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The Turkana Age Organization

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THE Turkana are nomadic pastoralists, numbering about 80,000 people, who inhabit semidesert country in north-western Kenya. A general account of them has been published elsewhere (Gulliver 1951) and also a detailed analysis of their kinship and property systems (Gulliver 1955).

The aim of the present paper is to give a description of the structure and operation of their age organization, as my earlier account of this was incomplete and inadequate.¹ Because of the continued interest in and comparative discussion of age-groups, and also because current field research will almost complete the coverage of the Nilo-Hamitic peoples and their immediate Bantu neighbors in East Africa among whom age-group systems are notably important, it is thought useful to make available the data for the Turkana on which an adequate comparative study may draw. Therefore, the object here is description and initial analysis only. I do not wish to intrude theoretical or comparative considerations, which are to be left for a later and wider treatment than would be possible here. In any case, there have been two recent broader studies to which the reader should refer (Eisenstadt 1956; Prins 1953).

Initiation. Turkana youths are initiated into full formal adulthood at an average age of eighteen; the age limits vary in practice between about fourteen and twenty years. Initiation occurs by the youth spearing a male, castrated animal—ox, camel, goat, or sheep—at a communal ceremony which may last for several consecutive days or which may be renewed for a day or so at a time over a longer period. On each day a number of youths (up to as many as fifteen) present themselves, each with his animal provided by his father. After all the initiates on one day have speared their animals, the carcasses are opened and the head and body of each youth is smeared with the undigested contents of the stomach of his own beast and with the elders' spittle by the seniormost elders of the area. This is a normal Turkana method of ritual purification and strengthening employed on any occasion when an animal is ceremonially slaughtered. The important feature here is that the act is necessarily performed by the seniormost men in the age-group system, who are thought to be able to receive the initiates into that system and to pass on to them the attributes of strong manhood and the idealized qualities of age-group membership. After this act the slaughtered animals are cut up and the meat is cooked over open fires and eaten by all males at the initiation grove. No females are allowed to participate in any part of the affair, but uninitiated boys may be present and may eat the inferior pieces of meat.

At the end of the day each initiate separately goes off with a man of approximately his father's generation. The initiate goes to his "patron's" homestead and remains there for five days; he is expected to act as if he were

living at his own home rather than as a visitor. At the end of the period the initiate and his patron formally exchange spears, knives, sandals, and cloth, which act, say the Turkana, establishes and symbolizes the father-son relationship between the two men. Thereafter the young man refers to his patron as "father." He is finally given his first mudded headdress by his patron (Gulliver 1955: 113). The initiate thereafter returns home and takes up normal life.

The initiate's weapons and clothing are specially provided by his real father expressly for the exchange, but the initiate receives only the everyday possessions of his patron in return; and therefore the patron usually profits from the transaction. The patron is chosen by the initiate's father, who aims at creating a useful new pseudo-kinship bond with the man. About the time of initiation, sometimes before and sometimes after, the father makes the patron a gift of animals; ideally he should give at least one of each type of castrated male beast, but the actual gift varies according to the wealth of the father and the condition of other contemporary claims against his herds. Through this gift a type of "stock-association" is established both between the father and his son's patron and also between the son and patron. (Gulliver 1955: Chapter 8). In his choice of patron, therefore, a father seeks to obtain the consent of some unrelated man of dependable character with whom relations are likely to be fruitful in later years. Sometimes, but by no means necessarily, a father chooses one of his bond-friends. There is no customary requirement of particular age-group relationship between the two men, and cases were recorded where the patron was junior, equal, and senior to the father.

The patron must belong to the same alternation as the initiate (see below). He should provide a kind of parental responsibility, care, and assistance for the initiate not unlike a Christian godfather, but in fact the actual relationship which develops may vary a good deal. Like all interpersonal bonds in Turkana-land, the actual relationship depends on the exigencies of nomadic movements and the frequency of contacts over the years, and it may flower or wither according to personal preferences. In some cases the young man and his patron maintain little or no contact; in other cases a genuinely valuable association is maintained such that mutual assistance and gifts of livestock are made in times of need in the normal way of stock-association. Sometimes the young man also develops a bond-friendship with one of his patron's sons.

There is no significance claimed with regard to the type of animal which a youth spears at initiation. Although oxen and camels are more valuable economically and socially than are goats and sheep, the fact of spearing a larger animal affords no seniority or other credit to the initiate either then or afterwards. The rule is that a man's sons, as they come to the time of initiation, are provided alternatively with an ox or camel and a goat or sheep—the eldest son always takes an ox or camel. Sons come to initiation as their father considers them to be of age; in general this means that they come forward in order of birth, although that order may be slightly varied in accordance with an internal system of seniority based on placement in the mothers' groups

("yards") within the nuclear family (Gulliver 1955:131-32; also Gulliver 1953:154-56).

On initiation a youth joins the age-group then open; no further induction is made. After initiation the youth becomes a young man: he is able to wear a man's mudded headdress and to carry a man's weapons, to fight in war and to marry. In practice he will not be able to marry for several or many years, for that event depends not on initiation but on his position in his own nuclear family and the size of the family herds. The young man can also take part, albeit a minor part, in ritual activities such as are involved in rain-making, fertility ceremonies, curing illness, warding off epidemics and witchcraft, and so forth.

The alternations. Every male Turkana belongs to one of two groupings—Stones (*Ngumur*, s. *Imurut*)² and Leopards (*Ngirisai*, s. *Erisai*). These are referred to here as "alternations" because at birth every male child automatically becomes a member of that of his grandfather and not that of his father. Thus a Stone's sons are all Leopards, and vice versa. On the other hand, it is important to note that the two groupings do not refer to tribal generations, for they are coexistent among a crowd of males of the same age such that about half will belong to each. The alternations, with the same naming, exist throughout Turkanaland.

The alternations provide a basically social classification rather than physiological, so that a boy's placement depends on that of his legal father. Thus the son of an unmarried mother joins the alternation to which his mother's father (his pater) does not belong. If the woman marries later, the placement of her subsequent sons depends on the alternation of her husband (their pater). For example, a woman might have a son before marriage who becomes a Leopard because his mother's father is a Stone; and later sons become Stones because her eventual husband (whether or not the progenitor of the first son) is a Leopard. Women themselves are not included in these two categories and they may marry a man of either alternation. After marriage a woman is said, in a loose way, to belong to her husband's alternation just as, more genuinely and significantly, she becomes a member of his clan and family. The only importance it has for her is in the color of certain personal ornaments.

Connected with membership of alternations are rules prescribing the types of decorations that men may wear. Stones should only wear black ostrich plumes and dark-colored metal ornaments (rings, bracelets, anklets, and so forth); Leopards should wear only white ostrich plumes and light-colored metal ornaments, and they alone may wear leopard-skin cloaks. Without exception in 1948-50 men stated these rules, and most commonly they failed to observe them, so that it was generally impossible to identify a man's alternation by his decorations either in everyday life or on ceremonial occasions. Emley (1927) noted these same rules but he did not record whether they were actually observed. Turkana claim that they do observe them, but patently they do not. There are no sanctions compelling observance and no man suffers for neglect of them. The only rule which is rigidly followed concerns the color

of a wife's marital neck-ring which invariably is of the color appropriate to her husband's alternation. Emley also recorded that certain colors of beads and certain songs were reserved to each alternation, but no trace of this was found twenty years later.³

Invariably, if a group of men come together for some conscious purpose, they tend to separate into two groups according to their alternations. This is most clearly seen at feasts when the two groups sit slightly apart and cook their shares of meat over separate fires. This occurs not only at specifically ceremonial feasts but also when an animal is slaughtered just for meat for the immediate neighborhood. In earlier, war-like days, Turkana military attacks were normally mounted by a two-pronged assault, each prong composed of men of one alternation.

At initiation the youths of each alternation are dealt with separately, usually on different days but sometimes on the same days at separate but adjacent groves. Turkana see the existence of these alternations as a fundamental dichotomy throughout the tribes such that a youth's allocation to an age-group and his participation thereafter in specific age-group activities is unvaryingly guided by his natal affiliation—e.g., feasting, dancing, war-making, and ritual, as well as the more general feelings of association which produce attitudes of respect, assistance, and mutual support.

Although a man takes the alternation not of his father but of his grandfather, there is no claim to a special connection with the grandfather as there is among the related, neighboring Jie people (Gulliver 1955:250). Indeed, the rule is always formulated in terms of the father's alternation; it is the point of difference from the father which is here emphasized, for all men of whatever age of a single alternation think of themselves as associated together as against men of the other alternation. The two new age-groups which are established in any one initiation season, and which together comprise a total collection of coevals, do not find an especial common interest and mutuality, nor do they coalesce as a single age-class. Instead, each group tends to associate itself with its next senior group in the alternation, and in later life age-group membership gives way in part to the wider membership of the alternation. Young men tend to seek the advice and help and to accept the orders and restraints of the senior men of their own alternation, but they can ignore both counsel and control coming from the other group. There is a greater formality and conscious distinction between members of contemporaneous groups but of different alternations than there is between members of successive groups in a single alternation. An elderly Stone at a ceremony or dance would not give orders to a young Leopard, but he would expect and would normally obtain compliance and respect from a young Stone.

There is a fairly general notion that Stones are in some vague way senior (*luapolok*, the big ones) as an alternation to the Leopards. This idea was expressed in widely separated parts of the country, but no one could explain the reason for it, nor was there much if any significant difference in behavior, status, or privilege. On ritual occasions—for example, rain-making—elderly

Stones claimed to be more important than elderly Leopards and claimed to lead communal supplications to the High God and to receive meat first, but in fact there appeared to be no essential observation of such difference between the two groups at these times.

Age-groups. Normally in each initiation year two new age-groups (*athepan* or *arek*)⁴ are created, one in each alternation. The Turkana say that initiation only occurs in a good wet season; that is, when the rainfall is above the meager average and is adequately distributed, and when there is sufficient grass in the plains to permit all the cattle herds to leave the mountains. Heads of nuclear families and their wives are then able to live with their cattle in the plains⁵ and there is a relative abundance of milk, butter, fat, and meat. It is likely, too, that the tiny, scattered plots of sorghum will produce a fair harvest so that porridge may temporarily be added to the feasts. Thus food is plentiful; people are able to relax and to be hospitable and the herds prosper. Turkana say that they cannot dance and rejoice with empty stomachs, and in fact almost no major social gatherings are held in the dry season and only a few in a poor wet season.

Turkana say that a good wet season (March to July) occurs about once in four or five years. Reasonable rainfall figures are available only for Lodwar, Central Turkana land: for the thirty years, 1922 to 1951, the average annual fall was 5.75 inches and there were eight "good" seasons at an average interval of 3.75 years (Gulliver 1952 b: Fig. 4). Some of these statistically "good" seasons were in fact poor because of maldistribution of rain, and therefore they were not adequate to become initiation seasons. At least one good season (1947) followed so closely on the preceding one (1945) that it was not made a new initiation season. Turkana say that when, exceptionally, two good years are consecutive or separated by only one other year, the new age-group created in the first year can be continued during the second year. In fact, in that period of thirty years five new groups were begun at an average interval of six years. The actual period varied, of course, being entirely dependent on rainfall.

In the more favored (north-western) areas of the country where average rainfall is higher, there tend to be rather more good years which are only partly offset by a group running for more than a single season; in such areas there are usually one or two more groups in existence. In general, however, there are between eight and ten groups with living members in each alternation. This gives a range of fifty years or a little more, which, together with the average initiation age of about eighteen years, puts the age of the oldest men at about seventy years. In my experience, exceedingly few Turkana live beyond the approximate age of seventy years in this hard country, and there is a notable scarcity of men much over sixty years of age.

The general rule is, then, that an age-group comprises the men initiated in a single wet season (toward the end of the season usually). Individual initiation gives automatic entrance to the current group without any subsequent ceremony. There is neither opening nor closing of the group as such. The initiates of one year are given a name and their group takes its place in the

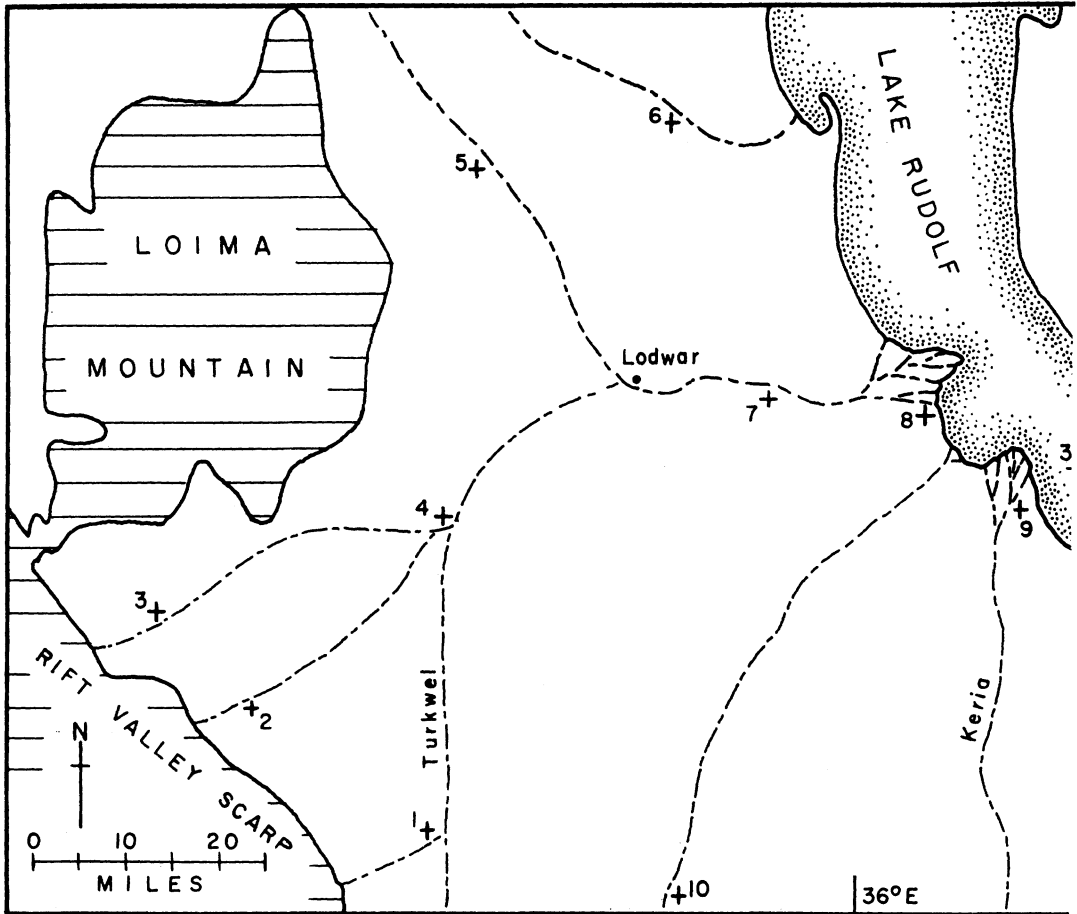
total series of groups. There is no equation between a group's position in the total series at any time and any social function, distinction, privilege, or responsibility held by its members severally or corporately. For example, there are no warriors' or elders' grades.

A member of the newest group is a "man" in the general sense; in earlier days, he was a "warrior" only because he was a young man and not because of his membership in that group. His own development as a social person is an individual matter depending upon his place in his father's nuclear family, the time and nature of his marriage and his inheritance, and the evolution of his own nuclear family. Imperceptibly "a man" (*ekile*) becomes an "old man" (*ekasiko*), and this too is largely an individual matter. It is a relative status; he is an old man compared with his juniors and in reference to some affair such as dancing, fighting, or ceremonial performance. At an initiation ceremony the only "old men" are the members of the most senior extant group, but at a dance the "old men" are all those who do not take a very active part. On one occasion a person is an "old man," and on another he is not; the designation does not necessarily refer to his age-group membership, for some men retain their physical powers and continue an active life longer than their age-mates. At no time does a group reach the grade of "old men," although certain groups may at times be regarded as such.

The diffusion of age-group names. Initiation ceremonies are held at certain conventional centers scattered through the country, and a man takes his son to the center nearest his wet season homestead. These centers are not absolutely fixed, although their localities are fairly definite. Because it is essential that members of the most senior extant group attend the ceremonies and purify and bless the initiates and supervise the distribution of meat, the actual choice of the site for a center depends to some extent on the location of their homesteads, for they cannot be expected to make long journeys in their aged infirmity. Sometimes in a good year an area may not be able to hold an initiation because none of these seniormost men are living there at the time, and the youths and their fathers will be compelled to travel to the nearest center available. Fathers will attempt to arrange their nomadic movements so that their homesteads are reasonably near to an operative center where their sons may attend for initiation. Nevertheless, most centers operate in a good wet season, for these seniormost men are quite equitably distributed among the regions of numerous population. The accompanying sketch map shows the approximate locations of the initiation centers in central Turkanaland, and demonstrates the nature of their geographical distribution.

Past initiation centers retain no special significance. The actual site (*akireket*) is a convenient group of shady trees near to a watering point.

Each center is independent and the arrangement and timing of the ceremonies is the responsibility of the interested people in the area, i.e., fathers of youths to be initiated, influential senior men, and the seniormost age-group. Initiation occurs on several days and each day a number of youths, up to as many as fifteen, present themselves and their male animals. Although the



Sketch map of Central Turkanaland, showing rough locations of initiation centers. These centers are numbered for reference purposes only, and are in no special order. Positions are approximate, and actual locations may vary slightly from one initiation season to another.

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Koteruk river | 6. Kalokwel river |
| 2. Lorengagipi river | 7. Lower Turkwel river |
| 3. Logiriama | 8. Turkwel delta |
| 4. Lorungumu | 9. Kerio delta |
| 5. Kagwelasi river | 10. Upper Lokicar river |

Shaded areas indicate high land, much of which comprises dry season cattle pasture. Dotted lines indicate main rivers, but there is a flow of water, intermittently, only in the wet season.

question of the name to be given to the new initiates is mooted before the first of these days no decision will have been reached. During the ceremonies the matter is freely discussed by all the men present, and a name is finally agreed upon.

A name that has ever been used before may not be used again; this is said to be most important. It emphasizes the newness of the group, say the Turkana, and to the observer it appears to indicate that the group takes its place in the unending stream of groups in such a way that it has no direct relationship to any other group, extinct or existing, except in the total order of groups chronologically determined.

Men will propose names for consideration by their fellows. For instance, one man may suggest a name evocative of a recent notable event—the Locusts group commemorates a locust plague, and “Those of the grass and water” notes a particularly good wet season. Another man may claim a revelation from the High God in a dream—and such a name may be anything in the realm of nature. The arrival and establishment of the British have produced the Swahili and the Shillings groups. The name of the animal speared by the seniormost initiate may be used. These sorts of suggestions are freely discussed until a general consensus is reached. This is a completely informal process and there is no recognized leader who might control the proceedings. Men of the seniormost groups appear to have no special privilege in the matter, but when the name is finally determined these oldest men formally tell the initiates, who have remained aside taking no part.

Thus at each center two new names are agreed upon; but in fact age-group names are usually the same over wide regions containing several centers, and one or two names are to be found almost throughout the country. The whole region shown on the map has a majority of common names. It sometimes happens that, at a center where initiation begins late, men hear of names already decided on at another center and merely follow suit. The possibilities of this are not too great and can probably never occur between centers a hundred or more miles apart.⁶ Also, a particularly outstanding event may occasionally precipitate the same name at several centers—the Locusts group is a probable example. Thus in the initial stage there are an indefinite number of new names emanating from the twenty-five to thirty initiation centers in the country.

There begins a haphazard, wholly informal process of exchange of information and views, resulting in the beginnings of adjustment. During the normal migratory movements, visiting and traveling, men learn the new names which have been chosen at other centers. In earlier days the newly initiated men came together over wide areas for dancing, feasting, hunting, and raiding, but there is little of this nowadays. I have never heard of special meetings for the purpose of discussing the matter, but any gathering for whatever reason serves as an occasion for this. Men initiated at one center will gradually begin to discard their original name and to adopt that of another center which appears to be more popular, more apt, or more successful. Older men begin to refer to

the youngest men by this other name. This kind of slow adjustment to uniformity is lengthy and uncoordinated, and at some stages men from the same center will be individually referring to their group by different names, as will their seniors. This does not really cause confusion, as the Turkana are aware of the process in operation and therefore expect temporary differences.

There appears to be no determinate geographical or social route along which the diffusion of names travels: an examination of the process for the names of more junior age-groups reveals no common pattern. It is clear, however, that certain centers are allowed a degree of superiority such that men from other centers are inclined to follow their lead. For example, Turkana from the central Turkwell river area have colonized the country to the west, following the withdrawal of the Karamojong some 50 to 60 years ago. Centers in this new country (Numbers 2 and 3 on the map) are inclined to follow the lead of the center in the old country (Number 1). This center also holds a certain degree of superiority because the people who conventionally spend the wet season there are generally more wealthy in livestock and more influential than their easterly neighbors in the drier, poorer, more sandy central Turk-analand. A center near the locality of an important rain-maker (and, formerly, an important war-leader) may hold superiority for a period because of the reflected prestige and authority of such a man and because the names decided at these centers are likely to become more widely known. Formerly, a stimulus to accept the name of one center could be given, I was told, by a notably successful raid by its initiates.

The process continues for several years. Turkana say that for each new group the process will eventually be completed, so that for the whole country there is a single, agreed name in general use. This is not true in fact, as is shown by a comparison of lists of names of groups used in different parts of the country (Gulliver 1951:261-62). Nevertheless, a degree of uniformity is achieved which, if not tribe-wide, is extensive. Some names are more widespread than others, although no reason can be adduced for this. For example, there is no difference of uniformity for pre-European names and for more modern ones (i.e., before and after about 1918). Men declare that adjustment goes on indefinitely so that even the names of older groups can be changed, but this seems unlikely. Reference to the names of groups of men aged about 40 to 50 years in central Turkanaland produced fair recognition among people in north-western Turkanaland, but questioning elicited a declared determination not to alter names at that stage.

Not unnaturally, differences are greatest the farther apart two areas are. Such general regions as the north-west, the north-east, the center, and the south show considerable but by no means complete uniformity. For some reason not understood, the names in the Stones alternation show a greater uniformity than those in the Leopards, although no Turkana seemed to be aware of this until it was pointed out to them. Indeed, most Turkana, who are parochially minded despite their nomadism, assert that all names everywhere are the same

as those used in their own region, and it was not until I had recorded lists of names for many regions that I realized that their statements were untrue, although as an assertion of the ideal they may be correct enough.

One other point is worth mentioning: occasionally a name applies to groups which in different areas are of different seniority. This does not seem to contravene the rule that a new group must be given an entirely new name, though it would appear obvious that the more junior group must have obtained this name through knowledge of the more senior one elsewhere.

This imperfect process of the diffusion of age-group names is significant in two ways, First, it indicates the common tribal feeling of a single, uniform system for the whole country. There is extremely little mechanism of social integration in this nomadic tribe, wherein territorial allegiance is nominal and where there are neither significant encompassing groups such as lineages nor institutionalized political leaders or officials. In spite of this, and despite their permanently nomadic life, the Turkana do express strong emotional feelings concerning the unity and homogeneity of their tribe. The willingness to give up an age-group name and to adopt that of another center, and the general insistence that uniformity of names is eventually attained (untrue in fact) are part of this. Second, we note the absence of a formal social mechanism for obtaining uniformity, together with the absence of specific age-group leaders, or leading elders, who might be responsible for this.

The following list of age-group names for each alternation in west-central Turkanaland is given as an example of the sorts of names chosen. It will be noted that there are eight groups extant, and this number is a direct result of the relative infrequency of good wet seasons in that region. The names are given in order of seniority, starting with the eldest in each alternation.

<i>Stones</i>		<i>Leopards</i>	
<i>Ngkwalitom</i>	(Elephant's tusks)	<i>Ngimetheth</i>	(Locusts)
<i>Ngitapino</i>	(Guinea-fowl)	<i>Nggerowe</i>	(Buck)
<i>Ngimericada</i>	(Fur leg-circlets)	<i>Ngicodomethekin</i>	(Lame sheep)
<i>Ngimerithie</i>	(Spotted leopards)	<i>Ngikapilikwara</i>	(Spear shafts)
<i>Nginyagipor</i>	(Grass and water)	<i>Nginyangardung</i>	(Grass and erdung trees)
<i>Ngwaria</i>	(Small rain-pools)	<i>Ngibekekware</i>	(Broken spears)
<i>Ngilingakori</i>	(Goats with red heads and white bodies)	<i>Ngiriokumu</i>	(Black stones)
<i>Ngukwakora</i>	(White he-goats)	<i>Ngisale</i>	(Swahili)

The principle of seniority. There is a scale of seniority running imperfectly through a single alternation, but scales for each alternation are not comparable at any point. Groups are placed in chronological order so that the older are more senior. Within each group there is a ranking of members which is defined by the order of seniority of members' legal fathers. At any one initiation ceremony, this order is strictly followed and demonstrated in practice by the

order in which initiates spear their animals; but it can, at least theoretically, be determined as between any two men of the same group irrespective of where they have been initiated.

Fathers of initiates are not all members of the same age-group, but are drawn from the four or five most senior groups in the total series. Thus the initiate-sons of members of the seniormost (or first) age-group are automatically senior to sons of members of the second group, who are again senior to sons of members of the third group. Among initiates who are sons of members of a single age-group, seniority depends directly on the relative seniority of their fathers in that set. Thus the greater the age gap between father and son the higher the seniority of the son within his own age-group; the smaller the gap the lower the seniority of the son. Elder sons are therefore in relatively junior positions in their groups and younger sons are relatively senior. But, of course, elder sons still remain senior to their younger brothers in the total series in the alternation.

In each case the initiate-son's position in his section of the new group is determined by his father's position relative to the fathers of age-mates. This information is usually known at a particular initiation center or, by discussion, it can be determined by the older men present. When it cannot be determined, recourse is had to divination by throwing sandals, a technique known to many Turkana. Similarly, if it is later necessary to establish relative seniority between two age-mates, the same process of discussion and final recourse to divination is followed.

Under this system sons cannot benefit from the wealth or prestige of their fathers to gain high seniority positions. It is also certain that, whether or not a man has high seniority in his own age-group, his elder sons will be only junior in theirs; but, on the other hand, high seniority of a father will give a high ranking to his youngest sons in their groups. I do not think that this result is consciously intended or even appreciated by the Turkana; youngest sons are not preferentially treated in other social fields, and in general they have an unenviable position in the queue for bridewealth animals, inheritance, and the like. Finally, the determination of an initiate's seniority has no connection with his character, ability, physique, and so forth. Even order of birth (where it is known) has no relevance as between age-mates of different fathers.

Ecology and the age-group. The structure of the age-group system has been described in the first sections of this paper, and it is now necessary to understand its operation and significance in the social life of the Turkana. Before this is possible, however, it is necessary to mention very briefly the essential ecological limitations on social organization and on age-groups in particular.

The Turkana are nomadic pastoralists inhabiting semidesert plains where rainfall averages no more than 15 inches a year and less than six inches in the center and east. There are a few scattered mountains where rainfall is rather better and where permanent grass of a kind is found. The cattle herds follow a transhumance between mountains (dry seasons) and plains (wet seasons), while camels, goats, and sheep move slowly around in the plains throughout the

year. Human habitation is nowhere permanent. More importantly for this paper, no residential groups are permanent. Men whose homesteads comprise a neighborhood at one time do not necessarily move together and there is a constant process of coalescence and dispersion as heads of nuclear families shift their herds as they individually see fit. Although a middle-aged man will normally have established a general routine of annual movements, the details of actual location and timing vary considerably from year to year as a result of varying rainfall and personal inclination. All land is common pasturage. Thus the men who comprise a wet season neighborhood group will scatter gradually and join in a number of neighborhoods during the following dry season; in the next wet season, although most or all of them may return to the same region as before, they do not necessarily make up a single neighborhood again. A few kinsmen or friends may move more or less together for a period of months or even years, but inevitably they will separate sooner or later as disagreements occur over decisions to move or in personal relations. Sons do not normally adopt the same pastoral routines as their fathers. Close agnates often deliberately develop different routines from each other (Gulliver 1955: Chapter 2 and *passim*).

The effects of such pastoral-social anarchy are decisive in the nature and operation of the Turkana age-group system. Youths who are initiated together at one center in a good wet season must usually go to the mountain grasslands with the cattle herds in the dry season, but age-mates may well be scattered over a range of 100 miles or more. When wet seasons are poor they may get no opportunity to descend to the plains again; when wet seasons are fair or good they do not necessarily return with the cattle to the same plains locality as before, and even if they do, some of them may be detached to herd camels, goats, and sheep elsewhere as required by the state of the family labor force at the time. As the young men mature, marry, inherit their own herds, and become heads of their own nuclear families, they gradually develop their own annual routines without particular regard for the contemporary evolution of their age-mates. Their good wet season regions may or may not coincide with those of their fathers, and therefore may or may not include their initiation center.

In the course of their movements as dependent sons or independent family heads, men continually become temporary neighbors of age-mates initiated at other centers.

Thus there is not and cannot be any specific corporate unity of an age-group based on a single initiation center or a single region. Similarly, there can emerge no more or less permanent clusters of age-mates (parts of an age-group) which might normally meet together in corporate activities. Instead, wherever they are at the time, men tend to associate with their temporary neighbors of the same age-group in any activity in which age-group alignment occurs. It is most important to appreciate this point because in Eastern Africa the usual age-group, or some definite section of it, is a corporate group with recognized, stable leaders or functionaries.

The operation of the seniority principle. On any occasion when several members of the same age-group meet together, one of their number will be recognized as the seniormost and he will automatically be allowed superior privilege and will be expected to assume ad hoc leadership. For example, he will distribute the group's share of meat to his juniors and will retain the better pieces for himself. He will tend to act as spokesman of that temporary collection of age-mates in relations with members of other age-groups who are present, or before a diviner or other prominent man. At least initially, he leads his age-mates in group singing and dancing. But he has only a purely temporary status of *primus inter pares*, and in practice he may be superseded by a more forceful although junior age-mate.

The whole of an age-group never meets together, for that would, by Turkana theory, necessitate the assembly of age-mates from the whole of Turkanaland. Neither, as we have already seen, are all men initiated at a single center likely to reassemble in later years as a single group. Thus age-groups have a corporate quality only insofar as men tend to think of themselves and their age-mates, known and unknown, as a body distinct from other groups. In practice all age-group activities are conducted by ad hoc collections of members of a group who happen to live in an area at the time. Similarly, seniority is a relative matter: on one occasion a man may be the seniormost, and at another time he may be subordinated. The principle of seniority invariably affords a method of ranking such that it permits the automatic selection of a leader, and it provides for an orderly distribution of privileges and duties as required. Thus it is an invaluable mechanism for the guidance of the social conduct of these temporary collections of men.

The operation of the mechanism is best exemplified at a meat feast. After dividing into alternations, the men sit in separate age-group clusters. The men of the most junior group skin and cut up the slaughtered animal, fetch wood, tend the fires, and roast the meat under the supervision of men of more senior groups. If several age-groups are present, each is allocated pieces of meat by men of the seniormost group acting under their senior-man. The meat of each group is then distributed to the members in order of seniority by their senior man. The more senior age-groups, and again the more senior members of each group, retain the better pieces of meat for themselves. There are two special pieces which are ceremonially cut off the carcass first by the seniormost man present; these are the *emacher* (testicles and surrounding meat) and *apol* (side of loins). These are cooked separately, first, and eaten by the two or three most senior men present.⁷ During or after the eating there are usually communal invocations to the High God, led principally by the most senior man present, and by the seniormost member of each age-group (except the more junior ones).

The most senior members of a junior age-group have no special powers attaching to them, for their occasions of leadership are irregular and temporary. As a group becomes more senior within the extant series, its most senior members begin to acquire certain mystic powers and qualities which are of a more permanent nature. These attach to a few men who are continually seen to be

seniormost in collections of age-mates. By the time an age-group has reached first or second place in the series, these few men are accredited with a special relationship to the High God from whom these qualities come, of such nature that they can obtain his assistance, learn his wishes, and understand how to gain his support for the people. This relationship is thought to result directly from the gradually acquired seniority, for it is believed that the High God would not deign to communicate with lesser men. Certainly there is no specific nor conscious act by which these seniormost men obtain their new power. Such men are therefore preferred leaders of ritual activity and communal invocations.

There are a few specialists or diviners (*imuron*, pl. *ngimurok*) who have much closer contact with the High God and who, though members of age-groups, do not in any way owe their powers to such membership. They control rain-making, important divination, and important ritual performances; they are believed to be able to cure illness and defeat witchcraft through their ability to tap the omniscient power of the High God. The seniormost members of the seniormost age-groups do not attempt to compete with these diviners, for the powers acquired by ordinary men by seniority are less precise and more pervasive.

Seniormost men are thought to have the power to uphold and enforce the moral and legal standards of the tribe. They can, it is claimed, stop fights by stepping between combatants, who dare not harm them on pain of punishment by the High God and by practical penalization by these seniors. Such a seniormost man can insist on arbitration, conciliation, and the restoration of amity, and he should initiate, though not take part in, these proceedings. He should intervene when kinsmen quarrel lengthily, when husband and wife are estranged, and when age-groups wrangle over a long period—that is, where conflict is prolonged and socially disruptive. The seniormost men do not act in any way as judges in a dispute; under self-help, the parties to the disputes and their associates are responsible. Nevertheless, the old men, speaking *ex cathedra* as it were, can state the moral and legal norms relative to the situation and they may even be appealed to for determination of a point at issue when there is an impasse between disputants. These men are regarded as the repositories of tribal morality and law, and their pronouncements have a sacrosanct quality.

These special, mystic powers must not be over-emphasized. Many disputes are settled without intervention by seniormost men, and many others continue unsettled despite such intervention. These men are frequently too infirm to leave their homesteads very often; they tend to become too frail to interest themselves greatly in other men's affairs, and their mental powers weaken, depriving them of their practical ability to act as mentors to their fellow tribesmen. Turkana themselves tend verbally to exaggerate the authority and social value of their seniormost men in a way which falls short of actual usage.

Age-group activities. As may be expected, the noncorporate character of Turkana age-groups provides a general and pervasive rather than a specific

influence in social life. Although, as already noted, there is a conscious feeling of amity and similarity of interests, problems, and desires among members of an age-group, this is naturally limited by the irregularity of its expression in concrete activity and by the ephemeral collections of age-mates (i.e., members of a single age-group) who are involved at any time.

Primarily, the age-group system and its concomitant seniority principle provide a well-known mechanism for the ordering and grouping of men at any social event in which more than a handful of them are engaged. This point may be reemphasized in view of the nature of this tribal society where face-to-face relations are impermanent and where there are neither institutionalized public leaders nor universal patterns of alignment and integration such as are elsewhere provided by large kin-groups, politico-territorial groupings, and so forth.

What has been said so far refers mainly to social activities of a specific nature, such as rain-making, marital and family ritual, ritual defense against human and animal epidemics and recurrent misfortune, and, of course, initiation itself. From time to time, however, and particularly in the wet season when men feel able to relax and to enjoy the relative abundance of food, members of a single age-group who happen to live in the same area will come together merely to feast, sing, and dance—"to play" as the Turkana put it. In the dry season work is harder, involving long journeys driving the stock to water and greater care in herding; the animals are in poorer condition and thus yield less milk, and less meat and fat when slaughtered. Nevertheless, even then age-mates occasionally seek to relieve the stark monotony by arranging a feast, and to relieve their yearning for meat. A number of age-mates collect, probably at or near a watering point when work is over, and agree to beg an animal from one of their number. The actual begging is done by conventional group-singing and dancing directed at the man in question. They follow him to his homestead or herd and continue until the request is granted. In general, a man is chosen who is not too poor in stock and who is thought not to have given an animal for a long time in these circumstances; poor men are seldom importuned. Once the man has been selected, it is most unlikely that he can evade his age-mates. He may not be too unwilling and therefore agrees after a show of reluctance; but he may well have plans or obligations which make him most unwilling. In any case, it is rare for him to escape, and Turkana say that in cases of extreme obduracy the men would enter the kraal and seize an animal by force. I have heard of threats of this but have no record of it happening. Nevertheless, the group-begging may go on all day and be resumed the next day until success is achieved.

This kind of begging, which occurs only among men of one age-group, can result in any ox or camel being slaughtered, but there is a special case where bell-oxen are involved. Every man has one or more special oxen with trained horns and with bells attached to leather collars around their necks. There is a psychic relationship between a man and his bell-ox which gives it a particular importance. Such an ox should not die a natural death, especially of old age, and when it begins to grow old it is ceremonially slaughtered by its owner's

age-mates. Commonly, when it is seen to be ageing, the age-mates take the initiative and beg the animal, although they would not normally do this while the ox is still prime. None but age-mates may join in the subsequent feast.

At such feasts, except these involving a bell-ox, men of other age-groups may attend and will be given meat. The seniormost one or two men of the age-group will distribute the meat and will consume the two ritual pieces. The seniormost age-mate will lead an invocation to the High God in which the owner of the slaughtered animal is specially remembered. Junior age-mates will collect firewood, tend to the fires, and so forth; slightly more senior ones will attend to the butchery. Afterward, at least in the wet season, there is singing and dancing—a specifically group performance in contrast to the everyday individual forms. It appears to an outsider that the integrative effects, the sense of communion and of belonging to the age-group, are highly accentuated by the emotional and physical impact of the group-dancing as the men rhythmically stamp and move together in a tight bunch, singing and miming as they go. In my experience, the Turkana are notably inarticulate but they do talk of feelings of great pleasure and of their sense of unity on these occasions.

On the special occasions of meeting peacefully with foreigners—members of other tribes and European officers—for formal discussions, the Turkana tend to present themselves in age-group formation rather than as an undifferentiated body. Again, when men of an area go to attend a wedding, dance, or initiation ceremony at some distance away, they usually go in separate groups of age-mates and there is often a dramatic arrival at the event as such a group storms into the homestead, grove, or other meeting ground, dancing and chanting and brandishing spears and clubs.

These sorts of activities principally affect the younger men, for older men seldom dance, except for a slow, formal walk around the younger men who actively dance in the center. But older men hold ad hoc feasts and they retain their group alignments at ceremonies. The older a man becomes the more often will he be among the few seniormost and thus have to assume temporary leadership at local events when perhaps ten or more men may be present. That is to say, older men are more engaged and more concerned with the arrangement and administration of these larger-scale social activities.

Marriage and its preliminaries bring age-group membership into play. During efforts to gain the agreement of the girl's father to the marriage, and thereafter during bridewealth discussions, the suitor seeks the support of his locally resident age-mates. They may sometimes act as his spokesmen, and they are his best witnesses. If "marriage by seizure" occurs, the suitor obtains the assistance of his age-mates to abduct the girl and keep her hidden safely until her father accedes to the fait accompli. The physical support of as large a number of age-mates as possible is necessary at this time in order to protect the suitor from the wrath of the girl's agnates, and fights are not uncommon between the two parties. Whichever type of preliminary occurs, discussion or abduction, the wedding is similar and the groom arrives and moves about in the

company of age-mates. They share with his close agnates the drive and final spearing of the marriage-ox in the homestead of the bride's father. For an older man his marriage supporters are drawn more from his kinsmen than from his age-mates, but the latter are by no means ignored. Should an older man resort to marriage by seizure, he usually persuades a group of men of a younger age-group to do the deed for him, providing a beast for them to slaughter afterwards.

Military organization. Formerly, and until the final pacification of the Turkana between 1910 and 1926, age-groups were of military importance. Raids could be initiated by regional groups of age-mates and, as in all male activities, men were grouped by age-group during operations.

Local members of a young man's age-group often came together as already described, and at such a time the idea of a raid would be mooted and perhaps tentative plans laid. News would be carried around by the age-mates and other age-groups might join in until large numbers of men began to assemble at a convenient point—usually near the homestead of a war-leader or diviner.

Whenever new age-groups were established, the new adult men would set about working up enthusiasm for a raid, for it was a point of honor that initiates should go on a raid as early as possible. There was the desire to prove one's self a man and to take advantage of the new privilege of warriorhood. Raids were also initiated by war-leaders and diviners.

The raiding party sorted out into alternations and age-groups, and moved off in that order with the seniormost groups leading in each half. The seniormost men of each age-group were theoretically responsible for leading their fellows, but because seniority has no connection with character, prowess, or ambition, the seniormost were apparently often subordinated to more junior men. The actual raid was invariably made by a two-column attack, with each alternation forming a column. Captured stock and humans were taken by the more junior age-groups, while the more senior formed a rearguard in the flight back to Turkanaland. Of course this is a somewhat formalized account of actual events which would surely have been more confused, irregular, and disorganized. Nevertheless, age-groups were expected to keep together, to give mutual support, and to rally together. Age-mates would endeavor to regroup as soon as possible during the return journey.

During the celebrations after a successful raid, age-group configuration was particularly dominant in the feasting, dancing, boasting, and general roistering. Rivalry was strongly stimulated and age-mates partook of each other's military successes through powerful in-group feelings. Clashes between age-groups were not uncommon, according to my informants; but I failed to enquire about the structural lines of such conflict.

Warfare and raiding is now almost entirely ended, though there are still occasional minor raids and affrays against neighboring tribes,⁸ especially against those to the north and east which are only loosely administered, or when poor rains provoke intertribal quarrels over water and pastures. The last major fighting occurred no more than thirty years before my field research, and all

the older men had taken part. There was a temporary recrudescence during World War II, when irregular battalions of Turkana were raised to fight against Italian-administered tribes in Ethiopia. Warfare, then, still remains a vivid memory with the Turkana and it was one of the few topics on which they would talk without restraint to an outsider. Its compulsory ending has inevitably weakened the age-group system and the bonds between age-mates, not only by removing a prime *raison d'être* of the system but also because no longer do age-mates find that former intensity of group feeling which accompanied warfare and its aftermath.

The significance of the system. For the individual man the age-group system means, first, initiation into formal manhood so that thereafter he may rightfully be a warrior carry a man's accoutrements, and wear a man's headdress; he may marry, participate in communal ritual, and in general act and speak as a man. Of course, initiation is not necessarily connected with an age-group system, though such a system usually contains some specific form of it. For the Turkana, at any rate, initiation and age-groups are so closely bound together that they comprise a single social organization. Initiation leads to membership in an age-group and such membership necessarily implies the completion of initiation.

Second, therefore, the system allocates to a man his membership in a group of coevals, gives him a placement in that group, and thus a determinate status in relation to all other men in the tribe. That is to say, it affords him a relationship to his fellow tribesmen in a society in which kinship, political, legal, and territorial institutions are weakly developed or at least have only a limited range of operation. Wherever a man goes in the course of nomadic pastoral movement or in traveling, he finds men who are his age-mates, comrades, and supporters. He finds also his seniors and juniors to whom he can fairly easily adjust his attitudes and behavior. He can never become socially isolated.

Third, by membership in a specific age-group, a man has a range of equals (although internally such men also are graded and placed) with whom he can join in group activities outside the narrow range of his own particular field of direct, personal, enduring relationships based on agnatic, maternal, and affinal kinship and bond-friendship. Because of the indeterminacy of nomadic routines and the absence of permanent or even semipermanent neighborhood groups, a man is commonly separated from men with whom he has specific personal relations. Sometimes a few live near him, and sometimes others; sometimes there may be none at all. But always there will be some age-mates in his neighborhood who will combine with him in social activities. Moreover, they combine in certain essentially masculine activities such as feasting, dancing, ritual, and, formerly, warfare.

Looking at the obverse of the coin, society as a whole, men are grouped together for certain important activities and connected in a coherent system by regulated links. They are drawn out of their small circles of specifically individual relationships into a wider sphere. A mesh of links is established between all the many small collectivities of individuals, and these links, though

singly weak and tenuous, are in total strong, valuable, and integrative. They help to give form to purely temporary neighborhood groupings in alliance with economic and pastoral cooperation.

The chronological series of age-groups and the seniority principle assist the organization of public activities in the absence of institutionalized leaders and permanent large groups—e.g., ritual, warfare, feasting, dancing, the public enunciation of law and morals. They give form to an otherwise atomistic, disintegrate society.

As already noted, age-groups are not corporate bodies and membership in a group only affords participation in local, ad hoc collectivities of age-mates who come together and combine in special activities, and who temporarily find new and wider relationships within their current neighborhood. Thus the ties between age-mates must always have been limited both in time and in intensity. The compulsory abolition of warfare, one of the major activities of age-mates, has deprived membership of a cardinal element, especially among the younger men. Warfare was extremely important to these people and they were notably successful at it, as is shown by the way they robbed their tribal neighbors and drove them back on all fronts for at least two or three generations before the Europeans arrived. It was both emotionally and economically significant. Its disappearance has not only dispirited the people (after many years of guerilla warfare with the British) and removed a vital interest, but it has much reduced the emphasis on age-group membership, making a man's coevals less important and less sought after.

Despite this, however, it would appear that, as commonly in Turkana social organization, the decisive factor in the nature of the age organization and the quality of age-group membership is the limitation of ecology—nomadism with an uncoordinated diversity of movement and the impermanency of neighborhood and territorial groupings through the year, or at the same periods of successive years. Even when warfare brought coevals together, the strength and persistence of their unity must necessarily have been limited and frequently interrupted and broken.

It is well to make the negative point that the Turkana age-group system plays only a marginal part in the politico-legal system of the tribe today. It has been noted that there are no institutionalized political leaders, and in pre-conquest days certain war-leaders and a few diviners were able to assume temporary superiority and influence for only so long as they could retain it individually by force of personality and by practical success in warfare. Self-help was and is the only method of self-protection, the retention of rights, and the restitution of wrongs. In this each family head seeks the support of his peculiarly personal associates ("stock associates"; Gulliver 1955: Chapter 8); each individual's group of such associates is different from that of all others and does not include age-mates as such. In pastoral-economic affairs each family head is morally and legally independent; land is entirely communal and nomadic movement is determined by individual assessment of pastoral conditions and requirements. A man may or may not be influenced by the assessments of

his current neighbors, but in any case he need not be controlled by them and they can bring little pressure to bear on him. In all this the age-group system is unimportant, even insignificant.

Formerly, the age-group system did provide a means by which extratribal, i.e. military, affairs could be conducted. Nevertheless, even here ad hoc war leaders and resourceful diviners were the principal leaders of the day. That is largely finished now; but both in that matter and in the still-existing ordering of individuals and impermanent groups, the scope of the system was and is limited and rudimentary. The age-group system is not coordinated with the kinship system of the Turkana (as it is, for example, among the Nuer; Evans-Pritchard 1939: Chapter IV), nor with territorial units whose integrity and organization it might assist to maintain (e.g., the Jie [Gulliver 1953], the Masai, and the Arusha); nor does it provide a cadre of permanent leaders for specific purposes in ritual affairs (e.g., Jie) or in military or political affairs (e.g., Masai). It is true that the seniormost men in any activity involving age group alignment are afforded a certain influence, a degree of temporary leadership; but the opportunities are only temporary, they are not always advantageously taken and not uncommonly the seniormost men give way to juniors of greater initiative.

The alternations: a hypothesis. There remains the problem of the function of the dichotomous alternations in the Turkana age-organization. Analytically there appears to be little or no significance in the contemporary system, for the division of initiated males into two groupings provides no additional principle of organizational value. Were the alternations correlated with, for example, marriage rules or political leadership or permanently stimulating rivalry situations, it would be possible to understand and explain their function. Failing that one can only report that they currently exist as described.

However, a wider knowledge of the variety of age-group systems in East Africa indicates suggestive similarities between this Turkana dichotomy and that of the Kikuyu and Galla, for example, or, nearer to the Turkana geographically and culturally, the Jie, Karamojong, and Pokot. It would go beyond the scope of the present paper to discuss this, but it may be suggested that in fact a dichotomous principle is analytically discernible in all the various systems of this region, even among such apparently different ones as those of the Nandi and Masai.⁹

The relative insignificance of the contemporary Turkana alternations suggests that possibly they have lost their former functions through a process of social change. This is put forward here as a tentative hypothesis because it is thought that some explanation is required, particularly to assist students who may wish to use the Turkana data for comparative purposes. The hypothesis is not essential to the rest of this paper and need not be accepted as a final explanation.

It is clear that there is a close historico-cultural connection between the Turkana and their Jie neighbors to the west above the Rift Valley Escarpment (Gulliver 1952a). Cultural affinities are notable and, what is more im-

portant here, there are significant similarities between the age-group systems of each society. The Jie have a formalized generation system such that all males must be initiated into the generation immediately following that of their fathers; furthermore, a new generation may not begin initiation until all members of the previous generation have been initiated. Within a generation are a number of age-groups, and there is a system of reckoning seniority which is exactly like that of the Turkana. In practice there are normally only two such generations in formal existence at any time because the newest one is thought to replace that of its grandfathers, and it begins roughly as that of the older men dies away. There is a sense of continuity between a generation and the next but one following it (Gulliver 1953:148). A similar system exists among the Karamojong who, together with the Turkana, Jie, and others, comprise a distinct cultural group of Nilo-Hamites.

The Turkana have a common but vague memory of an older, extinct grouping (the Wart Hogs, *Ngiputiro*) which is categorized by them as of the same order as the two contemporary alternations. It is sometimes described by them as the father of the Stones alternation, although today Stones are all sons of men of the Leopards alternation. As already noted, the Stones are spoken of as senior to the Leopards. My tentative conclusion is that the Wart Hogs comprised a Jie-like generation and were the fathers of the original Stones, who were themselves fathers of the original Leopards. The system has broken down as younger Stones were initiated concurrently with coeval Leopards who were in fact their classificatory sons. For example, in a single extended family some men may well be as old as or older than their fathers' youngest cousins, but these cousins belong to the senior generation irrespective of physiological age. The Jie make conscious efforts to prevent a mixing of successive generations in order to prevent a breakdown of the formal structure. They not only initiate the youngest members of a generation at an early age, but they strictly enforce the postponement of the initiation of the eldest members of the succeeding generation until all their "fathers" have been initiated. This means that some men are compelled to wait until middle age, even beyond the age of 50 years, before they can be formally initiated and establish their own age-groups (Gulliver 1953: 157-8).

It is suggested in this hypothesis that the Turkana have come to reject this kind of restriction in favor of following in practice the ideal (qua ideal, common to the Jie also) of normal initiation in young manhood, i.e., at about eighteen years of age. Over no more than a few biological generations this practice would entirely distort the whole structure until the present situation is reached where there are two coexistent groups which are recruited from each other's sons¹⁰. There can no longer be a clear-cut end to one generation and the beginning of that of its sons.

An apparently similar kind of distortion is reported for the Pokot (Suk) of Kenya by Peristiany (1951:292). The Pokot claim to have imitated the Karamojong age-group system; but they, like the Turkana, have favored initiation

in early manhood, and certainly before marriage, irrespective of the structural position of the "father's" generation.

The question remains: why did the Turkana reject the Jie-type restraints on initiation and prefer to initiate males in young adulthood? This may possibly be related to the fact that Turkana age-groups, unlike those of the Jie, were military units and a warrior had to be an initiated man. For the Jie, initiation opens the way to potential ritual privileges and responsibilities, and its postponement is not socially harmful. A military organization, however, cannot afford the lengthy postponement of recruitment of personnel. Also, it is by no means impossible that social contact and intermarriage with both the Masai-like Samburu and the Suk gave added emphasis to military desires and needs.

If this hypothesis is correct, then it means that in place of a Jie-like generational system in which there is a structural and spiritual affinity between the groups of grandfathers and grandsons, the Turkana have reached a situation in which grandfathers and grandsons continuously combine into a single group with a heritage passing internally along a chronological series of constituent age-groups. Two related principles continue in both systems: the structural distinction between fathers and sons, and the structural affinity between grandfathers and grandsons. These basic principles, however, have come to serve rather different social ends in the two societies.

NOTES

¹ I acknowledge permission by the School of African Studies, University of Cape Town, to use material already published in Gulliver 1951. I wish also to acknowledge the assistance of A. H. Jacobs, who read and criticized this paper in draft.

² In ordinary usage this masculine form of the Turkana word means "mountains," whereas the feminine form of the same root means "stones," (*Amuru*). Concerning the alternation, however, the Turkana refer to "stones," as I have here translated, for the masculine form of the root is used to denote its reference to a body of men. The singular form *Imurut* differs from the ordinary usage singular, *imuru*, in being given a personal suffix.

³ Emley recorded informants wholly from the south of the country whereas the bulk of my work was in the west, center, and north.

⁴ *Athepan* is the infinitive form of the verb "to initiate" used as a noun. *Arek* is perhaps more commonly used and may also be used for "alternation"; it may perhaps share a common origin with the Swahili *rika*, (coevals or contemporaries), and Kikuyu *rika* (age-group and generation). Turkana sometimes also use the words *adjure* (strictly "a band or group") and *atherpic* (strictly "a crowd") for both age-group and alternation.

⁵ For most of the year and for all of poor years, the cattle are compelled to live in the restricted mountain areas where grass is available; but the head of a nuclear family and his wives remain in the plains, the preferred areas of residence, where camels, goats, and sheep remain all the year round. There are, of course, numerous exceptions to this simplified general pattern (Gulliver 1955: Chapter 2).

⁶ Turkanaland covers an area of some 270 miles from north to south and about 100 miles from east to west, though narrowing sharply to the south, and comprises about 24,000 square miles.

⁷ If the occasion is connected with a specific age-group, the seniormost man of the group who is present cuts off this special meat and it is eaten by him and the other one or two seniormost age-

mates, although there may be, by courtesy, members of more senior age-groups present to join in the general feast.

⁸ Internecine warfare, involving the use of spears ("proper warfare") seems never to have occurred among the Turkana, and fights with clubs and sticks were and are usually short-lived affairs, scarcely more than brawls.

⁹ Among the *Maa* group, comprising the various Masai subtribes and also the Samburu, Arusha, and so forth, a principle of dichotomy runs through many parts of the society as well as the age-group system itself.

¹⁰ Unfortunately, a genealogical test of this hypothesis is impossible as Turkana seldom remember details about their grandfathers, and almost never about earlier ancestors, while many know virtually nothing even of their grandfathers.

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