

HUNTERS OF THE NORTHERN EAST AFRICAN COAST: ORIGINS AND HISTORICAL PROCESSES

Daniel Stiles

This paper has three related themes. First, the hunting peoples of the northern East African coast are defined; second, a period of origin of each group is proposed; and, third, the processes which resulted in their creation and persistence to the present are hypothesised and discussed.

The literature dealing with hunting peoples is a confusing one, as there are terms that are generic in coastal languages for any hunters, there are specific terms for certain peoples in these different languages, and there are the names that people use to refer to themselves. Each of the main linguistic groups inhabiting the north coast has its own word for hunting peoples in general: Swahili, *Sanye* or *Sanya*; Orma, *Waar* (*Wata*); Giriama¹, *Liangulo*, *Ariangulo*; Somali, *Bon*. Most early writers who discussed the coastal hunters made little attempt to find out what they called themselves and accepted the name provided by their guide and interpreter; thus *Wasanye* or *Waboni* in the literature can refer to any number of different peoples. This has resulted in erroneous historical reconstructions when researchers work only with library and archival sources. Who, then, are the north East African coast hunting peoples?

DESCRIPTION

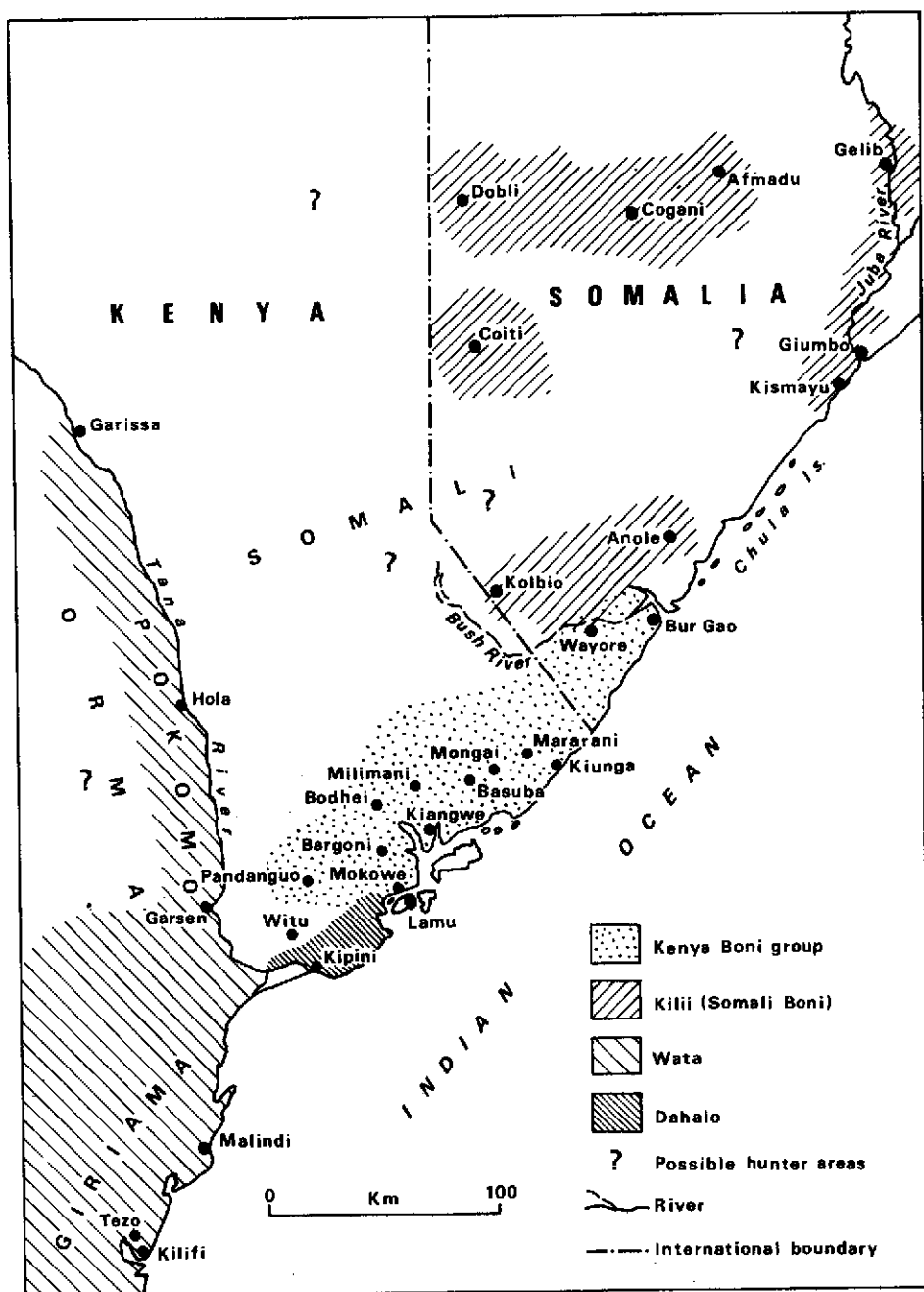
From linguistic and cultural features I think that one can define three basic population groups existing today along the coast that until relatively recently possessed a primarily hunting-gathering subsistence economy:

1. **Boni**, speaking a distinct Eastern Cushitic language called *Aweer* (Heine, 1977); called *Wasanye* or *Waboni* in Swahili, *Wata* by the Orma, *Bon* by the Somali, and *Aweer* by themselves. The Dahalo call them *Ogoda* and the *Wata-gedi* call them *Waboni* today, though in the past they were known as the *Wata-bala*. *Boni* will be used here because of its more common use in the literature and the fact that they use the term *Boni* frequently to refer to themselves.

There are two main subdivisions of the *Boni*, what I shall term the *Kenya Boni* Group and the *Kilii*, the latter located mainly in Somalia. Prior to their movement out of the deep forest in the 1960s to settle along the *Mokowe-Bodhei-Kiunga* road (see map), the *Kenya Boni* were divided up into several sub-groups based on geographical location. These sub-groups also display minor dialectal differences (Heine, personal communication), indicating that each sub-group maintained a certain amount of social and territorial independence. Today many of them are mixed in semi-permanent villages. A summary is given below, though it is subject to revision:

<i>Sub-group</i>	<i>Settlements</i>
<i>Aweerberer</i>	<i>Pandanguo</i>
<i>Aweersafaré²</i>	<i>Bodhei, Bargoni, Milimani</i>
<i>Aweerbala</i>	<i>Kiangwe, Milimani, Basuba</i>
<i>Aweebura</i>	<i>Milimani</i>
<i>Aweerdua</i>	<i>Milimani</i>
<i>Aweerkijé</i>	<i>Milimani, Basuba</i>

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|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Aweerjaré | Mangai |
| Aweerdhura ³ | Mangai |
| Aweerbedé | Mararani |
| Aweerwagoi | Mararani, Wayore (or Wajore) |
| Aweerbubé | Wayore |



One other sub-group was brought to my attention by informants in Milimani, called Aweerghurud. They are purported to occupy the western side of the Tana river around Hola and to live in association with the Orma. I was told that they were called the Wata-ormatu by the Orma⁴ and that they spoke Orma, but among themselves they still spoke Aweer. There are approximately one thousand Boni in Kenya and about one to two hundred of the Kenya group in southern Somalia.

The Aweerkilii, or Kilii, speak a dialect of Aweer significantly different from that of the Kenya Boni (Heine, personal communication). They are found in Somalia along the lower Juba river around Gelib, near Kismayu on the coast, and inland in the area between Afmadu and the border with Kenya in the towns of Belese Cogani (called simply Cogani) and Dobl. Cogani is the centre of the Kilii Boni, and I was told that a *hayu* (chief) traditionally resides there who commands the allegiance of all Kilii. Kilii are also reported to live around Anole further south and in Kolbio, on the Kenya-Somalia border, and they are now moving into Kenya Boni group territory across the Bush-Bush river. The Kilii probably also occupy the territory between the places mentioned, as there were several place names given to me by my informant that I could not locate on any maps, but only the areas definitely identified are marked on the map here.

The Kilii have taken up pastoralism, and my informant (a Kilii) told me that they also live in Kenya around Wajir and Moyale in pastoral settlements that they call *alango*, which is neither the Oromo or Somali word for this. Where they live around Borana peoples, as at Coiti, they are known as Bon Boran (see Salkeld, 1905) by the Somali, and as Wata by the Boran. If this information is correct, it provides a link between the hunting peoples of the coast and those of northern Kenya and possibly southern Ethiopia known as Wata in Oromo (though I was told that no Boni lived in Ethiopia).

2. **Dahalo**, speaking a Southern Cushitic language called by themselves *numma guhooni*; called Wasayne in Swahili, Wata by the Orma, Wata-Juan by the Wata, and the Boni call them Dahalo or Juan, though the latter term is more common today. 'Dahalo' is a perjorative term in Aweer meaning stupid or worthless people. I was told that the Boni called them this because they didn't know how to trade properly and they could never organise themselves, living singly or in family units in the bush, sleeping under trees.⁵ Elderkin (1976) records *guho garimaani* ('the people of the outside') and *guho gwisso* ('the little people') as names that they give to themselves, and informants told me simply *guho* (though some also said they called themselves Dahalo). Dahalo is used here as it is known from the literature and the term *guho* is extremely difficult to pronounce correctly. The Dahalo are limited to a small area around Kipini-Witu-Mkunumbi today. I was told that no Dahalo live on the western side of the Tana river.

3. **Wata**, speaking a dialect of the Eastern Cushitic language group Oromo; called Wasanye in Swahili, Ariangulo in Giriama, Walangulo in Duruma, and Wata by the Orma and themselves. The Boni refer to them as Juan and the Dahalo call them Oriothotanyi, according to what informants told me in Basuba and Kipini respectively. Their southern extent is not well known, though Holman (1967) shows them on a map as extending in pockets as far south as a little across the Tanzanian border. An informant in Tezo (a Wata) told me that they lived as far south as Tanga in Tanzania. It is not known whether these southern communities speak Oromo today, though Holey (1912) interviewed some inland from Mombasa and his 'Liangu' word list is

essentially Oromo. Wata informants told Hopley that they were moving south to escape Orma domination. Heine (in press) distinguishes three groups of Wata: the Wata-gedi, living north and south of Malindi and up to 100 km inland, the Wata-omartu, living between Hola and Garsen, and the Wata-manyole, living between Garissa and Hola. There are probably other Wata groups as well in areas not yet studied. All Wata are restricted to the western side of the Tana river. It is not known whether the Wata should be considered an homogeneous group. Today they all speak the same dialect of Oromo (Heine, in press), but interrelationships between the Wata groups in different areas have yet to be investigated. Wata in Tezo, near Kilifi, expressed the opinion that not only were all Wata of one people, but that even Dorobo and Boni were the same as Wata. It is unlikely that there are strong historical links between the coastal Wata and Kalenjin-speaking Dorobo (Okiek) of the interior, but it would form a valuable topic of research to investigate what links, if any, did or do exist between the hunters of the coastal and hinterland regions.⁶

ORIGINS

There are three theories that have been proposed to explain the origins of the coastal hunting groups: there are those who see them as survivors of aboriginal and possibly Stone Age populations, some view them as relatively recent ethnic formations made up of runaway slaves, destitute pastoralists, and people dispersed by wars, and there is an outline that can be proposed based on historical linguistic data. These theories are not mutually exclusive and the truth is probably realised in a complex mosaic made up of elements of all three. Extreme versions of any of the three cannot be supported, in my opinion, but I shall put forth the basis of each.

The survivor theory

Suggestions that coastal hunter-gatherers are the survivors of bushmanoid Khoisan-speakers who were once distributed from the Cape to the Nile and Horn are based on archaeological, physical, anthropological and linguistic data (Cerulli, 1922; Jensen, 1960; Huntingford, 1955; Cole, 1963; Grottanelli, 1957). The archaeological data consist of Later Stone Age microlithic industries, petroglyphs and rock paintings in eastern Africa similar to those found in southern Africa and associated historically with the San ('Bushmen') (Cole, 1963: 331-2; Sutton, 1974: 85; Peringuey, 1911). Microlithic technology was common in Post-Pleistocene times in many parts of the world and there is nothing that can be used to link definitely southern and eastern African Later Stone Age industries to one racial, ethnic, or linguistic group. There is, in fact, a much larger degree of technological and typological diversity in the Later Stone Age of these two regions than was earlier thought, which suggests that the human population was not uniform (Nelson, 1976; Phillipson, 1977). Likewise, petroglyphs and rock paintings are common to hunting peoples and are found in the Americas, Europe and Asia, as well as Africa. To my knowledge, no systematic comparative study of style and content has been done that would associate southern and eastern African parietal art with one cultural tradition.

There is no skeletal evidence of a San type from Later Stone Age burials in eastern Africa. The Singa skull, found near Khartoum and dated to about 17,000 B.C., has been suggested as a San ancestor (Wells, 1951), but this idea has recently been

contested (Stringer, 1979). The first definite San skeletons are seen in South Africa at Matjes River Cave, dated to approximately 11,000 years ago (Louw, 1960) and no good examples are known north of Zambia. All Later Stone Age skeletons now known in East Africa show characteristics that indicate that they are not 'Bushmanoid' (Rightmire, 1975, in press).

Physical anthropological studies of living hunter-gatherers have resulted in suggestions that there is a Bushmanoid racial component present in living populations (Puccioni, 1936; Parenti, 1949; Battaglia, 1957), but the results of these studies are far from conclusive. Foy *et al.* (1957) and Goldsmith and Lewis (1958) found only minor differences in sickle-cell and ABO and MN blood groupings between certain hunting communities and their Eastern Cushitic neighbours.

More recently, Fleming (1978) has synthesised data from many studies involving blood proteins of African peoples. These results suggest that at least for northern Somalia hunters (Midgaan) there is some difference between them and their Somali neighbours. In comparison with southern African San or East African hunters such as the Sandawe and Hadza, however, the Midgaan are much more similar to the Somali (Fleming, 1978). Since the Midgaan form an endogamous caste, it is not surprising that their blood group frequencies differ somewhat from those of the neighbouring Somali. No studies of this kind, to my knowledge, have been conducted in the Boni-Dahalo-Wata areas.

There is better evidence for a Khoisan language having been spoken along the coast in the past. Elderkin (1976) and Ehret (1980) have both studied Dahalo and have found the presence of a dental click in the language, known only in Khoisan languages elsewhere. Damman (1950) and Tucker (1969) both earlier pointed this fact out, but they referred to the Dahalo as Sanye and they were uncertain about the relationships of these 'Sanye' with the 'Ariangulo' and the Boni. Dahalo, along with evidence of Khoisan-speaking with the Sandawe of Tanzania (Köhler, 1975), supports a notion of early Khoisan speaking populations in eastern Africa⁷, but this says nothing of the physical type, since languages can be transmitted from one population to another without significant gene flow or migration.

The conclusions to be drawn from the foregoing are that there is no evidence of a physical anthropological nature that the present-day coastal hunter-gatherers are descendants of a San physical type, but there is some evidence that they differ from their neighbours and that a Khoisan language was once spoken in eastern Africa along the coast.

The recent origins theory

Turton (1975) and Morton (in press) argue that coastal hunting communities seen today originated since the sixteenth century. They maintain that these people were originally of Somali origin, from the Garre section⁸, who inhabited the Juba-Tana region before the arrival of the Galla in the seventeenth century. The Galla dispersed the Garre, some of whom fled into the coastal forests to become Boni, Dahalo and Wata (though Turton and Morton do not distinguish between them and use terms such as Sanye and Ariangulo). These Garre-derived coastal hunters later absorbed elements from the Galla and Bantu populations and form therefore a mixed group of relatively recent origin.

Although Turton and Morton differ in some particulars, they are in agreement in rejecting a pre-sixteenth-century origin of coastal hunting communities and in accepting a pre-Galla occupation of the Juba-Tana region by the Garre. They do not discuss the linguistic differences of the three hunting groups seen today along the coast nor the fact that two of them are unique and are today restricted to very small populations. They both also present several inaccurate and unfounded assertions to support their argument of Somali origins of the hunting communities, which I have discussed in much more detail elsewhere (Stiles, 1980a). There is no doubt that individuals or even small groups from the Bantu and Galla communities joined hunting groups from time to time in the past, but this fact does not alter the separate and non-Somali origins of the different hunting communities.

Linguistic outline

Reconstructions based on historical linguistic work are not, strictly speaking, a theory of origins of various peoples, but rather form the basis for suggesting a chronology of when the different hunting groups may have come into existence. This outline is based principally on the work of Ehret (1974) and Heine (1977, 1978, 1979, in press). Ehret proposes that pastoral Southern Cushitic-speakers migrated into East Africa from southern Ethiopia from about 4,000 years ago, though it could have been as early as 5,000 years ago (Fleming, 1969). They possessed cattle, sheep and goats, and linguistic data suggest they possibly cultivated sorghum. They encountered Khoisan-speaking hunter-gatherers (Heine, 1979: 39). The Dahalo are thought to be people remaining from this early Southern Cushitic migration who retain elements of the earlier Khoisan language spoken by the indigenous hunters at the time of contact.

Proto-Sam speaking peoples, the ancestors of the modern Boni, Somali and Rendille, began migrating from the area north of Marsabit to the east and south-east about 2,000 years ago. According to Heine (1978: 47-8) they passed through the Lorian Swamp and down the Tana to the Indian Ocean, then some continued north into the Horn. The Proto-Sam who remained behind in the Marsabit area became the Rendille. The first group to separate from the Eastern Sam were the Proto-Boni, followed by Jabarti Somalis, and then successive Somali dialect speakers developed further north in the Horn. Reconstructed vocabulary suggests that these Sam peoples were primarily camel pastoralists. The Boni would have begun to emerge as a distinct linguistic group some time around 500 A.D. They undoubtedly had some contact with the Dahalo, but to what extent is difficult to determine at the present time.

The origin of Oromo-speaking Wata is a more difficult question. They have a tradition of having spoken another language before they adopted Oromo (Barrett, 1911; Stiles, field research), but this language is not known. Was it perhaps Aweer or Dahalo? Or was it more closely related to one of the Southern Cushitic languages spoken until recently by hunters of Tanzania (Fleming, 1969; Winter, 1979)? If the Wata speak Oromo because of a language shift, in other words because they adopted the language of their Galla patrons while abandoning their own between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, then lexicostatistics will be of no help in determining their time of origin. There are three possibilities of Wata origins: (1) they arrived with the Galla beginning in the early seventeenth century as accompanying clients, (2) they were already inhabiting the coast when the Galla arrived, but subsequently acculturated to them, or (3) a combination of (1) and (2).

THE SOCIO ECONOMIC AND ECOLOGICAL CONTEXT

The history of coastal hunting groups can be understood only in the context of how they have traditionally functioned in the broader socio-economic system of coastal peoples in general. In relation to the Eastern Cushitic Galla and Somali pastoralists they occupy a very low-status position. They are believed to be polluting, and sanctions against intermarriage and communal residence are upheld by the belief that hunting peoples eat impure foods, such as wild pig and porcupines. They are, however, considered to be a valuable economic asset and therefore close interaction is maintained. The hunters supply needed wild animal products for a variety of economic and cultural needs, not the least of which until recently was ivory. It has been widely reported by early travellers that the Boni and Wata were required to give one tusk from every elephant killed to the Galla or Somali, and for some this practice seems to have applied with the Bajuni as well (Fitzgerald, 1898: 487).

East Africa has been an important source of ivory for the world since Roman times, and the amount of ivory estimated to have been exported since the sixteenth century must have required a stable, full-time hunting population with an organised market system (Lamphear, 1970; Beachey, 1967; Thorbahn, n.d.), thus there was an economic incentive to remain or even to become a hunter-gatherer. In return for their economic products and social services the hunters received domestic animal produce and a certain economic and socio-political security, as long as the pastoralists decided not to over-exploit their dominant position. The institutionalisation of this patron-client relationship is known as *shogat* by the Galla and Somali.

Relationships with the Bantu agriculturalists are somewhat different in that there is no connotation of social pollution associated with the hunting peoples, although they are considered to be of low status. Hunters would trade animal products in exchange for food, cloth, iron and other goods with Bajuni, Arabs and Giriama, and today they continue to look after the crops of land owners in exchange for food and land on which they can cultivate crops for personal use. The share-cropping situation applies mainly to the Wata-gedi and Dahalo today. The Boni in Kenya have their own territory upon which to cultivate, though they hire themselves out as casual field labourers to the Bajuni in Kiunga and Mokowe. My Kili informant told me that the Boni in Somalia are mainly pastoralists, but some also practise agriculture, and hunting is still carried on. De Carolis (1980) states that the Boni of the Juba river valley practise sporadic agriculture and are engaged in craft activities that the pastoralists despise. She also states that they are in an unequal reciprocity relationship with outside peoples. Wild rubber and gum collecting is now more important than hunting, because of governmental measures and lack of animals, and that trade is carried on with coastal Swahilis.

The Swahili and Bantu peoples will allow marriage with hunters, the main prerequisites being that they adopt Islam or Christianity respectively and have an acceptable economic standing. Thus today one sees the Dahalo becoming Muslims and the Wata-gedi Christians.

Van Zwanenberg (1976) has argued that hunting and gathering in East Africa is more of a mode of production than a way of life. By this is meant that hunting and gathering is only part of a range of economic pursuits that are open to everyone, and if an individual perceives it as the best means of survival he will take it up. In the case of a pastoralist, he usually only resorts to hunting and gathering during times of extreme

stress, such as when his livestock has been lost through disease, drought or warfare. If conditions improve, these people will return to pastoralism. Van Zwanenberg also argues that people of hunting origins have the option of taking up pastoralism and assimilating to a pastoral society if they can accumulate enough stock to be taken seriously by their pastoral neighbours.

There are documented cases of Maasai and Samburu accepting, with some reservations, hunting peoples (Dorobo) as segments of their communities on a full-time pastoralist basis (Spencer, 1973; Jacobs, 1965; Bernsten, 1976). As part of the institution of *shogat*, however, the Boni and Wata (at the coast and those found far in the interior as well) were not allowed until recently to own milk-giving large stock. The camel pastoralists (Gabbra and Somali) were particularly strict about this⁹. The Eastern Cushitic hunting peoples never had the option of assimilating to the pastoral way of life, except in the subservient fashion prescribed by Galla or Somali custom. They occupy a social position similar to that of untouchables in India and, like the Hindu untouchables, there is no opportunity for upward social mobility through marriage or occupational change within the traditional system. The economic situation of the hunting peoples could improve with the addition of skills such as iron- or woodworking, which would also be to the advantage of the patron pastoralists who desire the products. The Boni, for example, engage in trade with the Somalis exchanging carved wooden objects, gourd containers, bark rope and water lily bulbs for ghee, milk, meat, and sometimes sheep and goats or money (Stiles, n.d.).

Hunting peoples along the coast also often occupy areas that are not suitable ecologically for pastoralism or agriculture, thus restricting their economic subsistence options. The Boni are an excellent example of this situation (Harvey, 1978; Stiles, n.d.). The highly variable rainfall in Lamu District results in agriculture being unviable for the Boni forest area, which is why no other agricultural people live there, except near the coast. The Boni cannot make a living by agriculture alone. The large numbers of tsetse fly and periodic lack of surface water renders pastoralism a very high-risk occupation in the forest, so that today there is only dry-season grazing in some parts of Boni-occupied territory by the Somali and Orma. The Boni have the forest pretty much to themselves and hunting and gathering is the most adaptive mode of subsistence, given the ecological parameters.

FORMATION PROCESSES

Let us now consider why and how these hunting populations formed and have persisted in time to the present day. Todd (1978), in a critique of Levine (1974), has discussed the possible processes by which the various caste or specialised occupational groups within Ethiopia may have been formed. This discussion has direct relevance here, as Todd considered Cushitic-speaking hunting groups, some of whom are in contact with Galla groups related to those found on the coast. The hunting peoples of south-west Ethiopia may have a historical relationship to some of the coastal hunting populations as well as being in an analogous structural position.

Todd (1978) recognised four different possible processes of formation, but for hunting groups these are not all mutually exclusive. They can be refined into two opposing processes, one termed 'mutualistic specialisation' and the other 'internal social differentiation', each with specific historical implications.

Mutualistic specialisation refers to a situation in which 'a small society no longer relies solely on intermittent contact with outside groups to obtain goods and services which it cannot provide for itself, but moves to secure them on a regular basis by finding a place for the suppliers within its own home territory. This is the condition represented by tribes which have incorporated caste groups' (Levine, 1974: 169). This concept would imply that hunting groups existed geographically apart from and outside pastoral and agricultural home territories until the latter peoples decided to incorporate them in an institutionalised manner within their geographical boundaries. It would also imply that hunting and gathering peoples were in existence before pastoralists or agriculturalists decided to incorporate them, and thus that they are descendants of long-lasting hunting peoples. Moving to the coast, it would imply that the hunters were there before the Galla arrived in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This fits with the fact of surviving hunters speaking non-Oromo languages such as Aweer and Dahalo and the presence of distinctive and unique cultural phenomena within these societies (Stiles, 1980a, n.d.). The coastal Wata, however, could be composed in part or wholly by Wata who arrived with the Galla, since they speak only Oromo.

If the Galla moved into the coastal region with insufficient numbers of Wata, or none at all, then one can easily imagine the Galla encouraging the acculturation of the indigenous hunting populations to their society. As Bernsten (1976: 7) points out in a discussion of Maasai interrelationships with outside people, economic interaction is facilitated if two peoples share cultural features. Thus indigenous hunting peoples began to adopt the language, clan names and social institutions of the pastoralists to allow for easy exchange of desired commodities and services. This process was taken to its furthest extent with hunting peoples to the west of the Tana river known today as Wata, to an advanced state with the Boni, and to a much lesser extent with the Dahalo¹⁰.

Internal social differentiation refers to a process whereby specialist occupations within a society are created by members of that society in response to a recognised economic need. A prerequisite is that food production is relatively stable and that there is a surplus with which to support the specialists. Hence iron workers, potters, tanners, weavers, etc., can evolve into full time specialists only if there is surplus food production and a market for their products. This prerequisite does not apply to specialist hunters, however, as their occupation produces food. This process of formation could have occurred in the case of hunters and gatherers only if there were no hunting peoples to begin with. Archaeology and the basic facts of human evolution make it clear that hunting peoples have existed in East Africa for hundreds of thousands of years. Our knowledge of the prehistoric period along the coast is extremely limited, but it is unlikely that the coast was uninhabited before the arrival of the earliest pastoralists and cultivators. For this reason I do not think internal social differentiation can be used as a model to explain the origins of coastal hunting groups. It leaves unexplained the fate of autochthonous coastal populations.

I think, therefore, that mutualistic specialisation is the more likely process for the formation of hunting castes as they are seen with Eastern Cushitic pastoralists, along with the concomitant requirement that these hunting groups were in existence as independent peoples before their incorporation. In terms of the coastal hunting groups under discussion, the traditional *shogat* system has broken down to a large extent today,

due to recent political and social transformations, but it may still exist with some of the Wata groups associated with the Orma and possibly with some Kili in Somalia.

The fact that it is unlikely that internal social differentiation explains the process by which coastal hunting populations were formed does not mean that later immigrating peoples did not contribute physically to the hunting groups. Members of immigrating pastoralists were forced by circumstances at times to take up hunting and gathering as a response to environmental or social disaster, a practice well documented historically (Spencer, 1973; Sobania, 1978; Robinson, 1980; Jacobs, 1965). These people probably joined hunting bands known to them in the coastal forests, which acted as nuclei to which impoverished pastoralists were attracted. If a system of close hunter-pastoralist interaction was already operating at the time, the acceptance of destitute pastoralists into hunter communities would have been facilitated. It would offer an opportunity for hunters to forge more formal links with the pastoralist society through marriage (or concubinage if marriage was not allowed) and exchange relationships with the kin of the adopted ex-pastoralist. Through the process of acculturation, described by Bernstein (1976) and Winter (1979), the hunting peoples would begin to adopt the language and cultural features of the dominant pastoral society. The extent to which this process advanced would depend on the length of time and intensity of undisturbed interaction.

A distinction must be made between acculturation and assimilation. Van Zwanenberg (1976: 16-17) equates the Maasai-Dorobo situation with that of the Boran-Wata, the latter of which is analogous to that of the past situation of the coastal Orma-Wata and Boni. They are not structurally the same situation, however, even though they share many things in common. The Dorobo are not in an institutionalised system (i.e. *shogat*), nor are they members of a recognised inferior caste group. Dorobo can be assimilated through intermarriage and by communal residence with Maa-speakers. The Wata, Boni and Dahalo, given the present social system in operation, will never be assimilated by Oromo- or Somali-speaking pastoralists.

SYNTHESIS

The most likely explanation of Dahalo origins is that they are a remnant of the original Southern Cushitic migration that took place at least 4,000 years ago and that they came to the northern Kenya coast from the north-west. An alternative possibility is that the Dahalo ancestors migrated south via the Rift Valley into Tanzania with the historically known Southern Cushitic speakers located in that region, and later in time moved north-east to the Kenya coast. Because of the great difference between the Dahalo language and other Southern Cushitic languages (Elderkin, 1976; Ehret, 1980) it seems more probable that their separation occurred early on during the Southern Cushitic migrations and that the Dahalo ancestors never entered Tanzania.

Since there are Khoisan language features in Dahalo, it is legitimate to assume that Dahalo ancestors had some form of interaction with Khoisan-speakers. Not enough is known at present to suggest whether the Dahalo-Khoisan interaction was of the pastoralist-hunter type described above, but Ehret's (1974) claim that the migrating Southern Cushites had knowledge of cattle and small stock by 4,000 years ago at least presents the possibility. The Southern Cushitic-speaking pastoralists inhabiting Kenya were later absorbed by Eastern Cushitic and Southern Nilotic immigrants beginning as

early as 1,000 B.C. (Heine, 1979), leaving the Dahalo hunter-gatherers in an ecological zone which the pastoralists could not inhabit. Lack of intensive contacts allowed the Dahalo language to persist in small, localised areas.

Beginning approximately 2,000 years ago the migrating Proto-Sam pastoralists came into contact no doubt with the Dahalo of the coastal forest. The portion of the Proto-Sam population that turned to hunting as a subsistence economy subsequently developed into the Boni (Aweer). They either absorbed or displaced Dahalo occupying the forest away from the coastal fringe, maintaining their Somaloid language. The geographic extent of the Boni at that time is unknown, but it probably extended by 500 A.D. from the Juba river in the north to the Tana river in the south. The same process that created and preserved the Dahalo would have occurred with the Boni ancestors. Intensive interaction with pastoralists ceased because livestock could not enter the forest. Hunters living at the forest fringes may have continued a symbiotic relationship with the pastoralists, but no linguistic evidence has been left of acculturation to any other former Sam-speaking group. Exchange relationships almost certainly existed, but not long-lasting enough to result in language shift; thus the Boni maintained their language.

The Boni and Dahalo may have established more substantial economic ties with coastal agriculturalists and the emerging urban centres after the ninth century. Preliminary linguistic evidence suggests an important Bajuni-Boni relationship (Nurse, personal communication), which is supported by Boni oral traditions (Stiles, 1980b). Coastal urban settlements in the Lamu archipelago (Manda, Pate) and near the mouth of the Ozi-Tana river (Ungwana, Shaka, Mwana) would have been places where ivory and other game products could have been exchanged for grain, cloth, iron, etc., by the Dahalo and southern Boni. The northern Boni had available Kismayu and Shungwaya (Bur Gavo) and possibly even Barawa for trade connections, though once out of the forest north of the Juba river interaction with pastoralists rather than urban centres was more likely.

The Galla invasion of the seventeenth century changed everything. The Bajuni fled to the offshore islands (Nurse, 1980) and many inland urban centres were abandoned at this time (Chittick, 1975; Wilson, 1980), thus seriously weakening any existing interaction of the hunters with coastal peoples. The Boni began a period of intensive interaction with the Galla, as evidenced today by Orma clan names amongst the Boni, some social institutions in common, certain word borrowings, and methods of house construction (Stiles, 1980a, n.d.). The Dahalo claim not to have had contacts with the Orma (Galla), but there is some evidence of Orma influence on them (Stiles, 1980a; Ehret, 1980). The Dahalo have some Orma clan names, a few linguistic borrowings, and even use the Orma word for God (*waq*), but these could have come through contacts with the Boni, which is how my Dahalo informants explained it.

The Kenya coast Wata are a result of complete acculturation of the existing hunting peoples to the Orma. They lost their language, probably a Southern Cushitic one¹¹, and entered into a patron-client relationship with the Orma. The Wata have certain institutions which seem to differ from those of the Orma and some initial lexical data have been collected that suggest that even though the Wata speak Oromo today they have retained some words of their former language (Stiles, 1980a).

The hunting peoples of the coast have persisted until the present because they occupied a needed place in the human ecology and economy of the coastal region.

Products of the hunt have always been highly valued by the non-hunting communities of the coast for profit, food and crafts, and the hunting peoples traditionally fulfilled certain social and economic functions in the Galla, Somali and Bantu societies. The total ban on hunting in force in Kenya today is ecologically and economically unsound, as the most rational land use of the forest, while preserving its ecology, is hunting-gathering. The ban also deprives a segment of the population of its means of livelihood and it denies important sources of food and needed commodities to all sectors of the coastal economy.

Hunting can be ecologically sound in relation to the wildlife if the excesses encouraged by trophy hunting (ivory, rhinoceros horn, etc.) can be controlled, admittedly a difficult aim to achieve. Estimates of numbers and species of animals killed for food indicate that no threat to the existing wildlife would be posed by allowing subsistence hunting (Harvey, 1978: 143; Stiles, 1981).

Since the principal economic basis for the existence of hunting peoples has disappeared, the people themselves as distinct cultural entities can be expected to disappear as well. It is for this reason that more field research is urgently needed to investigate the history, culture and economy of these elusive but fascinating people.

NOTES

¹ The Giriama and other Mijikenda groups also refer to hunting peoples that existed in the past as Ala, Laa, Asi and Degere.

² A sub-group called Aweerhalder, who formerly lived in the area between Pandanguo and the Mokowc-Bodhei road, are now considered to be part of the Aweersafaré.

³ The Bon Dhurrey of Salkeld (1905).

⁴ Hilarie Kelly, conducting research with the Orma, asked a Wata-omartu woman living in Garsen if this were true. She replied that the Boni were different, not Wata-omartu. It is possible that either Boni only live with the Wata-omartu or that they are in actuality a group called Wata-manyole, which means 'Wata of the sea', who live between Hola and Garissa.

⁵ I thought that this was a perjorative story when I first heard it from Boni informants, but Dahalo informants confirmed the fact that they did not live in villages, nor did they normally build houses in the past.

⁶ There is a much stronger possibility of historic connections between Wata ancestors and former Southern Cushitic-speaking hunting groups known in Tanzania, named variously the Asi, Aasáx, Ala, Aramanik, etc., who today speak Maasai (Winter 1979).

⁷ Hadza is no longer thought to belong to the Khoisan language family (Köhler, 1975; Heine, 1979).

⁸ Turton (1975: 34-5), when discussing the Garre, makes several references to reports written on the 'Koreh'. These Koreh are more probably the Kore, who have recently been discovered to be Somali-speaking remnants of the Laikipiak Maasai (Heine and Vossen, 1980) and therefore have nothing to do with the Garre Somali. Some of them do live in Lamu District today.

⁹ It is not uncommon, however, for a pastoralist to 'lend' one or more female large stock to a Wata for him to look after. During the period that the animal(s) is entrusted to the care of the Wata he is allowed to keep the milk.

¹⁰ Winter (1979) presents a detailed example of how this process occurred in the case of a group of Aasáx hunter-gatherers in Tanzania as they acculturated to the Maasai.

¹¹ If the Wata are descendants of the Ala, reputed by the Giriama to have been hunting peoples occupying the coast before their arrival, it is highly possible that their language was Aasáx, classified as Southern Cushitic (Fleming, 1969). Winter (1979: 192-3) discusses the connection between people known as Ala and those called Asa, Asi, Aramanik, etc.

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