly as possible and take it to her parents' home within a few weeks. At this point, the agreement between the two families about the amount of bridewealth, is usually settled quickly. In the majority of such cases, the agreement involves a promise from the groom's family that they will pay bridewealth at a later stage, after the couple have stayed together and produced children.

The amount of 'force' used to keep a captured woman at the hut of the groom, is not much greater than the normal guarding of a new wife when she is brought to her husband's home after the completion of bridewealth negotiations. A woman can almost always manage to run away if she has a violent dislike for the man. If she does run away to her parental home, her parents will probably not assist the groom because there has been no previous agreement made between them. However, in some cases, bridewealth negotiations begin when the groom goes to 'retrieve' the woman he captured. If an agreement can be reached as a result of such negotiations between the two families, then the groom may later "take his wife home".

A woman's first marriage rarely takes the form of marriage by capture, in fact out of the ten cases of marriage by capture recorded in Katuw over a period of about two years, all the women concerned were either widows; had run from

a previous husband; or had been 'chased' away by a previous husband, men involved were all older men who had tried to obtain wives before, or were seeking second wives.

Carriage by capture is recognized as an alternative form of carriage by lb« Pokot. It seems to be retorted to by two opposite oategories of ien; (hog# who are poor or feeble and unable to get wires by negotiation, and thoe are wealthy and/or very able and can afford to hare sore than one wife. Meter, it is Important to realise that marriage by oapture often takes place go the spur of the mount as a spontaneous decision, mainly because an tllgible woman happens to be in the area at the time (visiting her parents, at » oereacny, etc.). Hen appear to take the chance of capturing a woman as a i^nj of obtaining a wife quickly. If after capturing a woman there are no mediate protests from her relations, then the couple is considered married as long *s the man takes some beer to his afflnes thereby confirming his latentions. Men usually oapture women who have previously been married, because by the time most girls go through initiation and are able to marry, their marriages have already been negotiated and agreed upon. In this way marriage by capture helpa to balance the discrepancy between the number of eraliable brides and bachelors, and also assures that almost all Pokot are married and thus continue to produce children for their husbands.

Elopement is another form of alternative marriage, and is used instead of aarriage by capture if the couple decide themselves that they want to marry i other. Such a course of action is usually kept secret between a w=£n ber lover, with the possible involvement of a few accomplices. I only recorded fire cases of elopement, or attempted elopement, while in the field. Ho*ever, as elopement is often a short-lived affair, it may well have been part o Various women's marriage history which they neglected to describe. Out of ^ oases of elopement I recorded, three were successful: two in which k® had the support of a parent, and the other where a man eloped with wife after she had been staying with her parents,who had meanwhile agreed to Another man marry her.

^QPaaent often oooura when a woman attempts to elowe with her lover on the t. ^ of completing th«? Ir^t stage ox iter initiation. If the couple

if B*nage to get m j , the nan will hare to faoe the woman's parents alaoat i^dlately* In most oases, the very next morning the woman's father will

mm ,rith a group of his male relations with the intention of taking his daughter away by force. It is extremely unlikely that the prospective groom at this point could persuade her father to let him stay 'married' to his daughter. Only if doubts had been raised during previous bridewealth jgget1*tions about the suitability of another suitor, or if the daughter had impressed a violent dislike for another suitor ohosen by her parents and had rowed continually to run away until she was allowed to stay with her lover, is it lively that the father would allow the couple to stay together.

Elopement is very similar to marriage by capture, save that the woman decides with the man about the course of action and goes with him eagerly and teoretlvely, and therefore with no need to

scream and struggle. Because the woman agrees to go with the man, there is no necessity to persuade her with promises of gifts of stock to enter the hut or take food. Nevertheless, the groom's family will often perform the normal carriage custess as a means of showing their support for and welcoming the 'bride*'. Whether the woman's father retrieves her or not, her prospective husband must bring beer to the bone of her parents a short time after elopement. Negotiations then take piaoe and, once an agreement has been reached between the two families, the couple are considered to be legally married.

*ajaent and Distribution of Bridewealth

The Pokot

perceive the payment of bridewealth as a long term payment of a ootliming debt. They often ocmpare the exchange of bridewealth to a tulia ^ ^ age, in which a close bond is formed between two men when one of them gives o^ther a steer in exchange for a cow; because of the greater value of the Cot ±b

- me receiver renaina indebted to the original owner, and eventually his (as long a3 the cow has reproduced), and repays him with a number of * and goats over the years. **S3** People often say that a woman is like a tola oow and the bridewealth paid is comparable to the goats and calves the

took associate mat pay after hia tulia cow haj reproduced.^ Aa this analogy jpdlestss, Pokot associate bridewaalth principally with a woman's ability to gduoa children. The payment of bridewaalth also confirms a man's right ^jr the labour contribution of his wife and their ochildren. Another aspect men women emphasise as being isq)ortant, is that the payment of bridewaalth I, a nooessary reimbursement to a woman's parental family for haying "fed" their jioghter orer the yes^s, as well as being a kind of compensation for the loss of # insistence labourer to that family.

The actual payment and eventual distribution of bridewaalth, confirms an **acceptance** of socio-economic obligation and commitment between the two kin groups involved, and by extension between the kin groups within, and between, tvo different neighbourhoods. The reality of how much bridewaalth is paid, and to whom and when it is distributed, depends on the socio-economic actualities of each family and there is a great deal of variation from oase to ease. Although a high brldewealth which includes large livestock is preferred,, tha total amount of brldewealth is open to negotiation and is not fixci er governed by a particular Ideal. There is, however, a clearly articulated ideal about how the payment and diatribution of brldewealth should be made. Ibis is as follows: Tha initial payment should be when the grocm comes to his bride heme. At this time the groan should bring one ox for tho father of the bride, and one cow with a suckling calf for the mother of the °ride to that she does not feel "sad in her atemach at the loaa of a daughter".⁸

The next instalment of the brldewealth should be sfede after the oouple's '^st child has been born^and before the next child has been conceived. This t*laent may be shared out by the bride's father among hia brothers and half-'othera (sons of his father by other wives). Further instalments should ^inua to be stade over the years until about three-quarters of the original '•^-upoi amount has been reached. The bride's family will uually oease to further brldewealth at this point, especially if relations between the P*®Hiea are positive and if the grocm has provided economic assistance and

part when the law was needed or not

Bridevealth received for the last born daughter should go to her Mother's
the?*' ie in part reciprocated when a small portion of **bridevealth**
^tird by the mother's brother for his own daughters is given to his sister.
o fact, in Kapenguria it is obligatory that one female goat be given to the
other's sister whenever her brothers' daughters marry. Hence, when a woman's
daughters get Married a significant portion of their **bridevealth** goes to her
mothers, and when her brothers' daughters get married she, in turn, receives a
^all portion of their bridevealth. The transfer of their daughters'
bridevealth between a brother and sister underwrites the prohibition on
marriage between their children. Should a girl be married to her mother's
brother's son, then her mother's brother would not only have to help his son
provide bridevealth, but would also have the right to receive part of that
bridevealth. This contradiction is avoided when such a marriage is prohibited.

If a couple has many daughters, almost all the bridevealth they receive
for the first two or three daughters will be taken by their parents, while a
portion of each of the remaining daughters' bridevealth is shared among their
father's brothers, mother's brothers and father's sisters. If a family has
only two daughters, the whole of the second daughter's bridevealth should go to
her mother's brothers. If a family has only one daughter, half the bridevealth
should go to her parents, while the remainder should be evenly divided between
her mother's brothers and father's brothers.

Bridevealth payments are not directly received by, or distributed among,
the brothers of a bride. A man benefits from his sisters' bridevealth only in
40 far as it allows his parents to provide him with livestock when he, himself,
** contemplating marriage or, on inheritance, when they die. This is
•Prized by a strictly adhered to taboo which prohibits the particular stock
•derived for a daughter's bridevealth, from being used for the payment of a
8 orinevealth: only the offspring of this stock can be used, or other

When speaking about bridewealth distribution, the Pokot say that, if all
 that was received through bridewealth payments remains in one hand, the stock
 will not survive. Furthermore, they say that portions of bridewealth should be
 given to "good" relatives, or to relatives who have "helped", implying those kin
 who were actually given stock, or cash, through the years*. Frequently a Pokot
 brother, or Aa/*-brother, receives a portion of the bridewealth
 for the marriage of his daughter, unless he has received, or can
 expect to receive, a portion of the bridewealth from that brother's
 in return. There are, of course, other occasions when a brother
 might make an economic contribution to his brother's family, which should in
 turn entitle him to a portion of his brother's daughter's bridewealth. For
 instance, he should contribute stock, or land, to his brother's wife when her
 turn is tied on; he should give stock to his brother's sons and daughters
 after their initiation at kiyul; he could have "helped" in tens of stock for
 entertainments, or fines, from the time when his brother was first married.

The obligation to give the mother's brothers at least some of the bride-
 wealth is more absolute. The mother's brothers should contribute to the
 numerous ceremonies which directly involve the daughters of their sister, such as
 lvoi, or at the different stages of initiation. Even if the mother's brothers
 do not fulfil all of these obligations, they will receive a fairly large portion
 of the bridewealth payment, in Katuw particularly, for the last born daughter,
 and the mother's daughters should also be able to obtain assistance, in the form of
 both stock and land, from their mother's brothers whenever such assistance be-
 comes necessary.

In practice, wife-givers exert pressure on the wife-receivers to pay as
 much bridewealth as possible in the early stage of marriage. Where a father
 has received any bridewealth, or only a very small portion of it, he will,
 when his daughter has given birth to a child and has just again conceived" or
 *** to, request her to come and stay at his home. At this point the
 parents are in a stronger position to demand a further bridewealth

btoast their daughter's marriage is that much more secure* Their
 ^ughtar, haring produced a child, is unlikely to run off with another man,
 fbils their son-in-law will probably want to keep his wife, especially as she
 ^ proved that she can successfully bear him children. The young married
 ooupl* also have had time to realise that, if they oan build a
 r#lationship of cooperation with each other, they can also establish a
 prosperous doaestio unit which, in the long run, will be to their considerable
 jirantagf.

Generally, the daughter will not put up any resistance to her parents'
 request to stay at home until further bridewealth is paid. It will be to her
 om advantage later, if the bridewealth is paid, because she can then rely on
 tht network of kin among when some of the stock has been distributed.
 Socially, the Pokot would ridicule her if she refused to stay at her parental
home, and she would be openly teased for having no self-respect if she made no
 effort to ensure that the debt owed to her parents, on her aooount, was not
 paid beoause of her refusal to comply with the request to stsy at hose.

In a similar sense, after a wife produces four to six ochildren, although
 the wife-reoeivers' indebtedness increases, the social pressures on than to pay
 bridewealth are considerably lessened. The parents of the wife would not
 "at their daughter to return to their home because of the considerable
 burden involved in supporting a woman with many children. At the same time,
 the daughter, herself, would not want to return home beoause, as an older

the would know that she would not be desirsble to another man because
 * could not produce aajgr more children. This is another reason why parents
 * *l»aya endeavour to obtain the bridewealth for their daughter as quickly
 M Possible. In the words of P'Katieny, "by not letting the son-in-law feed
 **fe for too long".

*(o n
 - Study 1; Complications involved in receiving and paying for
 bridewealth.

^'Efctieay i« a relatively poor man. He has fear children; the first and
 Crn ^e daughters. When this case study was recorded both daughters

- married, the elder son was married, although not living with his wife, the youngest son was planning «to start negotiating for a wife, the amount of bridewealth agreed at the negotiation for P'Xatieny's first daughter was two oxen and one cow. The night when the husband came to take his wife» he paid five goats, the equivalent of one ox. P'Xatieny's daughter **gdayod** at her husband's home, and gave birth to two girls. However, both her **pregnancies** were extremely difficult and required a great deal of ritual and medical attention to keep her alive. Soon after the second child was born, P'Xatieny requested his daughter to bring her two children and stay at his home until most of the agreed bridewealth was paid. While she was staying at her **parental** home, her husband made attempts to retrieve his wife, but never managed to. This was mainly because he could not afford to pay any more of the bridewealth he owed, but also was because P'Xatieny, and possibly the husband as well, feared the consequences of further difficult pregnancies in the future.

P'Kstieny kept his daughter and her children at his home for about four years, when another man came to negotiate marriage. During the negotiations the amount of six goats, one ox, one cow and a suckling calf, was agreed on. P'Kstieny let his daughter go to her new husband's home without any of the bridewealth

being paid, because the agreement would have to be further ratified by the first husband, who was not present at the time of negotiation. *It* the informant recorded this case, the second husband had still not paid any of the **bridewealth**.

because P'Kstieny's daughter had not given birth to any of his children. The first husband had not demanded that P'Kstieny pay back the five goats that he initially received as bridewealth, nor had he demanded any payment from the second husband.

When bridewealth negotiations for P'Kstieny's second daughter took place, she was living with relations in Xapenguria. Because of this, the amount of bridewealth—

that was agreed for her was considerably higher than those described from other regions. The total included five head of cattle and ten goats.

figjtlonj was still living in Katuw on the night when his son-in-law came to his bride home, and brought an initial payment of three head of cattle (two oxen and an ox). For at least five years, the cattle were looked after by the sons of P'Katieny's deceased brother, and they were eventually given one

The ox remained with P'Katieny while he gave the ox to his eldest son when married.

When P'Katieny's second daughter had borne two children he tried to obtain more of the bridewealth he was owed. However, because of his continual quarrels between Kapenguria and Katuw, he had not been able to keep his second daughter at his house. He said that if he was not given at least the one ox which, traditionally, should be given for the mother-in-law, he himself would have to give his wife an ox from his own herd. It is of interest that P'Katieny, in his need for stock, had started pressuring the husband of his sister's daughter to pay to him the ox that he was promised during the sister's daughter's bridewealth negotiations. Because his sister's daughter had recently moved to Katuw, and was cultivating P'Katieny's land, he was in a strong position to demand that this ox be paid to him.

Bridewealth negotiations for P'Katieny's son, Siwareng, were settled soon after both of P'Katieny's daughters were married. Siwareng's bride had been previously married to Lokitai, who had paid a small amount of bridewealth. She had not given birth to Lokitai's children when she returned to her parental home, where she remained, and because Lokitai never managed to retrieve his bride her parents opened negotiations with Siwareng. The exact amount of bridewealth was not settled during the negotiations. Instead, P'Katieny and Siwareng were told to "wait and see the power which Lokitai still has over his

Eventually, Lokitai demanded that the small amount of bridewealth he had given be returned. However, this was not possible, because the stock received by Lokitai had, apparently, already been "consumed", that is, either eaten or

by Lokitai's affines. Soon after _____ settled in a fesh

kokwo, where P'Katieny gave his affinal relations She. 100 to give to
fictal and hla relations. This assistance, plus a few token gifts, was

«**dered** enough bridewealth payment for Siwareng to "take his wife home".
oqv*

It the time of Siwareng's marriage, P'Katieny gave the newly married
^ple * cow and an heifer in Kapenguria to begin their domestic unit,
Siwareng's wife stayed until shortly after the birth of their baby girl, and
then **returned** to her parental home in Katuw. Her parents demanded that
P'Katieny pay at least one more ox for bridewealth, and they were also
^grilling to let their daughter return to her husband in Kapenguria, because
they conjectured that was where her eyes had become seriously infected, due to
continual close contact with cattle. P'Katieny could not afford to pay the ox
requested and, as a consequence, Siwareng's wife stayed at her parental home.

Almost two years later, the long process of bridewealth negotiations had
begun again. After a number of negotiating sessions, over a period of about
eight months, a series of further complications were brought forward. During
these two years, Siwareng lost control of 'his' property, because P'Katieny
took back 'his' cow until Siwareng would begin living with his wife again.
P'Katieny also considered that Siwareng had mismanaged his herd because he sold
the heifer shortly after he married, and P'Katieny therefore decided to resume
control. As a consequence, Siwareng did not have any property to pay bride-
»»lth with.

P'Katieny had refused to give up any more cattle, but, since he had become
he could not participate directly in the bridewealth negotiations,
•cant that P'Katieny was reliant on secondhand information, including that
own wifs, who had never liked Siwareng's 'wife', and was continually
•Uling with her. Another major complication was that P'Katieny would
t!ler ha 7t had Siwareng and his wife locking after his cattle in Kapenguria,

** Parents were adamant that the couple should stay in the Katuw region.
^ the circumstances, the negotiations were conducted by kin living in
9 the main person involved was P'Katieny's sister's son, who could not

to help Siwareng pay any bridewealth because he was deeply in debt
^jpsl* 70 MSttera worse, Siwareng had been extremely irresponsible
but fulfilling promises he had made to his in-laws at the negotiating
sessions. Because of this, he had lost the active support of the respected
father of Katuw, who refused to go to negotiating sessions with him.

Nevertheless, an agreement was finally reached and Siwareng promised to
pay five goats. He planned to get these by selling his father's tulla ox,
though this would put a further strain on their relationship. The transaction
was delayed yet again, because, in the meanwhile, the eyes of Siwareng's wife
had become much worse. Her parents let their daughter stay with Siwareng for
several days in the hope that he would find a cure, but he failed. Things had
reached a standstill at the time this case was recorded.

f. Repayment of Bridewealth to Terminate Marriage

When a marriage is unsuccessful, it represents a loss for both the kin
groups concerned. If a woman returns to her parental home, and has not
produced any children by her husband, the husband has the right to demand the
return of the bridewealth he paid. If affinal relationships are positive, the
bride's parents will try to persuade their daughter to return to her husband's
home. This is, partially, on account of the difficulty in retrieving the
bridewealth which, in most cases, has been distributed already between a variety
of kin. However, if all efforts fail, then the bride's family should return
the amount of bridewealth they originally received, excluding the offspring that
she may have produced.

It is only when a wife returns to her parental home after producing her
children, that the husband should not demand (although some do) that
the bridewealth be returned. This is partially due to the fact that, the wife
that fulfilled her duty as a mother, the husband is expected to be able to
fulfill his role and retrieve her, using the full assistance available from his
parents as well as his parents and relations to persuade her to go back to his
home. Retrieval will depend on the existence of positive relations

Another reason why the brideprice should not be demanded if the husband
 dies to retrieve his wife, is that it will be used to cover the
 costs of bringing up his child and maintaining his wife. In this
 situation, it may happen that the parents, if they are still alive at the time,
 will eventually gain back their loss of not receiving the total brideprice
 for their daughter, by receiving a portion of the brideprice for their grand-
 daughter. During brideprice negotiations, the father of the daughter to be
 married is always closely questioned, and if it is confirmed that he has not
 consistently supported his 'wife' or daughter over the years, he will receive
 one female goat from the total brideprice paid. This goat is for his
 clan name, which his daughter bears by right, no matter whether her parents'
 marriage was successful or not.

Still this is further complicated if, after the brideprice has been paid, a
 woman returns to her parental home, with or without her husband's children, and
 eventually marries another man. If brideprice negotiations take place with
 the second husband, he must be prepared to pay a portion of the brideprice to
 the first husband. The latter should be present during the negotiations, or
 contacted separately, to agree upon this amount. Even if no negotiations take
 place with the first husband, the second husband must be prepared to pay
 something eventually to the first husband.

This might turn out to be in the form of a fine for adultery but, if the
 husband has neglected his wife for a number of years, this becomes
 likely. However, if the woman produces the child of her second husband,
 confirming their intention of staying together as a married couple, the
 first husband usually exerts his full legal rights to demand that a fine be
 paid

If the second husband and his wife take care of the first husband's
 children, they are considered to be economically responsible for them, and thus
 bear the expenses for, and receive the benefits from, those children.

Instability of Marriages Divorce and Separation

The first years of a marriage in Pokot are very unstable, as the husband and wife adjust, or fail to adjust, to one another and their new circumstances* far as the public 'male' ideal is concerned, there are no recognized strategies or alternative ways for women to get out of marriage* As Siwanyang, a young girl said: "Women have no power when they are taken to their husbands' houses* If they run away, they will be beaten*" In practice, however, alternatives (more or less extreme) do exist, and are used*

The most obvious tactic used by a new wife is to run back to her parental home and complain* As already explained, it is approved of, and even advised, that a bride should do this at least once after the fourth day of arrival at

9

her husband's home* Sometimes, however, a woman simply refuses to stay at her husband's home from the minute she is brought there* A new wife who has openly expressed her dislike for her husband, is usually guarded by the women and men of the compound (or possibly close neighbours) for the first few days after her arrival* Nevertheless, she will most often manage to get away more than once, and create a general disturbance through her actions*

There are two recognized actions which a woman can take if she does not want to stay with her husband* firstly, a woman can climb up a tree. This is ritually very extreme, as it symbolizes that the husband will die at an early age. Secondly, a woman can smear her body with excreta and thereby

to make herself so undesirable that her husband will leave her alone. If a woman shows her disapproval of her husband by resorting to either of these actions, her husband should break off the marriage. Yet, many husbands persist

in the marriage whatever actions their new wives take, which can turn out to be to their own disadvantage in the long run.

It must be remembered that it is not only women who do not choose their husbands but also men who do not freely choose their wives. A young man is dependent on his parents and close kin to give him the property to pay bride-price, and, as a result, they have a strong say as to whom he may begin

ptitions with. But more importantly, marriage is seen as a relationship
 of commitment between two kin groups, and not simply between two individuals,
 it would be wrong for a kin group to force their 'son' to marry a
 whom he had a violent dislike for, as they would probably lose their
 bride wealth payment if the marriage failed. Although it is far easier
 for a man to obtain a legal divorce in Pokot than it is for a woman, legal
 divorce is extremely rare. A legal divorce is known as kitlakat; to open or
 break (probably referring to the untying of a woman's turum; wedding
 bracelet). For a man to obtain a formal divorce from his wife he must take
 the case to kokwo; the neighbourhood council of elders. If the elders agree
 that a divorce should take place, then the two families are blessed and the
 division of property is decided by the elders. At kitlakat a man either
 relinquishes all claim to his bride wealth (if the woman has produced a child),
 or the elders decide that at least some of the bride wealth must stay with the
 wife's kin/because of the trouble of trying to retrieve it from various
 relations. It is very difficult for women to obtain legal divorce in Pokot,
 because they have to persuade their male relations to present their case for
 them at the council of elders. She may be able to persuade her own kin to do
 so, but it is more likely that she will be able to convince a lover and his kin
 to do so, if she has stayed with the lover for an extended period of time.

Kitlakat is only resorted to when it is advantageous for either party,
 from what I have been told, this only occurs in cases of impotence, if the man
 or woman has become ill or mad, and possibly if the woman is known to break the
 taboo of handling food when she is menstruating (I was only told of two cases
kitlakat was supposedly performed, and I do not know of any case of legal
 divorce which occurred when I was in the field). It is far easier, for both
 men and women, to obtain a de facto divorce than a divorce de jure. De facto
 occurs frequently and initially only involves a separation of the
 either a husband chases his wife from his home, or a wife decides to
 free her husband. In such cases the legalities of marriage, and the

It is clear that another man's child is not necessarily seen as a hindrance to a woman's marriage possibilities. Let us now review a case example in detail to see what strategies women can use to get out of unwanted marriages.

(1). Case Study 2 Woman getting out of a negotiated marriage

The example of ChepoLoyale's successful flight home encompasses almost all of the possible strategies a woman may use if she dislikes her husband. When ChepoLoyale was still a girl, Lopokoi, a middle aged bachelor, began to negotiate with her father over her marriage. ChepoLoyale rushed out of the hut during these negotiations and told her father he should not drink the beer of Lopokoi because she would never stay with an old man like him. Her parents ignored her outburst. However, ChepoLoyale then became pregnant before Initiation, and her father agreed to let her marry the lover who had brought her beer, hoping that she would stay married to a man she did not dislike.

After completing Initiation, ChepoLoyale went through a difficult pregnancy, and when she eventually gave birth her child was still-born. At this point, her father hurriedly reopened negotiations with Lopokoi, telling him to bring beer quickly, and to take 'his wife'. While the negotiations and drinking were going on, ChepoLoyale fled. Much later, after a somewhat drunken search she was finally found near a neighbour's house, up a tree. Her father's brother managed eventually to persuade her to climb down from the tree and to re-enter the hut. After another four-hour session of talking to her, while she sat hidden in the loft, her relations finally persuaded her to accompany Lopokoi to his home in Katuw. She only conceded when it was agreed she could come back home and tell her father if she had any complaints to Lopokoi. With little choice, ChepoLoyale remained subdued on the way to Lopokoi's house, not even bothering to stop (thereby requesting gifts of tobacco) the way.

At the moment ChepoLoyale arrived at Lopokoi's home, he and his brothers made an effort to keep a close guard on her in case she ran away.

Qpio***» oX1 second day, when she pretended that she needed to go outside to ipiti, she esoaped. Lopokoi went to search for her on his own, but could t find her. Everyone suspected that she had gone to her ex-lover's home in SiS^{oTt} negotiations were still not completed, but Lopokoi did not bring beer to I<07»l^{e>*} kcne as promised, because he had no idea where 'his wife' was.

4fter ChepoLoyale had returned to her parents' home, however, Lopokoi ^opened negotiations. After realising that her father was prepared to satiate again with Lopokoi, ChepoLoyale went to Sigor on market day and ran gray. That evening Lopokoi began the search for 'his wife'* Even though he apent one day looking for her in Sigor, and continued his search the next day with the aid of Loyale's wife, he was still unsuccessful. ChepoLoyale, however, found no place where she could stay, nor any means of leaving the area, and by the following night she sheepishly returned to her parents' home. In the morning her psrests gave her strong advice, and immediately sent for Lopokoi to ocne and finally take 'his wife' hone. That afternoon, ChepoLoyale, subdued once again, went with Lopokoi to his hone.

In the middle of the night, Lopokoi could be heard shouting directions soroaa the hills to the young men of Katuw who were in hot pursuit after lopokoi's run-away-wife. ChepoLoyale had run straight back to her parents'

this time, in the hope that now she would be able to persuade them to let tar stay. However, she was disappointed, and the next day when Lopokoi Arrived with a group of men, they took her by force from Loyale's home. Her •other had helped them find her and, before they left, she told her daughter she never wanted to see her again.

following day, while ChepoLoyale was in the house and Lopokoi was Just she smeared herself with her own excreta. On discovering this,

°*Ued his brother.

** the and they talked and laughed about what she had done.

tad» Lopokoi's brother simply took her down to the river, washed her

^ a.,

i «na »aid, •when you have my brother's child, will you not get the of the child on you?".

paring ChepoLoyale's stay, Lopokoi had to work at all the household tasks,
*ho waa ^ia heno, closely guarded. Two days later, while
Ifipokoi was at the river fetching water, she quickly dashed outside and, agsin,
oli*bed up into a tree. When Lopokoi returned he threatened to beat her and
globed up to get her down. As soon as ChepoLoyale saw hia coming near, she
fell out of the tree, possibly on purpose. This resulted in her suffering
^ious aches and pains, including a very swollen foot and backache. Everyone
then thought that there was now no way that she could run anywhere for some
tise. The next day she proved everyone wrong, escaping again in the middle of
the night. Lopokoi and his neighbours spent the next two days looking for
his wife' without success. He went to Loyale's house, and asked him to report
immediately if she had been found.

After about a week she returned to her parents' home. By now she had
definitely made her point to everyone in the community that she had no
intention of ever staying with Lopokoi, no matter how many times she was
forcibly taken there and had to run away. Lopokoi discontinued negotiations,
but he still quarrelled violently with other men who were seen with 'his wife',
and, when this case was recorded, he was still keeping his claim on ChepoLoyale
by refusing to return her skin skirt and her beads. Loyale became very angry
about this, as he believed that Lopokoi could easily bewitch his daughter while
he had these personal effects in his possession. However, Lopokoi had his
reasons: he was demanding that Loyale return the Sh.370 he had spent on beer.

As this case study shows, ChepoLoyale had no support from either her
mother or father but, in spite of this, she was finally able to get her own way
by resorting to every course of protest open to her. Other cases, either
forced by capture or difficult marriages, are always easier for a woman to
solve if she has the support of her own kin.

Acquisition of and Rights over Property

11.2-

This section is concerned with the ways in which men and women acquire stock and land, and the different rights they have in their own and their husband's property and its products (such as grain, milk, and meat). Who makes the decisions in the domestic unit over the use and disposal of resources, and how, will also be discussed at length. Finally, the concept of marriage itself is considered from the differing perspectives of men and women.

There are a number of different occasions in the life of a man or woman when he or she is promised, or directly given livestock or land. When a person is promised stock or land they have the right to claim it at a future date, and livestock can also be acquired through exchange and, of course, through the reproduction of existing stock. To begin with, let us look at how and when a man acquires livestock and land, or the proceeds of these.

1. Acquisition of Livestock and Land by a Man

A young man is first promised stock by his close relatives when he is blessed at klyul after completing initiation and when he is allowed to see his close female kin for the first time. From initiation onwards, young men slowly begin to accumulate property over which they obtain full ownership rights only when they marry (usually five to seven years later). Until a man is married, his father has ultimate control over his livestock. If, however, a young marriage breaks up, a father may still confiscate his son's stock (as we have seen P'Katieny do in Case Study 1 above). It is only when a man moves to his own household, particularly once a man moves with his wife to his own home nearby, that he finally gains full ownership rights and control over his livestock.

An unmarried man may further accumulate livestock in the following ways:

1. His father may introduce his son to one of his tulia; stock associates,

designating his son to carry on that association in the future. A

2. A young man, with the help of his father, will probably start a tulia relationship when he does aapara. An unmarried man will also try to purchase his

livestock through the sale of maize or beer, or possibly with money from employment. Alternatively, he may earn a goat or sheep by special tasks, such as burying a close relation.

When a man wants to marry, most of his stock will be used to meet the

- obtaining a wife; both in the cost involved in brewing beer for negotiations, as well as to complete the initial bridewealth payment,

goats of an unmarried man may also be needed for other reasons, such as the presence of a fine for wrong-doing. Taking these factors into account, plus the natural reproduction and mortality rates of livestock, a man in Katuw will most probably own only two or three goats at the time of his marriage.

Once a man is married and brings his wife to his home, his father and mother divide their herd, separating their own stock from that of their son. Aside from the two or three goats or sheep which belong to their son, the parents will give him and their daughter-in-law additional goats on account of their future children. The father may simply tell his son and daughter-in-law which stock belongs to them, but in some areas the father will mark their stock with dung. A horizontal line smeared along the flank of a goat, sheep, or cow, signifies that the animal belongs to the son and his wife alone, while a crossed line signifies that the offspring of that animal are to be shared eventually with his other sons and their wives. Some of this stock will have been promised already to the daughter-in-law on the night she was taken from parental home. The rest will belong to the son.

After marriage, a man also gains full ownership rights and control over the piece of land his father gave him and which he cultivated as a young married man. If this is particularly small (about quarter of an acre), his father or mother will probably give additional land to their son at the beginning of the next cultivation period (perhaps a further half acre).

B. Acquisition of Livestock and Land by a Woman

The first time a woman is promised livestock from her close relatives is when she is blessed (at kiyul) after completing initiation, when she is allowed

to ..^m her relativea for the firat time. The next occasion when a

ia promised livestock la on the night she ia taken aa a bride from her
cutal home, when she Is firat promised lirestock by her own parents and
tar by the relatives of her husband. Before leering her parents' hone, the
4e la dressed in the speoial ornaments she wore at initiation (some of which
belong to her mother). The groom and his group stage a mock attack outside
tbo hat door, demonstrating their determination to take her mjr. When the
bride is resty she comes out of the hut end is welcomed with shouts of Joy and
gxcltffBO&t. Before the bridal party leavea, the couple la blessed (kiyul)

the bride's parents who spill drops of milk on their foreheada. As part of
the blessing they also tell their daughter that if ahe follows their adrlee end
gtaya with this man of whoa they hare approved as her husband, they will gire
her s female goat or cor. The blessing serves aa a final ritual statement that
the parenta and their relatione are now giring their daughter away, and thereby
expect the wife-receivera to uphold their part of the agreement and to pay, over
a time, the agreed-upon bridewealth.

From each of these promises, that after initiation and that upon marriage,
waien usually ask for and receive only one gift of atock (in Katuw usually one
fenale goat) from their parental hose. In most cases a daughter would only
for additional atock from her parental hone, and that of her mother's and
father's brothers, "in times of hunger", when there 13 insufficient food or
rtock at her husband*a hcae.

After the blessing, in the middle of the night, the groom and his group
of

• ^ e end female relatione take the bride to her new hcae. Every so often
tlexi2 the way, the bride atopa and can only be persuaded to continue by a
* ^ iae of a sheep or a goat. When the bride stops, her husband or one of his
relations describes in detail the stock they are promising to give her:
Vou

• tand (and go) by the white and black female, goat ("which is) now in mj
P * * ' * herd". Such promises of atock-aust be made each time the bride

• *o: a 'milk tree' (a tree with a whitish sap, of which there are four

gr\$T\ t in the Chrsngnsni foothills); a tree with a beehive hanging
 a Junction of peths when the other leads to another hose; before
 || 1M
 ting * river; and, before orousing an irrigation channel,
 then finally she reaches her husband's family home, the bride stops again,
 gust be promised more stock before she enters the livestock encloeuere, and
 before she enters her mother-in-law's taut. It this point the mother-in-
 }gg should make promises of stock to persuade the bride to "save her sendit"
 (a ritual atiok she has kept since her initiation, which she 'saves' by putting
 It in the thatch roof of her mother-in-law's hut); to sit down; and, finally,
 to eat.

Pokot wanen say that when men are initiated they learn about the customs
 of the country and how to oheat women over their promised goats. Out of all
 the goats or sheep that a new wife is promised in Katuw, she will receive at
 eost only two. The two most commonly given are;one for entering the but of her
mother-in-law and 'saving' her sendit and;one for eating her first food there*
 Both these goats are premised to the bride by her mother-in-law from whose herd
 they are taken,as distinct from the father-in-law's herd.

The night the husband takes his bride to his own house she demands, and is
 Promised, more stock. It is with these promises of stock that he persuades
 her to have sexual intercourse with him for the first time, which, according to
 ^e social ideal, should be the first time she has had aex since her initiation.

bride will refuse to move until promised a goat for closing the door,
 •Bother for coming to the bed, and finally a female goat or a cow for removing
 cr •1{irt and consenting to have sexual intercourse. This last animal is the
 ° gift of stock she demands to see, instead of simply accepting a verbal
 teniae.

She following morning the father end mother, as described above, designate
 reat of the stock which will belong, henceforth, to their son and daughter-
 is ip-

People say that long ago noslo was performed that afternoon, but
 r ^ys it is often delayed for as long as eight years. Noslo is the last

m •msrriage', by which the new wife is publicly recognised and accepted
gMI* °

10 the community. The most significant rite of the nosio ceremony is
rfoT*6* old 11911 neighbourhood inside the serried ooupla's hut,
r
gfc11* women wait outside. The men chant songs and bleaa the newly-wed
pie by enacting scenes which represent a prosperous household* The new
rffi is then oalled and given strong advice by one of the elders. He warns
that she must now obey her husband, and not try to run away with a former
lorar, emphasizing this latter point by threatening that the eldera of the
.flgbbourhood will curse any former lover who may pursue her now that she is a
juried woman.

ifterwards the new wife is told to sit on a akin next to her husband's
Joae klnwnmi (usually his brother) so that he can twist her turum; a wedding
bracelet made from a long strip of leather worn on her wrist. The husband's
brother can only be persuaded to oomplete the wedding bracelet if the new wife
is promised gifts of land or livestock from her husband and his kin. In this
way approximately eight promises are pledged before the bracelet la finished.
?or a woman*a turum, two promises are said to be more important than the others,
and each ahould, therefore, be a large gift, such as a female oow. One of
these is for the tying of the last knot and the other is promised after the
form; ia completed and she is blessed by her father-in-law.

Of the stock promised for turum, a woman of Katuw will actually receive
only sbout two female goata or aheep. These usually include the one which her
f*ther-in-law promised when he blessed her, and an additional goat or aheep
Pr&aised by her husband or his close kinsman, such aa his brother. If, in
J«*rs to

come, the wife desperately "needs" stock, ahe can go and aak one of
toisband'a relations,who had promised her stock for turnspj taking him some
fcer
^Ut A In most cases, the person will then give her the stock he had promised,

• great deal will depend upon the prosperity of his own herd at that
^icular time.

*omen receive;&nd usually use, all the land they arc premised for turum.
M**? •mount **to** •— lend In different eoo-

ftjid, over the years, a woman and her children will use these different
nf land at different times, leaving some land fallow while they
jlte"

^ t i * * * the reBAinder_

^ jy way of a summary, the amount of stock a wife in the Katuw area
pcairt® immediately upon marriage is, typically, three female goats and/or
two from her mother-in-law, and one from her husband. Later, she
iinHtl
^ receive two more stock for turum; one from her husband, and one from her
/atb«r-iu-law. At this time she also receives, but may not necessarily use
adiately, three or four pieces of land from both close and distant relatives
of her **husband**. apart from the total of five (usually all female) goats and/or
g-eof a woman has received upon marriage, a woman has a reserve of at least
three goats and/or sheep which she can ask for in "times of need"*

Tables I and II (see end of chapter) summarize the usual sources of
property for a man and woman in Katuw, and the usual number of livestock and
pieces of land acquired from these sources* However, it must be remembered
that there is a great deal of variation in the amount of property with which
a couple establishes their household, as it depends largely on the wealth of
the husband and his kin.

C. Legal Rights in Property

It is evident from the foregoing account that, at the beginning of their
married life, a wife is most likely to have been given and promised more land
and stock than her husband. From this, one might expect a woman to be in a
more powerful position than her husband as regards the economic affairs of
her domestic unit. However, although a woman receives more property than
her husband, she does not have full ownership rights in this property, and
her right to dispose of property outside the domestic unit lies almost
entirely with her husband. Essentially, a woman only has usufruct rights in
her land and stock she has been given, plus the right to transmit her property
to her children and daughters-in-law, either upon their marriages or as
***intance after her own death.



hurried men, on the other hand, have full ownership rights in their own
 stock, for they not only have usufruct rights and the right to
 pass their property to their children, but they also have the right to
 dispose of their livestock as they wish through exchange, and to meet various
 social and ritual obligations such as payment of fines; gifts to stock
 associates; bridewealth instalments; contribution to public ceremonies; etc.
 Furthermore, a man's right to dispose of stock in exchange also extends to his
 wife's livestock. However, a husband's right over his wife's livestock is
 qualified by the strong obligation to take his wife's wishes into account, and
 is limited in a number of ways (discussed in detail in the next section)*

In the case of grain and milk, rights are similarly divided between men
 and women. Milk, and the subsistence crops of maize and millet, are managed
 and distributed on a day to day basis by women. These crops, as well as milk,
 are said to be for "feeding the mother and her children". Only a woman is
 supposed to open the grain store, and her husband or male relations are expected
 to ask her if they wish to obtain grain in order to make it into beer, soil it,
 or exchange it for stock. Once the subsistence needs of the household are
 taken care of, the husband has the right to use the grain as he wishes. When
 a substantial crop is produced which is clearly beyond the subsistence needs of
 the domestic unit, a man will build his own separate store to which he has free
 access (this often happens when the children have grown up, or if a man has two
 wives and he works on his own separate field in addition to those of his wives).

The one occasion when a woman will not hesitate to claim her legal rights
 over grain, and especially over her stock, is if her husband attempts to take
 grain and/or a large number of her stock, in order to marry, or to use for,
 her wife. She will then take her husband to council, stating her case
 to a male spokesman, usually a close relation such as her son, her brother,
 or her father. When a woman's husband decides to marry another wife, he will
 have his first wife to make a contribution towards the initial bridewealth payment,
 to give stock to the new wife upon marriage. It is up to a wife to decide

L

earth which, stock she will give to a new wife. Her decision will
depend on the size of her herd, the number of her sons, and on her relationship
with her husband (in Katuw, she will probably not give away more than two or
three). A wife does not share the land she was given for
with another wife and once she has given her stock her economic
responsibility towards a new wife is completed, and she has no further
obligations towards her, even should this stock die without offspring.
Furthermore, after this the husband no longer has any right to take stock from
his wife's herd use it for the household unit of his new wife. This also
implies to inheritance, in that the husband, and/or the sons of one wife, have
rights over the allocated herd of another wife, even if she has no sons.

The rights a woman has in land and stock are altered if she separates or
gets divorced from her husband. Should a woman return to her parental home,
she cannot take any of her stock with her. However, if she separates from
her husband, and takes their children with her, the sons have the right to ask
for their mother's property in the future. Sometimes, albeit rarely, the
father will then give his sons one female goat. The only way a son can
receive more of his mother's property is if he stays and lives with his father,
rather than going with his mother to her parental home. Normally, this could
only happen if the son is at least four to five years old when his parents
separate. In most cases, younger children (up to the age of four) go to live
with their mother. If the couple have been formally divorced, then the
division of property is decided on by the council of elders, but, once the
wealth has been returned, a woman has no further claim on her stock.

Even if their parents are separated, both sons and daughters can
cultivate the land given to their mother at tunas. In some cases, even the
wife herself will return to cultivate her land at her husband's home,
though she must have given birth to his children, and thus be using the crop
to

thea. However, the children cannot inherit, and thereby own, their
land if their parents have separated. They definitely do have

usufruct rights, which can be extended to their children's children and so on for any generations, but only for as long as the relationship between the two remains positive, and if there is not a problem of land scarcity.

Management and Control of Resources in the Household

The usufruct rights which women have in land and livestock, and the usufruct rights they have in grain and milk, sometimes come into conflict with their husband's overriding right to dispose of these resources through exchange. In this section, the way in which a husband and wife negotiate with each other, and the factors they take into consideration in deciding what use their resources are put to, will be considered in detail.

It should be noted at the beginning of this discussion, that it is **beneficial** for a man, both economically and for his social status, if he takes his wife's interests into account. This way he gives himself the chance to work with her and their children towards building a prosperous domestic unit or household. If a husband does not take his wife's interests into consideration, she can take various actions to persuade him to do so: a woman can make her husband's domestic situation intolerable (by refusing to cook, fetch water, or by using sorcery, etc.); she can return to her parental home; and, finally, if she has the support of male relatives who can put the case forward on her behalf, she can take her husband before the council of elders. The threat of a wife returning to her parents' home is most often used, and the most immediately effective of these alternatives. In the event that a wife runs to her parents in protest against her husband's use of her livestock or grain, the husband will only be able to retrieve her by taking beer to his wife, and explaining his actions and promising to remedy the situation. In respect of this course of action, it is important to note that, among the Placulturists, a woman can support herself and her child through her own work by cultivating the land of her own kin. **This** may be one of the reasons why women run back to their parental homes so freely. The degree to which a woman can influence her husband's decisions over the

disposal of livestock, varies depending on which stock are in question, the nature of the relationship she has with her husband. A woman's relationship with her husband changes as the years go by. In the initial years of marriage, and so long as the children are still young, the husband usually manages his wife's stock together with his in a single herd, and, as a consequence, he has a significant say in the management and disposal of her stock. In later years, a woman will probably separate her herd from her husband's, as well as relying on the support of her adult sons, who help her in negotiations with her husband over the management and disposal of her stock.

A woman's rights, and control over, her ohepkupes stock (obtained for agreeing to have sexual intercourse) are much greater than the rights and control she has over her other stock. It is the one goat, out of all the ones she is promised, that a woman must actually receive, and her husband cannot use this goat without first obtaining her agreement; if he does she will undoubtedly take action against him. If a husband receives his wife's permission to use her ohepkupes goat, it must, as soon as possible, be replaced by another female goat. She can agree to, and even encourage, her husband to start a tulia relationship with her ohepkupes goat, to ensure that her children and children's children will receive their just share of goats in the future. Legally, a woman could sell this goat, but there would be little purpose in her doing so, she would forego the goat's offspring which are destined for her children. Also, if she were to sell her ohepkupes goat, her husband would be extremely angered and would undoubtedly beat her, or possibly try to get rid of her.

Besides trying to influence how her husband uses and disposes of her stock, a woman can also increase her personal herd in the following ways: asking for the other stock she was promised for kiyul and tuna; through sale of finger millet; possibly through the inheritance of her mother's stock

and eventually through the bridewealth of her daughters and sons

A woman will give some of the stock she has control over to her law upon marriage, and may, if she can afford to do so, also give

to her sons. However, she will try to ensure that the bulk of her herd
stock

for her last born son, and, in most oases, does not designate which
herd stock is to be inherited by each of her sons before she dies.
In

When speaking about land and their rights to control land, women are quite
firm. KokoP'katieny "Land will last for ever. It does
not die, like goats." A woman has almost complete authority over the land
she receives at marriage. No one has any right to take it from her, and should
her husband wish to use it, they must first receive her permission to do so. A
woman will never forget the land given to her at turum, and she and her children,
grandchildren, will use it whenever they find it necessary or convenient
to do so. A mother may give pieces of her land to her sons, or to their wives,
when they marry, but, as with her stock, the bulk of her land is inherited by
her last born son. The only occasion when a woman and her children do not have
rights over land, arises when the woman was not legally married; that is
when bridewealth negotiations took place and her turum was not tied on.

Women's control and legal rights over the household resource are
more limited than men's, and are circumscribed by the domestic domain. Although
women have important influence over, and rights in, the land and stock they are
allocated within the household, they cannot use them to build wider exchange
relationships outside the household, unless they do so through their husband or
male relation. Likewise, women have a great deal of influence and control
over their daughters and sons, but they can only use this to fulfil their own
practical needs and those of their children. In contrast to this, men can use
their rights over land, stock, and children, to widen their network of exchange
and improve their standing in the wider community.

A process of continual negotiation and renegotiation takes place between a
man and his wife, in which the wife asserts the importance of her rights against
those of her husband. The husband takes a good deal of notice of his wife's

rights and demands, because otherwise he risks the break-up of the household, and
she, in turn, is deprived of all the benefits it affords her. In most cases, without the help

I his wife and children, he would have a difficult time producing a
tial crop, and this would limit his ability to widen his socio-economic
relationships through exchange. The only exception to this is if a man (such
only has the good fortune to inherit a large herd of stock from his
+. However, he would still not gain status and respect in the
^jjity if he were not able to remain married, and share his wealth through the
lous ceremonies and social obligations expected of a married man, his wife
. their children. It is also important to note that, if there are no sons,
jju^iter can inherit the bulk of her parents' property. It would be more
difficult for a woman to hold on to such property than it would be for a man
but, because of it, she would be regarded as a very desirable bride and, once
married, be in a strong position of control in the household.

Through marriage a man and his kin broaden their network of commitment
and support by establishing affinal relations. If his marriage breaks down, a
man loses these affines. Only if he fulfils his commitments to his wife and
affines, will a man have full social rights over his children. Sons are
important in that they continue the lineage, and eventually take on the
responsibility of their father's property. Daughters are important in that,
through their marriage, exchange relationships are broadened, and the wealth of
the household is increased through the payment of bridewealth. A man's status
and respect in the community is dependent on his ability to obtain wealth and
^Udraa; without a wife he could have neither.

In certain respects, it is less important for women to stay married than
** for men. Women can have children and manage to fulfil their subsistence
^ through their own labour, without staying married. In many ways, men
^ ^de women from the public domain, and women's status, vis-A-vis each other,
Ⓡ dependent on marriage or wealth. However, if a woman stays with her
it
4A is usually more advantageous for herself and her children. It
At Possible for her sons to inherit a sizeable herd, and for the bride-
^ ^ transactions of her daughters to be clearly defined, without the

K

v

of who has rights over what, as would be the case if she remarried
in the past, or lives with her parents.

dependency of men and women on each other begins at marriage, when
they establish a domestic unit and attempt to expand their domestic group
through a complementary relationship with each other. However,
the interests of the domestic unit often conflict with wider socio-economic
interests.¹⁰ The interests and needs of the domestic unit are basically
those of the mother and her children, while the wider socio-economic interests
are identified with the husband-father.

The distinction between domestic and public, however, is probably
simplified if viewed as a distinction between opposites. Not only must a
balance be kept between the two for both to survive and expand, but also many
of the transactions carried out by men in the public sphere are, in fact, for
the benefit of the domestic group. (For example, the wider exchange
relationships set up through tulla also increase the stock of the domestic group.)

Nonetheless, often the immediate interests of the domestic group conflict
with wider public interest, as, for example,
when a goat has to be
sacrificed for pution; a ceremony done to chase away and keep "badness" out
of the area or neighbourhood. Different goats are taken from different
households on a rotation basis over the years. When a goat is taken, the
wife sees it
as a loss of property in terms of her household, while her husband
values in
prestige and status through his contribution to collective concerns,
during most of the ceremonies or feasts, the men of the community consume most
of the goods, and only save (or bring home) a small portion for their wives
to eat. In this way, the use of stock and grain for collective consumption
is in direct conflict with the interests of individuals in the domestic unit.

J. Male and Female Perspectives on Ownership

From the above discussion, it is clear that Pokot define ownership rights
and

control over land, livestock and people differently in different contexts
and circumstances. When questioned about ownership, Pokot men and women are

•ilr careful to define the specific rights people have in different contexts*
 9teRf in a public situation, and particularly In front of women, Pokot sen
 pi 9oftl likely to say that it ia they who have ultisoate authority over the
 bou5flboold resources including women and children. Even so, Pokot men do not
 ^ to be as emphatic about their ownership rights, nor does ownership appear
 to of such central importance, as is the case, according to
 Ik Uflwelyn-Dati-as* amongst the Maasai.¹¹

tinlike the Ifaasai, the Pokot have no single word which denotes ownership
 «d control. The concept of possession can be indicated by the preposition po.
 foT example, ko po chi; house of a person, or a hcuss belonging to a person.
 However, the more ~~common~~ way of indicating possession is by putting a possessive
 adjective after the noun, for example:

- my* goats neka chan
- your* goats neka ku
- his* goats neka chi, and so on.

1 aore possessive form of this exists by attaching the word for self: kegh.
 For example, neka che chi kerih; goats which are his of himself, or goats which
 belong to him himself•

Llewelyn-Davies describes far more specific words used by Vaasai to denote
 the notion of possession. Por the purpose of this discussion the two most
 important Maasai words she describes are: 1) A-itore; to own, have rights of
 disposal in, to be in charge of, to control, to command. This is used in
 r@fer«ice to the rights men have over wamen and livestock. 2) A-itodal; to
 ^ t, to allocate. This is used to describe women's limited rights over
 "'•'took (for

example, their milking rights, allocation of stock to sens, and

^O* Llewelyn-Davies goes on to quote a prosperous Ifoasal elder in his use
 of
 1xU1 • V a-ltore (the following underlined words): "I am extremely rich.
 * too control them all ... 7
 am the owner
 who is in charge. I control
 » I control cattle

her analysis of the Maasai concept of ownership, Llewelyn-Davies claims
 continual opposition between man on the cne side, who are potential

^rty owners with dependants having full rights in themselves, livestock and
 ^aiibelng't and wonjn on the other side, who are permanently dependent on men
 ^ sever acquire full rights in themselves, livestock or children. Although
 women have various rights and responsibilities, they- together with
 llrsst^olc children - oonstitute a man's wealth and are "given away in
 s Arr i age as if they were passive objects of property to be transacted between
 s^{*1} . 12

In s general sense the framework which Llewelyn-Davies presents for the
 giAssi could also be applied to Pokot: men control and have ultimate rights
 grer women and livestock, while women*s limited rights and oontrol over
 llrestook and children are contingent on men. However, the situation is not
 that simple and this is fully recognized by Pokot men and women. Although
 set may wish to have the same sort of control over their women as they do over
 their stock, this does not happen and their control is limited by a number of
 »ocio-economic factors. A Pokot man is careful when talking about his control
 orer women and livestock, especially when he does so in private, but also in
 jttblife. A Pokot woman may, on the other hand, initially say that all the
 livestock belong to her husband, and that he has wesio; power or strength over
 the herd, but she is, on the other hand, very unlikely to equate herself with
 the livestock. Pokot women are particularly anphvtio about the control they
 talieve they have over themselves and their bodies.

In explaining the Pokot case, I would modify the framework which
 ^welyn-Davies presents for the Kaas&i. In Pokot, while men have the ultimate
 to dispose of their herds and resources as they wish, they only gain
 ^tain rights over women and children through marriage. At marriage, women
 certain ri^its over themselves and their bodies, and gain rights over
 s*ock and children. In considering the intricate web of who has rights
 *h*t la different contexts, let us examine seme Pokot statements to see how
 *c@en view ownership.

I pokot older, Lccuria, explained the rights his son's wives have over their livestock by saying, "if Merinyang buys a goat he can give that house and it still belongs to him". When men refer to women's it 50

jjbts over stock they often say that the stock belongs to "that house" which to s woman and her children rather than saying those are "her goats/

• It would be impossible to make aiqy direct comparison of Lasuria's QoWS.

states^{1*} with that made by the rich tfaasai elder boasting of his wealth, g^yar, as a general principle it should be noted that it is considered fxtrosely unlucky to boast of one's wealth in Pokot. A man will never tissues the nuaber of oattie he has and will often be elusive about the number of wives and children he has. If he boasts, or is too specifio, he runs the :lsk of being cursed by others who are jealous or feel they deserve a portion of his wealth. A respected man of high social status is a wealthy man who oontinually shares his wealth (by slaughtering or exchanging livestock) with his relations, age-mates and nei^ibours.

2. Kama Maria, an older Pokot woman, said: "They ->y th* goat is yours only, but a man sells. They call it yours only." Earlier when I had taked her if she oould sell the goats given to her at marriage, her response ws: "Sell them. What will we eat? What will we give *he child? We will •ilk them and get the milk only."

This example shows the initial response women have when asked about their 8«eral rights over stock. Women will invariably say that men 'own' the Restock thus reiterating the accepted or dominant social view. Only when a is asked specifically about her allocated stock, does she become ^k^ant about the rights she has over her livestock (see also example 3)* The L-o® ®xaaple also reinforces the accepted idea that a woman is not only sponsible for herself, but for "her house", in other words, herself and her

51. The wealth women obtain is not for themselves individually but for children. Because of this, a woman is tied to her homestead and to her > out on the ether her.d, cho also has power, because of her property

q'/st her sons and their wives,
fil**''

fben a®¹ ^ wom«ⁿ apeak shout the stook given to s woman at marriage,
4nr*rlably aay that she ia "ahown" different livestock rather than that
tbtf ^ given these snimalm. When a woman ia given or promised stook she is
told to stand up by such and such a cow*, and the atock aha is promised on
the ^ to her husband's hose are those which she •spears" along the way. To
^ticguish the livestock that a woman haa more control over, Pokot call them
gtock which "ahe and her children will eat". The right actually to
ffidsuufe or dispose of livestock Indicates one's ri^ita of ownership. In this
U-ht It is Interesting that the fine a man has to pay if he comaita adultery
u (^lled "eating a woman". On the one hand, this could be seen as a
direct expression of the concept that men have property righta over women, but
® the other, adultery is precisely the time a husband has lost control over
his wife, specifically the rights over his wife'a sexuality which he haa
obtained at marriage.

3. In discussing her rights over her chepkupes cow, KamaAmaru said:

"And ohepkupes that becomes Important. A person [referring to her
husband] will not take. He will ask even before taking an ox. Even the
father [the father of the husband] will ask."

) ^ I once asked KokoMeriongor, "does your husband have the right to take
the goat which he gave you for your vagina?". She replied, "Ho, sjy
children will go on eating that for ever ... but if he must have it then I
^ot refuse. He will say did the goat come fraa. your stomach? Are not the
«*ts **Of** your thighs only? It is I who is big."

These last two examples ahow how women become adamant and go Into specific
il when asked questions which refer directly to their rights in the atock
allocated herds. Women are especially adamant when a discussion
PAsce amongst women with no men present. Women seem to reiterate male
*hen they feel it is beneficial for them to do so. They accept the

And on, which time they decide on the course of action they should
whatever the case, it is significant that women express this dual
tik'*

jruti? ** 093 0X10 hand, women recognise the male social order, in other
« how men see the world and women's position in it; on the other hand,
^^ articulate very specifically their own rights and power to control.

are not afraid to act on their rights as they perceive them if they feel
u-* have been abused by men. This is probably one of the main reasons why
lamj***

define their rights so specifically: only if they themselves are aware
of their rights can they take action in defence of them. Men might assert
that they control women through marriage, but women clearly do not accept this
point of view unconditionally and take action against individual men if they
feel that they have abused their authority.

Keeping in mind that conflicts often arise between husbands and wives over
their respective rights, it is interesting that when speaking about a wife's
rights over stock Lomuria said: "A person who is clever will divide his goats
into two houses. A person who is weak will keep his goats in one house
saying, 'Hal Let us use the goats together'. But then a woman will continue
disturbing him and she will try and control the goats." Men would probably
prefer to ignore women's specific rights over livestock. They accept that
men have rights over stock, but usually speak of those rights in general
terms, for example, they refer to the women's livestock as stock in "her house".

on the other hand, speak about their livestock in very specific terms
Noting the details of the different stock given to them for different reasons,
weby specifying the particular stock they have more control over.

possible symbolic importance which the giving of the chepkupes stock
18 ^ regard to male control over female sexuality will be discussed in detail
M.A. The giving of this stock is significant because it is the only
laboration of the splitting of the bride's dowry which should
W occur the first night a husband has sexual intercourse with his wife.
UOK » it is interesting that women, rather than men, emphasise the

•rtenca receiving this particular stock. It is the women who demand it. the d ^ s o u s s ^ o n a * had vrith wanen about their property rights the "stock g,lghs" always became the focal point and was distinguished as being the t isportant. The emphasis women put on receiving their ohepkupes stock iflect* their attitude about their sexuality. Fran a woman'a perapeotire It * statement of pride and, whether realistic or not, of her control over wfr sexuality: ahe is demanding from her husband direct payment to her, rather b»n to her family, for righta in her aexuality.

ftie aeccnd remark by KokoMeriongor (example K) is Interesting for a number gt reasons. Firstly, it expresses her recognition of the fact that;although the haa considerable rights over her chepkupes goat^her husband's righta In ttock overrides thess. KokeMerlonger also implies, although indirectly, that •en express the authority they have over livestock to emphasise their own aelf iaportance and prestige (and, as we have seen, the Importance and authority of •en is then reiterated by women). Secondly, by **Baying** the goats are only for the woman's thighs,Kokotferiongor refers directly to the fact that this goat gives a man rights over a woman'a aexuality and her ability to bear children. Unlike other aocieties (for example, the Earner of Ethiopia), Pokot women are not given stock after they have given birth to children, inatead they are given •took for their ability to bear children. Thirdly, the quote implies that a 'own has more rights over her ohildren than her goats. If a husband and wife **rrel he

cannot take away her young ohildren, whereas he can easily take away or defuse to give her any atock. This is not true regarding older children,

* to is unlikely that a woman with grown children would choose to run away husband or split up her marriage

^e important relationship between a woman's ownership rights in her stock and her aexuality,brings us to the crucial topic of female P ^ ty. This will be dealt with in the next chapter where we colore vhe ^ys in which female aexuality is ritually controlled.

TABLE II PROPERTY USUALLY ACQUIRED BY A HUSBAND IN KATUW

Property	On what Ocoasion	Premise made by whom: or how Aoquired	Received before Marriage		Received at Marriage	Received Later
			Possible	Probable		
2 female goats	<u>kiyul</u> ; initiation	Parents, and relations		2 female goats]		
1 male goat	tuliaj stock association, including <u>sapana</u>		1 male goat			
1 female goat		Purohased		1 male goat	Say 2 offspring from his herd	1 female goat
1 male goat		from employ-ment	2 female goats			
2 female goats	carrying out a special task	Parents or relations	1 female goat			
2 female goats	At Marriage	Father			2 female goats	
1 male goat and land	At Marriage	Mother			1 male goat and land	
? stock/land	Inheritance	Father				Portion of father's herd/land
? 3tock/land	Inheritance	Mother				Portion of mother's herd/land

N»B. Goats, cows or sheep may constitute the property aquired
 Most of his stock property Before Marriage will be used
 for Bridewealth negotiations

TABLE II: PROPERTY TYTICALLY PROMISED ALID WHEN USUALLY ACQUIRED BY A WIFE XH KATUW

Property Promised	On what Ocoaslon	Promise made by whom	Reoeived at Marriage	Received after Birth of Firstborn	Received in 'Need*	Receipt Improbable, or Eventually
4 female goats	Kiyul; initiation	Parents A relations		1 female goat*	1 female goat	2 female goats
	<u>NIGHT o? MARRIAGE:</u>					
1 female goat	Kiyul; at marriage	Parents			1 female goat	
2 female goats	at milk trees	Husband's relation				2 female goats
2 female goats	Trees with beehive	» H				2 female goats
3 female goats	Path Junctions	ft ft				3 female goats
female goat	River crossing	Husband				1 female goat
female goat	Irrigation canal	Husband's relation				1 female goat
female goat	Entering in-laws ¹ oompound	Husband				1 female goat
female goat	Entering mother-in-law ¹ 9 hut (<u>sendit</u>)	Mother-in-law	'I female goat*			
female goat	Eating food	Mother-in-law	1 female goat			
female goat	Closing door	Husband				1 female goat
female goat	Taking off skirt	Husband				1 female goat
female goat	Coming to bed	Husband				1 female goat
female goat	<u>Chepkupes</u>	Husband	1 female goat*			
	NOSIO:					
female goat	Tying <u>turum</u>	Husband's relation			1 female goat	
fonale goat	» n	n n				1 female goat
piece of land			1 piece of land			
piece of land			1 pieoe of land			
pieoe of land			1 piece of land			
piece of land			1 piece of land			
female goat	Knotting <u>turum</u>				1 female goat	
female goat	Kiyul; for <u>turum</u>	Father-in-law	1 female goat*			
Stook/lanu	Inheritance	Mother				? Stock/land

N.B. Goats, cows or sheep may be promised

*Property wife lias most control over.

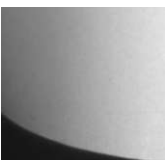
Chapter III

although aona should return to their real father when they are
jyoxiaately eight, I know of two casea in the Katuw area where aona did
t return to their father's home* One of these boys was only about ten
#ARS old, ao he might still return to his father's home later. The other
im now adolescent and, although he asked for a goat from hia father
j^a be was circumcised, he did not return to stay with his father and is
uBliially to do so in the future. When he was still young, the boy stayed
with his mother helping her to produce a subsistence crop until she died
guddenly. He is now with his mother's mother, and will most likely inherit
part of his grandmother's property along with his mother's brothers.

2. Conant (1966: 507) reports that twenty per cent of wives from the
Kasol plains (a pastoralist area bordering the agriculturists) come from
the Sekerr mountainA (an agricultural area), from my work amongst the
agriculturists, I only know of one woman who comes from a bordering
yastoralist area. I do not know the details of h&r zarrriage history and
it is therefore possible that her parents had begun cultivating, or moved
to an agricultural area (for example, because of drought), before she was
•arried.

3. It can happen that, among the agriculturists, the age gap between a
toaband and wife is as little as five or six years. Among the pastoralists,
however, the age gap between husband and wife tends to be much wider, due to
more formalized nature of their age set system. I was told by
•Sticulturists that men and women should not marry each other, if they are
^^Uacised within the same pun. There is, however, little agreement on this,
aoiBe people specified that, as long as the individuals concerned were not
P ^lly in seclusion at the same time (as tlyrs and chemeri), they may marry.

**® In point was Merinyang who, because his father was rich, married two
soon after he was initiated.



I good illustration of how a mother-in-law can break up a marriage, the marriage of Cheposiya. She married a man whose previous two wives run away, possibly also because of his mother*. He was an only son and mother was very possessive of him, and insisted that he eat in her house* also gossiped with him about his wife, accusing her of misbehaving. This led to many quarrels between Cheposiya and her husband. Nevertheless, Cheposiya stayed some five years and bore two daughters but then, after a final violent quarrel, she fled to her parental home. After this, because of his mother, Cheposiya's husband announced that he never wanted another wife.

Conant (1966: 314) describes marriage by capture as including "abduction, confinement and enforced intercourse", and goes on to refer to the act as "sanctioned rape" (ibid.). I have also been told, mostly by men, that enforced intercourse can occur as a consequence of marriage by capture.

However, from the case examples I have recorded, it appears that marriage by capture usually takes a far less violent form, and women are often in agreement with their abductors.

Schneider (1957: 285) also noted that a Pokot bride is referred to as a cow, and that the contract is compared with tulia. The Pokot are not alone in this respect, for example, the Hamar of southern Ethiopia also make the analogy between

wives and cows, and have a contract equivalent to tulia (Vtydall/strecker 1979: 4-5). The economic implications of tulia have been considered elsewhere by Herskovits (1926).

bridewealth is found among both pastoral groups, such as the (Spencer 1965)» and mixed agricultural groups, such as the Hamar & Wall/strecker 1979).

is an interesting example of the recognition by Pokot (men and women) of the close relationship which exists between mothers and daughters

According to H. Kuper (1950: 95), a

^Itr situation exists amongst the patrilineal Swazi and, at marriage,
^ ^there' care and affection are recognised in the special gift of stock,
p ^ n ** the ' wiperawa ^ of tears¹, which the groom gives the bride's mother,

I know of one case, where the bride happily accepted her parents' choice
the husband was good-looking, and wealthy. She waa the only

cM e I ^{knew of where a} newly married bride made no attempt to run back to
tr parental home, and was extremely pleased with her marriage from the start.
rne women of Katuw considered she was too pleased, and were angered by her not
running home to make her husband follow her.

10. Tb° conflict between the private and wider socio-economic interests of
4 domestic unit, is also a feature of societies as different to the Pokot as
the Pira-Parana of South America (see C. Hugh-Jones 1978).

11f M. LI ewelyn-Lavi e a 'Women, warriors and patriarchs' (unpublished) pp. 8-9.

12 M. LI ewe lyn-Lavies 'Women, warriors and patriarchs' (unpublished) p. 3.

Chapter IV

Bitual Control of Female Sexuality and Fertility

Women's 'secret' Myth (tf. Llewelyn-Davies):¹

Once men and women were equal. There were no [male] 'elders' In the land, hut only women, known as ilpongolo [women-warriors], and 'morán' fycrusg men; warriors]. The women were braver than the men. It that time, they had no vaginas, but only tiny holes for urine to peas through. One day they accompanied the 'morán' to war because the men needed assistance. That night, as they were sitting round their separate fires, the 'morán' crept up behind the women carrying bows, things which the **women** knew nothing of. The 'morán' pushed the sharp ends of their bows into the women's bodies and oreated vaginas. The women and the 'morán' lay down together. In the morning the 'morán' got up and said 'Ahahl these are only women after all!' So they took them and married them. **Wóman** lost their bravery, and fertility began.

Pokot Ityth (usually told by women, but accepted by both men and women):

They say all people were men. but in fact some of those people were really women. People did their hair in siolup [elaborate mud-pack haJr-do worn by Pokot men some sixty years a^oJ. They stayed like that until a woman told a person, that is a man, 'Xou ccas z^l scratch =e here'. Didn't that person scratch. Didn't that wonsr stay jus* like that. Months went by. And when people came and looked at her stomaoh, they asked 'What is this thing? What has eaten this woman to make her stmach swell?' Didn't she lie down one day, and people said that she had died But didn't ahe Just give birth, end they saw it was a person Her breasts were very big and when they showed the breasts to the child the child **suckled** Then they asked 'What happened so that it became like this?' And that person said, 'She told me to scratch here, @nd I told her like this [i.e. I did this to her].' They went on selecting the ones who had breasts, and they went on cutting the siolup. Then a person Just took his wanan. They went on playing sex, and they then gave birth. Then it Just became that a person's woman is a person's wanan.

The myths concerning the initial differentiation between the sexes serve
5 introduction to this chapter. It is clear that, although the two are
^l&Tjthe emphasis or apparent message of each myth is very dlifferent. In
* myth men and women were once the same but, unlike the account
^•lyn-Davies gives of the Maasai, women were never braver than men nor did
"en fo

^* women into the initial sexual act by "creating their vaginas". The
•m the Maasai myth is suzaned up in the last sentence, "When women lost

/

bravery, /fertility began." Whether Uasai women actually view their
negative or positive attribute is another issue. Nonetheless,
myth, they pin-point sexuality/fertility as the reason for losing their
equality with men.
it"

The message in the Pokot *myth* is less absolute. It is the women who
the man to carry out the first sexual act; a woman says to a man, "you
and scratch me here". The statement suggests two important ideas.
Firstly, that Pokot women assume that they have control over their own bodies,
secondly, that women's understanding and knowledge of their own sexuality
& fertility is greater than men's. In the myth, there is no expression of
loss of bravery or status after the initial sexual act. In fact, when I
suggested the possibility, both men and women insisted that there were no Pokot
stories about women once being more powerful than men. It is also interesting
to note that the Pokot myth emphasizes the importance of the pairing off of
couples, "then it became that a person's woman is a person's woman". This
statement implies that after the discovery of sexual intercourse the pairing
off of couples, or the possession of women, was necessary or inevitable. The
myth, therefore, suggests that it was the control of female sexuality that
eventually led to marriage. This is interesting in view of the Pokot data

Indicate that it is not innately accepted that female sexuality is
controlled by men. Instead, this is an area which is continually renegotiated
Private between individual
men and women.

However, to look at what is actually being said in a myth is of course only
of explanation. Each society has its own myth of how sex differences
related, and there are many similar stories documented for other East
the Barabaig, a group of pastoralists in north-eastern Tanzania.
Peoples. I was, however, struck by the account G. Klima (1970: 83-9)
the Barabaig myth is extremely similar to the Pokot myth the emphasis
is central. (Klima simply describes the following as a "myth", without
if <
** it is told by men, women or both.)

r Long ago, In the beginning of time, women had no husbands but moved from kraal to kraal, staying only a short time with each man. They moved on with the cows and their fathers while the women went to a powerful female magician She gave them a magical potion One day, after a heavy rain, the men returned home ... and ...

Lotio** — — — — — » * —

... The men ... They told the women to go out and milk the cows. While milking the cows, the women put the magical potion into the milk gourds and gave them to the men. Upon drinking the men's minds began to change. That night each woman stayed with the man she was with at the time and continued to stay. This was the beginning of marriage. Hereafter, the men were afraid of losing the women and began to respond to their wishes.

Although the Barabaig myth does not focus on the first sexual act, it does locate marriage as being the reason for the change in what the Barabaig society was. I mention the myth, not only because of its similarities to the Pokot myth, but also because it clearly illustrates that what is said or expressed in a myth may have a number of different meanings. The myth raises various questions which Klima leaves unanswered such as, is this what Barabaig men want women to say, and if so, why? It has claims that Barabaig women enjoy a relatively high social and legal status preserved by a council which defends various women's rights (1970: 94). However, the council is used mainly by women to defend themselves if their sexuality has been abused (much in the same way as Pokot women do through tumbajaama, see ...). From the other data Eliaa presents, it is clear that the socio-economic and legal status of Barabaig women is still far inferior to that of Barabaig men. As such, it is important to remember that the views and attitudes which are expressed in myth may at times contradict, and at other times ... a social reality. The view expressed in the Pokot myth will now be in relation to Pokot gender constructs and attitudes towards female and fertility.

are two distinct views concerning female sexuality and fertility discussed in this chapter. One is the male perspective which is ... and concerns various pollution taboos. This perspective

as times used by men as a rationale for the subordination of women. The bar is a female perspective, which views aspects of female sexuality and fertility (such as menstruation and childbirth) as something positive that men can use to their own advantage. In particular circumstances women may use various pollution taboos as a means of manipulative power. In a comparison of male and female perspectives in relation to the ritual roles of men and women will be discussed in the third and final section of this chapter. |

jYj. Kale Perspective: The Social Ideal Articulated In Public (emphasized by men, but accepted by both men and women)

A Pokot man once said to me: "A woman can never walk a straight line like a man [comparing this to a particular star which over the months gradually travels across the sky from east to west]. She will always have to stop and start again [because of menstruation and by implication childbirth]." To him, this was a clear and obvious explanation of why women could never do what men do. As far as Pokot men are concerned, women could never be as productive as men, nor could they take on the responsibility men have, because of their childbearing capacities. However, it is important to note that it is not really women's childbearing capacities which make them unable to "walk a straight line like men", but the way in which Pokot define women's reproductive Powers.

Although in Pokot children are highly valued by both men and women, a child is considered to be unclean or polluted at times directly associated with reproductive powers. It is Pokot men who continually emphasize that women are polluted at these times and are, in their opinion, lesser beings because of this. Although the degrees of pollution vary, women are considered to be polluted during menstruation, after clitoridotomy, and at childbirth (during pregnancy and just before and after childbirth). Both men and women, but especially women, are considered polluted after sexual intercourse especially

^ultcry has been committed. There are various forms of purification after different periods of pollution, some of which may be performed in a ritual text by women, some by elders, and others in a more private situation by the pollution taboos, as well as the various cleansing rituals, ^leot the different areas which men and women assume control over*

Menstruation b*

Men and women never discuss menstruation openly or directly in public, s i w a y * refer to menstruation metaphorically, whereas women amongst themselves speak about menstruation more directly (see 17.2:5). For example, a man talks about a menstruating woman as one who is "sitting aside", because of the taboos and prohibitions which restrict her activity. When speaking about menstruation itself, a man may simply say, "srakachi; the cloth of a person", which refers to the particular skirt a woman wears while menstruating. To ask if a woman has completed her menstruation period a man may say, "has she gone to the river?", intimating whether she has washed after the completion of her menstruation period. To ask if a young girl has reached puberty and started menstruating a man could say, "has she crossed the river?", relating menstruation directly to female initiation, since girls in seclusion cannot cross the river without hitting it with their ritual sticks, and are also not allowed to wash until after their coming-out ceremony.

In comparison to other states of pollution, men consider women to be most polluted or 'dangerous' while they are menstruating. I have sometimes heard breaking of menstruation taboos given as a reason for divorce, particularly if a woman "catches or touches things", such as a man's cattle when she is menstruating. It is ritually taboo for a menstruating woman to come into contact with or handle any sort of food or beverage which men might consume. This restricts a woman from doing various subsistence tasks which men usually perform; such as milking stock; gathering vegetables; grinding grain; and fetching water (she can carry the containers, but must make sure that her hands do not touch the mouth of the calabash). She may do some

work on the farm, as long as she does not touch any of the crops. A menstruating woman should also not come into direct contact with any food or utensils which men might use, for example, if she is drinking beer, public she should not only sit slightly apart from others, but should hold the beer calabash with a cloth. A very conservative Pokot woman keeps her own cups, calabashes and bowls completely separate from men at all times.

A menstruating woman's state of pollution affects anything she comes into contact with, so that she must stay away from men or anything directly associated with men. A woman is not allowed to pass behind a man when she is menstruating and she should not caress or have sexual intercourse during this time. It is strongly believed that if a man has a sexual relationship with a menstruating woman he will become "shaky and weak". In a similar vein a menstruating woman should not handle a man's spear, or these days his gun, because of the fear that if she does it will not shoot straight and will fail to hit its target. A woman's 'dangerous' state may also affect things by association, even if she does not come into direct contact with them. For example, a woman is restricted from drinking cow's milk during menstruation.

are directly associated with men and highly valued by them, and it is feared that if a menstruating woman drinks from a cow this may have an ill effect

on the health of that cow and the rest of the herd. A menstruating woman can, however, drink from an old cow, and amongst the pastoralists certain cows are usually set aside particularly for women. A woman should not wash herself in the irrigation canal. The irrigation system is not directly associated with men, but a woman's pollution may spread to the canals irrigated by the different canals. This taboo does not necessarily apply only to women washing themselves after their menstruation period, but to both men and women who have menstruated and borne children.

Men are only allowed to wash after their menstruation period is

completed. After this there are no further ritual purifications which must be

[

ft!*** m Pokot women do not use any method of restricting the flow of blood
ocmaonly known, although not openly spoken about, when a weman is
*> 4†

posting* Consequently, this, plus the varioua ritual restrictions infer
tb** gjj hare a rest period every month, "sitting aside" from the arena of
otirities and men. During this period, the subsistence tasks a woman
lly performs are done by her daughtera, women relations or nei^iboura, and
^iaes when necessary, her husband.

The details of olltoridotoqy as well as the notions of pollution and
purification are discussed in Chapter V, on women* a initiation.

- Childbirth

A pregnant weman is not considered to be as polluting, or polluted, as a
tasan who is bleeding or discharging from her vagina. She can perform her
usual subsistence tasks, although she should cook her food separately and eat
froa different utensils. She is somewhat restricted in the food she is
allowed to eat, for example, ahe should not eat the meat of a dead or old oow
unless, after inspecting the meat, older women have said it is all right to do so.
i pregnant woman is regarded as someone vulnerable to disease and witchcraft,
and her vulnerability in turn affects her husband. To cite acme examples; If
» pregnant woman passes a woman whose baby has recently died, the pregnant
woaan will have to be ritually cleansed and protected by a kololian; a man who
killed an enecy. A pregnant woman's husband aould not go hunting because
to ia believed that the animal he hunts will not die, and he and the others
?iU be killed on the hunt. Also, he should not kill a snake, because when
the °Wld is born it will wriggle like a snake.

However, the most important cleansing or purification which takes place
bef °re birth is the ceremony of parpara. It is only necessary for a married
CouPle to hold one large par^ara (which is attended by the entire cconunity and
^ close relatives) ritually to ensure t^e safe and easy birth of their
°hildr

so. However, it is considered necessary that a pregnant weman, married
Ulftarried, admitta all the possible fathers before she gives birth, so that
/c>C>

can P571 a small version of parpara for each man concerned.

I *'

^ffotued to oleanaa the aintier of any p»3t or prsrjsj,*. mls-a^s zhe
^ 13 P ^ families may hare committed. The elders of the community eua
appease the ancestors by repeating a chant as one of then calls out

^ bigtori®» or f the families and olans involved. All of these "words" are

- ired" in a mortar filled with water and red eerth, which is
tirrod and blessed as it is passed around the hut from one elder

It the end of the ceremony the mortar is placed between the
io «nother. — tipped over. This is said to symbolise an easy birth having
pdl>er 1 . out" end thus got rid of, or absolved, any past or present conflict

^ could cause haraa to the mother and/or her unborn child.

fne actual act of childbirth is strictly a woman's affair. Men stay well
frees the area unless a serious complication develops, in which caae the
iders are called to come and slaughter a goat near by and appease the disturbing
ircestora. B/eiy effort is made to hasten the birth and save the life of the
ither, rather than that of the unborn child. There is an organized system
ef nifrifery with at least one experienced midwife residing in eech korok or
neighbourhood. Unless a Kokoegh; wife oT hands, or midwife, delivers a still-
torn child, a woman will use the same midwife for the delivery of all her
:K.lldr«n. The midwife is paid for her services with beer and later a female
goat.

•A woman about to give birth does not usually lie still during her labour

»_ j 3- She will get up and walk or crawl trying to induce the birth and

e pain. The various women present may massage the pregnant woman's
•tcanh or •

» in extrmaely difficult cases, lift her up and shake her. Some

birth more easily than others, biat after giving birth to two or

ren most Pokot women give birth without much trouble. When a woman

•bout to g v© birth she sits on a flat atone sometimes holding her arms
^stretched jr u -

of her osnds in the air. Shie is expected to show the minimum

And koep quiet, but she may be held by one woman supporting her

I

• pother one holding her thighs. Because of olitoridotoray, it is to out a wcuau Just before she gives birth to her first two children. .firifo makes two outs on each side of the vagina (at right angles to the iitorial line) thereby expanding the sise of the vaginal opening. Once .114 is born, the midwife outs the unbilical cord, and qiiookly buries the tW on

I?tor a woman gives birth she is ocnsidered unclean or polluted and is ietted in similar ways as to when she is menstruating end after itoridoteqy. For the first few days she should not touch any food with her l&is, not her own food, which she must pick up with a stick unless another f3JMi feeds her. During this time she should not go out in public and is jeoluied in her heme, wearing her kolika; the large skin oloak worn during initiation. She should not see men, including her husband, althou^i this is not strictly adhered to. However, men will never discuss the sex or health of their new-born baby until their wives have completed their period of semi-leclusion about one month later. After approximately one week. Kokoe^h or another older woman ccmes to ble33 and wash the mother and her child in the ritual of lapow. After this a weman can eat her food with her own hands and be seen in public, but her movements and behaviour are still restricted in a water of ways.

For approximately one month, until a woman "stops bleeding", her diet is restricted. She is not allowed to drink *ater, because it is believed that ^e water will lodge in her back and cause her pain. She should only drink dotted milk, and obtains other liquid through the thin porridge she is meant ^iak. Pckot are adamant that this restriction on a new aother is purely ror health

reasons. In fact, wenen these days go to the hospital to get an Section which they believe allows them to drink water (the injection is tJaPl7 a vitamin complex, but it is only after women have recei?d their Action that they freely drink liquids). When a woman no longer has any discharge or bleeding, her period of semi-seclusion is orer and eho is

another one holding her thighs. Because of olitoridotomy, it is pTj to exit a wcuau Just before she gives birth to her first two children. idwif* »akes two outs on each side of the vagina (at right anglea to the fit** . -jitoral line) thereby expanding the sise of the vaginal opening. Once P*1 ' \ i ohild la born, the midwife outs the tnbilical cord, and quickly buries the ^tarbirth.

After a woman gives birth she is oensidered unclean or polluted and is r«gtriftod in similar ways as to when she is menstruating and after litoridotoi^r. For the first few days she should not touch any food with her ^sis, n^ @^ven ker own food,which she must pick up with a stick unless another v3»an feeds her. During this time she should not go out in public and is 19oluded in her home, wearing her kolika; the large skin cloak worn during Initiation. She should not see men, Including her husband, althou^i this is net strictly adhered to. However, men will never discuss the sex or health of their new-born baby until their wives have completed their period of semi- / inclusion about one month later. After approximately one week,Kokoegh or another older weman comes to bless and wash the mother and her ohild in the ritual of lapow. After this a weman can eat her food with her own hands and be seen in public, but her movements and behaviour are still restricted in a ~~nuafer~~ of ways.

For approximately one month, until a woman "stops bleeding^{1*}, her diet is restricted. She is not allowed to drink water, because it is believed that water will lodge in her back and cause her pain. She should only drink dotted milk, and obtains other liquid through the thin porridge she is meant to drink. Pokot are adaaent that this restriction on a new mother is purely ** health reasons. In fact, wenen these days go to the hospital to get en Ejection ^Ply which they believe allows them to drink water (the injection is a vitamin complex, but it is only after women have receiv d their Section that they freely drink liquids). When a woman no longer has any **2KDa discharge or bleeding, her period of semi-seclusion is over and chc is

i -H to handle food and cook for men.

sexual Intercourse

^v perscn who has had sexual intercourse la considered to be somewhat
., ted and thereby a threat to all young babies*. It is believed that, if the
Artn of someone who has had sexual intercourse the previous ni\$it faLis on a
. nr its utensils.the baby will beoome seriously ill. To prevent people
; * polluted state from ootning near new-born babies a crude gate is built
Mr the entrance of the homestead, and women with young babies usually stay
gttj from unfamiliar crowds A stranger to the area will not pass through
a gate, whatever the case, for fear that he/she may be blamed if the baby
MRE to become seriously ill.

There are other restrictions regarding when men and women should and
iaould not have sexual intercourse. In every case it is the woman and her
children who are affeoted if these restrictions are not adhered to. For
maple, if a pregnant woman frequently has sexual intercourse with her husband,
It is believed that her baby will be born orus; with a white film covering its
y. (The word orus is also used to describe an unclean or polluted state.)

i 'OOAH is usually only accusad-xaf having had sexual interooursv* too frequently^.
she has given birth to an orus child. If an orus child is born the woman
'aould smear her own eyes and feet with a particular fat, for example the fat
'ra» a sheep's tail.

In fact any sort of difficult birth is associated with a wanan
^' shaving sexually. One of the taboos taken most seriously, is the belief
at a woman should not conceive a child before having had her third
^-ruation following her previous birth. If she does conceive a child
•for® th

then the ceremony of rlwoi must be performed. This ceremony is also
a woman has a breech birth or if twins are born. Riwoi is done
with complex purification rituals which are performed just after
H , ' J^wluding the smearing of fat on the feet of the child's parents.
w "rge oeremcny^where an ox is slaughtered,must later be held before the

1(j/0hildr«n roach tha ago of puberty. The parents of riwoi children ars a 4.0 have special powers which I will discuss more fully in the third iction of thia ochapter (17.3).

jf a wcmán haa sexual intercourse with her husband before her baby ia id to walk, it is believed that her baby or her other children will become m end die. A woman can privately bless her baby (who is considered to be a o5t vulnerable) by smearing his/^ier joints with a mixture of the widened red earth taken from the centre of the hearth plus her own urine and that of her husband. The exact mixture used to smear the joints of the baby ttriea from area to area, but the two most important ingredients are always the burnt earth from the hearth and mother^a urine.^ Whatever the case, it is the •other^a responsibility to carry out the purification ritual of her baby in private.

Among the pastorallsta it is believed that, if a wcmán has sexual relations with her husband when their baby is still small, she can cleanse her baby by using the earth from the hearth and her own urine alone. It is only if ahe has aexual relations with a man other than her husband, that it is considered necessary for her to obtain his urine in addition to the other ingredients. It •ay be that adultery is more frequent among the pastoralists, especially since they have a higher rate of polygeny and there are more unmarried young men. ^kis is difficult to document, however, because unless adultery is discovered People will rarely admit to having had an adulterous affair, especially if *here is a recognised way in which women can ritually cleanse their children. Koi*etheless

both examples, from among the agriculturists and the pastoralists, • ^itereating because they require cooperation between men and women. In k«r words this is a private or negotiated agreement between an individual ^d woman. The aexual offence would only become public knowledge (and ^ the knowledge of the anthropologist) if the child were to becañe ill or, ^ oomitted the pastoralijts, if someone were to discover that adultery had

r :

As we have already discussed, if adultery is discovered the case is judged by the council of elders who decide on the appropriate action to be exacted by the adulterer. The fine the adulterer must pay to the husband of the adulteress depends on the severity of the case (this may be as high as two hundred six goats among the agriculturists, and eight to fifteen head of oxen among the pastoralists). Men and women have different views on adultery (the women's perspective is discussed in IV.2:D). In public, men emphasize that committing adultery is considered a severe breach of conduct. For men or women to commit adultery runs against the social order. However, after adultery has been committed, although a man must pay a fine, thereby depleting his much valued herd, he is not considered polluted or defiled. The adulteress, on the other hand, is considered polluted and she and her children must be ritually cleansed.

No matter how trivial the case of adultery might be considered (even if no fine has been levied), the adulterer must cleanse the adulteress and her family through the ritual of *mwata*; to wash. It is a private ceremony in which the adulterer and his family must bring a small amount of beer to the husband of the woman, plus milk and dung from their goats to smear on the joints, chest, forehead of the woman and her children. If this ritual cleansing is not performed it is strongly believed that the woman, but more especially her children, will become ill and die. There are other beliefs which affect the adulterer and his family, but these are not as strongly emphasized. For example, if a woman has a child belonging to someone other than her husband, all the children of her and her husband will die if the 'illegitimate' child sits on

It is only necessary to pay a fine and perform *mwata* if adultery has been committed, or if the people involved admit to having an adulterous liaison. The adulterer is unlikely to admit this because of the fine he has to pay, and the adulteress is hesitant to do so because of the resulting quarrels with her

(
band 111(1) shame involved in having to go through mwata. However, a
will probably confess to adultery if some misfortune occurs in her family,
har children become seriously ill. KokcMasinyang is a case in point. She
ct
4 been having adulterous relations with three men from the Katuw community
a nisfcer of years. It was only after her child became ill, and she
orer
feared he would not recover, that she found it necessary to inform people of
hir various relationships.

The adulterer is not considered polluted or vulnerable to disease as is
the adulteress. Nevertheless, he is blessed when he has paid his fine and
the case is settled. Pokot say that the blessing is performed to "end all the
words" or close the case, which suggests that the blessing is necessary as an
insurance against any witchcraft or further demands of property from the husband
of the adulteress, rather than as a ritual purification. The only time I
recorded a case when men were cleansed for their various sexual offences, was
among the agriculturists. Just before a party of men set out to hunt a buffalo
(organized hunting occurred rarely in the area as large game was usually
confined to the plains and seldom wandered into the farming district in the
hills). Before the party of young men set off for the hunt, the elders were
called to cleanse them of any sexual offences they might have committed. There
were no particular cases of adultery referred to by the elders or admitted to by
the young men. One of the elders explained that the blessing was necessary
because, "these days men play sex with many different women". He was thus
replying that some of the men had broken various sexual taboos, such as committing
adultery, or two men having sexual intercourse with the same girl or woman
using one menstrual oyole (this is said to harm the different men as well as
girl concerned). To perform their blessing, the elders first asked all the
*** of the hunting party to urinate in a particular place along the main pathway
111(1) then each dip their toes and heels into this mixture. After this, the
elders recited a blessing over the hunters' weapons both to absolve the "words
of men and girls", and also to bless the success of the hunt.

toQ

I

If complications developed later that day the elders felt it was necessary to perform a second ritual cleansing. By using a oloap of burning i they brushed against the ankles of each of the hunters. The only other f*3 a this type of blessing is performed is after someone has died. Fire ^ to cleanse the utensils and tools of the deceased, any of his children ^10 e oot yet given birth, and the relative who performs the burial (this varies . different Pokot areas and in some places the relative who buries the deceased ^ cleansed with water). The explanation the Pokot gave for cleansing th® elose relatives of the deceased was "so that death will not attack them". blessing, therefore, is meant to protect the relatives from drying, and froia ijara the ancestral spirit of the deceased may cause them. Although there *re gore levels of interpretation than the actors' explanation (some of which I ^H xplore in the third section of this chapter), the fact that the same type blessing is performed in both cases is a significant indication of the severity with which the Pokot regard the breaking of sexual taboos. The state of pollution caused by committing sexual offences is regarded as being equally harmful or 'dangerous' as the pollution caused by death. However, it is iaportent to emphasize that it is the wanan and her small children who are a»ost affected if any of the taboos concerning sexual intercourse are broken.

Women's Perspective or Point of View

This section is an examination of the way in which wanan perceive their sexuality and fertility. At times women express a positive pride in the** sexuality and fertility which contrasts strongly with the siale articulate** Point of view discussed above. This may be in a ritual context such as their Elation rite or in turiba noma (the action taken by a group of women if a ^ and has abused his wife's sexuality), but it is also apparent in daily life ^Sh the various things women say and the actions they choose to take.

5-M

11 of these contexts are reviewed in this section with the topic discussed **®ilar order to the one adopted above (Section IT. 1).

I

-^ution Taboos Viewed as Advantageous to Women

\$0

bough by no means would it be said that all pollution taboos are to women (for example the taboo restricting women from drinking ^jring menstruation), the various taboos surrounding menstruation, child- ^jj (especially Just after birth), and Just after clitoridotomy, ensure that _ u-va a minimal amount of work to do and are oared for and left disturbed. During these periods, women actually need space and time to tcoreT because of their physical condition and new state which may also ijtove hormonal changes (except perhaps after clitoridotomy). It is difficult to interpret the fact that ^according to the articulated point of view, t*en are more pollution-prone than men. However, it would be incorrect to .suse that men are imposing these taboos and prohibitions onto women in order to maintain their position of dominance and control. Although this may be part of the reason, it is important to explore what these taboos actually mean to wanon, and to seek an explanation of why the form of these taboos may be advantageous to

women. Instead of assuming that men are imposing these prohibitions onto women, let us explore the possibility that women may be lapsing these restrictions onto themselves.

Given that women want to rest during menstruation, and after childbirth and clitoridotomy, it may be that women forbid themselves to carry out many of the subsistence tasks they usually perform. They do this by claiming that they are too •dangerous¹ during these periods. In other words, they would •danger others if they were to cook, milk stock and so on, because of their diluted state. A woman does not claim that she is 'too important*' to carry her subsistence tasks, but simply claims that she is 'impure¹. In this way does not threaten the dominant position of men in Pokot society. As a

even though men are excluded by women, and might actually have to do 10a® of their work for than, they accept this because their own image of self- ^ortar^e has not been threatened. However, this argument begins with the •sise that Pokot women accept a submissive or subordinate status to men,

/of

(

wotaen nay open the grain stores among the agriculturists, and only women
do the milking (at the homestead but not the cattle camps) among the

It is thus publicly recognized that the distribution and

control of subsistence food is the responsibility of women,

and Pokot women can and do use their control of subsistence food and labour as
a bargaining power with men. A case example of this was Koko Aricmonyang,
who became angry with her husband for lending a friend the calabash she used for
drawing water without her permission. She refused to cook Ariccaonyang decent
meals, and only brought him a small amount of left-over food (cooked maize
meal) after he had been working on the farm all day. When he saw this he
began to quarrel with her and they started to fight. Soon afterwards,
Koko Ariccaonyang left and went to stay with her parents for several weeks. Not
only can women refuse to do certain tasks, but presumably they can also ensure
that they and their children get enough food by giving their husbands less in
the way of hunger. (I do not, however, have case examples of this as I was not
in Pokot during any severe drought or food shortage.)

All of this suggests the possibility that men have not imposed food
preparation and other subsistence tasks on women, but rather that women have
excluded men from this province, which is one they can manage and need to
monopolize, to give them bargaining power vis-à-vis men. To do this women have
told men that they are "too good and important to carry out inferior tasks".
Men accept this because it reinforces their image of self-importance. When
women then want to exclude themselves from having to do these subsistence tasks
(for example, during menstruation), they claim to be "impure" which further
reinforces the image men have of their own self-importance. Although women
are recognized rights over the control and distribution of subsistence goods,
ultimate authority over the means of subsistence still lies in the hands of
men. Women use their rights as strategies of manipulative power within the
dominated system. Women's perceived self-importance in monopolizing
subsistence tasks and goods, can be likened to the image of self-importance

(

ilka to maintain. In view of women's perception of their own self-
ftaitf* &S childbearers, and in view of their monopolising subsistence tasks,
jgpo

_ nCW return to the discussion of pollution taboos.

Menstruation and use of Menstrual Blood

Amongst themselves women discuss menstruation far sK>re openly and do not
speak about it metaphorically. When referring to a woman who is
-trusting women will often simply say "her blood has come", although they
use some of the more common metaphors I have already mentioned if men are
not. I have never heard women discuss menstruation taboos in a directly
positive way (for example, in expressing their relief that they do not have to
work), but> 011 other hand, I have never heard women complain bitterly about
the fact that they are asked to "sit aside" during their menstrual periods,
menstruation taboos and restrictions are not topics of discussion unless the
taboos are broken. Usually they are simply adhered to without any explanation
or resistance.

One particular instance, when I broke a taboo by mistake, revealed to me
that women may view the severity of menstrual taboos differently from *men*.
One afternoon a Pokot man reproached me for washing in the place in the river
where he wanted to fetch water. I later asked some women friends why he had
done this. One of them answered by saying: "The dirt of a woman is different
from that of a man. A woman's dirt is [more] unpleasant or 'bitter' [mwani;
P*ikful or bitter]." Another woman quickly intervened and said, "That man was
^y being rude. His words are foolish. What about the women who wash in
ficio [a location further up river]?" This case suggests not only that women
are aware that men can use menstruation as a rationale for women's subordination,
* Also that women regard menstruation as something dangerous and thus
fearful.

Menstrual blood is one of the most important elements used by women in
f**** (menstrual blood can also be used by men, but is more often used by

Two of the most important ways menstrual blood is used are: 1) sckoi;

f^od of sorocry used by individual women against men. For example, it ia
 .^eved that if a woman places the particular skirt she wears during
 ^ruation under her husband's head while he is sleeping>then he will become
 •filiy 811(1 P olit «"- other words, he will become obedient and willingly
 jpait to the demands of his wife. 2) Botow; a method of birth control, which
 jjjfol^es sealing into an animal horn a scraping of menstrual blood, vaginal
 and other private exuviae of the girl or woman concerned. The horn is
 pfjefully hidden, and until the contents are spilled out, the girl is
 -fljfidered •tied* and not able to conceive.

I have never heard a Pokot woman openly admit, or proudly state, that she
 ^ us^ed sokol against her husband. Instead, a wasan is accused of having
 done sokol to her husband if he is considered to be weak and indecisive.
 Otherwise the notion of sokoi may be used as a joke to ridicule a man who is
 seen doing women's tasks. For example, if a man is seen grinding grain or
 fetching water people will say "kam nylnde sokol"; he has eaten sokoi. The
 power of women's sorcery is said to make men more *womanlike'. In this sense,
sokoi further identifies women, and particularly menstruation, with "weakness
 and silliness". It reinforces the existing ideas of pollution and the need to
 control women's reproductive powers. From a male point of view, if a man is
 •ccused of having eaten sokoi it is meant a3 an accusation that he has not been
 «ble to control his wife.

However, even if aokoi reinforces the accepted image of women as vulnerable,
 weak and silly; it must be remembered that sokoi is something which women use
 HMnst men. Although it is sometimes joked about it is al3o feared. It is
 *oo«rted by both men and wemen that this type of Individual sorcery is only
 Uaed as a last resort. Women are extremely reluctant to discuss hew sokoi is
 •ctually performed, because it is considered to be something extremely secretive
 aocially unacceptable.

ID their discussion of sexual antagonism among the PokotjBdgerton and
 •t quote a »!!«n 93 sayir^: "Ky own son wants to get together with his

/

to poison and bewitch me. A poisoning of a father by his wife and a
w. octified Just last month" (1964 : 410), The poisoning referred to is not
f&u' - olarified by Conant, but In the light of my own research data it would
to be an example of women's use of sokoi. During my fieldwork I did
* --cord any deaths which the Pokot attributed to women's use of sokoi. but
m poisoning* was expressed as an aspect of women's sorcery (although the
Ijfi at 'poison* used was always left undefined). The actual result of
^jt3 sorcery is unimportant. What is more significant is that men believe
fear women's use of sokoi and, although it is never openly discussed, it is
g accepted threat and tool women can use if they feel mistreated or abused.

It should be made clear that Pokot make a distinction between an
individually strong, knowledgeable woman whom they respect, and a woman who is
held to have gained her position of power in the household through the use of
sokoi. For example, Chermit's wife was considered to be a strong and powerful
woman and there was often a great deal of gossip about her she ruled the house-
hold but, because (Permit was also known as a strong and influential elder,
there was never any suggestion that his wife had used sokoi against him. On
the other hand, Karita's wife was also known to rule her household but it was
generally agreed that she had bewitched her husband since he was known to be
and indecisive, especially regarding the affairs of the household,
including the control over his children. A woman can also accuse another
of doing sokoi. For example, the second wife of Cheutoi accused his
wife (who
3 Wealthy had run away and left him) of having bewitched her husband who
and at times completely incoherent. Both men and women can use
or blame others for using sokoi, as a means of readjusting the
^icn if individuals have deviated from the social roles expected of them,
u
» however, more often use sokoi, or the threat of sokoi, as a tool to
^late their husbands.

now turn my discussion to rotow; the method of *psychological*
m control. The use of rotow is interesting in itself, but particularly

i

important regarding the question of control over women's reproductive powers.
 . can be done by either men or women, although women are said to use rotow
 far more amongst themselves. Rotow is most often used by mothers
 to "tie" their young daughters in an attempt to prevent them from conceiving
 before they have completed their initiation rite. Married women can also use
 rotow to "tie" themselves so as not to conceive another child too quickly after
 a birth. It is also possible for men to use rotow to "tie" their wives
 if they have run away, although men usually need the assistance of other women
 to obtain the scraping of menstrual blood and other necessary ingredients,
 for example, Lomwai is said to have used one of the reputedly stronger types
 of rotow after his wife left him because of frequent beatings. She had
 already given birth to one of Lomwai's children, but when she went and lived
 with another man for six years she was unable to conceive her lover's child,
 then (for a number of reasons) she finally returned to Lanwai's home she
 conceived Lomwai's child after three months' time.

From the examples I have, it appears that men use rote to try to reinstate
 their control over women's reproductive capacities primarily when women have
 deviated from the male social ideal. This also holds true in regard to
 abortion. Certain elder women are known for their skill in being able to
 perform abortions by pressing a woman's stomach and displacing the foetus as
 late as two to three months into pregnancy. However, elders are also said to
 be able to make a woman miscarry by performing a strong and secretive curse
 which they do when, in their view, an extreme breach of social conduct has been
 committed (for example, if a woman is known to have conceived after having an
 illicit affair with a close relative). Nonetheless, both the ability to
 prevent and terminate conception is recognized by Pokot as being primarily the
 responsibility of women, and both are used far more frequently by women for
 control, rather than by men trying to impose their control over women. It is,
 however, difficult to assess how often, and under what circumstances, women
 use rotow or abortion to their advantage and for their own personal

It is mainly because women are extremely reluctant to admit when they do so. I know, for example, various oases where individual girls -hosaan to abort rather than go through initiation and marry. Whatever the important point is that women can actually use these methods of rolling their reproductive powers if they wish. Also, women, but uninitiated girls, have a greater choice than men as to when and by their child will be fathered.

The fact that the social system gives women the chance to make these choices about childbearing, underwrites the accepted notions of maleness and femaleness. Men are identified with social concerns while women's concerns revolve around their bodies and themselves as individuals (although how women choose to use their bodies to their advantage is based on their own self-perception of their sexuality, rather than the accepted or 'articulated' gender constructs). Through male initiation and the age-set system men focus their control of sexuality on other men, rather than trying to control female sexuality directly (see also Chapter V. pp 145-151). Furthermore, the fact that men do not actually enforce their control over girls' sexuality may be an inadvertent admission that they cannot do so. Female sexuality and the complex network of control which revolves around women's reproductive powers, is essentially in the hands of women. It is perhaps because of this recognition that male control of female sexuality is focused on their control of marriage: in their perceived control of the exchange of women for bridewealth, and through their control of the male age-set system.

c- Childbirth

From a woman's point of view, some of the taboos surrounding pregnancy seem to be extremely practical. The fact that a woman should not eat the meat of a dead cow, or that her husband should not go on a hunt, could be viewed as a type of protection for the woman who is in a physically vulnerable state. She is not only regarded as being physically vulnerable but she is also ritually unclean, and must therefore be protected from ritual 'badness' or pollution

Ti

i/r

f

w m that associated with the shadows of relativea who have recently

jp jren with respect to the idea of protection, however, the primary motive (4t jarpara^aPP^{eara} to be that of men making an attempt to enforce their control ^r women's childbearing capacities. The fact that only elders oan absolve peat and present mistakes of a pregnant woman and her lover, or lovers, is fty of reinforcing male power and their control over women's reproductive potential. However, this only occurs after the fact; in other words, after the woman has already become pregnant. Also, usually in the case of uzxnarried tceen, it is up to the individual woman to admit to the various mistakes she have committed. It is possible that if she has not had a difficult pregnancy, and her birth does not become difficult, she will not admit to baring had numerous sexual affairs. This is of course difficult to document because women would probably never admit this even privately. Nevertheless, it is significant that women are given the opportunity to remain quiet if no complications develop. During parpara both the men and woman concerned must be cleansed, although the cleansing ritual focuses on the woman who is considered to be more vulnerable than the men. The fact that Pokot recognize women as being more vulnerable may cloak the more fundamental idea that Pokot perceive Hrth as something ultimately out of their control and 'dangerous', not only in 'Physical/practical sense but also in a ritual sense. As a result, from both¹ male and female point of view, pregnant women, and women with small children, *Tt seen as needing ritual protection.

Sexual Intercourse

In a similar way as pregnant women are considered to be vulnerable, a *nd her snail children are seen as needing ritual purification and I taction if the woman conanits a sexual offence. A woman carries a great ••Pansibiity with her in believing that her child can become ill if she ttt5aves sexually. Accordingly, it is primarily the responsibility of the ^^Pdual woman to decide when and if she wants to have an adulterous affair,

•htfi if s*¹⁶ f(R)l(R) it is necessary, to admit that she has done so. (ttiis
tfii^{tn} ,

^urs® cases of forced adultery, or raps. From the oase
pics I hare oollected, however, adultery more often involves a certain
^jjjgness from both partners rather than forced rape.) Having the
jiponsibility of her children's welfare should (although it clearly does not)
a woman from sexually misbehaving, but in a similar sense it should also
p £ man from camnitting a sexual offence. This is especially true
^rding the taboo which prohibits a husband and his wife from having sexual
intercourse when they have a small child. It is in the interest of the father
Buch as the mother to keep their baby healthy. In this case, where a
gutual interest exists between husband and wife, there is also a great deal of
room for private negotiation between them. If a woman's child becomes ill she
©d her husband can decide to first oleanse the child privately and then, if
this has no effect, they can abstain from sexual intercourse.

The following is an excerpt from an interview with Cherimut in which she
describes the various forms the negotiation between a husband and wife might
take.

•A man will not be tough [force the woman to have sexual intercourse]
if he knows that the child is still small. But another day we can steal
each other ['stealing' is often used to describe sexual intercourse, but
usually when it takes place in situations which are considered socially
unacceptable]. When my child is only able to sit down, I take *my* husband
into the bush ... it is not at heme. He tells me to bring his basket of
food to such and such a place. I take his food to that place and we
steal each other [if sexual intercourse takes place at home] you wake
up and say, 'it seems that my child has become sick'. The man says, 'yecu
stay and look after our child here [telling the wcoan to stay at home
rather than going to work on the fields]. Tes, will yecu not do those
*ords then [ritually cleanse the child by smearing his/her joints]¹
[If the child becomes seriously ill], then the man asks, 'are those [the
zickness of the child] because of the sins we did the other night?'. And
then he goes for a month, for a long time, until he sees that the child
has power [the husband will not try to have sexual intercourse with his
*ife until their child is healthy again]."

In

the above excerpt Cherimut suggests that it is better for Pokot to have
•e*iiial intercourse away from the child concerned. This way the shadow and the
Vs&ess* associated with the act will be less likely to affect the child.

•TO, most people specify the sexual act itself, wherever it might take

(
 •« making the child vulnerable to ailcness. This is confirmed by the
 that the shadow of anyone who has had a sexual relation the previous
 should not fall on a young baby. In describing the details of how it
 light occur that a couple has sexual intercourse at home, Cherimut says that a
 wife can tell her husband to "pour the sperm outside" (practising coitus
 interruptus) for one night, but the next night because the man has not been
 satisfied¹¹, they will have complete sexual intercourse whether the woman insists
 on coitus interruptus or not. In the interview, Cherimut also goes on to
 explain that if the child becomes seriously ill the man and woman may decide to
 take the child to be smeared by a kololian, rather than only sneering hi[^]Ae*
 privately at home.

The various details of the above abstract serve as a summary to some of
 the points I have raised so far. The example points out that, although
 various social laws exist, men and women may work privately at finding ways
 around them. Early on in Cherimut's explanation, it appears that it is the
 woman who has the most interest in protecting her child, and she therefore
 "takes" her husband into the bush. However, the arrangement itself is
 actually made between the husband and his wife, with the husband telling his
 wife where to meet him and her agreeing to do so. The mutual interest of the
 husband and wife are revealed in the fact that the man does not force the woman
 to have sexual intercourse. Instead, they arrange together the most suitable
 way to do so, and if the child becomes ill, they **decide** together what to do and
 whether it is **necessary** to abstain from sexual intercourse or not.

The prohibition which forbids¹ women with small children from having
 sexual intercourse, also serves as a method of birth control and helps to
 maintain the usual two to three year age difference preferred between the
 children of one woman. Even without this prohibition, the limited Pokot diet,
 the fact that children are usually not weaned until they are two to three
 years old, makes it physically very difficult for women to produce healthy
 children more frequently than once every two years. It is now generally accepted

f

lactation itself functions to space out the interval between successful
births (Short: 1976). The time between births varies, however, with the
different circumstances and physiology of each individual woman concerned.

It is therefore unlikely that Pokot women ovulate soon after birth, which
is an interesting light on rlwoi; the ritual which must be performed if a
woman conceives before completing three menstruation periods. This custom is
particularly particular to the Pokot. For example, amongst the Hamar of Ethiopia, if a
woman conceives before completing two menstruation periods and various
coinciding rituals, the child will have to be aborted or killed at birth. In
Pokot, rlwoi is possibly an additional way of assuring that there is a
efficient space between consecutive births. Hiwoi, and the taboos forbidding
sexual intercourse for women having small children, are both examples of
ritual prohibitions which in some ways respect or protect women's childbearing
capacities and can thus be seen as advantageous to women. Women sometimes use
these prohibitions as bargaining tools when they do not wish to have sexual
intercourse. On the other hand, if women do want to have sexual intercourse
they can easily do so by finding a way around these prohibitions, such as
cleansing their child privately. It is significant that men and women are both
involved in various aspects of controlling women's reproductive power, and it
is probable that both sexes impose these prohibitions on themselves and each
other for different reasons.

A different view of Pokot sexuality is discussed by R. Edgerton and

Conant who claim that Pokot women are sexually unsatisfied, and that the high
degree of sexual antagonism found in Pokot is due to "the pronounced disjunction
between the

emphasis placed on the full expression of female sexuality in adolescence
and the subsequent restrictions of female sexuality in married life" (1968: 417).

In the many private interviews and discussions which I had with married and
unmarried

women I would suggest that Pokot women clearly enjoy sex (see also

Chapter V.3; # if women may sometimes claim to be sexually unsatisfied (Edgerton
& Conant, 1968: 409) for a number of different reasons, but the fact that

f

Express their sexual 'frustration' could also be seen as an expression

I know of one woman who often complained about her husband's sexual performance in public. Although this was publicly frowned upon, and it is difficult to say how this embarrassment affected her husband, it is well known that her complaints helped to attract a number of men with whom she had adulterous affairs. It would also be impossible to document how

married women actually have sexual intercourse by managing to negotiate discreetly the various ritual restrictions with their husbands and lovers, but from the number of cases which became public, it appears that adultery is a frequent occurrence.

The other difficulty in Edgerton and Conant's argument is that it fails to take into account that sexual satisfaction is defined very differently in different cultures. Pokot women insist that they feel the most "heat" or sexual excitement when they are trying to conceive a child, the ultimate condition being the moment of conception (the "heat" is described as coming from a woman's "stomach" where the komong; ovaries are "opening and closing their mouths anxiously trying to catch the sperm"). Women may express this for a number of different reasons, for example, as a way of showing their acceptance of the social significance placed on them as childbearers. However, if this is

what Pokot women 'say' gives them sexual pleasure, it is not for us to 'say' that it is actually an expression of their sexual frustration. Also, data suggest that women have, and use, the opportunity to do something about their sexual 'frustration' when they feel inclined to do so. Although Pokot women may use their sexuality in different ways, sexual satisfaction in

particular is not a significant issue for the Pokot, nor is it important for my analysis defining gender constructs. Conant's focus and analysis of these issues brings to light our own cultural preoccupation with these ideas in our society. Many of our ideas about sexual satisfaction stem from the western notion of romantic love which is non-existent in Pokot marriages.

NO women in western society hope to get affection and personal satisfaction

the relationship with their husbands. Pokot women receive most of this
(to* * the close relationship they have with their children.
fir®

It is common for married Pokot women to have adulterous relationships.
Agerton and Conant point out (1982: [Pokot] wives maintain
several adulterous relationships at any given time". Amongst themselves, a
group of women might scorn or ridicule other women who have "hot vaginas" and
only flaunt their sexuality, but in the presence of men they seem to remain
and ignore the issue. Although women usually have little say in the
community council, when a case of adultery is discussed at a council meeting
the adulteress may be asked to review her side of the case. At this point
other women often give their opinions and details of the case even though they
are supposed to remain quiet. From the cases of adultery I have recorded, it
is extremely rare for women to give evidence against each other, either
privately when asked by men, or publicly at the community council meetings.

However, in comparison with what U. Llewelyn-Davies reports about Uasai
women (1973), Pokot women are less absolute in giving their full support to each
other in their adulterous relationships. In Pokot, it can happen that adultery
causes conflict amongst the women themselves as well as between men and women.
For example, in the case of KokoMasinyang (see also 17.1: C p. 100) after
he was finally admitted to having adulterous relations with three men of the Katu
community, the case was discussed at council and each man was fined one

she wives of the three men became so enraged that they gathered with the
women of Katu and beat KokoMasinyang. Although this is the only case I
recorded in which women acted against another woman for having committed
adultery,⁷ it is important because the women decided amongst themselves to act
-settler ^

reinforcing the male ideal: one of the themes they emphasize in
^ ^ situations could never occur. From what Llewelyn-Davies reports about the Uasai,
of the main differences concerning adultery amongst the Uasai and
that if adultery is discovered in Uasai it is essentially the

^jtcress who is blamed and must pay a fine which she usually begs for
 #gates (Llewelyn-Daviea, 1978: 233), while in Pokot it is the man who
 lime*' In H**s*1-* » has an adulterous relationship, his wife l
 ^footed directly. By contrast, in Pokot, a man who has an adulterous
 #relations^{hi}P must pay a fine thereby depleting his herd: the same herd
 LIVESTOCK that his wife and children are dependent on. For this reason
 P^ot wife may feel antagonistic towards both her husband and the woman
 had as adulterous relationship with. Llewelyn-Daviea concludes that t^{^hs}
 support Maasai women give to each other in 'adultery', is a form of woe
 solidarity which attacks male superiority (1978: 235). In Pokot, altho
 Taen do not openly give evidence against each other, a case of adulter
 erase conflict between women which hinders their solidarity as a group.
 Nonetheless, Pokot women use their sexuality freely and seem to recogni[^]
 laplicity (individually and as a group) that this can disrupt the patu¹
 order and cause conflict between men. It does not escape recognition[^]
 men and women that it can be beneficial if a woman has an adulterous r[^]
 with a wealthy stockholder. If a wife commits adultery, the fine will
 to her husband and this will eventually benefit both her husband and h[^]
 Pokot say that a husband and his wife are conspiring together to get m[^]
am
 * a husband shows no anger towards his wife after she has committed a[^]
 & interesting case was that between Meriongor and Kapkai. Meriongor'[^] **
 n adulterous relationship with Kapkai's wife, and because he was still
 Carried and living at home, the bulk of the fine was paid by Meriong[^]
 lemony, a few months later, Meriangor's wife became drunk and fell a[^]
 bej
 rjnext to Kapkai's brother. When he approached her sexually she ma[^] d 1
 ttten-f i
 | pt to dismiss him, but they did not actually have sexual intercom[^]
 c*se 3 v wrought to council and it was decided that Kapkai's brother a[^] Th«
 Ojg f py
 goat to the elders so they could perform the blessing to •finish t[^]
 V ta <
 • interesting, however, is that Mericngor's wife then jxiblicly \
 *hep ,
 » o aen Present that if her daughter had not recently gone through,[^] te

Iters33 who la blamed and must pay a fine which she usually begs from her
tes (Llawelyri-DaTieSi 1978: 233), while in Pokot it is the man who is

In Maasai, if a man has an adulterous relationship, his wife is not
-ffeCted directly. By contrast, in Pokot, a man who has an adulterous
-gtionship mist pay a fine thereby depleting his herd: the same herd of
livestock that his wife and children are dependent on. For this reason a
pokot wife may feel antagonistic towards both her husband and the woman he has
hbd an adulterous relationship with. Llewelyn-Daricia concludes that the
^ppert Maasai women give to each other in •adultery¹, is a form of women's
solidarity which attacks male superiority (1978: 235). In Pokot, although
»aen do not openly give evidence against each other, a case of adultery may
ctuse conflict between women which hinders their solidarity as a group.
Nonetheless, Pokot women use their sexuality freely and seem to recognise
iaplicitly (individually and as a group) that this can disrupt the patriarchal
order and cause conflict between men. It does not escape recognition by Pokot
aen and women that it can be beneficial if a woman has an adulterous relationship
fith a wealthy stockholder. If a wife commits adultery, the fine will be paid
to her husband and this will eventually benefit both her husband and herself.
Pokot say that a husband and his wife are conspiring together to get more stock
if a husband shows no anger towards his wife after she has committed adultery.
An interesting case was that between Meriongor and Kapkai. Meriongor's son had
a> adulterous relationship with Kapkai* 3 wife, and because he was still
Carried and living at heme, the bulk of the fine was paid by Meriongor. At a
C9renony, a few months later, Meriongor's wife became drunk and fell asleep on a
next to Kapkai' 3 brother. When he approached her sexually she made no real
l^aaPt to dismiss him, but they did not actually have sexual intercourse. The
c*ae was brought to council and it was decided that Kapkai's brother should pay
8°at to the elders so they could perform the blessing to "finish tae words",
that <
« interesting, however, is that Mericngor's wife then publicly told the
»oan present that If her daughter had not recently gone through rotwa;

fl*^{for}ldotomy (thus being in seclusion and in a weak and vulnerable state), she

not have dismissed Kapkai's brother's approach. She announced that she
Id have had sexual intercourse with Kapkai's brother in order to "return the
^ taken by Kapkai's family". Although this particular case may be
tffp_r eted as something of a vendetta, it nonetheless indicates a woman's
.yiranness of the possibility of using her sexuality for the economic gain of
^_o_i if and her husband.

Ibis Is in contrast to the Maasai where, although it may be economically
liiantageous for the husband if his wife commits adultery, it is disadvantageous
for the wife. She is not only beaten, but if her agnates cannot help her pay
h<r fi>® her husband can take the stock from her allocated herd. As
LleweljTO-Davies reports (1978: 233), when two wives of a lalbon had obtained the
full fine of nine head of cattle for their husband they claimed that it "made
his a rich man". Amongst the Maasai, and the pastoral Pokot, there is a
clearer distinction made between a woman's allocated herd and her husband's
herd than amongst the agricultural Pokot. This is due both to the higher
degree of polygny and the far larger herds of livestock found amongst the
peatorialists. However, Llewelyn-Davies gives little account of the movements
made in Maasai between the husband's herd and his wives' allocated herds. The
only comment she makes is that women do not own livestock, so that a husband
04.1 take livestock from his wives' allocated herds whenever he wishes to do so.

not only raises the question of how a wife can really pay a fine if she
d®3 not own any cattle (especially if the fine should be taken from her
Seated herd), but also whether the cattle a woman obtains from her agnates,
^ *re then added to her husband's herd, do not eventually benefit her and
her ,.

3cEs. Amongst the pastoral Pokot, there is continual movement and exchange
B^Hn the wives' allocated herds and that of their husband (especially in
* of drought and difficulty), with the husband having ultimate authority

PU the

^t us return stock in the home state agricultural Pokot where the productive

la ouh smaller. Here, it is far clearer how a fine paid for adultery benefits both the husband and his wife economically. Pokot agricultural adultery as a way of attacking male superiority, by using other men to gain the benefit of their self-esteem, but, it is interesting that they also use adultery to benefit the economic position of themselves as well as their husbands. Maasai women, on the other hand, view adultery as an attack on male superiority, which benefits their self-esteem but hurts them economically to the advantage of their husbands. This suggests that amongst the agricultural fokot, where survival is dependent on small productive units, women recognize the need of maintaining a complementary relationship between husband and wife despite the tensions that exist between them,

g. Tumba nama: A Collective Statement of Sexual Pride

tumba nama (turn; song or ceremony, nama; to catch or capture) is a practice which enables women of one neighbourhood or region to take collective action stating their pride in their sexuality. Only a brief summary of the main aspects of this practice are given here, as a detailed account has already been reviewed by B. Edgerton and P. Conant (1980). In the area where I worked,

what Edgerton and Conant know as kilapat was referred to as tumbanama.

Essentially, tumba nama is performed if a man or a woman radically misbehaves towards his/her spouse, for example, if a man abuses his wife verbally by hurling insults at her such as, "let maggots grow in your vagina", or if he is disrespectful and continually drunk. Although both men and women can do tumba

it is performed far more frequently by women against their husbands than

9. For example, if a woman is abused by her husband, she will gather together the

the neighbourhood (sometimes including friends from the wider region),

to go as a group to ridicule her husband until he agrees to pay them a cow

* Set for his mistake. To ridicule and shame the accused husband, the

group

* will set up and taunt him with sexually obscene songs and gestures.

• Ardener reports (1977: 12) that this type of collective action by women

H

13 . unusual in Africa, and she cites the Pokot material as being particularly

her own data on the Bakweri of West Cameroon. Many aspects which
is characterised as characteristic for other cases in Africa are also
for the Pokot, especially the concept that if a man abuses his wife, the
concerns all other women and not just the individual woman abused. As
women demonstrate not on behalf of the victim but for themselves as a
social group (1977: 34). In Pokot, tumba nana, as well as women's initiation,
affirms women's identity with each other as a sexual group in general and
strengthens, in particular, the solidarity between women of one neighbourhood.

3. Ardener also suggests that many of the 'vulgar' actions she reports are
performed by women to demonstrate the dignity of their sexual identity, a
concept which they consider to be valuable and beautiful (1977: 11)» Various
obscene songs and gestures in Pokot women's initiation reflect women's awareness
of, and pride in, their own sexuality, and their actions during tumba nama
strongly reaffirm this idea. Here, women as a group are taking a positive
stance and refusing to let men abuse their sexuality. Tumba nama, when
performed by women, is an organised action by women expressing their opposition
to the abuse of male control.

Like the collective obscenities women engage in during their initiation
rite, tuafca nama also reflects the sexual antagonism and struggle characteristic
of Pokot marriages. Although there are many similarities between the two
actions, the collective obscenity women engage in during tumba nama is performed
for the specific purpose of resolving marital conflict, whereas women's
initiation does not serve such purpose. Although there may be many difficulties
involved in doing so, women often make use of the various alternatives open to
them when their marriage situation is unbearable. However, using these
alternatives becomes more impracticable for women as they get older and have a
number of children, and, whatever the case, it is far more difficult for a woman
to get

out of a marriage than it is for a man. Probably the main reason men do
not resort to using tumba as often as women do, is because they have more

1

got seans deal lug with marital oonflict.

S# Ardener suggests that the aotion of collective obscenity itself presses an opposition to male control, but what she fails to point ait is that ^{5d} actions do not necessarily oppose or threaten male oontrol in the long run. ^{pokot}, women's actions work towards resolving marital conflict and thereby y) ^tribute to the maintenance of the established social order. This is also pye for seme of the examples which Ardener oites herself: amongst the Lele, as a group punish any married woman who has run away with her lover (1977: which is clearly an example of women upholding the male social order and tellies, rather than expressing their opposition to it.

Por this reason, I question the aspect of S. Ardener's conclusion where (he claims that there is probably a strong similarity between the present women's liberation movement and the actions taken by the Bakweri and other African women (1977: 49). As Ardener suggests, perhaps at a deep structural level of self-identification there are similarities between the two (ibid.), but if I understand the goals of the women's liberation movement correctly, they include a firm desire to change the accepted male stereotypes. Ardener defines the concerns of the women's liberation movement in the same way (1977: 44), but she does not then apply this definition to the Bakweri or Pokot examples. In Pokot, although women express their opposition to male control and go against the accepted stereotypes by a demonstration of collective obscenity, they do little actually to change these stereotypes but rather tend to confirm male control in the long run.

^•3. An Analysis of Male and Female Perspectives

As we have seen, there are many different pollution taboos and cleansing ^tuals concerning women's sexuality and fertility. Most of the taboos ^{oo&cern} women's childbearing capacities, and limit women's activities in a of ways. When any pollution taboo is broken, women and their small ^Udrsn are more directly affected than men. However, it would be inoorrect

f that men impose these taboos onto women, or that Pokot men consider
to be lesser beings because of their childbearing capacities. Hence
not only here different attitudes about female sexuality and fertility,
t also about the various pollution taboos. Furthermore, the taboos are
^•x^le and can be manipulated by both men and women. This allows for an
tr* of private negotiation which is of particular importance in the husband/
fj/s relationship.

In the broader view of gender constructs, it is significant that if a
e»an misbehaves sexually, it is said that she and her children will be
adversely affected, whereas a man's sexual misbehaviour is said to affect his
wealth, in particular his herds. This distinction corresponds and reinforces
the distinction between a woman's perspective, which revolves primarily around
herself and her children, and a man's perspective, which revolves around his
wealth and his herd. Within the generally held model of Pokot society, the
male perspective, or the values held to be important by men, are predominant, but,
in practice, the importance placed on male and female perspectives and values
evolve as circumstances change. Within the context of either only male or
only female interactions, however, the values and perspective held to be most
important are sex specific. In this sense, the pollution taboos, and the
rituals taken to cleanse individuals if they have broken the taboos, reinforces
•eparate male and female values and, as»re generally, the notions of maleness
and femaleness.

It appears that, to maintain a position of apparent dominance, Pokot men
continually reinforce their image of self-importance. They do this in a number
^ys, including articulating and repeatedly asserting the various prohibitions
^ concepts of pollution. Men articulate the point of view that women are
•^ordinate to themselves because of their childbearing capacities, which are
••to as dangerous and polluting. It must be noted, however, that the Pokot
are something 'dangerous' as something 'powerful', precisely because it is
their complete control. Just as childbirth is considered 'dangerous*', so

the ancestral spirits, and, Just as men are considered 'powerful' because of their influence over ancestral spirits, so, by implication, must women be considered 'powerful' because of their influence over childbirth. However, no one publicly articulates this idea and, in fact, the notion that childbirth is an important source of women's power, is deliberately muted through various concepts of pollution.

In so far as childbirth may be expected with life, ancestral spirits may be associated with death. Women are not, however, entirely excluded from either the sphere of ancestral spirits or of death. Hiwoi women are a case in point, as already mentioned. If a woman has an 'abnormal' birth (for the Pokot, a breech birth, twins, or a "black" child born before a woman has completed three pregnancy periods) she, and the child, will have to be cleansed through the elaborate ritual of riwoi; a way of bringing the abnormal birth back under social control. As a result of this cleansing, a riwoi woman has special powers, the most important of which is that she and her husband have the ritual power to cleanse others after death. This is done by the riwoi woman smearing fat onto the feet of the female relations of the deceased, while her husband cleans the feet of the male relations.

Another case in point is that, when a child is born, a woman normally identifies the protecting ancestral spirit of that child. Onyot; ancestral spirits play an important part in Pokot ideas of life and death. Every Pokot child is said to be protected by one particular ancestral spirit. A few days after a baby is born, an older woman identifies the protecting ancestral spirit of the baby in the ceremony of kotkotoi (kotkotoi is only very occasionally worked by men for male babies only). At death, a person's spirit is said to depart from his/her body and to join the other ancestral spirits.

Y

There are different accounts of how and why the ancestral spirits manifest themselves, but most Pokot say that they are an ever present force in Pokot life.

Some people go so far as saying that onyot hold council at the birth of every baby, and decide the child's character and fate. Others simply

it is that onyot are present every day, helping to guide people and make
visions, or conversely causing people harm or illness, for example. If they
should to observe taboos, quarrel with one another, or fail to pay respect
to the ancestors. There are a number of different occasions when the elders
of the community try to control the ancestral spirits, by cursing those which
they have identified as causing sickness or misfortune, and invoking others to
provide protection and bring good fortune.

As this brief account shows, the ritual roles which women and men have
regarding ancestral spirits, are complementary and correspond to the
distinction between birth and death. Thus, women identify and invoke the
protective ancestral spirits at birth, while men identify and invoke ancestral
spirits at moments of sickness or misfortune in order to avert death and
disaster.

In conclusion to this chapter, it could be said that, although Pokot men
always say that women are polluted and subordinate because of their childbearing
capacities, at the same time they recognize implicitly the importance of women
as childbearers for the reproduction of Pokot society. In this way, they
silently acknowledge the complementary interdependence of the sexes, and that
the female sphere is just as important as the male sphere to the survival of
Pokot society. There is, however, a clear dichotomy between what men overtly
express and what they covertly accept. It is as though men and women are able
to understand quite different messages encoded in the same social ideals and
practices. We now turn to examine female initiation in the light of the different
messages it can be seen to encode.

lootnoU* Chapter IT

M. Llewelyn-Davies 'Women, warriors and patriarchs'¹ (unpublished) p. 1.

fha Pokot word for people is plch. The Pokot word for person is chi.
-gt^lly these words are used in reference to men* When there is any doubt
9 to whether these words refer to men and/or women, the narrator will
^jalTTY thea, as in the instance of this uyth a person is qualified as a man*

j I only heard of this taboo in this very specific sense. However,
p»ristiany (1975* 187) suggests that the shadow of a menstruating woman is
alio considered polluting. This taboo would mean that a menstruating woman,
^d close relatives of the deceased, are considered to be equally polluting.

4# I was never told the specific significance of using the burnt earth of
the hearth and mother's urine as a blessing. However, the hearth can be seen
u a symbol of domestic well being, for example, blessings must be performed
over the hearth before brldewealth negotiations are allowed to begin and at
noaioi the final marriage ceremony. Urine is used more generally to bless
•exual offenders, such as blessing men before they go on a hunt, which is
discussed later. It is interesting that, in Pokot, saliva is most commonly
used to bless, and to note that urine and saliva are both bodily secretions.

5* It is said by Pokot that, if the shadow of either of two men who have
both had sexual intercourse with the saae girl or woman during one menstrual
cycle, should fall upon the other, one of them may become sick and die.

fcristiany (1951J 287) also mentions this prohibition, adding that the two
in such a relationship should not help each other if one is wounded,
^•cause the touch of the other man's blood may result in death.

Personal communication, J. Iydall.

In a similar context, Sdgerton and Conant (19&4: 414) noted that, if a
is known to ex eed sexual moderation, she can be beaten by older women.
According to Edgerton and Conant (1964), the word kilaaat, something
tly organised, was used in Kuino and Hasol to describe what people

Chapter T. Women's Initiation Rite

This chapter is an examination of the women's initiation rite among the agricultural Pokot. Women's Initiation is the single most important ritual for Pokot women. It is a complex and elaborate ritual, performed around the onset of puberty, which legitimises the change of status from girlhood to womanhood as a prelude to marriage. Amongst the agricultural Pokot, the major purpose of female Initiation is the conferral of the right to exercise procreative sex.

In her detailed analysis of a female initiation rite, Richards states that one can use a number of different approaches when interpreting a complex ceremony (1956: 112). In the analysis which follows, the focus is the manner in which women's Initiation expresses and dramatises the socio-economic roles of women and the relation between the sexes. This is examined from the feminine perspective, looking at the way in which women's initiation is a mechanism of status granting and role assumption, and questioning the extent to which women's initiation can be seen as a way of bringing women's procreative powers under social control. The principal focus, however, is an examination of women's initiation from a female perspective or point of view. The initiation rite is significant because it is the principal way Pokot women as a group socialise Pokot girls into womanhood. As such, it is the most important recurrent articulation by Pokot women of the female perspective. By investigating the initiation rite we examine what Pokot women say women should be.

Sexuality, already discussed as being one of women's main bargaining

is also the focal point of paradoxical themes expressed by women in their Initiation rite. On the one hand, older women teach the initiates the expected code of behaviour, thereby undermining the current social order and

control, while, on the other, women make a statement of their separate solidarity and power, which focuses on the use and control of their sexuality* fbes® two contrasting themes of women's subordination and power, are described . they are portrayed in the events and actions throughout the three month initiation rite, and the significance of women articulating these two contradictory themes is later examined and analysed. The analysis not only Includes the way in which male and female perspectives are voiced and incorporated in the rite, but also how, and to what extent, the female perspective (which can differ from the male perspective) is communicated to the men so as to become validated and acknowledged.

The description and analysis which follow are based on some fifteen initiation ceremonies which I attended and recorded on tape. The tapes were later translated and further questions were asked in a number of extended interviews with Pokot women. (There were also interviews with Pokot men in which I discussed male and female initiation, but these were less frequent.) The statements quoted have been chosen as representative of recurring themes.

T.1. Women's Initiation Rite: A Description

It is up to the individual girl to decide when she wishes to undergo the initiation ordeal. Initiation occurs every year in different neighbourhoods, and is primarily an event involving the women of one neighbourhood, but women of the wider community may also participate. Most girls decide to be initiated around the age of puberty, some just before their first menstruation and others slightly later. Althou[^]i it is an individual decision, and the initiation rite can be held for one girl, it is more common that three to five [^]1-friends of similar age from one community decide to go through [^]tiation together as one group. Before initiation, Pokot girls, or ti[^]in, *&Joy sexual freedom and carry on a number of flirtations with lovers of their [^] choice. However, after initiation, a woman is expected to marry, stay with ** husband of whom her parents have approved, and who has paid the bridewealth

pr -areata have requested. It is only after the completion of initiation that
 is 'allowed' to produce a child. In fact, if a tlpin becomes pregnant
 initiation, she will usually undergo initiation soon after conception,
 Io •hat she becomes a wōman, or mrar, before giving birth.' Pokot sen and woman
 th claim that the primary purpose of female initiation, is to legitimise a
 g^go of status from immature girlhood to mature womanhood. Male initiation
 ^soxif the Pokot involves a similar change of status for men, and there are
 y striking similarities in the sequence of events and content of the two
 eB (summarized in T.2i B).

Women's initiation rite is a two to three month ordeal which involves

2

clitoridotomy, a period of semi-seclusion, and the public presentation of the
 •new' women in the final stages of various coming-out ceremonies. These
 three stages have many features in common with the three stages of separation,
 segregation and Integration, described by Yan Gennep (19^0) In his discussion of
 transition rites* The various stages and events of the initiation rite are
 controlled and organized by the women of one neighbourhood and region. The
 ritual knowledge contained in the initiation rite is cumulative, and it is only
 after women become older that they are allowed to perform, and learn about, the
 complex meanings attached to various secret parts of the rite*

Sotwa (Knife): ^ The Ceremony of Clitoridotomy

Clitoridotomy of girls is a public ceremony, held at the home of one of the
 Vitiates, and attended by a large crowd of men and women from the surrounding
 who gather to enjoy the social occasion. People begin to gather for the
 Vision in the afternoon, singing and dancing through the night until the
 tiates go through clitoridotomy at dawn the following morning. There is a
 deal of excitement and tension in the air, as people watch to see if
 will be able to maintain the required posture^ without showing any
 ° f pain when she sits on the stone and is quickly cut by Kokoaelkong^ (a
 jpwuar woman in the community who is known to be professional in performing
 the
 ^•Kration of clitoridotomy).

Kotoelkcng, the Initiates, and their mothers and fathers, are easily distinguished from the rest of the crowd because of the special ornaments they

Around 5.00 a.m. a group of older women and the initiates gather in a ~~text~~ separating themselves from the rest of the people attending the ceremony. Packed closely together in the confines of the small hut, women sit swaying gently to the slow melody 'songs of dawn'. Women sing the refrain while one of the older women leads the songs with impromptu verses referring to the individual histories of the initiates, and the ordeal they *^ri About to go through*

Each song is different and they vary greatly depending on who is leading or calling the song. However, there are a few major themes which recur frequently in the 'songs of dawn'. Probably the most prevalent theme expressed, is that the girls should withstand the operation bravely so that they do not bring shame to themselves and their families. The leader makes constant references to the fact that the girl should "protect" her family and refers to both the initiate's father and patrilineage, and to her mother. For example, she usually mentions by name the initiate's name, her brothers and her father: 'How look at that daughter of Kapuntua'. She also makes references to her mother: "Look at the tenda of your mother, don't neglect it" alluding to the fact that the initiate's mother cannot wear the traditional ritual tenda (head-band) if her daughter cries out or flinches during the public excision.

There are repeated warnings about the harsh pain caused by the quick slash of the knife. The emphasis women put on the difficulty of withstanding the ordeal can be seen as a way of testing the girl's individual willpower and determination to go through with the rite. The songs stress that girls have to go through this alone and have the "strength of heart" to do so - no one can help them the moment the public operation of olitoridotcoy takes place: 'to

"cut needs heart from you alone". The girls are also constantly reminded of the fact that all the other women present have managed to withstand the

*^rtiaa bravely: "at the women sitting under the tree ... you must take

irt like others here taken heart". Another theme women tend to sing about
b*

tbef« days, is that the girls should not be lured astray by the temptations of
Oiteri*1 goods, and the different way of life in the townships and road oespe
jbloh now exist throughout the Pokot area: "I say Chupa [girl's name] do not
proud of your whistlo. Do not be proud of your blanket." Women see
godemizstion ** * threat to their oontrol over the young girls snd the
^additional values which they are trying to teach them.

Just as the first rays of light are beginning to appear on the horison the
final preparations for olitoridoto^y are made. Older wtmen place a number of
:arge flat stones in a row outside the hut, while men force the exrowd back with
gticks to olear an area round the stones. In the hut the women sing their
last songs about the fact that dawn has arrived, using special words and phrases
particular to women's initiation. During these songs the initiate whose house
the ceremony is being held at, oarries some grass rolled in a large skin (which
ihe will sleep on during her seclusion period) in snd out of the house four
tiaes. ^ The moment this is finished the girls undress (except for three
ipoelial ornamental belts), have cold water poured down the front of their
bodies, leave the hut and run to the stones.

it the stones each girl sits with opened legs, head thrown back looking at
the sky, and both arms stretched straight out in the air. It
this moment Kokomelkon^ takes hold of the labia minora, flicks the girl's vagina
*lth her finger, and cuts off the prepuce and part of the labia minora in one or
tro quick slashes. The girl is then allowed to lower her head to the ululation
r* Ipfcomelkoi^ which is the sign that the girl has successfully undergone the

fat ion. Kokonelkcn^ must cut any girl who sits on the stones in the posture
^s Mentioned. Any girl who cries out in pain or tries to run away will be
f^@uled by the crowd, but she will still be out even if people have to hold
down. i girl who cries out during the public operation can never, even as

° lder woman, attend the more secret aspects of the initiation rite, and oases
her seclusion period without any elaborate ceremony on her own.

It frequently happens that girls push their way through the crowds and may go through initiation against their family's wishes. Usually, approximately *plf of* the girls who are out at the ceremony, are girls who run out from the crowd without giving any previous warning, or formally announcing that they will do so. If a girl's friends are initiated she will usually join them even if she is younger than the rest. Initiation is seen by the girls as a way of proving their maturity and gaining social status and respect. It is customary for the girls (around the age of puberty) from each neighbourhood to attend the rotwa of nearby neighbourhoods. If the families of a group of girls from the same neighbourhood have refused to hold rotwa for them, the girls often decide to go through initiation together and all 'run to the stones' when rotwa occurs in a nearby neighbourhood. The family of a girl may not wish her to be initiated for the following reasons: they feel that she is too young to be initiated and will not be able to withstand the pain; that she is too young to marry and they do not wish to lose an important labourer in the household; or simply because they do not have the wealth required to pay for the expenses of the different stages and ceremonies of the initiation rite.

After the last girl has been cut, the older men and women of the crowd begin to sing. The women and mothers of the initiates move towards the men, waving their arms in the air, and bless the fathers and male relations of the initiates by smearing them with milk. This is done a few times, with the initiates later joining in the group of women when they walk towards the men.

The songs mention that the girls have now been cut, should "mind the words and the voice of women" and have honoured their fathers.

As the crowd disperses, the blood spilled by the initiates is covered with ¹¹¹¹ and they are led to a private place in the shade where the old mothers at the outset made by Kokomelkong. Pokot women say that they 'correct' the initiates by taking care that both sides of the labia are cut straight and evenly so that the two sides are able to heal together to form a smooth and even scar.

•oorreotion' la very painful, often involving another one or two minutes of putting parts of the labia majors, minor* end the prepuce and tip oowring the jlitori** The clitoris, more precisely, the shaft of the olitoris, is sot out. fotot women refer to this as a •vein" saying that if the olitoris were out the girl would bleed to death and die. During the seond cutting, the girls are gfoally held down by women and are not ridiculed when they openly express their pain. When the cutting is finally ocspleted, the breast milk of a woman, who feu not lost any ochildren, and who is suckling a female child, is put on the ybund to 'cool* it down* The Juice of a pipi plant is also squeezed on the found.

Groups of girls and wasen then begin their Journey hose, which may be seme three to four miles away if any of the girls have come from different neighbourhoods. On the way hone women begin singing songs particular to voasn's initiation and the seclusion period. The refrain of these songs has a » special ritual language, while the leader of the song centimes to call out phrases referring to the history of a particular girl. The Initiates and most of the women (with the exception of a few older women) do not know the meaning of the songs which gives the songs an esoteric quality. Along their way hose, If the women should meet a woman from their neighbourhood who did not attend the ceremony, they will pretend to beat her as a way of showing that she should hare been an active participant in a ceremony involving one of 'their' girls from the beginning.

When the girl reaches home she and her father (if he was not present at ^e ceremony) are blessed with milk while more initiation scngs are sung (the *** song is also sung at the conclusion of moi (from word oi: ancestor or TOrit), a ceremony done to appease the ancestors in case of sickness, and ^tions that the father can now "open the path - or gate - to let the oows ^ home" aa a sign that all has gone well). The moment the Initiate enters hut she begins her period of seclusion. From then on the hut Itself is ** by womea. The father most find somewhere else to aleep aa he, plus

else that the girl refers to ss father or uaola, cannot see her for the
next two to three Months until she is presented at the public coming-out
ceremony of klixmo.⁷

The Seclusion Period

For the first few days after olitoridoto the girl should lie as still as possible. She lies on a special skin with grass keeping her legs together on the two outside sides of her vaginal lips meat and eventually join together to form a scroth scar. The scar is formed over the shaft of the clitoris (and sometimes over the urethral orifice so that the urine passes underneath the scar) making the vaginal opening slightly smaller than it was before. She should not drink water until her wound has healed, and may not touch any food with her hands (her mother will either feed her or she will pick up her food with a stick). She is now known as a chamerlon, shares her hair, covers her face with ash, and wears a kolika (large skin, made of several goat skins sewn together) which hides or deforms the shape of her body. She is rarely left alone, as women constantly come in and out of the hut to see how she is and make sure she is being fed properly. For the first four nights after olitoridoto all the women of the neighbourhood gather to sing the special ritual songs of seclusion.

On the fourth or fifth day an old woman comes to do lapow (from lapa: to wash). At this time the body and wound of the chamerlon is washed with water which has had certain leaves boiled in it (songowo, manampellon, or moywon depending on the area). After the washing of lapow the chamerlon is strictly forbidden to wash during her seclusion period (if the wound gets infected

the Juice of plpi leaves will be applied). The old woman then measures the chamerlon by spitting chewed moigut root on her hands, and around the

upper part of her body while repeating the words "sweet, sweet, thanks, thanks".. Having completed lapow the chamerlon is allowed to eat with her own hands and go outside without covering her head with her kolika.

B The wounds of the girls heal in approximately two weeks' time (unless the sides are crooked and thus do not join properly, in which case the girls

bar* to be out again). When a girl's wound has healed enough for it not
to split open when she walks, she and the other Initiates go to collect a white
chalk which they air with water and smear over their entire bodies every

10

Journaling. *Tram* this time onwards the ohameri usually stay together as a
group during the day. They sit and talk while wearing the various **ornaments**
acquired during their seclusion period (for example, a rope belt, a kind of
fiddle so they can be heard when they are approaching, etc.), or walk together
tarrying their sltot (particular long branch from a sitet tree which the
ohameri smear white) to wave at passers-by who should give them some small
token.

Throughout their seclusion period oheneri are considered to be polluted or
unclean, but they are considered to be most 'dangerous' before their wound has
healed, at which time they are restricted by the same taboos as a woman during
menstruation or one who has just given birth. Some of these restrictions are
lifted later (for example, after lapow and after the wound heals) and the
chaseri help with a few of the more simple domestic tasks, such as gathering

4

firewood, or grinding and cooking maize. There are also many restrictions
which are particular to a ohenerion. For example she must use her sltot branch
to make sure she does not cause things to be polluted by her presence (for
example, she must hit the side of the hut door with her sltot four times before
entering or leaves, and before crossing a river or an irrigation canal when
she hits the water in the same manner). There are also restrictions which not
only reflect the idea that she is polluted, but that she is neither a girl nor
a woman but in an in-between state, or what Turner (1974) refers to as a
'liminal' stage (for example, she should only whisper, not wear shoes, not
meet men, etc.). Her special relationship with women and other chaseri is
acted by the fact that she can greet them, but in a specific ritualised way
using her sitet branch.

During seclusion girls are not allowed to have any sexual relations and

sleep in their tot; a specially made narrow bed which is sealed off from

fe, t of the hut. If a girl has a aexoaal relation during her seolusioit led, people say that she will hare to face similar oonsequences to a girl who f< ffrd olitoridotomy. In the latter phase of the seclusion period ohemerl to the special ornaments required for klpuno (for example, the oven ^ down the back of the girl, the til, headband, etc.), tho traditional necklace or sanal. After two to three months, towards the end of the plosion period, the women and ochildren of the neighbourhood meet at tho jg^eri houses to sing and practise various songs and dancea, including those g^h are apeoial to klpuno.

Before the eoming-oot ceremonies, the family of each ohemerl must provide one goat plus twenty kilos of maiso for the ceremony of lapan (pans cocked grain - the staple food of the Pokot diet) • Lapan is basically a feast for the women of the neighbourhood, in which the meat and maise is divided trenly amongst the women and given as a payment to all those who participate in tht various stages of the Initiation rite* Because it is a women's ceremony, in are given the less desirable parts of the goat (for example, tho goat's head, intestines, etc.) which are usually given to women in the many ceremonies eonducted by men. The men do not actually participate in the songs and activities of lapan but are called to come and eat their food in a secluded •Pot nearby. The more significant lapan are those done nearer the time^of the ° ° *ig out cermnanies in which, aside from practising the various songs and knoea of kipuno, women also sing a number of 'rude' or 'obscene' songs and about out phrases, deliberately teasing or taunting men about sex.

The first songs sung at lapan are called cherlpko, and are sung with the and chenerl standing in a line facing the other homesteads across the W* while they wave their altot branches in the air. At the end of most of *igs women, but not chemeri, shout various obscenities across the hills to ** *<i. If any aan should ocme near the women at thia time, he will bo chased *** hy a **group** of excited women making nuaerous obscene gestures and remarks, tfcs phrases which are shouted across tho hills are about raaen's own

degirm, sometimes teasing the men that they are not easily satisfied.

of then express that they want or need sex with the clear recognition by **YOB** that they are highly desired because of it. The women explain their behaviour as a way of expressing their excitement that the ohemerl are near to attaining their full sexual and mature status, and women use very similar phrases when boys emerge from their seclusion period during the male initiation rite. Nonetheless, it is a strong contrast to the strict roles of obedience emphasised throughout the rite (examples of the shouts and songs are given on page 111).

Towards the end of all lapan the special songs and dances of klpuno are practised, and the chemeri are advised or instructed by the women on how they are expected to behave as wives and mothers. The more detailed instruction takes place at different times in different neighbourhoods, but always begins with a review of the individual history and personality of each chemerlon by her mother, before the group of neighbourhood women begin shouting their advice. It is a particularly painful time, when each ohemerion is made to kneel with her head buried in her hands while the women whip her (with their sitot branches) and rave about the various mistakes she had made and how she must correct them. As the tension mounts and more beer is drunk,¹¹ women begin to contradict each other, and the 'harshness' they display often depicts their own apprehension about the rules they themselves have been made to follow (for examples see

There is also the recognition that soon after this the chemerlon leave her house; after being brought up and working closely with her mother every day, the time of separation between mother and daughter is emotional and difficult.

* The Coming-out Ceremonies

Just before klpuno all the chemeri are taken to the river to perform a private ceremony. Before reaching the river, the old mothers check the scars of the ohemerl to make sure that none of them has had relations during their seclusion period. The rituals which take place

^ :

if I

the river are led by an older mother, whose first-born is a girl and who has lost any children.

The ohemeri are led to a particular pool of still water in the river which has been used by the women of the neighbourhood for many generations. In this I the leader hits the water with her altot branch, with each Phaserion following what she does in turn (the girls follow the order of their fathers' group - the father of the first girl belonging to the eldest age group and so on)* Women say that after each chemerion hits the water a rainbow should appear (probably caused by the spray after hitting the water). The jinboa is said to be the wife of the rain god who should show her approval to each chemerion. If the women see a rainbow they do a abort blessing to give thanks, and ululate to indicate their success.

In a slightly more shallow place in the river, each chemerion must follow the leader by placing one iron bead and some ghee in the water. The movement of the bead and ghee is said to indicate the future health and childbearing capacities of each of the initiates. For example, it is said that if the bead does not lie still on the river basin, it means the girl will probably be barren, or if the ghee becomes stringy and floats downstream, she will become a rlwoi ~~oan~~ having difficult breech births, and so on. A few special songs are sung at this time which indicate that the ohemeri have brought their beads to their 'other' and 'mixed' them with "the others of the past". Stories differ as to what actually lives in the water. Most women say it is the wife of the rain god; but other women have told me that it is the, wife of an ancestral spirit (representing all ancestors rather than any particular

Whichever, all women recognise it as a powerful spiritual force which ~~kwu~~ itself and received the beads of Initiates for many generations.

After completing these events, the chemerion are allowed to wash their bodies with water for the first time since the beginning of their seclusion period.

Yemen's perception of their reproductive powers is cloaked in the Epilation rite, but it is nonetheless evident that they conceive of it as

nothing related to the supernatural - beyond themselves and their society.

There are a number of taboos and references concerning water during WOMEN'S initiation, and it is significant that most women say they wait for the appearance of the wife of the rain god at this very secret stage of the rite

have a special relationship and particular control over the rain,¹² and fertility is sometimes associated with rain and the fertility of the land. The simplest example of this is that, if the position of the stars Kara and Venus is unfavourable to the Pokot that there will be no rain,¹³ the women of the neighbourhood must go into the hills and sing their secret initiation songs to make it rain. If they do not, it is hollered that women will not bear children successfully and the young children will die.

After the ohemerl have washed, the final preparations for kipuno begin. The actual songs and events of kipuno are similar in most areas, although the order in which they are performed varies. Usually, after coming from the river, the Initiates go to their own huts where they collect their ornaments and are blessed (in a way similar to when they returned from the initiation ceremony). All the new ornaments must also be blessed by members of the community before the initiates can put them on for the first time. The ornaments are placed on a large cow skin and shaken by old men and women (who have not lost any children) as they sing, 'poro, poro, poro, four'. The word Egro is usually only used by older men who have completed the last phase of their age set ceremony. In most cases men say "poro (or porokok) four" as a curse to chase away any ill effects or harm which may be caused by the ancestors or spirits (see p.

Most of the girls are given a new kolika to wear for the final coming-out ceremony. The older women mark these skins using white chalk for the

who are pregnant, and red earth for the girls who are not.¹⁴ Because of the social ideal that girls should not get pregnant before they are married and married, a distinction is made between the ohemerl who are and who are not pregnant. However, other than marking the skins in different

loari, the oheneri are all treated the same throughout the Initiation ^{^o<}eedings. Pokot always place far more importance on the fact that a girl pgt not give birth before she is initiated, rather than that she should not become pregnant. The women claim that the number of lines they draw on an **Initiate's** ko[^]fr represents the number of children she will have, and any circle which is drawn represents a vagina, "the house of women". A circle is also drawn on the stone which the Initiates sit on when their vaginas are **checked** for the last time to make sure that they have not had sexual intercourse. **Since** women sit on stones to give birth, the circle can be seen as another sign relating to the initiates' ability to give birth to children.

After all the ornaments have been blessed and named the Initiates are finally allowed to put them on. They oil their bodies and beautify themselves before going to the public dance area, where they will meet a large crowd of people and many of their **relations**, whom they have not seen since the beginning of their seclusion period. **It** the public dance special postures and steps are adopted to the fast rhythm of the kijuno songs •

A number of songs are sung which mention various events that have occurred in the area; the names of the different places the girls have come from; the names of their fathers whom they have honoured by completing the initiation rite successfully; and so on. The poro song is usually sung last, and afterwards the initiates run to the nearest tree having white sap (simotwo or gghotwo tree) and spear it with their aendlt sticks (special carved sticks which are used at k[±]puno and kept by the women until they marry). The Initiates then lick the sap or smear it on their chests (symbolically drinking the 'sweat' of the tree). They then kneel down burying their faces in their hands and each waits for a young boy to promise her a gift of stock as if he were her husband. These promises are not taken seriously, but it is

interesting to note that, at the **initiation**, a young girl does the same to an Initiated man (the girls actually call the young men their "wives" and ^{l ^ 1} them up¹ by **providing** than a gift of steak, a complete reversal of roles,

jjffjusc further in Section V. a; fi).

The initiates continue to wear their large skins and special ornaments
^U the private and secret ceremony of sewo takes place, four days after the
l^pletion of kipuno. During these four days the initiates go to the
^esteads of their fathers and their fathers' and mothers' brothers. All of
{b#se relations are expected to bless the initiate by pouring milk on her
forehead, and must promise her stock which she can collect after she has been
married for a few years (usually after she has given birth to her first child).

In order to attend the very last ceremony of sewo, the family of each
Initiate must provide a small goat and some maize as a payment to the older
man who conducts the ceremony. Of all the stages of initiation, women are
most secretive about sewo. The most important part of sewo can only be
performed by women whose last born children have given birth. This was used
as a rationale for not letting me attend the ceremony, but some of my close
women friends were eventually willing to give me a detailed account of what
sewo involved. According to these women, most of the songs are the same songs
which have been sung during the seclusion period. (Only once have I been
given an account of a song particular to sewo: in this song the various
household tools are mentioned as the initiates are made to act out some of the
household tasks they will be expected to perform as married women.) At sewo,
the initiates are once again advised or judged by the women of the neighbour-
hood. The procedure and advice given is very similar to that of lapan, except
that the initiates who are known to be disobedient are treated more harshly
than before, with the women beating their bare backs as they kneel in front of
them.

I have heard a number of different versions as to what happens during the
>
secret part of sewo, when the old grandmothers go to a secluded spot with
^t initiates. The fact that the initiates must carry metal beads and uncover
a particular spot, remains clear throughout all the accounts. It
that each initiate and her leader (the same woman who led the ceremony)

took" place at the river), must bury two metal beads under atones in a pftloilar spot. It la frosi the ssae spot that the leader than uncovers two jitsl^{b e A d B} belonging to the girls who were last Initiated In the neighbourhood. fb#st two beada are given to women (possibly the Bothers whose daughters vert vitiated the previous year) snd they wear then on their speolal ritual belts.

women say that the inltlatea are Bade to take an oath at this apofe promising to "follow the words of wtmen and not reveal any of their aeorete". fhether the Initiates are sude to take the oath or not, there ia an important o»bolio bond established between waaen of one neighbourhood;bj burying new bssds and uncovering old beada of the inltlatea over the years.

After the secret part of sewo fa few nore songs are sung and the 'new' vcaen then go to their homes to destroy their tot bed which they have slept in for the past few aonths. In many oases bridewealth negotiations have been oopleted during the initiate's seolnsion period, snd the husband oernes to take his bride heme the night sewo is finished. It la the Pokot ideal that a newly initiated woman goes to her husband's home wearing all the speolal ornaments of Kmno and sewo. If she does, it signifies to the rest of the community that the husband of the 'new' woman is the first who will have sexual intercourse »ith her, therAy splitting the scar tissue for the first time and making it bleed.

Male Perspective: Initiation as a Mechanism of Social Control

Pokot men snd woaen give a number of different reasons when they are asked aoaen'a initiation is performed. Although women usually give far more bailed answers than men (who confess to knowing little about a •women's °tfeaony");'both men and women regard women'a initiation as an important part overall ritual snd soocial framework of Pokot society. Thda section ^ ^ • s the two most oonon ezplanations given by Pokot men and woman when • j * Uaouss the purpose of women* s initiation: 1) that initiation gives wocon I* to bear ohlldren and 2) that women initiate girls because men

boys. Those statements will be analysed in regard to the place of women's initiation within the dominant social order, and the broader question of whether - or to what extent - men impose their control over women's initiation.

« Social Control of Women's Procreative Powers

The most important consequence of women's initiation rite is to legitimise a woman's right to have children. The ritual of women's initiation can be seen as the first social recognition of, and attempt to control, women's procreative powers. Although girls can have sexual intercourse (and may become pregnant) before initiation, the Pokot do not recognise or 'allow' the girls to give birth until they have become socially mature women. As discussed in Chapter 17, Pokot men perceive the physical nature of woman as something 'dangerous': articulating the view that women are polluted because of their childbearing capacity, while at the same time recognising this capacity as the power to create and something beyond their control. Seen as part of the dominant social order, the complex initiation ritual is a way of bringing the 'natural power' of women into the sphere of social control*

La Fontaine reports (1972), biological changes are often marked by elaborate rites de passage, rituals which dramatise not only a physical change but also a change in social status. Because women's initiation is performed before the time a girl reaches puberty, the same could be said about the Pokot. However, the emphasis in Pokot is placed on granting a girl mature status, rather than on the biological change she may have recently gone through. For example, like the case in Gusli (Koloski: 1967), where an elaborate female initiation ritual takes place before a girl reaches puberty, most Pokot girls are initiated before the onset of menstruation. Also, unlike in Gusli, if a Pokot girl becomes pregnant before initiation, it is not considered to be a heinous offence.

imposes social ritual on a biological change which has already occurred, thereby redefining the biological change as a cultural phenomenon*

After initiation a girl becomes a crar or young woman. At this point she

the distinct ornament* worn by other women and beoaaea Integrated Into a .fooyal group. **la** a mrar,**ah**e has different social responsibilities which ^oaa • °r° acutely defined when **the** moves to her husband's neighbourhood and the wife of a person. In Pokot, when a girl attains full ft00J*1 status, she also attains full serual status in that she is now 'allowed' ^ give birth. Granting a girl mature social status, which 'allows' her to glfe birth, is nonetheless olosely linked to the biological fact that she ham t bt00Ba able to do so. The longer the interim between puberty and initiation, the greater the risk of pregnancy. Although it runs sgainst the social 'ideal'. g surprising number of girls are pregnant when initiated: from my records on % *IJ Ji^JL Jcei A-W <jl// 3C, CC>1mY-A.,'ci Jo ik^i lc<jDWcti b^McCtr>ldfc>./Sa<* initiation oersmonies 21% of the girls initiated were pregnant^ With **tills** in ain^let us examine the part women's initiation plays in bringing women's prooreatire powers under social control. More specifically, looking at the quoftion to what extent Pokot wcmen's initiation oan be seen as a mechanism by which men ensure their control over women.

From the description of the initiation rite (pp./33- '**>), it is clear that ian do not play any direct role in women's Initiation except at the public ceremonies, when the girls go through olitoridotomy, snd at the coming-out ceremonies where they are presented to the community. However, men are imtichned throughout the ceremonies: especially in the more private secret cereaonies by old women, who continually stress the fact that the girls should the dominant social rules, emphasising, in particular, that each Initiate honour her father and obey her hushand and the rules of her affinal home. * *i3t be remembered that initiation is not only a ire-requisite to childbirth, also to marriage. In many ways initiation and ammdage camot be seen as t* completely separate events. Many women are taken to their husbsad's home •otly after finishing the last stage of initiation. From that night onwards ooupie are considered to be legally married, and little further ritual ^oration takes place until sometime later when noslo is performed, and a a marriage bead la twisted onto her wrist.

It+<i

The night * bride is taken to her husband's home, there are many rituals which are a direct consequence of initiation (for example, a bride would be wearing all her ritual ornaments of kipiino; some of these ornaments returned to her mother with a gift of beer from her husband a few days after marriage; the morning after she has had sex with her husband she wears a ceremonial headband, etc.)« However, a more important consequence of initiation is that the husband *should' be the first person to have sexual intercourse with the newly initiated woman, thereby being the first to perform clitoridotomy and make it bleed. The scar could be seen as symbolically recreating a hymen, thus asking the woman into an unspoiled virgin for her husband, by symbolically obliterating any previous sexual relationship she had before marriage. By having sexual intercourse with her for the 'first' time, it could be said that the husband is the first to initiate her procreative life, thereby establishing his control over it. A similar principle is discussed by La Fontaine (1972), when she writes about the importance of defloration among the Gisu. Although Gisu women do not go through initiation or clitoridotomy, La Fontaine discusses defloration as an aspect of the final stage accompanying the rituals marking their progress from girlhood to womanhood.

Let us take a closer look at the ethnographic data, to see to what extent it supports the idea that initiation creates a symbolic situation, allowing men to exert their control over women's sexuality and fertility. We have seen that there is continual emphasis put on the rule that a girl should not have sexual intercourse during her seclusion period, and if she does she will face harsh consequences. The night a woman has sexual intercourse with her husband for the first time, is distinguished as being an important event, because, before agreeing to do so, a woman demands a large gift of stock and a headband (although other gifts are promised to women when they are brought to their

husband's home, they have most control over the stock given to them (Agreeing to have sexual intercourse). *iff* however, other than this, there no

,001*1 recognition or ritual elaboration of the actual splitting of the
 of Xitorid to y soar. Nonetheless, it is significant that both Pokot men and
 women articulate the idea, that the first act of sexual intercourse between a
 husband and his wife, endorses the marital relationship which is confirmed
 through the transaction of stock. They also say that a woman should only have
 sexual intercourse with her future husband after bridewealth transactions have
 been completed: the ideal being that this occurs just after initiation and the
 husband is the first to split the woman's olitorid to y soar. Whenever a
 Pokot woman spoke to me about the first sexual act of marriage, she would
 often articulate the association between the 'giving of her vagina' and
 the payment of stock "for herself and her children", or emphasise the
 importance of a man having paid bridewealth, thus being her legal husband. In
 an example of the latter was revealed in a taped discussion I had with Koko-
 Kerlonger about olitorid to y x "When they put a child, beer comes - beer for a
 wife (i.e. beer brought during bridewealth negotiations). Her parents have
 agreed, and he (the husband) will come to take her to his home. He has
 brought beer, and when he takes her to his home she is 'without'; she has not
 played sex. Her soar is completely black. It will be time to go to bed.
 Then 'tat' comes the blood, 'tatatatat', the penis has entered inside."

Some Pokot say that a woman does not have the right to receive stock if
 she has had sexual relations in the interim between initiation and marriage,
 but I have many case examples showing that women do actually receive stock.
 Whether a woman 'should', or actually does, receive stock seems to vary from one
 area to another, and also depends on the individual circumstances of the marriage.

Bridewealth negotiations are not settled for a long time after a woman has
 completed initiation, the likelihood that she will have had sexual intercourse
 before she is married is far greater). Other than this, I have not heard of
 harsh

consequences which might occur if the husband is not the first to have
 sexual intercourse with a woman after initiation.

This is in contrast to La Fontaine's material on the Gisu, where she writes

Upon deflowering his bride a man will shout out to an awaiting crowd: or
I S*¹ does not prove to be a virgin, the man has the right to divorce her.
Nevertheless, although it is not held to be of the utmost importance, there is
evidence in the Pokot material to support the idea that a husband
should be the first man to have sexual intercourse with a woman after
initiation. The breaking of the clitoridotomy scar could thus be interpreted
as a diabolical claim of a man over his wife who, from then on, should only produce
children for his patrilineage.

To carry out a valid comparison with La Fontaine's material one has to
take her argument as a whole and make the distinction between defloration of
a young virgin and 'symbolic defloration' of a woman after clitoridotomy and
initiation. La Fontaine argues that men demonstrate their control over women
through defloration: men, and culture, control the bleeding of women as
opposed to the uncontrolled or natural bleeding which occurs at childbirth and
menstruation. La Fontaine explains that the three stages - menstruation,
defloration, and childbirth - are all ritual events but defloration is the most
ritually elaborate and regarded as being the most important.

As we have seen, splitting the scar of clitoridotomy is not ritually
elaborate in Pokot. Also the Pokot do not view it as being the most important
part of initiation and marriage, although the first sexual act does, in a
certain way, confirm the marital relationship, and the social ideal is that a man
should have a woman's scar at this time. Thus, there is enough evidence to support
the idea of 'symbolic defloration'; an endorsement of male control over female
sexuality and fertility. However, it must be remembered that, although a man
should not deflower his bride by making her clitoridotomy scar bleed,
it

itself was made by women as part of their own 'women's ritual'.

* If clitoridotomy was done solely to ensure male control over female
sexuality and fertility, one would have thought that there would be less

incidence of girls who become pregnant before initiation, and possibly a greater

emphasis on initiating girls before they reach puberty (as among the Gail),

pokot women view their own sexuality and childbearing capacities as a source of power; a concept which they express amongst themselves and in their initiation rite (discussed in detail in section 5.5). Although men may use menstruation and childbirth as a rationale for female subordination, they nevertheless remain in awe of women's 'natural' powers, and accept that women possess more understanding and control (in certain respects) over their sexuality and reproductive capacities than they do. This is discussed in Chapter 17, where childbirth is controlled primarily by women, from the necessary cutting at birth to enlarge the vaginal opening, to the ritual aspects of blessing and purification. If we say that men impose their control over women the first night of marriage, then we must also say that women take back their control over women when they give birth to their first child.

From the above analysis, it is clear that there is no single or straightforward answer to the original question regarding the extent to which men impose their control over women's initiation. Women's initiation is one way in which women's procreative powers are brought under social control. Although women's initiation is strongly influenced by social roots and 'male' expectations, the initiation rite itself is certainly not controlled by men. Because of this, social control of women's procreative powers cannot be attributed solely to men, but must include a male and female framework. In Pokot, both men and women impose their own perceptions of 'culture' on their own sexes, and each other through their individual initiation rites. This

is justly summed up by Pokot men and women in a commonly expressed purpose for performing women's initiation, "women initiate girls because men initiate boys".

Aspects of Male Initiation in Relation to Female Initiation

Both male and female initiation are equally elaborate in ritual detail and follow a similar pattern and sequence of events. Although the details of the songs and activities may differ, boys are circumcised, go through a two to three-month seclusion period (staying together in one hut rather than in

Individual homes), and afterwards perform the oomlng-cot ocremonies of

» klpuno, and finally the last and private ceremony of sewo. Like women, make sure that the secrets of their initiation rites are not revealed to uninitiated, in this case women and children.

The main difference between the two initiation rites is timings whereas female initiation takes place each year in different neighbourhoods, male initiation occurs approximately once every three to four years in the same area, to different neighbourhoods from east to west throughout the Pokot region. Usually a large number of boys are initiated together in one group (ranging from 20 to 100 including boys from nearby neighbourhoods), and the ages of the boys range from approximately twelve to twenty years. When a man is initiated he becomes part of the age-set or pun existing at that time. There are at least eight known pun and these are cyclical, with the last pun repeated again only after all members of that age-set have died. A man remains a part of the pun he is initiated into for his entire lifetime, although as he gets older he passes through various age-grades or ranks. A sense of support and mutual obligation, often cemented through stock exchanges, is established between men of the same pun. For men, the hierarchy based on age, and the obligation of age mates is further defined by the age-set system of the Turkana and Karaojong, which the Pokot have interwoven with their own (for further explanation of the age-set system see pp. 10-11 - Oud).

Although the entire process is delayed for boys, and they pass through other age-grades in their lifetime, the result of male initiation is similar to female initiation; after initiation a boy attains mature social and sexual status. Unlike girls, however, it is only after a boy is circumcised that he is allowed to have sexual relations and later marry. Because of this, boys do not enjoy the same sort of sexual freedom which girls do before initiation, and an uncircumcised boy to impregnate a girl or woman is considered a heinous crime and the elders should ensure that the child is aborted. It is interesting that some time after the ritual proceedings of male initiation have

. Appletad (including the secret ceremony of sewo). the newly initiated men
 * go through another ceremony referred to as sukutlon ¹⁵ (before they are
 ^oired to hare aeral intercourse (aukution la held whan the termites fly and
 u at this time that the alders are said to teach tha youths about sexual
 jpteroours*). Ill of this indicates a mora defined attempt by older aen to
 ^trol boys' aaxuality, than there la made by man or woman to oootrol girls'
 jigoality. However, men enjoy considerable aexual freedom in the two to eight
 pX period after they are initiated/and before they are able to obtain tha
 taoissary bridewealth for marriage. Ivan after marriage, a man la not
 jriftricted from carrying on a number of affalra with girla and young unmarried
 lfj<ru This la in strong contrast to women, who are married soon after
 initiation sad are then expeoted to remain aamally faithful to their husband*.
 Rkt women are, in fact, expected to mature and take on family responsibility
 it a much younger age than Pokot mem.

The similarities between male and female initiation are striking, and, by
 uldng a brief comparison of the two rites, it becomes clear why the Pokot
 fcaaaelvea see them as complementary. Taking a close look at what happens in
 te two rites, it is also difficult to define exactly who is following or
 Stating whom and why. Unlike olitoridotemy which takes place in public,
 7 aen are present at the operation of male circumcision, snd although a youth
 ibuid show his bravery and remain still, there are no harsh consequences if he
 ^ches or expresses his pain during the operatic*. After he is circumcised^
 is known as a tiyoa and is considered to be in an unclean state similar to
 Ht of a chemerl. Like ohemerl. people say that tiyos are orua; hazy or
 V but also emphasise the vulnerability of tha country as a whole: "the
 o4 of tiyoa is heavy and brings disease and badness to the country*.
 aimilar to thoe on chemeri restrict the behaviour of tiyoa and are
 > gradually as they paas through various ritual phases; for example,
 cannot eat with their hands until after the oompletion of lanow.
 aen of the neighbourhood build a gpccie.1 hut for their tiyo3 ^called

\Sf

jrftfho which is hidдон in thо bush away from ths sight of women. 1 Ben

neighbourhord always stay in mencho with ths tlyos, but all ths elders and **fathers** of ths initiates gather there to teaoth than the special **songs** and secrets of initiation's veil as to review their individual oharooters/and rfriae them in a similar way to that in which older women advise girls during f^als initiation. is tlyos. the boys are dressed in oloaka and their facea **iff** covered with a veil of ropea which they make themselves. These, **as** well m other special ornaments, are then mneared in red ochre. The rope veil is **especially** important to hide the boys from their mothers and aunts when, after having completed various ritual phases, they are allowed to travel around the oountry during the day .

ilthogh women are excluded from mencho ,they are mentioned in many of the scngs sung by tlyos. and participate In different stages of male initiation, particularly towards the end and at the ocoming-out coramany of kipuno. Tlyos ting every morning and evening and many of their songs include phrases which refer to and praise mothers and womanhood. For example, "Praise ohepkur; daughter of closed or restricted" is said in praise of mothers for having observed taboos such as those during pregnancy and after childbirth. Other phrases Include, "praise korke; women in general", and more specifically, "praise yonya; mothers". Whenever the women hear the tiyos sing (including ceremonies such as kipuno) they respond with ululations which confirm the Praise the tiyos sing; "sons of perseverance" and "sons of scars" both refer the strength and perseverance which women have endured for their sons during tkair own initiation and during childbirth (see also p./3^).

The women of the nelgibourhood participate In male initiation right from atart,when men build the frame of mencho and women cut the grass for the *10Gf. Mothers of tiyos are particularly active participants as they bring ^cked

food to their sons every morning. When a mother bilngs the basket of to an older man waiting near mencho. she can also report on her sen's **V**dividual character^and any instances of ^{ISS}misbehaviour she feels are important

to mention. Although it is possible that men do not always ratify a
other's remarks, it is nonetheless significant that mothers have a formalised
role of participating in the teaching process and advice given to their sons at
initiation, whereas men do not have this concerning their daughters. This is
an overt recognition by men of the importance of women's role as the
socialiser of boys as well as of girls. In this case, a direct link is made
between a woman's role as socialiser with cooked food and thus with the
domestic domain.

The period of giving advice to the boys culminates with the ceremony of
plat; to burn*. At this time the men tell the women of the community that
they will burn their sons' penis and that this ordeal will cause their death.
The man who ritually burns the boys, first walks through the neighbourhood
brandishing poison arrows and screaming before he finally arrives at naccho.
Having thus had their attention attracted, the women gather in a group giving
their varying opinions as to whether or not the men actually burn the tiyoa.
but they all agree that the boys do not actually die in the ordeal. While
discussing the various possibilities, they stand near by and listen to the
confusion of noise coming from mencho, with the sound of men and tiyoa
screaming as arrows supposedly hit the side of the hut wall. After this there
is a heavy silence, when the tiyoa are supposedly dead, and they do not come
back until the following evening when they sing their songs once again. It
is said that if one of the tiyoa dies for a long time then the men will have to
perform mol, and call the women to find out which one of the mothers has
committed adultery while her son was at mencho. In this way, men hold the
women responsible for the well-being of their sons while they are in
exile. It is another example of men imposing their ritual control over
women's sexuality, and it is interesting to note that it is done at a time when
the fathers are away from home at mencho, making the possibility of
adultery that much greater.

Just before the public coming-out ceremony of klpuno the various feasts of

take part, and women are given a portion of the meat in the same way that are given a portion of meat at female initiation. Women's insistence that *th*f* receive their fair share became clear to me in 1977, when the women of the village felt that they had been cheated and, to the surprise of the men, stormed the sacred area of mencho singing rude songs and beating the men with branches, the first direct contact women have with the veiled tiyos is at the singing and dancing on the morning of klpuno. However, mothers do not actually see the faces and bodies of their sons until later in the day. They must first break through a human chain, made by the men of the neighbourhood, to get to their sons who huddled together crouched on the ground, holding their red cloaks tightly over themselves. When a mother has finally found her own son, she dresses him in a new cloak and makes him "beautiful" by smearing him with ghee and decorating him with her necklaces. The initiates are now known as mrar; young women, and after a few dances go to spear a tree with white sap and symbolically lick its "milk". Here they must again wait crouched over until a girl or woman promises them a gift of stock. Men begin shouting at the girls and women to go and "wake up their wives", making the tiyos stand and go in the same way that a husband coaxes his wife to come home. The initiates have four days to go to their mothers, the other wives of their fathers, and their mothers' and fathers' sisters, who must bless them and promise them stock before they complete the final ceremony of sewing.

It is clear that throughout male initiation many references are made to and that women also actively participate in the initiation rite. At times, the references to women and the role they play in male initiation, is a clear articulation by men of their respect of womanhood. For example, the men give to women and mothers in their initiation songs; the fact that women have a recognised right to participate in the advice given to their sons and that fathers and other female relations can bless and promise the initiates stock, which also recognises the rights women have over property.

mx references to women and aspects of their participation are far more ^Jguoua;and the meaning of such actions, as the role reversal at klpuno im ^ to many different interpretations. is a symbolic statement, the role r|forsal condenses a number of different meanings and relationships, some of jblah may be ambiguous or even contradictory. I will explore some of the pgsible interpretations below, but, the fact that newly initiated men become jptB/vivtSjis nonetheless a positive acknowledgement by men of women and lotherhood. Whether ambiguous or clearly articulated, men make a rare public gttmaent of their respect towards women in their initiation rite.

When asked why newly initiated men are dressed as ararfP6kot men and women ggoally answer by saying that it makes the boys beautiful, in the same way that girls are made beautiful in their initiation rite. Lokoripira, however, was more specific: "Everyone becomes a mrar, a chemerlon she is a mrax and even a no he is a mrar. The person who will marry the chemerlon or her father (if there is no prospective groom) will buy the chemerlon beads and make her bmatiful. The tiyosion will be given beads and u« beautiful by his •other and his sister. Since marriage is patrilocal, it is significant that glrla^s future wives, should be decorated by their future husbands, while men, u future husbands^ are decorated by their mothers and sisters. In each case, taia is where the initiate will establish higher marital home. In the case * the tiyos, this can be seen as a symbolic gesture whereby women reclaim their authority over their grown sons, particularly in matters concerning the ^estic domain. It is here that a woman's son, as an initiated man, will *»tually marry and bring his wife, who will then be the woman's daughter-in-

> Although it is usually only mothers who decorate the tiyos it is Wtant to note that sisters may do so as well. They do so as female ^•rs of the natal domestic group who may, whenever necessary, call on the ^ ^ of their brothers.

Ken continually emphasize that women should not have contact with tiyoo they are at mencho, but during the seclusion period men also specifically

i&an that the tiyos hare died. In effect, women ere told that their
 boja hare died, and thej are not allowed to hare oontaot with thee
 they bare become nature men. The first mcment women actually hare
~~Wr~~
 contact with tiyos:is when the women hare managed to break through a
 pⁱ9^r which the men have set up, by defeating the nen in a nook battle. I®
 . mothers, end nore generally woaen, symbolically reclaim their mature
 . frca the secret male world which they are prohibited from entering. To
 ^tste their olaim over their sons^women then decorate them in their «m
 43 then the mothers deorated their sons in the initiation rite at Xatu*
 L1977l they used not only theif own beads but beads belonging to other woë®¹
 jL ^e neighbourhood. This reinforces the interpretation that it ia not os&f
 A, lothers and sisters who reclaim authority over the tiyos, but also wanen
 jjganeral. The fact that women deorate the tiyos in their beads,is a
 pi)olio gesture which confirms that(as mature men^the initiates are now able
 toeariy, and become part of the aociail world which includes both males and
 tales.

It is also significant that tiyos are considered polluted in the same way
 *oheneri. and that the restrictions and taboos concerning both groups are
 to those for women after ohildblrth and during menstruation. Not only
 the pattern of fmnale initiation strongly echo that of childbirth (the
 ities of the two ordeals are discussed further in Section V*3: A), but
 * Pattern of male Initiation does so as well. The biological change in
 i!n is given a 'cultural' significance through female initiation, and for
 51 the most important consequence of becoming socially mature is that they
 to give birth to children. After Initiation a socially mature si*2*
 allowed for the first time to father children. It appears that the
 "ttt&ce of this is further emphisised by the fact that the sequence of
 1 in both aule and female initiation closely resembles that of childbirth*
 * is Interesting that the account given by La Fontaine on G-isu male
 i*ion (1972: 180); is very similar to my data on Pokot. La Fontaine

el, circumcision rituals can be seen as a symbolic oration in £ the Inherent physical power of women" (ibid.). This could also be ^ for the Pokot, especially because newly Initiated men become mrar; women and potential childbearers. However, La Fontaine then goes on to £*t uncontrolled bleeding denotes women's (reproductive) power, while the rolled bleeding by man (i.e. male circumcision) denotes their superior power. This could not be argued for the Pokot given that both male and female circumcision, using La Fontaine's model, would have to be defined as 'socially controlled', which is socially controlled, another possible interpretation of the role reversal^ is to look at it using the idea put forward by H. Strathern (1981); that gender stereotypes are often used to symbolise or talk about other things. In Pokot many of the stereotypes are modelled on the husband-wife relationship. The question this raises is if the control asserted by senior men over initiates can be likened to the control husbands assert over their wives. Not only do tyos become wives after initiation, but they also become wives. It is, however, Swu ^ tell girls and women to "wake up their wives" promising them gifts of . Nonetheless, the husband/wife relationship may be symbolised in the context of male initiation in the following manner: young men are to senior men as wives are to husbands. On the one hand men becoming mrar is a symbolic statement by men of their respect for women. On the other hand, the fact that tyos are also wives, reinstates the dominant male point of view that wives are controlled by and subordinate to men. The hierarchy based on women is further differentiated by age in that senior men have a position of authority over young men.

Women as Officiants

^ considering the extent of male control over female initiation, it is necessary to examine why old women conduct and control the activities and ⁹ female initiation, and have a status of ritual authority over the members of the neighbourhood (see also Section 7.3: B). Of all Pokot

Old women with adult children have the greatest social advantage because of the recognised rights they have over their land and substantial herds of *stock*, as well as their status of respect and authority. In the domestic domain, which allows them to wield power over their sons and daughters-in-law and call on the support of their grown sons when conflicts arise. Old women also tend to be less restless and stay in one honest and neighbourhood. Throughout female initiation, it is the old women who 'teach' the young girls the impacted code of behaviour by emphasising the necessity of upholding male values. During the rite they are the usual spokesmen for male values which they themselves have come to accept as the ideal. At the same time, they also voice a female perspective based on essentially female values (discussed in Section 7.3), which men may at times acknowledge, but never articulate. In this way, old women act as a link between male and female values in the context of female initiation.

It is interesting to examine the authority of older women in the light of the argument put forward by Fortes (1945) that initiation is a critical stage in the developmental cycle of the domestic group. According to Fortes, initiation is the occasion when the domestic group hands over the child it has bred and reared to the total society or wider political-jural domain. For the Pokot, female initiation is usually a prelude to marriage and marks the stage when a woman leaves her parental home and becomes incorporated into her husband's homestead and kin-group. As we have seen in Chapter II, many of the activities of women are confined to the domestic domain and, because they do not have access to stock and wider exchange relationships, they have little recognised authority within the political-jural domain. Therefore, for women themselves, female initiation marks the critical stage when a girl's natal domestic unit hands her over to her husband's domestic unit. In each case she is under the authority of old women: in her natal domestic unit she is under the authority of her own mother, and in her husband's domestic unit she is under the authority of her mother-in-law.

In this respect, the role played by older women in women's initiation rites has a new significance. They are in a position of authority not only as a group but as individuals. In the context of initiating girls into a 'woman's world', older women as a group sever the bonds between mothers and daughters. In addition, they unite young wives with their mothers-in-law. At the same time, as mothers-in-law, individual older women reassert their position of authority over their individual daughters-in-law because of the accepted hierarchy of ritual authority and status based on age (see also Sections 7.3: B and C). Let us now look at how the initiation rite, as a whole, and older women, both as a group and as individuals, 'teach' initiates and young women a female perspective which may differ considerably from the male social ideal.

f.J. Female Perspectives Articulating and Reinforcing the Female Point of View

The female perspective expressed in women's initiation includes the accepted social ideal, as well as a contrary point of view based on female values. Women express a positive pride in their individual sexuality, as in themselves as a group via-A-vis men. For women, the pride they have in their sexuality is seen as a source of power. The way in which women perceive and articulate their individual power, and their collective power, which in many ways is a direct consequence of the bond established between them because of their initiation rite, will be examined in this section. I will take a close look at what women are saying about themselves and their world, and how this relates to their roles in Pokot society.

Clitoridotomy and Childbirth

Throughout women's initiation there are a number of references made to childbirth: the taboos they observe being the same as those observed after childbirth- when the initiates go to the river and their ability to give birth is predicted; the marking of their klpuno skirts which indicates the number of children they will have; and the fact that the leader must be a woman who has lost any children. This can be seen as part of the overall social

Ition and respect given to motherhood and successful childbirth. The
 i. That a woman should give birth to many children (both sons and daughters),
 ^ both aen and wasen, and emphasized in many different ceremonies;
 ^ le, women are blessed to give birth to many children in the marriage
 L& of nosio, at parpara (performed before a woman gives birth to her
 L child), and on other occasions. However, the many references made to
 ^rth in women's initiation, and particularly to the birth of girls, has a
 f(reD and more pertinent significance to women than the wider social Ideal
 ^essful birth.

Women often refer to childbirth when describing the details of
 initiation. This is especially true when they speak of the pain of child-
 hood that of clitoridotomy, most women agreeing that the pain of childbirth
 is greater than that of clitoridotomy. Aside from the fact that they
 i ^rare painful experiences which Pokot women are made to ~~endure~~, there are
 i ^i similarities between the two ordeals* One of the most striking
 . similarities is that the posture and attitude which the girls 'must hold during
 clitoridotomy, is almost the same as the posture Pokot women adopt when giving

At childbirth, an older woman sometimes supports a woman's back as she
 lies on a stone giving birth, but a woman is still expected to withstand the
 pain bravely and be as calm as possible. As we have seen, at childbirth a
 woman goes through stages similar to those of a rite de passage although the
 rituals involved are far less elaborate than at initiation and take a
 ^rttremely short period of time. Like initiation, childbirth is considered
 ^t woman's affair from which men are strictly excluded. Furthermore,
 clitoridotomy at initiation, for at least the first two births a woman is
 r ^in to enlarge the vaginal opening. Whether a woman has been cut or not,
 ^Proximately two to three weeks after childbirth she is considered to be
 ^ and restricted (in similar ways to an initiate during seclusion/until
 P ^ and "stops bleeding". For example, for the first few days after
 k*th a woman should not touch food with her hands, must wear her kolika,

should not see sense. As it does in initiation, the ritual blessing of
wrist is a taboo of the traditional after childbirth, but a woman should still
drink water or handle food until her vaginal discharge and bleeding have

Given the many similarities between the two ordeals, the question arises
whether clitoridotomy can be seen as a test or preparation for the strength
needed during childbirth. By "preparing" a girl for childbirth I am not
saying that the operation of clitoridotomy makes the physical act of childbirth
easier. In fact, most Pokot women will privately say that clitoridotomy
makes childbirth more difficult. For example, when Pokot women speak about
Turkana women (who do not go through any form of circumcision), they envisage
the Turkana give birth easily without any trouble. However, from my own
experience it does not appear that clitoridotomy actually makes childbirth more
difficult, especially since the two cuts made by the midwife during the first
or second birth, heal within a week and prevent the complications which may be
caused by the mother tearing at birth. It is interesting to note that, in
modern hospitals today, it is common medical practice to perform episiotomy at
birth; although the operation is different among the Pokot, both are said to
prevent tearing.

Although when discussing initiation, women do not give direct expression to
the idea that initiation prepares girls for the ordeal of childbirth, the idea
is implicit in the expressed purpose of making a 'girl' into a 'woman', given
that childbearing is the most important role of Pokot women. It would seem
that one of the functions of initiation is to prepare the girls for what is
of them as mature women, by giving them a glimpse or introduction to
life involved. Initiation influences a girl's attitude and prepares her
physically

not only for the physical pain of childbirth, but also the periods
of seclusion just after childbirth and menstruation (and the code of
conduct expected of her as a mature woman. The many associations and
connections between the ritual pattern of clitoridotomy and childbirth reaffirm

Idea. Women expect a change of attitude in girls after initiation and the ritual itself is an important way in which the passage from girlhood to womanhood is brought about.

Another question which arises is why women make specific references to the birth of daughters throughout their initiation rite: the breast milk of a woman suckling a girl, and not one suckling a boy, is squirted on to the wound after the operation; and the woman who leads events at the river is one of the first born is a girl. Having daughters in particular is considered to be important not only by women but by men as well. As one woman said to me, "if a man has many daughters he will become rich (because of the brideprice he receives for them)". However, it is usually women who stress the importance of having daughters rather than men. Mothers and daughters work together closely on a daily basis, and a woman's work load is greatly lessened if she has daughters who can help her do the many subsistence tasks, particularly when she is in a polluted state, such as after childbirth and during menstruation. These relationships are often formed between mothers and daughters, and others often distrust their daughters-in-law; they usually manage to keep at least one married daughter living close by (see also Section III). Lastly, the emphasis on giving birth to daughters can be seen as something particular to women's initiation rite; a simple recognition by women of the fact that without daughters they could not perform their initiation rite.

As we have seen, initiation in a sense prepares girls for mature womanhood, in particular the act of childbirth. Unlike men, women regard childbirth as something positive which strengthens their identity with each other. This attitude, and women's preference of giving birth to girls, is symbolically expressed and reinforced through female initiation. It is significant that the ceremony is essentially the responsibility of older women, who also play an important role in women's initiation. Let us now examine their role in closer

9acrey and Respect for Old Age

fokot women ssy that old wasen make girls into vassen through initiation by
t h e n a b o u t womanhood. One of the many facets of this 'teaching', is
the initiates are shown, for the first time, the various secret songs and
pities particular to women's initiation, thus making them part of a select
pith Its own particular ritual knowledge. Women find value in being
of this select group, in which shared secrets strengthen their Identity
k nob other. Women begin excluding men and younger children from the
it parts of initiation, on the first night before olitoridotonjy, when they
ata themselves as a group and sing the songs of dawn. Women's emphasis
Fjjoreoy continues throughout the seclusion period; for example, singing the
LWil initiation songs the first four nights after clitoridotooy, at the
.rties and instructions of lapan, and so on. The secrecy is, however,
it erident in the later stages of the rite, when the initiates are taken to
river and at sewo.

fcean's solidarity, based on sex, is divided along the lines of ags. Only
know the — ^THng and how to conduct the secret aspects of women's
tion. Old women guard their secrets and only pass their knowledge on to
old women. These secrets focus mainly on aspects of childbirth and
y. over which old women assume a particular control. This group of
fan» who have, or are said to have, special ritual knowledge, have a
tf respected authority in the community as a whole, but expaoially among
Sn.

° U&r example of how old women keep the most important secrets amongst
r ^ i s the fact that only grandmothers, who have at least one grand-
t&f has been initiated ^ an go with the girls at sg*o to bury and
M *al beads. Although the initiates themselves take part in this very
foment, the meaning of what they are told is not revealed to them,
^ iata out (1956: 127-8) that the initiates of Chisungu are not aware
' ^ • ificance or meaning of their initiation rite until later, when, as

older women they perform the ceremony for younger girls. This is true for the Pokot as well, and, as a young initiate, a girl has little or no ritual knowledge, but if she passes the ordeal of clitoridotomy successfully, she is given the chance to learn gradually the details and secrets of the rite. With this accumulated knowledge, she is later able to assert her power over future generations of girls.

A hierarchy based on age is respected by women. In their initiation rites, and it is evident throughout the rite that older women are asserting their power or control over younger girls and women. Women do not form a separate age-set system through their initiation rite, but each group of girls initiated adopts the name of the current male circumcision age-set. A strong identification is formed among women initiated within the same three to four year period (the time period in which a group of boys from one **neighbourhood** is initiated). Like men of the same age-set these women call each other puaendentenyu; friend or age-mate, and, although there are no ritual or social rules governing their relationship, they go through an elaborate greeting whenever they meet and should help each other in times of need. In this way, the close relationship established between Initiates of one neighbourhood (usually girl-friends who have grown up together since childhood), is broadened into an identity with other women (particularly men) throughout the Pokot area. Initiation therefore not only strengthens women's identity with each other, but especially the identity and bond between women of the same age group. The solidarity of age-mates increases as the women get older, and attain the right to assert their ritual authority over girls.

C. Unification of the Women of One Neighbourhood and Region

It is significant that a woman accumulates ritual knowledge by participating in women's initiation in her husband's neighbourhood, rather than her natal neighbourhood. Although the overall ritual pattern of the initiation rite is the same throughout the Pokot area, a number of ritual details, songs and events differ from one community to the next. A newly

^rried woman ia introduced to the details of the initiation rite of her
tuiaband'a neighbourhood for the firat time;when one of the girls *at* that
neighbourhood la initiated, and ower the yeara aha gradually playa a aare
pignifleant role in the oerenemy. Initiation thua playa an Important part in
integrating new wirea into the group of nelabourhood women.

It oan happen that a woman marriea without baring oompleted aewo. This,
however, occura rarely and only under particular circumstances, such as when a
woman elopes Just after kipuno, or If a woman la from a pastoral area where sewo
is not performed.

Among the agricultural
Pokot, a woman must go through sewo before her daughters are initiated. To do
this, a woman must pay the women of her husband'a neighbourhood one goat and
two to three pots of beer. After being shown some of the aecreta of sewo, she
oan then participate more fully in the initiation rites of the neighbourhood
she has married Into.

The fact that through the initiation rite women help to Integrate new
wives Into their husband's neighbourhood^can bo seen in two One is that
women are accepting their position in the patriarchal aystem and giving their
support to it; the other is that women are mi>VHr>g their own statmnet of
solidarity outaide and separate from the patriarchal order. Because the bond
between women of one neighbourhood is atrengthened, due to their Increased
participation in the initiation rite over the years, women are inadvertently
giving support to the social Ideal that a weman should stay with her husband
•ad produce his children.

However, as we have seen in Chapter III, this social ideal is not always
•hat happens in reality. For various reasons Pokot marriage can be extrasely
[• ^stable and it often occurs that a weman runs away from her firat or even her
••oond husband. As such, the neighbourhood in which a woman grows old is not
hacessarily that of her original husband. Various case examples I have
°ollacted, show that older wanan do not limit a woman's participation In the
Vitation rite because she haa had a complex marriage hirtor^. *is l^Z* as

When a woman has completed her *sewo*, she has stayed in the neighbourhood for an extended period of time, she will become fully integrated into the group of neighbourhood women and have the same privileges as any other old woman. In this way, the younger women set for a woman to gain a position of status and ritual authority amongst themselves. This is not in agreement with the accepted social ideal.

One case example of this is Kobarabara, an older woman of the Katuw district who was highly respected for her ritual knowledge. Kobarabara originally married Lolem when he was living in Muino. Then Lolem later became employed in the town of Kapenguria, some 60 miles away, Kobarabara followed him there. But soon after she arrived she was rejected by Lolem because of another woman. Kobarabara stayed in Kapenguria nonetheless, where she eventually met another man and gave birth to his child. Some years later Lolem returned with Kobarabara and her child to Muino, where she and Lolem had another two children. In Muino, Lolem married a second wife, with whom Kobarabara quarrelled. Because of this Kobarabara left with all three of her children and went back to her parental home near Katuw. When her sons had grown up she moved to Katuw, because she had land she could cultivate there which belonged to Lolem and her parents. She has now remained in Katuw for approximately twelve years, where she plays a significant role in the women's initiation ritual.

The unity of the women of one neighbourhood is strengthened through the ritual bond established between them in the more secret parts of the initiation ritual. A ritual link is cemented between the past, present, and future girls and women of one neighbourhood by putting their metal beads in the same spot in the river over the years, and again by burying and uncovering them at *sewo*. As explained in Chapter II, the close bond between women of one neighbourhood has a number of socio-economic consequences and they often act actively in doing some of their daily tasks, forming work groups to farm fields, and so on.

One Important principle in patriarchal societies which works towards maintaining male control is that of separating women from one another through the rules of patrilocality. In Pokot, women go directly against this principle by uniting women from various clans into one group through their Initiation rite. When we speak of the integration of new wives into their husbands' neighbourhood, it is important to remember that older women are integrating new wives into a group of neighbourhood women, a group with its own ritual knowledge, separate and different from *mm*. Nonetheless, the two themes of male and female influence and controllers evident in the above example. On the one hand, older women, in this context mothers-in-law, reassert their power and authority over daughters-in-law and young wives and play out their accepted role in the patriarchal society. On the other hand, the mothers-in-law are uniting with the young wives of the neighbourhood to teach the rules and secrets of womanhood to initiates, or girls.

So far I have examined how women are united through their initiation rite on the basis of sex, age, and area. The bond established between women of one neighbourhood is the most important in forming the basis for collective action. By integrating new wives into their husbands' neighbourhood, women are incidentally supporting the patriarchal system, but they are also uniting as a separate group outside the patriarchal order. Pokot is a patrilineal, patrilocal society in which male networks and alliances exist based on kinship residence. (Given the rules of exogamy, women do not have access to the same type of networks and assist therefore create their own. The most significant way women of one neighbourhood establish their own networks of support and mutual obligation, is through their initiation rite.

One of the ways women make use of the female networks they establish through their Initiation rite, is through tumba naaia which is a collective lament about their sexuality. Women's perception of their sexuality is articulated in *umbj* songs and speeches in their Initiation rite, and this is discussed in the next section.

P Women Expressing their Views about their own Sexuality

In the various 'obscene' shouts and songs of lipan, women express the attitude they have about sex. What women say about their sexuality is another facet of the 'teaching' or learning process which takes place at initiation, although initiates are not actually instructed on how to use, or misuse, their sexuality, the fact that women take great pleasure in announcing that they enjoy sex, and taunting men about their sexual abilities, must influence the attitude of the initiates in some way. It could be said that women are given licence to act in a normally prohibited way because of the ritual situation or context (Gluckman: 1954). But this does not explain the meaning of the songs or gestures, or why women do them.

One of the most repeated phrases shouted across the hills at lapan is simply "Give me a penis" or some variation of this, such as "Give me the penis of a motorcar". These are both examples of women shouting that they want and enjoy sex and prefer to have it as often as possible. Pokot women very much enjoy shouting their remarks across the hills at the men. Many of themselves find their remarks hilarious, and usually break down in laughter when they actually hear them. Women never gave a straightforward answer and often laughed when I asked them about the meaning of their 'obscene' shouts and songs. Their answers were usually only suggestions that the meaning was obvious and inherent to the phrases themselves.

It is significant that women only shout this type of remark as the initiates near the time of kipuno (usually on the evening or morning before kipuno). For women, they are statements of pride that the girls have completed the initiation ordeal successfully and are now 'new' women. As women, the girls are now allowed to enjoy sexual intercourse completely, without being afraid to conceive or restricted by such methods as rotow; psychological birth control. Having become mrar they should now try to conceive children, the time

Pokot women define as being sexually the most pleasurable.

The following is another example of what was shouted across the hills at

^portent factor in reproduction.¹⁷ The above statement by Pokot women of their pride in their sexuality and fertility, also reinforces their identity and solidarity with each other as childbearers.

Women make many other overt references to their sexuality and fertility in their initiation rite. It must also be considered that these references represent a release of sexual tension and frustration (as suggested by Jurgens and Conant: 1964). Perhaps some women suffer sexual frustration because of the many ritual restrictions on their sexuality as married women. However, it must be remembered that women may, and in fact do, transgress these prohibitions in various ways (discussed in detail in Chapter 17). It is possible that the sexual songs and remarks at initiation give expression to some of the sexual antagonism which exists between men and women; women expressing their resentment of the male favoured social laws and marriage regulations which attest to restrict their sexuality by preventing them from freely having extra-marital relations. As such, their expression of antagonism is contained, because it is within a socially recognised ritual context, and cannot, therefore, be seen as an open act of rebellion.

It would seem, however, that the more significant statement women are making is a positive one about their own sexuality. Although women are aware (and might resent the idea) that men try to control their sexuality, through a number of social laws, this does not negate the fact that they also know it is ultimately up to themselves, as women, whether they let them do so or not. Given the many restrictions imposed on women, they are surprisingly free in how they choose to use their sexuality, and it is not unusual for a married woman to have adulterous relationships. As we have seen from the adultery cases considered in Chapter 17, women are aware that they can use their sexuality to disrupt the patriarchal order and cause conflict between men. The awareness and pride women express about their own sexuality and fertility during women's initiation, seems to underwrite this implicit recognition.

The following example of a cheripko song, summarizes women's understanding

of the ambiguities and conflicts involved in their control over their sexuality:

Greetings [sexual intercourse] we are persuading our vagina to be closed.
If it [the vagina] could be put on the face, we could put it in a container.
That thing [the vagina in a container] would be good to exchange for cows
That [wild] thing is in a place which is difficult to get to
It should not be played with
It will wait for father to exchange for cows and property.

In its simplest sense, this song conveys that a cheerick should not have sexual intercourse with anyone other than her future husband, whom her father has approved of and/has paid the agreed-upon amount of bridewealth. At the same time, it also expresses a recognition that men want and need women's "vaginas" for sex and enjoyment, and so that they can produce children. Women know that their sexuality (and ability to bear children), is part of what makes them a valuable resource within the social system. For women, their value is confirmed by the fact that men have to pay bridewealth for them. The song also implies that it is essentially up to the women whether they follow the social rules, and abstain from sexual intercourse with anyone other than their husbands; "we are persuading our vagina to be closed". They reaffirm this idea with the imagery that their sexuality is not like an object; "a vagina in a container", which can be picked up and easily controlled. Instead it is part of themselves as women; "in a place which is difficult to get to", and should

not be played with". In summary, the song expresses women's recognition of the dominant social order, their understanding that their sexuality is something highly desired and necessary to men and the wider social system, and that it is ultimately up to themselves as women to use their sexuality as they see fit.

** Older Women's advice to Girls: Articulating a Woman's Point of View

The instruction given after lapan, is the most obvious time older women teach girls the expected code of behaviour. The privilege of telling the what is expected of them carried women, is very much enjoyed by older

foaen. At first glance, what the older women say seems harsh and absolute. They repeatedly emphasize male social values stressing that the girls must listen to and obey their husbands and fathers. However, women's emotions are »t * peak because of the beer they have drunk, and the intensity of the occasion mounts as the instruction period wears on. Women instruct the girls for at least three hours, and (after approximately one hour, they get carried away, show their personal emotions, and openly contradict each other. In so doing, they often reveal the exact opposite of the social laws which they are meant to be teaching the initiates

The time of instruction becomes a kind of forum in which women vent their feelings and ideas amongst themselves. There is no question that the simplest message or dominant theme throughout the instruction, is to tell the girls what ideally they should do as married women. However, the everyday reality of a woman's life, and the choices and actions she takes as an individual, are frequently far from the social ideal. During the instruction period women often express the actual complexity of their marital situation, times revealing the sources of power and strategies they have as a group and as individuals in difficult marital situations. There is no attempt made to hide the expression of this complexity, although sometimes it is simply implied or hinted at while at other times it is clearly articulated. The range and diversity in what women say and how they say it, leaves a great deal of room for interpretation, not only for the anthropologist, but, more importantly, for the ethnographer themselves. This is interesting in view of the argument made by Richards (1956: 125-9) and La Fontaine (1972: 169), who point out that this type of 'instruction' does not really impart any new information to the initiates, but is done to emphasize what they already know, and make it legitimate. This could also be said about the Pokot instruction. However, for Pokot the statement should be qualified; the instruction given to girls legitimates a Neman's point of view which is far more complex than a simple expression of the social ideal.

The way in which the instructions are conducted is revealing in itself. On the one hand, the girls are made to kneel over in a completely servile or subordinate position so that they listen to what the older women are saying. On the other hand, they are expected to answer the questions which were put to them. Usually they are asked questions towards the end of their individual instruction session and are expected to simply agree with what the women have said. However, if they strongly object to something which the women have said they are expected to explain *why*. Whatever the case, the chaaeri are actually provoked into giving some sort of response, and stand up to the very group of women who are punishing them for their mistakes and making them feel powerless.

This is reinforced by the fact that the girls are expected to remain motionless while kneeling over so the women can beat them with their sticks if they feel it is necessary to do so. However, the beating itself is not straightforward and often results in a test of wills between the women themselves and the individual oheerlon. For example, when one chemerion was keeping particularly quiet, it was suggested that she be beaten and a woman called out to her: "You speak quickly **my** daughter, so you will not be beaten". Another time when a girl showed her weakness, a woman asked, "She is crying, what can I do to her?". Another older woman quickly answered by saying: "Beat her. She till

not defeat us." In this way the women are actually building up a girl's strength and ability to respond and stand up for herself. A girl will probably need both of these qualities later, to be able to cope with the inevitable conflicts in a young marriage.

One of the messages, therefore, that women seem to 'teach' the girls is to avoid conflicts by simply agreeing with their antagonists. This message is further qualified by the way it is conveyed. The qualification is that if the girls do not avoid conflicts they will probably be beaten, and a conflict involving the physical strength of their husbands should be avoided if possible, however, it is interesting that if a chemerion has a valid complaint (against women, and by implication against her future husband), she is encouraged to

tolas this and clearly articulated her reasons. For example, after one of the hāaorion insulted the women and was beaten, the women demanded that she "admit her mistakes". Instead, she complained that her mother had often called her (filly (or stupid)) and had even once encouraged her brother to "appear her", afterwards an argument ensued amongst the women, which revealed that the mother of the ohemerion was often drunk and irresponsible. The final conclusive remark was made by an old grandmother who said: "You take the good words with you. You are now leaving your mother to remain behind with her words, and you go with your own words" •

Another apparent contradiction is the emphasis women put on individual action and behaviour, while at the same time stressing the importance of the solidarity of women as a group. The individual instruction of each chemerion begins with a review of her particular mistakes and behaviour by her own mother. The instruction which then follows by the group of women neighbours^ geared towards the individual personality and past history of each girl. Women thus recognise the individuality of each initiate^ and the fact that (like themselves) each girl will act differently as a married woman. However, it must be remembered that it is the group of women from one neighbourhood who instruct the individual chemeri. Although the women may at times contradict each other, they act as one unified group in stating their position of authority and status over the group of young girls. It is nonetheless interesting, that women may specifically advise girls to act as individuals, and convey the message that • each girl should first assess the situation for herself before she acts. It is only after a careful assessment of the situation • that she has the right to expect the support of others, such as the women in her husband's neighbourhood or her natal family. This is implied in the above example concerning the hāaorion and her drunken mother, but it is also summed up by the warning women repeatedly give to chemeri: "When you reach someone's home [when you are married] there will be many lies. Do not listen to lies."

I have selected the following eight remarks and dialogues because they

^nbody sane of the most repeated instructions given by older women. By
^viewing these in detail they should serve as a summary of the main points I
have raised so far.

1. Mother of a ohemerion (to the other women):

"This is a bad ohemerion, my daughter is really bad. She will
divide someone's home because of her hot temper. I have seen that
since she was a small girl she does not obey me. When she marries
won't she take those words with her? Now she will be away from *my*
arms, what will she do with her badness now? Her husband will just
beat her, right away, quickly Sure, you see that she is crying
and her tears are falling."

(Turning to her daughter) "... What about if your husband annoys you,
without you making a mistake? What will you say *my* daughter? Will
you keep quiet or will you go against your husband?"

The chenerlon: "If I quarrel with my husband I will keep quiet.*"

Mother of ohemerion:

"Really? Look she is talking with rudeness in her throat, she
is really no joke. She said she will quarrel with her husband."

All the women present laughed.

This example reflects most of what I have already discussed above. It
begins with a sharp review by a mother of her daughter's individual personality.
The mother is then very explicit about what aspects of the girl's character
will cause conflict in her marriage and may hinder its success. This is not
only important as an example of how women recognise the individuality of each
girl, but also because the idea is expressed that a girl actually can "divide
someone's home". Although the mother is telling her daughter to curtail her
"hot temper", she is also implying that it is a tool her daughter might use to
disrupt her marriage, and that it is ultimately up to her daughter whether she
chooses to behave well or not.

The example also reveals how women, particularly mothers, openly display
their emotions. Here, the mother publicly laments the loss of her daughter
saying, "now she will be away from *my* arms ...". She then goes on to
question whether her son-in-law will be able to cope with her daughter in the
way that she has. Later on, the ohemerion was actually beaten by the
but as a symbolic gesture for it was hardly necessary since the mother

bad openly warned her daughter that if she misbehaved she would be beaten by her husband. As such, it is interesting that the Bother went on deliberately to provoke her daughter by asking her what she would do if her husband annoyed her, even if she had made no mistake. Again, it is important in the context of the instructions because an older woman has articulated a situation which should not occur, but does, and is a common cause of antagonism in Pokot marriages. The ohamerion answered the provocation in the way she was supposed to; by saying that she would keep quiet and not quarrel with her husband. But the mother simply did not believe her, and dismissed her reply by saying that her daughter was trying to deceive the women (probably in the same way she would later deceive her husband), and that her daughter actually meant the exact opposite of what she had said. Seeing the double twist made by the mother, the other women simply laughed.

2. The mother of the ohemerion:

"Someone has brought beer [for bridewealth negotiations] and you should go with him. Is there anyone else you might go with? Obey your father and Lckor [the girl's uncle who has helped in the bridewealth negotiations]. Tes, I have said go, then you must obey and go."

This is interesting because it embodies the two themes of male and female influence and control. In regard to bridewealth negotiations in particular, I have already pointed out in Chapter III that a mother has a great deal of influence in either persuading her daughter to marry and stay with a certain man, or in secretly helping her to get out of a proposed marriage. It is clear that women have substantial influence and power in bridewealth negotiations even though men would never admit this, and it is significant that women make a point of expressing this amongst themselves. Influencing their children and whom they will marry is definitely a power women have and recognize as theirs. In another more explicit example a mother told the group of women advising her daughter, "I refused to let that man marry my

daughter because there was no food [in his homestead]".

As example number 2 illustrates, most of the advice women give to

Initiates expresses and reinforces male values. At the same time the example shows how women make a deliberate distinction between what they, *s women, expect the initiates to do and what is expected of them by men. Sometimes these are one and the same, and older women are acting as spokesmen for male values. However, this is not always the case, and sometimes the instructions to men give depict female values (such as their control in bridewealth negotiations) which may be in opposition to, or unrecognised by, men.

3. do not cry, you speak out. You refuse because you do not want the man to marry you, is that not what you said? If you marry someone follow the rules of that home. If you have been told to do something do it, do not refuse. If you have been told to look after the farm, obey. And if you want permission to visit your father you can ask, but if he refuses then stay home. Obey the person whom you marry.*

This is a clear example of an older woman telling an initiate to stay with and obey her husband. However, many of the things she emphasizes which the initiate 'should' do, are primary causes of conflict and tension in Pokot marriages: that women run away with their lovers and do not necessarily stay with the man they are supposed to marry (it is interesting that in this particular case, the older woman points out to the initiate that all the women know that she dislikes the man she is supposed to marry, an example of how women's gossip can play an important part in the affairs of the community); that women refuse to obey their husbands and can make their domestic situation intolerable; that they often run back to their parental home playing off their parents' loyalty against their husbands', adding to the tension which may already exist between the two. Nonetheless, it is significant that women articulate in such detail the recognized code of behaviour and social ideal. Older women in particular, have come to accept these values as ideal, realizing, through their own experience that it can be to advantage of themselves and their children if they stay married and work their husbands rather than against them.

"What will you tell the old woman of someone, so that you replace that home? [Asking how the chemerion will treat her mother-in-law given that if she stays with her husband she will eventually take

over her Mother-in-law¹ a position when she dies.] Will you cook for the mother of your husband and keep her?"

When a woman marries, she will have to work closely with her mother-in-law, who remains in a position of authority in her household until she dies, probably the main reason why women find it necessary to tell the initiates to care for and respect their future mothers-in-law, is because the relationship between mother and daughter-in-law is often fraught with conflict (see Chapter III: 1. G (1)). However, the broader implication of women advising initiates to respect their mothers-in-law, is that it reinstates their authority over younger girls, and once again points out that the girls must not only obey and respect their husbands, but also their mothers-in-law and the older women of the neighbourhood.

5. "When you marry someone and you quarrel with your husband, you just keep quiet and count the number of mistakes, and if he has beaten you without reason bring that story home. Then tell out that you have been told this and this, and it must be true.*"

In this example a woman is pointing out to an initiate that it is within her recognized rights to run back to her parental home if her husband treats her unjustly. The old woman here stresses that a married woman should not run back to her parental home, unless she comes back with a "true" story of how her husband has badly mistreated her several times. In reality, however, when a daughter returns to her parental home the story she tells is weighed against that of her husband, and the actions her parents take are more likely to be influenced by the relationship they have with their son-in-law, than by the validity and content of their daughter's story. Women often run back to their parental homes simply because they do not like their husbands, rather than because they have been mistreated.

This is another example in which a woman explicitly states that husbands often mistreat their wives, and that wives have the right, and power, to take action against them. This same idea is reinforced by the fact that women tell their initiates (usually at sunset) to run back to their parental homes on the fourth day of their marriage, both in order to report on the conduct of their

husband and his family and to males sura whether "a man is really searching for a wife or will just try without" (that is, that the man is sincere in his Intention of staying married to that particular woman). In a broader sense, these statements imply that women recognise that if men abuse the social rules (for example, if they mistreat their wives and/or do not fulfil their obligations to their afflinea), this gives women a greater chance to manoeuvre within the system and use the various recognised and unrecognized alternatives open to them to their advantage.

6. •You will get a husband who is big. When they slaughter a goat, they will divide the meat evenly. When they bring maize or millet [from the highlands] they will pour it out and divide it evenly. And then he will tell you to go [to the highlands] and get more maize, and you will answer, why should I go and get more maize when I can eat it in another home."

Reply by another woman: "Do not follow that advice. You have talked too much. What is the matter with you, are you drunk?"

This example shows how women openly contradict each other during the instruction period. Drunkenness and the excitement of the occasion are both important aspects of the ritual procedures, although women may sometimes use them as excuses for voicing their contradictory opinions. The contradictions are a significant part of the instructions, especially when the instructions are seen as a forum in which women express their own ideas, which include both what should happen in a marriage as well as what actually happens. The initiates are thus made aware of the perception women have of their own world and the choices and alternatives they have within it. In the above dialogue it is implied that a woman should obey her husband, and go to the highlands to get grain when she is asked to (a request which is usually made when there is a shortage of food). At the same time, the first mother is provoking the initiate by stating a likely answer women give if they do not wish to make the long trek up to the highlands to get grain. A woman might simply reply by stating why she should go and get maize, if she can feed herself and her children with grain she obtains from "another home", either from her own

relations/ar even froa another nan. In this way, the woman not only articulates that a wife can, and does, disobey her husbrnd, but also that women can produce and obtain a subsistence crop for themselves snd their ohildren,without the assistance of their husbands, even in difficult circumstances.

Another aspect of this ezample, is that it shows how women underwrite accepted social values in the advice they give to initiates. The statement made by the first woman implies that it is to the initiate's advantage to marry a "big man" (one who is wealthy and has prestige in the cocssunity),so that she will be well provided for. However, it is important to note that, in reality it is probably more advantageous for the initiate's parents If she marries a wealthy man/than for the initiate herself. A woman who is married to a wealthy and respected man, is not given any special recognition or status amongst the women themselves, and it depends on her individual character, to what extent she is able to use her husband's wealth to the advantage of herself and her children, especially if he marries a second wife.

7. "Do not pass the words of wore where you are kneeling. This stone, it is the traditional place of old mothers since long sgo Kaplelach generation did oath at this stone long ago. It is the house of women and it is for women of every generation. Even our mothers, they knelt at thia stone, and they were beaten by other women."
8. "I say my daughter, you have no mouth when you are a chemerion, but now you should speak as I am, with a loud voice like mine, just as women do."

Both of these are clear examples which portray aspects of women's solidarity and power. The seventh example stresses the importance of secrecy and respect for old age. It also mnphasises that the initiates have now become part of the collective group of wcmen ^ who have successfully completed initiation, and are also part of a particular age group with whose members they have a special identity. Participating in the initiation rite itself helps to unify women of one neighbourhood. This strengthens their solidarity *s a collective group, which enables them to act as one unit in such ceremonies as tumba nama.

The eighth example is also concerned with women's collective power, but is geared more directly towards the initiate as an individual. As a girl, and during her seclusion period, a female has few social rights and little or no manipulative power. Upon obtaining full status as a woman, she gains certain rights and a position of influence, both in the community as a whole and within the group of neighbourhood women in particular. However, as the mother points out in this example, women realize that it is essentially up to each individual initiate, to decide to what extent she wishes to use her influence and rightful "loud voice". As such, the mother has explicitly said that, as a woman, the initiate not only has the right to voice her own opinion, but that she should do so with conviction, just as other Pokot women do. Implicit in this is that a woman's opinion may differ from her husband's, but she should nevertheless voice it in as clear and strong a manner as possible. Both these examples also express women's recognition that, in time, these girls will grow older and be in a position of authority over the next generation of

•wotnotee Chapter Y

The Pokot differ from societies such as Gusii, where an elaborate initiation ritual takes place before a girl reaches puberty. In Pokot, it is not a heinous offence for a girl to be initiated after the onset of menstruation or even pregnancy. K. Koloski (1967) reviews the Guaii Initiation ceremonies in her **M.a.** thesis, University of London.

2. I use the term 'clitoridotomy' to refer to the Pokot operation of r0twa. 'Clitoridotomy', according to Butterworths Medical Dictionary (1980), refers to "circumcision performed on the female" as distinct from 'clitorideetony' which refers to "surgical removal of the clitoris". I do not use the terms 'excision' and 'infibulation', as the common definition of these as given by Anne Cloudsley, do not exactly apply to the Pokot operation (1981: 84).

Any Pokot word, whose literal meaning I was able to discover, I have translated in a footnote, or in brackets following the word. However, many of the words have obscure meanings and are not used outside the ritual context. *Although I often asked, I could not obtain the meanings of all the words used in songs or to describe different phases and aspects of the ritual;*

4. Kokomel^kong, Koko; wife of, Mel; lick, Kong; eye. The Pokot never clearly explained the relevance of calling the woman operator 'wife of lick eye'. However, the operation of clitoridotomy could, by association, be seen as an action of 'licking something clean'.

5. The number four is commonly used in Pokot rituals, and is related to the Pokot belief in ancestors and directly associated with the four corners of the hearth, which a Pokot must touch when calling forth the spirit (or protector) of a baby soon after it's birth.

6. Pipi plant is used medicinally by the Pokot to wash or clean open wounds. The medicinal value, and botanical names of plants I collected, are currently being analysed at Kew Gardens, London.

7* Kipuno; relates to the word kojmdo. This can be used to wean menstruation (for example, to ask if a young girl has reached puberty and started menstruating), or the lifting of restrictions and taboos (for example, in asking if people have completed the last purification rite after the death of a family member). The usage of this word implies that Pokot see the onset of menstruation as the beginning of a new phase for women, with kipuno; the last public ceremony of initiation, 'culturally' defining the change of sexual and social status. In light of this meaning, it is interesting to note that the final public coming-out ceremony of oale initiation is also called kipuno.

8. The only times I have recorded the use of these leaves, is at the cleansing after clitoridotomy and childbirth. It may be that the leaves are only used for ritual purification rather than medically.

9. Molgut is a root which is usually chewed and used as a cure for coughs and throat infection. Apart from after clitoridotomy and childbirth, this type of blessing, which includes the spitting of oigut, is only performed by men.

10. In the initiation rite of blaungu JEUJJ&^s^i0^ts out that the initiates smear themselves with white to symbolically remove and purify the initiates from the 'terror' of menstrual blood (1956: 124). Though whitening in Pokot may be partially seen as a purification against menstrual blood, the girls in seclusion are not considered "beautiful", and the whitening serves to emphasize their polluted and unclean state. Peristiany, in considering the symbolic meaning of white in Pokot ritual, sees it as having auspicious qualities, and says it is used to protect initiates from heavy and dark powers (1975: 173)*

11. At every advice session I have ever attended, the old women invariably become drunk. Beer is, in fact, expected as a payment by the initiates' families to the old women. Drunkenness is accepted at this time as part of the ritual, and it is a common occurrence for the old women to contradict each other as the afternoon wears on.

12. As we have seen (Chapter II), men, specifically elders, also try to control the rain through prayers addressed to llat; the rain god, asking for rain. In contrast to this, a woman, whose first born is a girl, is said to have the power to redirect the rain if it is unwanted.

13. According to the Pokot, tapo^h; Venus, the planet which brings the rain, is married to Mars, and their children are the smaller, duller stars clustered around them. When the bull, Mars, rises in the east, his wife, Venus, should go slightly down so that she is not above him, and say, "Rain, so that you don't rain on me", which implies, "Do^h t urinate on me". If the bull follows or stays behind his wife, it is a bad omen, as it is when Mars stays in the west with the children and leaves his wife, Venus, alone in the east. These are inauspicious signs which indicate that it will not rain, and also that Pokot women will not bear children successfully, or that many young children will die.

H. According to the social ideal, a chemerl should not be pregnant. Therefore, it is interesting to note that pregnant initiates have their Bklm marked with white. This adds weight to the suggestion that the painting of chemerl with white, emphasizes their polluted*^{an3}"unclean" state; ^hTt should— be noted that boys in seclusion are smeared with red ochre. The two colours seem to indicate contrasting states. On the one side, girl initiates vs. boy initiates; on the other side, pregnant girls vs. non-pregnant girls.

15. Sukution means bamboo and, in this context, refers to the bamboo poles with which the mencho hut is made. At the time this ceremony of sukution takes place, the mencho hut is said to be dismantled.

16. There is no evidence in the Pokot material to support the Freudian interpretation that women want to become men. Instead, as the Pokot explain, and the following examples show, women enjoy teasing men about their own sexual desires.

* A .. / '

17. We are not told, however, if Mgoni women also see semen as the most important factor in reproduction. «'... *

Chapter VI. Conclusion

As we saw in the previous chapter, through the annual ritual of women's initiation, older women attempt to teach girls how they should behave as women. It is particularly significant that older women emphasize two seemingly contradictory themes during the initiation rite. On the one hand, they tell the girls they should follow the social ideal and obey their husbands and fathers. On the other hand, they emphasize that the girls should become strong married women, both as individuals and as part of a larger group. In women's initiation, these two themes are clearly articulated in statements and songs, or implied symbolically through phrases and events.

In this way women express, and are therefore aware of, two different points of view in Pokot society. The first point of view corresponds to the male perspective; the second is only expressed by women and, together with the first, constitutes the female perspective. The second, or female point of view, arises only in respect to the first, or male point of view, and the social ideals which this endorses. In other words, the female point of view is concerned with how the social ideals, expressed in the male point of view, can be manipulated by women to limit men's influence and power which are legitimized by these social ideals.

In simple terms, the Pokot male perspective could be summed up as 'men control women, land and livestock'. The Pokot female perspective only partially agrees with this and could be summed up as, 'men control women, land and livestock, but this control is limited by women in a number of ways'. From a female point of view, the most important limitation of male control is focused around the control of female sexuality. Women perceive their own control of their sexuality and fertility as one of their main bargaining tools vis-a-vis men. Women regard their own sexuality and fertility highly and

female initiation, hence: when an initiate comes home after initiation, women of the neighbourhood take over the house and the father must leave and sleep in a cave for the following three months; men must give up stock, both to the initiates and to the old women who act as officiants of the ceremony; and, when men are given a portion of the slaughtered stock, they are obliged to eat those parts of the goat considered less desirable and usually given to women.

Thus it is demonstrated through ritual that there are times when women have effective control over men. Men, however, do not admit this publicly, as it is not part of the social ideal which is asserted as an absolute truth without inherent contradictions. Nevertheless, men do silently acknowledge the validity of women's claims, which qualitatively changes the simple statement that 'men control women, land and livestock'. In fact, we have the existence of two contrasting statements expressed in different ways: the overt expression of the male ideal; and the covert expression of male acceptance of women's ability to limit male control. Both Pokot men and women use and manipulate these different forms of expression, and individuals or groups do so in different circumstances when it is to their advantage. The ability of Pokot to switch from one form of expression to the other, assures that a maximum flexibility is maintained at any one time in terms of decoding messages.

The existence of these two different views, is expressed most graphically by women to other women in their initiation rite. The mere fact that women reveal both forms of expression to the initiates, puts emphasis on their view that male control is limited. This, in turn, teaches the initiates that a great deal more flexibility and negotiation exists than is apparent in the public male ideal. In their initiation rite, women assert the view that they perceive the relations between men and women (particularly the relationship between individuals as husbands and wives) as a flexible and negotiable contract, in which each sex takes the views of the other sex into account. In one sense, female initiation can be seen as an annual expression and restatement



of this contract. This is particularly interesting considering that in the public male view no such contract exists. In contrast to this, women state the nature of this contract, and their position of strength, within the context of the male order: it is only after women's initiation that women are allowed to bear children and marry, both of which are seen by men to underline their subordinate functional role via-A-via men.

For this reason it is important that, from the male perspective, women's initiation could be seen as a way of bringing women's procreative powers under social control. By redefining the biological change through initiation, girls become eligible for marriage, which should occur soon after initiation. From a male point of view, men control marriage and, after marriage, they impose their control over women and their sexuality through a number of rules and pollution taboos. This is exemplified by the fact that a husband should be the first to split a woman's clitoridotomy scar after initiation: a symbolic statement of his authority over his wife's sexuality and reproductive powers.

Women's initiation is also a public statement of women's individual and collective power, in which they focus on the control they see themselves as having over their own sexuality and childbirth. Women's initiation unites women on the basis of sex, age, and area. The solidarity amongst women 'age-mates' of one neighbourhood, increases over time as their participation in the initiation rite increases, and they attain a position of ritual authority over the younger women of the neighbourhood. Seen in broader social terms, old women's authority is closely linked to the maintenance of male control. However, their authority also has an independent significance amongst the women themselves. On an individual basis, initiation facilitates the separation between mother and daughter - a close, emotional relationship - and, over time, the unification of mothers and their daughters-in-law - a relationship often fraught with conflict. On a collective basis, initiation unites all women together, but a particular solidarity and bond is formed between the women of one neighbourhood and to a further extent, one's community. The solidarity

amongst women forms the basis of power which women can use in direct opposition to men, but is primarily used to recreate a balance should men abuse their power.

In women's initiation we find a basic contradiction expressed regarding the control of female sexuality and fertility. The message which women seem to convey in their initiation rite, is that men try to control women's sexuality and procreative powers, but ultimately it is up to the women whether they let them do so or not. Women's initiation legitimizes giving birth, but it does not control pregnancy, nor does it assure that a woman's husband is necessarily the father of her children. In itself, the initiation rite has no direct influence over who will make a woman pregnant, nor when she will become pregnant. However, if a woman should do things in the 'ideal' way the rite will have a direct influence over both these factors. According to the male ideal, a woman should not be pregnant before initiation and should not have sexual intercourse after initiation before she marries. This way, a woman would only become pregnant after initiation and marriage, thereby ensuring that her husband would be the one to make her pregnant and be the father of her children. As we have seen, the ideal is not always what happens in practice. Not only are a high percentage of girls pregnant before initiation, but many women are pregnant before their first marriage, and even more women (5Q* in the Katuw region) do not stay married to their first husbands.

Pokot women seem to be aware of the discrepancy between the ideal and the actual, and enjoy stating their sense of sexual pride in their own initiation rite. They also seem to enjoy mocking or teasing men about their attempts to belittle women's childbearing capacities, and to control their sexuality and fertility. Even if we look at women's initiation from a male perspective, and assume that through clitoridotomy women are offering men their sexuality, this could not be interpreted as a straightforward admission of female subordination. 'Offering' men their sexuality reinstates the fact that women have, and always will have, something men would like to have control over.

Another aspect of female initiation which cannot be interpreted solely as an admission by women of their subordinate status, is the fact that older women often reiterate and stress male values. Not only is it to women's advantage to allude to the notion that they support the same values as men (which gives them and their initiation rite additional status and respect), but, in practice, it is to their advantage to work with men rather than against them. A statement of women's power and solidarity does not necessarily have to be a statement in opposition to men. Through their initiation rite, Pokot women, and old women in particular, are expressing publicly that they agree with men, but, at the same time, making a statement of their separate identity as a group of women; **or**, to put it simply, that they are not men.

In the context of female initiation, old women act as mediators between male and female values. They 'teach' the individual initiates to be obedient and follow the patriarchal rules of society, although they know themselves that many of the individual girls will not follow the advice they are given. This becomes increasingly evident when women's sections are heightened, at which time their own anxiety about the rules is often portrayed. The other important factor is that many of the old women themselves have had complex marriage histories (or gone against the very ideals they are supposed to be 'teaching'), but this does not detract from their position of status and authority amongst the women. In general, the criteria for gaining status and respect which women set for themselves, is different from the social ideals (for example, by being married to a wealthy man a woman does not gain status, respect, and authority amongst other women)*

The picture which women portray in their initiation rite is not simply one of opposing points of view where men see women as subordinate, while women see themselves as powerful. Instead, women present more of an integrated picture, indicating that the main difference between the two perspectives is that each perspective places a different emphasis on female subordination and power. From the female perspective, women's individual and collective power, and their

control over sexuality and childbirth, are emphasised, while women's subordination, and men's control over their sexuality and women's procreative powers, is muted. From the male perspective, female subordination, and male control over female sexuality and fertility, is emphasized, while women's individual and collective power is kept muted. Both of these perspectives, with their different emphases, are articulated by women, although, in the context of women's initiation, the female perspective is dominant.

Let us now turn our attention to examining how the female perspective articulated in women's initiation, which emphasizes women's influence and power, corresponds to the influence women have in reality. This may be best explored by looking at the actual control men have over reproductive assets; women's sexuality and fertility, and over productive assets; land, stock, labour and produce. Within the male ideal, the assertion is held that men have complete control over the reproductive assets. Men claim that they alone control the marriage process (primarily by controlling the exchange of women through the payment of bridewealth), and, once married, it is assumed that the husband alone will father his wife's children. In practice, women have a great deal of influence over the marriage process and who will father their children. Mothers have a strong say in who their sons and daughters will marry. A mother's say in bridewealth negotiations stems from the influence she has over her husband and children; the rights in bridewealth her own relatives have (particularly her brothers); and her own right to transmit stock to her sons. A young woman has a considerable say in who she will marry, and can manage to get out of a marriage which she finds undesirable. As such, a woman also has a strong say in who will father her children, both before initiation and after marriage.

It is also claimed by men, and held as a social ideal, that men have complete control over the productive assets. Men have the overriding right to dispose of property and produce as they wish and, through marriage, they have complete rights over the labour of their wives and children. In practice, a

woman influences the way in which her husband disposes of their property and produce, and can abolish his rights over her labour (and often her children's labour) through separation and/or divorce. A woman influences how her husband disposes of stock and land through her usufruct rights over property, and may be in a strong position of control if her husband is using land, and to a lesser extent livestock, of her kin group. She also has recognized rights over subsistence produce, and if her rights are abused she has means of persuading her husband to take her wishes into account, particularly the threat of leaving him. Also, because the unit of production is extremely small and cultivation is labour intensive, a man is dependent on his wife and children to be able to produce a substantial crop. This, in turn, affects a man's ability to increase his herd and expand his sphere of exchange. For these reasons, a husband's control over the productive assets are clearly limited by his wife.

It has become evident that, amongst the agricultural Pokot, although there is a clearly articulated ideal of male control, it is not rigorously enforced. There is enough flexibility in the economic reality, to give women the chance to modify male control of both the reproductive and productive assets. However, it must be remembered that women's power and influence only limits male authority. An imbalance between the sexes still exists, but this is less skewed, and women are more powerful, than has been previously recorded (Beech 1911, Edgerton and Conant 1944)*

The female modification of male control has an effect on the relation between the sexes, particularly the relationship between husbands and wives. In practice, there is a great deal of negotiation and renegotiation which takes place in the husband/wife relationship. This is partially due to the fairly strong bargaining leverage a wife has with her husband, but it is also due to the acknowledged benefits a husband and wife will receive if they stay married and work together. Although it is possible for a man and a woman to survive and live separately on their own, it will not benefit either of them economically.

or socially to do so. A man would have a difficult time building up his herd and widening his sphere of exchange, and a woman living with her parents would make things less comfortable for herself and her children than if she had stayed with her husband.

Almost all Pokot men and women are married and live together as married couples, although women do not necessarily live with, or stay married to, their first husbands. The household, consisting of a married couple, and their unmarried children, is a relatively small unit of production. Husbands and wives are thus closely dependent on each other, and their children, for producing a subsistence. On the one hand, this close dependency may be a reason for negotiation between husbands and wives, while on the other hand, it may be a source of antagonism and conflict. In a close situation, with few alternatives, conflicts are bound to arise, particularly over the control and distribution of household resources. It is interesting that in the context of day to day interactions, the point of view women articulate concerning ownership, is closer to what actually happens than the perspective articulated by men.

This brings us to the broader question of how women are seen to be different and opposite to men, and also whether women have a different conception of the world than men do. The first part of the question relates directly to the more fundamental dyadic contrast between nature : culture. This issue was originally raised in discussion of binary oppositions by Levi-Strauss (1963, 1966), and discussed more recently, in relation to women, by Ortner (1974). Ortner writes that women are more closely identified with nature, which every culture devalues, while men are identified with culture, which, by asserting its control over nature, is seen to be superior to nature (1974: 72-3)* KacCormack and Strathern (1980) have considered in detail the validity of using a hierarchical nature & culture contrast in a general sense, as well as questioning the specific definition and usefulness of this formulation in different cultures. I will concentrate on the latter aspect of this, and examine whether the nature : culture contrast, formulated by western science, is valid in the

analysis of the Pokot material.

Throughout the thesis, I have stated that Pokot women are identified more closely with the domestic domain and childbearing capacities, while men are identified more closely with the public socio-political domain, having a powerful ritual control through their ability to communicate to the ancestral spirits. I have also stressed that these two domains cannot be seen as standing on their own, operating separately, or independently of each other. The female/domestic domain and the male/public domain are closely interdependent, the activities of one domain having a direct effect on the other domain. The question, however, is to what extent the Pokot equate the female sphere with 'nature', and the male sphere with 'culture'. Furthermore, do the Pokot perceive man/culture as being superior to woman/nature? To examine the nature : culture dyad, we must begin by clarifying the Pokot definitions of these categories, before we look at the question of control. However, as we have already seen from the discussion of male : female relations, it is impossible to make any simple statements about male superiority and control, as this must be closely analysed according to different contexts and situations.

There is no clear definition of what the Pokot might consider to be 'nature' and what to be 'culture'. Pokot make a definite distinction between what they call *wu*; forest or 'wild', which they identify as *sany*; outside, and the *ko*; household and domestic area, which they identify with *ori*; inside. Through ritual, people continually try to control the 'wild' and to a further extent the unseen forces of 'nature'. Pokot, however, do not view 'culture' as innately superior to 'nature'. There is no question that they try to control 'nature', but, for the Pokot, the 'natural' and the 'supernatural' are inextricably bound together. On the one hand, Pokot culture tries to control nature through its perceived control of the supernatural, on the other, the supernatural is a notion created by Pokot culture in respect to nature. Furthermore, for the Pokot, the forces of nature and the supernatural are at

times affected and controlled by Pokot themselves and their culture, while at other times, they perceive themselves and culture as controlled and affected by nature and the supernatural. M. Strathern (1980: 178) describes a similar idea but without referring to the supernatural, "culture is both the creative subject and the finished object; nature both resource and limitation, amenable to alteration and operating under laws of its own".

The other issue raised earlier was the question of control. As we have seen, the control of the natural/supernatural through ritual is in the hands of both men and women. As such, it makes it difficult to identify one sex as closer to either nature or culture, as well as complicating the issue of one sex having clear control over the other sex. Let us examine this in more specific terms. In Pokot, men try to devalue women because of their child-bearing capacities. Men also try to control women and their childbearing capacities, through marriage and various social rules and ideas about pollution. Given that Pokot men see women as closer to nature (because of their child-bearing capacities), and also to the supernatural (because of their association with rain and fertility), this does not result in the simple formula of *men/culture* being in control over *women/nature*. Given that Pokot perceive the natural and supernatural as sometimes being superior to themselves and culture, then male control over nature cannot be considered absolute. For the same reasons, women's identification with nature could be seen as making women as much superior to men as it makes them inferior.

The situation is made even more complex by the fact that women have recognized control over their 'natural' childbearing capacities. Although it is not recognized publicly, women have a great deal of control over matters concerning their sexuality and fertility, particularly in a ritual sense. As we have seen, there are ways in which women can prevent and terminate childbirth; they organize and control women's initiation; and women have the power to bless both after childbirth and after olitoridotaqy. Women are also called upon to invoke the ancestors at the ceremony of moi, if a woman becomes

IT?

ill because of a peculiarly 'female problem'. The case of KokoYaranyang illustrates this point. KokoYaranyang dreamed that her child would die and claimed that onyot had come and pulled out her vaginal hair. Hoi was held and the usual songs and blessing were performed by the elders with women joining in the chorus. In addition to this, the older women of the neighbourhood went into the nearby bush, away from the men, and by cursing chased away the bad ancestral spirits, naming the "wife of onyot" as the particular culprit.

In Pokot, ritual control is, therefore, undeniably the responsibility of both men and women. There are, however, two distinct spheres of ritual control in Pokot which are essentially complementary. The women's sphere of ritual control focuses primarily on childbirth and other women, while the men's sphere of ritual control focuses on the ancestors preventing sickness and death of both men and women. There is, however, a recognised link between the two spheres in the case where both riwoi women (women who have had 'abnormal' births) and their husbands can bless the relatives of the deceased. Ortner (1974) identifies ritual as part of culture. Using Ortner's definition, we cannot identify Pokot women simply and only with nature. In Pokot, the nature : culture categories are ambivalent and men cannot simply be identified with culture, any more than women can be identified with nature. Furthermore, the questions of control and superiority are complex and ambiguous. In so far as Pokot women exercise ritual control over nature, they must be aligned with culture just as men are. On the other hand, in so far as their ritual control is concerned with childbirth and women, while men's ritual control is concerned with communal matters, they are more aligned with nature and men more with culture. As such, the simple formula that men and culture are superior to women and nature, is not applicable to the Pokot material. Instead, we have Pokot women aligned with both culture and nature, while men are aligned more exclusively with culture. Women can be seen as mediators between culture and nature and, in so far as nature's value is ambiguous, so is men's value is

ambiguous and oscillates from superior to inferior and back again. Men's value, on the other hand, is more consistently superior.

The question of how men and women bound themselves off from the 'wild' nature was discussed in detail by E. Ardener (1977). Ardener also raised the questions of whether women conceptualize their world in a different way than men do, and whether women are able to articulate their perception of the world. In a review of S. Ardener's work S. Ardener writes (1977: xii), "This dominant model may impede the free expression of alternative models of their world which subdominant groups may possess, and perhaps may even inhibit the very generation of such models [The subdominant group] might be relatively 'inarticulate' when expressing themselves through the idiom of the dominant group, and silent on matters of special concern to them for which no accommodation has been made in it." E. Ardener goes on to explain that women often form such an 'inarticulate' group, and may be effectively 'mute'.

It is clear from the Pokot material that women are not a particularly weak group. Pokot women articulate very clearly a variety of ideas which are both of special concern to themselves and anchor their relation to society and the dominant male model. E. Ardener would, however, explain this by saying that women are simply expressing themselves in the idiom of the male model, having transformed their own muted model into the dominant model. But how can we be sure of this? How can we know the degree women actually accept the male model, or just say that they accept it while subjectively relating to it in a number of different ways; or certainly in a different way than the way men do? It has become clear that Pokot women manipulate different forms of expression, and change how and what they say in relation to the context they say it in.

In some situations, for example in discussing ownership in public, Pokot women articulate and appear to accept the male model when it is to their advantage to do so. However, when discussing their ownership rights in private, women tend to emphasize their own perspective, based on their particular interests, and how they see themselves and their interests as fitting into the

larger modal. At other times, women may simply agree with the dominant male model, for example older women who act as officiants in women's initiation. As such, in the Pokot case, it would appear to be more useful to speak of the process of 'muting*' rather than speaking of the entire group of women as mute.

X. Ardener also writes that women express their own muted model through obscure symbols or obscenities, and often what they are saying is only half acknowledged or understood. This begins with the assumption that women always want their messages to be made clear. I would suggest that there are times when women make their messages deliberately unclear. There is, of course, the other side of this, in that it is almost impossible to define whether these messages are really only half acknowledged, or if people - in this case men - are only 'saying' that they partially understand the messages, when in fact they understand the total message. It would be extremely presumptuous of the anthropologist to assume that he/she can understand the encoded messages of ritual while the people in that society cannot. In his discussion of rituals and symbols, I. Strecker (1981) also stresses this point, when he says, "We should acknowledge the actors' competence for complex thinking, and concede to him the competence for sustained multivocality.*"

It appears that, in Pokot, there are certain topics which are muted and others which are clearly articulated. However, it is still people who express their views on these topics and their views (or what they express) may differ in relation to their age and sex and the particular circumstance and situation. It is difficult to define whether it is the topic which is muted or the actors who are mute. Instead, it is important to view the two as closely related. For example, women may decide to keep a particular topic mute, while at the same time the association between femaleness and the topic may be the reason for the muteness. Also, things of special concern to females may be muted because they are difficult or complex subjects, and not only because they are associated with females.

I have already pointed out how the topic of sexuality, which is fraught

with ambiguities and problems, appears to be muted through the various pollution taboos. This may be partially due to the fact that, in a sexual relationship, women have as strong a bargaining position as men or even stronger because of their childbearing capacities. Pokot women express this fact, albeit at times indirectly. Men appear to mute women's expression of this because it is in contradiction to the social/legal relationship between men and women. The sexual relationship raises questions about women's position which cannot be resolved, so the entire topic is muted. Topics are, however, muted in various ways. It appears that, where there is no standardized solution, or clearly articulated rule, topics are muted by cloaking them in ambiguous ritual symbols. This way, all parties can interpret symbolic statements to their own satisfaction, without anything definite being said or articulated. This is borne out by the fact that women can articulate their views on sexuality and will do so publicly in the face of male insult, or if they feel their socio-economic position is threatened.

Even topics which are fluently articulated or expressed may involve the process of muting by either men or women. Articulate statements made by men, concerning male control and ownership, can hide an entire range of complex relations which are effectively muted by their dominant or articulated statements. Both men and women are aware of the muted aspects, but the image created is one of male control, and it again seems that women only give expression to muted aspects of a subject, on occasions which happen to be relevant to themselves.

In discussing my ideas with Jean Iydall, she questioned why Hamar men and women have positive things to say, and are extremely articulate when expressing ideas about their close kin relations (for example, a Hamar man will speak positively about his mother, sister or daughter), but are much less positive when speaking about their spouses (especially in regard of how men speak about their wives). In Hamar, as well as in Pokot, a man's image may be more threatened vis-a-vis the woman he marries, because there is more scope for

negotiation in the relationship. His other relationships are more fixed and based on a degree of historical fact. In Pokot, there is far less flexibility on the relationships based on age and kinship than there is in the relationship between the spouses. No one can change their age independently of others, and kin relations are manipulated only slightly, and not at all in the case of close kin. On the other hand, Pokot men and women have considerable say in both choosing their spouse, and in changing their spouse if the marriage situation becomes intolerable.

It is interesting that, in Pokot, although the relationship between husband and wife is continually renegotiated and extremely changeable, the stereotype which is articulated is that of an unequal relationship in which men have control over their wives. This is partially due to the fact that men mute women's opinions and views, and publicly articulate their own views through gender constructs and symbols which project male control. The aspect of Pokot society which is least articulated, in other words an aspect which is rarely seen or heard, is what is negotiated or agreed upon between men and women; especially between husbands and wives. The relationship between husbands and wives only becomes public when they have disagreements, rather than when they agree with each other. Only when things go 'wrong', or there are diversions from the practical order and social ideal, do the views of either men or women become articulated. As a result, the area of negotiated space between men and women, is often by definition silent or muted.

In the final analysis, it is clear that both men and women articulate and mute different ideas and topics at different times in different ways. However, women and female topics are more often mute, and women make their statements publicly amongst themselves only, while men and male topics are more clearly articulated, and men make their statements in public to both men and women. Pokot men and women do have different perspectives of the world, which stem from their different interests. Nevertheless, the individual perspective of each sex takes the other into account, although this acknowledgement is usually muted

in the perspective which each sex articulates publicly. As such, there are aspects of both the male and female perspectives which are kept mute. Within their own perspective women mute male control and dominance, while within the male perspective men mute women's influence and power. For these reasons, I would suggest, there is an acknowledged area of negotiation which is held in common by both Pokot men and women. This area is by definition ambiguous and undefined because the set of values and different perspectives within it are in a constant state of flux and continually renegotiated.

;

Bibliography

- ARDEHER, S. 1977. 'Belief and the problem of women', and 'The 'problem' revisited*', in Perceiving women, ed. S. Ardener. London: J.M. Dent
- ARIKNER, S. 1977* 'Introduction' in Perceiving women, ed. S. Ardener. London: J.M. Dent
- ARLKNER, S. 1977. 'Sexual insult and female militancy', in Perceiving women, ed. S* Ardener. London: J.M. Dent
- ARIENER, S. 1977* ed. Perceiving women. London: J.M. Dent
- ARDENER, S. 1978. ed. Defining females: the nature of women in eoolety. London: Croom Helm
- BEECH, M.W.H. 1911. The Suk, their language and folklore. Oxford: Clarendon Press
- BOZERUP, S. 1970. Woman's role in economic development. London: George Allen and Unwin
- CAPLAN, P. & BUJRA, J.M. 1978. eds. Women united women divided. London: Tavistock Publications
- CLOUDSLEY, A. 1981. Women of Omdurman - Victims of circumcision. London: Anne Cloudsley
- CONANT, P.P. 1963. 'Korok: a variable unit of physical and social space among the Pokot of East Africa*. Amer. Anthropol. 67, 2, 429-435
- CONANT, P.P. 1966. 'The external coherence of Pokot ritual behaviour*', in Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London. B. vol.251, 505-519
- CRITCHLEY, M. 1980. ed. Butterworth's medical dictionary. London: Butterworths
- DIGON-HUDSON, N. 1966. Karimojong politics. Oxford: Clarendon Press
- EDGERTON, F.B. & CONANT, P.P. 1964. 'Kilapat: a 'shaming party' among the Pokot of East Africa'. Southwest J. Anthropol. 20, 404-418
- KDHOI*, P. & HARRIS, O. & TOUNG, K. 1977* 'Conceptualising women', in Critique of anthropology, coordinated by P. Edholm, O. Harris & K. Toung
- KYANS-PRITCHARD, E.E. 1974. The Suer. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- E7AKS-KLITCHARD, S.E. 1977. Muer religion. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- PORTES, M. 1962. 'Introduction', in The developmental cycle in domestic groups, ed. J. Goody. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- GKNNEP, A* van, 1960. The rites of passage, (trans. M.B. Tiedom and G.L. Caffee). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul

- GLUCKMAM, M. 1954. Rituals of rebellion in South-East Africa. Manchester: Manchester University Press
- GOLDSCHMIDT, W. 1976. Culture and behaviour of the Sebei. California: University of California Press
- GULLTTER, P.H. 1955. The family herds. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul
- GULLTTER, P.H. 1963. Social control in an African society. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul
- HKRSKOYITS, M.J. 1926. 'The cattle complex in East Africa'. Amer. anthrop. 28, 230-72, **361-80**, 494-528, **633-664**
- HUGH-JONES, C. 1978. 'Food for thought - patterns of production and consumption in Pira-Parana society', in Sex and age as principles of social differentiation, ed. J.S. La Fontaine. London: Academic Press
- HUHTINGFORD, G.W.B. 1953. The Southern Hilo-Baaltes. ESA. London: I.A.I.
- KES3T, J.D. 1977. The cultural regions of East Africa. London: Academic Press | New York: Academic Press
- KLIMI, G.J. 1970. The Barabaig. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston
- KOLOSKI, fi. 1967. 'Initiation ritual in selected African societies* a study in social differentiation'. M.A. thesis, University of London
- KUPKR, H. 1950. 'Kinship among the Swasi', in African systems of kinship and marriage, eds. A.H. Radcliffe-Brown and Daryll Forde. London: Oxford University Press
- Li FOMTilHE, J.S. 1972. 'Ritualization of women's life-crises in Bigisu', in The interpretation of ritual, ed. J.S. La Fontaine. London: Tavistock Publications
- Li FONTiUffl, J.S. 1978. ed. Sex and age as principles of social differentiation. London: Academic Press
- LEYI-STRAUSS, C. 1963. Totemism. (trans. Rodney Needham). Boston: Beacon Press
- LEYI-STRAU3S, C. 1966. The savage mind. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson
- LLEWELTN-HiTIES, M. 1978. 'Two contexts of solidarity', in Women united women divided, eds. P. Caplan and J.M. Bujra. London: Tavistock Publications
- LLSVEITH-BITISS, M. Women, warriors and patriarchs (unpublished)
- LTQiLL, J. 1978. 'Le symbolisme des couleurs dans le rituel Hamar', (trans. Serge Tomay) in Toir et noaer les couleurs, ed. S. Tornay. Paris: Latethro Kanterra

- LHYJLL, J. & STRBCKER, I. 1979- The Hamar of Southern Ethiopia. ^
 Baldambe explains. Distributort Klaus Renner Yerlag, G.P.R, '
 MaoCORMICK, C.P. & STRATHERN, M. 1980- eds. Mature, culture and
 Cambridgei Cambridge University Press
- ORINKR, 3.B. 1974. 'Is female to male as nature is to culture?*',
Vom^n. culture, and society., eds. M.Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamph^
 Stanford! Stanford University Press
- PKRISTIAHT, J.G. 1951 • 'The age-set system of the pastoral Pokot»
 % Africa,
 21, 188-206, 279-302
- PKRISTIAHT, J.G. 1954. 'Pokot aanctions and structure'. Africa. ^
 It 17-25
- PKRISTIAHT, J.G. 1975.' The ideal and the actual: the role of Wo ^ ^
 the Pokot political system! *Oxford: Clarendon Press a ^ a ^ ; * / ^ ^ -7
- RICHARDS, A.I. 1956. ChiBungu: A girls' initiation ceremony am ^{ong the sc}
Bemba of Horthern Rhodesia. London: Paber and Paber
- ROSALDO, M.Z. & LAKPHKHS, L. 1974- •da- Woman, culture, and a ocj ^
 Stanford: Stanford University Press
- SCHNEIDER, H.K. 1953- The Pakot of Kenva. vith special reference ,
 7 s<^thQ
 role of livestock in their subsistence economy. Ann Arbor. ^
 ~ ^versity
 Microfilms
- SCHNEIDER, H.K. 1957. 'The subsistence role of cattle among the
 East Africa'. Amer. Anthrop. 59» 278-300
- SCHNEIDER, H.K. 1959. 'Pakot resistance to change', in Continuity ^
char.^e in African cultures, eds. V.R. Bascos and M.J. Hera]c_o.^
 Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- SHORT, R.T. 1976. 'Lactation - the central control of reproduction
 » in
Breast-feeding and the mother. Ciba Foundation Symposium 45, ^^
 Elsevier/Excerpta Medica
- SPENCER, P. 1965. The Samburu. a study of gerontocracy in a ^
 London: Routledge & Kegan Paul ^ tribe.
- SPKNKER, P. 1973. Nomads in alliance. London: Oxford University ^
- STRATHEBN, M. 1979 (unpublished). 'Domesticity and the denigratiou
 women', forthcoming in Women in Oceania, eds. D. O'Brien an\$
 S. Tiffany. A.S.A.O. publication
- STRATHERN, M. 1980. 'No nature, no culture: the Hagen case', in H * ^
culture and gender, eds. C.P. MacCormack and M. Strathern.
 'ridge:
 Cambridge University Press

- LTD&UJi, J. & STRECKER, I. 1979. The Hamar of Southern Ethiopia. II, Baldambe explains. Distributor: Klaus Banner Yerlag, G.F.R.
- MacCORMACK, C.P. & STRATHERN, M. 1980. eda. Mature, culture and gender. Cambridge University Press
- ORINKH, 3.B. 1974. 'Is female to aale as nature is to culture?', in Woman, culture, and aociety, eds. M.Z. Roaldo and L. Lamphere. Stanford University Press
- PKRISTIAN, J.G. 1951. 'The age-set system of the pastoral Pokot'. Africa. 21, 188-206, 279-302
- PKRISTIAN, J.G. 1954. 'Pokot sanctions and structure'. Africa. 24, 17-25
- PKRISTIAHT, J.G. 1975. 'The ideal and the actual: the role of prophets in the Pokot political system!'. Oxford: Clarendon Press
- RICHARDS, A.I. 1956. Chisungu: A girls' initiation ceremony among the Bemba of Northern Rhodesia. London: Pater and Faber
- ROALDO, M.Z. & LAMPHERE, L. 1974. eds. Woman, culture, and aociety. Stanford University Press
- SCHNEUER, H.I. 1953. The Pakot of Kenya, with special reference to the role of livestock in their subsistence economy. Ann Arbor. University Microfilms
- SCHNEIDER, H.K. 1957. 'The subsistence role of cattle among the Pakot in East Africa'. Amer. Anthropol. 59: 278-300
- SCHNEIDER, H.K. 1959. 'Pakot resistance to change', in Continuity and change in African cultures, eds. V.R. Basco and M.J. Herskovits. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- SHORT, R.T. 1976. 'Lactation - the central control of reproduction', in Breast-feeding and the mother. Ciba Foundation Symposium **45**. Holland: Elsevier/Excerpta Medica
- SPENCER, P. 1965. The Saaburu, a study of gerontocracy in a nomadic tribe. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul
- SPENCER, P. 1973. Nomads in alliance. London: Oxford University Press
- STRATHERN, M. 1979 (unpublished). 'Domesticity and the denigration of women', forthcoming in Women in Oceania, eds. D. O'Brien and S. Tiffany. A.S.A.O. publication
- STRATHERN, M. 1980. 'No nature, no culture: the Hagen case', in Nature, culture and gender, eds. C.P. MacCormack and M. Strathern. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

- STHITHKRN, M. 1981. 'Self-interest and the social good: some implications of Hagen gender imagery', in Sexual meanings eds. S. Ortner and H. Whitehead. New York: Cambridge University Press
- STHBCESA, I. 1981 (unpublished). The social function of symbolization. Habilitationsschrift Georg August University of Göttingen, Göttingen
- TURNER, T.V. 1974. The ritual process. London: Penguin

References on Pokot Referred to, but not Cited in the Thesis ;

- Barton, C. and Juxon T. 1921. Notes on the Suk tribe of Kenya Colony', J.R.i.I. LI pp. 62-99.
- Bryan, I. A. and Tucker A. I*. Distribution of the Nilotic and Nilo-Saharan Languages of Africa. London: Oxford University Press.
- Chaundy, G. H. 1943. 'The agricultural education of a primitive tribe', Kest African Agricultural Journal,
- Chaundy, G. H. 1940* 'The west Suk of Kenya: teaching a primitive tribe to be better farmers', Canadian Geographical Journal, XXXVI:2.
- Collins, T. W. L. 1939. Suk Vocabulary. Mimeograph, A.I.M. - B.C.M.S.
- Dundas, K. R. 1910. 'Notes on the tribes inhabiting the Baringo District of the East African Protectorate'. J.R.A.I. 40, pp. 49-72.
- Porter, P. In. 1963. 'Suk views on Suk environment'. Annals of Association of American Geographers, 53, pp. 615-616 (abstract).
- Schneider, H. K., 1955. 'The moral system of the pakot', Encyclopedia of Morals. V. Perm, ed. New York: Philosophical Library.
- Schneider, H. K. 1956. 'The interpretation of Pakot visual art', Man, 56, pp. 103-6.
- Totty, A. N. and Chaundy, G. H. 1944. 'The people and District of West Suk', Peoples of Kenya Series, No. 17, Nairobi.
- Tucker, A. N. and Bryan, M. A.* 'The non-Bantu languages of North Eastern Africa', Handbook of African Languages. I.A.I. London: Oxford University Press. *1956.