

This set of oppositions puts into relief another conceptual pair in Maasai thought – that of cattle and wild beasts. While cattle, God's gift to man, give life and allow people to live through the pastoral foods they provide, the wild beasts – epitomized by the predatory and scavenging carnivores – literally feed on people, the human corpses laid out in the bush. It is this fundamental opposition which constitutes the conceptual boundary between men and beasts, and defines the Maasai notion of humanity.

b) People, Cattle, and Wild Beasts

The Maasai say that "a man is only a man in community" (Kimirei 1973: 47). The saying expresses a fundamental quality of the Maasai concept of man: being a man is being a part of a community of men. It is this idea which is at the basis of the ideal of the multifamily homestead and the normative value of congeniality that governs homestead organization. A Maasai considers it necessary to live in close company with other men in order to gain wisdom (*eng'eno*) and achieve dignity and respect (*enkanyit*). It is regarded as bad (*torono*) to live alone. A homestead inhabited by a single family is referred to as *elet*, a term used pejoratively as the opposite of the ideal congeniality of the multifamily homestead (cf. Jacobs 1965: 222).

To be a part of a community implies, for the Maasai, cooperation and sharing, congeniality and generosity. Men exchange livestock and ritually share meat. Social relationships are expressed in livestock exchanges. Close kin call one another by "cattle names" which refer to the livestock exchanged (Jacobs 1965: 159). Marriages are legitimized through cattle exchange, and disputes are settled by the same means. Thus the exchange of livestock and the participation in communal meat feasts form an essential part of the Maasai way of being human; indeed, sharing and exchange bring about society and hence humanity. The quintessential herdsman is the "big man" (*olkatok*) who builds up influence by means of generosity and the generalized exchange of livestock, not the "rich man" (*olkarsis*) who accumulates wealth by restricting livestock exchanges (Galaty 1981). A man who is considered greedy and selfish may pejoratively be referred to as *olowuaru*, wild beast.

To eat meat together has to the Maasai the very explicit connotation of peace and unity. Reconciliation between the parties of a dispute – for example, between offender and offended in the case of theft – is often brought about by compensa-

tory payment in stock and the joint consumption of meat. It is these values attached to sharing which account for the reputed hospitality of the Maasai, i.e., the custom of presenting an esteemed visitor with a goat which is instantly slaughtered and eaten in a joint meal. Hospitality (*enkaminin*), then, to the Maasai means more than a token of generosity; it is a means and expression of being human the Maasai way; it draws the boundary between humanity and animality.

The warriors epitomize the human qualities of sharing, solidarity, and community. These values are inscribed in their code of behaviour. Warriors are not allowed to drink milk alone, or drink milk from their family herd, nor even walk alone. They must always be and act in the company of their age mates. The local group of warriors constitutes an undifferentiated, depersonalized community of men who exist only as a part of the collective whole. Their collective identity is, indeed, so great that they virtually share lovers, and even as elders age-mates have sexual access to each others' wives. This sense of community, of being part of a collective social body, is forged and fostered during the warriors' stay in the *emanyata*.¹²

Closely tied to the value of sharing in Maasai thought is that of restraint. As opposed to the unrestrained behaviour of animals, the society of human beings is regulated by rules and restrictions, a code of proper conduct which regulates sex and eating – as typified by the warriors' *enturuj* rules. The social importance of restraint is further reflected in such rules as the prohibition on warriors from finishing a gourd of milk or eating the last piece of meat; lack of restraint is a sign of greed and selfishness and, hence, of inhumanity.

Another important and, in view of their beligerent reputation, perhaps surprising feature of the Maasai notion of exemplary human behaviour is non-violence. To cause bloodshed is considered polluting. An exemplary Maasai – one considered "holy" (*sinyati*) – is someone who abides by the Maasai code of conduct, who is right-handed and has no physical defects, whose parents are pure Maasai, and who has not killed any human being. Only such a man is eligible for prestigious and influential statuses within the age-set system.¹³ The apparent paradox implied by the proscription against killing

12 The particular black and white body paint of the newly circumcised boys, the *sipolio*, is said to make them "invisible," undistinguishable one from another.

13 Such statuses are, for example, those of the political leader of the local age-set (*olaiguenani*), and the ritual leader of the age-set (*olaunoni*), elected at the *eunoto* ceremony.