Concepts of ethnicity and inter-ethnic migration among the Ariaal of Kenya*

Martin Falkenstein
Sozialanthropologie, Fakultät für Soziologie, Universität Bielefeld, Postfach 100131, 33501 Bielefeld, Deutschland


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Abstract. This article focuses on the dynamics of ethnic formations and questions the relevance of static concepts for understanding ethnicity among the Ariaal. Ethnicity and inter-ethnic migrations are an outcome of processes which can be of different kinds in different periods. The motives for changing an ethnic affiliation and thus the meaning of ethnicity vary through time.

I further argue that ecological and economic models which were applied to the explanation of the development of the Ariaal need to be extended by social or political concepts. In the more distant past, the relatively high degree of political differentiation of Rendille society significantly generated the flow of migration from the Rendille to the Ariaal. With the establishment of the colonial rule in northern Kenya the pastoral economies of the Samburu, Rendille, and Ariaal became more diversified. This contributed to an increasing inter-ethnic migration between these groups, especially to the Samburu. In more recent decades it appears that these inter-ethnic migrations have lost some significance. In connection with the urbanization process, many income opportunities were created in the non-pastoral sector. The affiliation with a Church has become in some cases more important for gaining access to resources than affiliation with a pastoral or ethnic group.

Introduction

The aim of the paper is to analyse the long-term development of ethnicity and inter-ethnic migration among the Ariaal. The Ariaal have often been presented as a classic example of a bicultural group which has its origin in two distinct ethnic groups: the Cushitic Rendille and the Nilotic Samburu who speak a Maa dialect. To understand ethnicity among the Ariaal of northern Kenya, one must recognize that the binary logic which underlies classical segmentary models is incapable of making distinctions among the multiple affinities related to ethnic group or clan membership. Social formations, and thus ethnicity, are the result of historical processes which change considerably over time. The dynamics of ethnic formations have heretofore been systematically neglected in many ethnographic studies which focus on only one ethnic group. Furthermore, the standard paradigms treat the primary characteristics of ethnic groups (i.e. their political institutions, economic orientations, cultural practices) as static traits without a sense of their dynamic nature.

On one level it is necessary to understand ethnicity according to fixed and stable categories and classifications since those concepts were to some degree employed, for instance, by the colonial government. Yet, such an approach ignores the complexity and flexibility which are integral to all ethnic groups. The Ariaal, like the other pastoral groups of northern Kenya, actively responded to challenges through such means as migrations, the changing of ethnic affiliations, and the modification of their pastoral economy and culture. My findings on the emergence of the Ariaal and the long-term development of inter-ethnic migration reveal that ethnicity is the outcome of social and political processes which can be of different kinds in different periods.
Concepts of ethnicity applied to the Ariaal

The Ariaal are a relatively small group of people who number perhaps 11,000 souls and who live in the southern part of Marsabit District in northern Kenya. Fairly accurate population figures on this group are not available, since also the recent population census (Rep. of Kenya 1994) does not refer to the term “Ariaal” as a means of self-description for “tribal” membership. Most probably, those Ariaal who have been encountered in connection with the census have classified themselves as Samburu or Rendille.

Who are the Ariaal? In an attempt to answer this rather simple question I looked at publications by early travellers, archival records and ethnographic studies of that region. Moreover, I conducted focused interviews with Ariaal and Rendille informants in order to get a more emic view. On the basis of these interviews I was able to compile a list of Ariaal lineages which are regarded at the present as being affiliated with one of the five Ariaal clans. In addition, I collected some information on inter-ethnic migration among this group for a more dynamic approach and tried to find out when and how these Ariaal lineages were established.

There are very different ideas on Ariaal ethnicity, since there is a variety of linguistic, economic, social, political and cultural concepts which can be applied on this group. According to systems of ethnic classification based upon languages, the Rendille are part of the Eastern Cushitic branch of the Afro-Asiatic language family like the Somalis, Dasenech, and Oromo. The Oromo in turn, include the Boran, Gabbra and Sakuye. The Samburu, like the Maasai, are classified as a Maa-speaking group of Eastern Nilotes who are in turn a sub-group of the Chari-Nile language family. The Ariaal can be assigned to both the Cushites and Nilotes since they are usually bilingual, fluent in Samburu and Rendille. These concepts of ethnic classifications are purely linguistic and should not be misinterpreted as evidence of a common origin of those societies which are classified under the same language family.

The Ariaal may present an atypical case of an East African society, since they clearly do not fit into classical, monogenetic concepts of ethnicity which employ clear-cut classifications. Thus, they may be regarded as a problem. This was especially true for the colonial administration which tried to establish social control in northern Kenya through the imposition of boundaries and the separation of nomadic tribes.

In the archival records we can find the first reference on the Ariaal, made by a District Commissioner in 1918, nearly 10 years after the British had occupied northern Kenya and established a government post at Marsabit. In that colonial report the Ariaal were classified as a Rendille section. There are only a few other references on

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the Ariaal, or Ariale, as they were sometimes called, in the archival records. In all of them the Ariaal are treated as a part or section of the Rendille tribe. In 1926 the first mention was made that the Rendille also possessed a few cattle which were herded by the Samburu. In earlier records and publications the Rendille were generally described as nomads sustaining themselves only on camels and small stock. It is further said that the Samburu tribe and Rendille tribe have been on such intimate terms for many years that the Ariaal section has become so much like the Samburu "as to be indistinguishable both in appearance and speech." Other accounts in the archival records from 1948 and 1950 refer to the circumcision of a new age-set among the Ariaal section of the Rendille. It is remarked that this Rendille section follows the Samburu custom in connection with the circumcision ceremonies. All in all the Ariaal were neglected by the colonial administration as an insignificant or rather confusing category in their systems of tribal classifications.

Instead of employing the term Ariaal the colonial administration made use of concepts which differentiate between Rendille, Samburu, “Marsabit-Samburu” or “Maralal-Samburu” and related the affiliation of individuals to a certain group to registration in the tax-register of a certain District and other characteristics. The Ariaal were living across the boundary between the Samburu and Marsabit District. Before the outbreak of the World War II this boundary, and the ethnic differentiation between Rendille and Samburu, became an issue for the colonial administration which had experienced some problems with the Samburu by that time. The authorities had made some efforts to repatriate Samburu tribesmen living in Marsabit District. In connection with this effort the District Commissioner (DC) of Marsabit had to identify these Samburu and thus to develop a concept of ethnicity which could separate the Samburu from the Rendille or the Marsabit-Samburu from the Maralal-Samburu. By referring to the correspondence between different colonial officers related to this issue it becomes obvious that there were a number of different positions within the administration and, furthermore, that their concepts of tribal classifications were often pragmatic rather than ignorant and based merely on misconceptions of ethnicity which neglect the inter-ethnic links between pastoral societies. In connection with the rath-

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3 Cf. Spencer (1973:193); for an intensive discussion of this conflict, which largely came up in connection with demands on land by white settlers and saw the colonial administration in a position in between the settlers and the Samburu, rather than serving alone the interests of the former group, see Simpson (1994:ch.9).
er vague nature of social boundaries there is some confusion in relation to the application of social categories. By examining the correspondence it appears that the Ariaal could have been taken as Rendille, Marsabit-Samburu and Maralal-Samburu. After mentioning the five Ariaal clans, four of them bearing names similar to clans found among the Samburu, the DC Marsabit pointed to the fact that these clans “live astride the boundary of the two districts. Roughly speaking the camel-herding sections live on the Marsabit side, the cattle-herding sections on the Maralal side. The problem is further complicated by the fact that these clans are inextricably interwoven with the Rendille, so much so that it is impossible to separate them. What then is a ‘Marsabit Samburu’? The only test really is this – the Marsabit Samburu are only those written on my tax register. An unsatisfactory test as the list will obviously vary from year to year. [...] The Rendille Samburu elders know whether any particular Samburu is a ‘Marsabit’ Samburu, also they know that any Marsabit Samburu who crosses the border with a spear will be treated like a Maralal Samburu. Also they know that no Maralal Samburu may carry a spear either side of the boundary.[...] I am forwarding you a list of those Samburu who have been written on my tax register for 1936.”

In reply, the DC of the Samburu District disagreed with his colleague from Marsabit, “as to what constitutes a Marsabit Samburu. I consider they are those Samburu and their offspring who were on the Marsabit Registers in 1930 and not any of those who left this district to avoid tax in 1931 to 1933 or avoid the troubles in Samburu in 1934-35 or 36.”

Apart from the registration as a tax-payer for a certain year the language aspect was taken into consideration for the distinction between Rendille and Samburu.

“There are roughly 220 Samburu in Marsabit District – written on my tax register – who really have no claim to be called ‘Rendille’ as they cannot speak the Rendille language with exceptions. [...] I am inclined to think that repatriation of the entire 220 might cause a bit of stir as many of them are closely related to Rendille.”

“I understand from the District Commissioner Laikipia-Samburu that when he stated that he did not agree that every Samburu on the tax list of the District

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4 DC Marsabit to DC Maralal, 01.05.1936, KNA: DC/MBT/Native Tribes and Their Customs, The Samburu. There is a considerable variation of names in relation to the Samburu District, which was also known as “Laikipia-Samburu” or “Maralal”, and to the location of the District headquarter, which was shifting by that time from Maralal to Rumuruti.

5 DC Laikipia-Samburu to DC Marsabit, 14.05.1936, KNA: DC/MBT/ Native Tribes and Their Customs, The Samburu.

6 DC Marsabit to Officer-in-Charge, Northern Frontier, 30.07.1936, KNA: DC/MBT/ Native Tribes and Their Customs, The Samburu.
Commissioner Marsabit District was a Marsabit Samburu he had in mind the fact that a number of Samburu moved into Rendille in 1930 in order to avoid taxation; and that a further lot moved in 1934 to avoid Tribal obligations; and for these reasons they could not really be considered to be Marsabit Samburu.  

“The total number of Samburu who pay tax in Marsabit District and who have really no claim at all to reside here, is about 220 [...] The Officer-in-Charge has suggested that it would be a good thing if a clean sweep of all Samburu were made.”  

“[...] on 12.1.37 and, on the following two days Barazas [meetings] were held at Horr, both Samburu and Rendille elders being present, to decide whether some 23 Samburu found on Kulal should be returned to the Samburu tribal area. It was decided that 21 of the Samburu, together with 32 women and 17 Moran should be so returned. [...] Of the remaining two men, one was found to be Rendille and the other had been in this district before 1930. [...] On 17.7.37 a similar baraza was held at Ngoronet to deal with 21 Samburu. Of these all but six were able to satisfy the baraza that they were in the district prior to 1930.”  

“[...] apparently not all the 40 enumerated by the District Commissioner Laikipia-Samburu had entered this district since 1930. [...] Apparently in these proceedings the hand and past rule has been followed that any Samburu who came to Marsabit prior to 1930 have a right to remain. This was not quite my intention nor is it in accordance with the policy as laid down in your letter [...]. I had really intended to repatriate all the Samburu and make the test not one of date i.e. when they entered this district but whether they were genuine Samburu or Rendille. In deciding this question I should have been guided by several considerations, e.g., language – customs – length of residence – residence of parents and relations – whether cattle or camel owners. I had intended to make a start with these 40 and then deal with the remainder of the odd 200 Samburu resident in this district [...] However a start has been made [...]”

7 DC Rift Valley to Officer-in-Charge, Northern Frontier, 06.08.1936, KNA: DC/MBT/ Native Tribes and Their Customs, The Samburu.
8 DC Marsabit to DC Rumuruti, 14.09.1936, KNA: DC/MBT/ Native Tribes and Their Customs, The Samburu.
9 Asst. Supdt. of Police, Marsabit to DC Marsabit, 19.01.1937, KNA: DC/MBT/ Native Tribes and Their Customs, The Samburu.
10 Marsabit to Officer-in-Charge, Northern Frontier, 22.01.1937, KNA: DC/MBT/ Native Tribes and Their Customs, The Samburu.
With the outbreak of World War II the representatives of the colonial state had to commit themselves to efforts other than trying to make a "clean sweep" and repatriate all the Samburu living in the tribal area of the Rendille. Some officers employed a rather rigid concept of ethnicity with the implicit idea that it was indeed possible to separate these groups by using administrative instruments. Others followed a more flexible concept and appeared to have been aware of the rather vague and dynamic nature of the boundary between the Rendille and the Samburu. A few years later the colonial administration again showed a rather relaxed attitude in reference to the separation of Samburu and Rendille or "Marsabit Samburu" and "Maralal Samburu". A request by a "Samburu" individual to remain in Marsabit District was even granted under the following condition:

"I think he ought to be sent back to Samburu if he intends to keep his 'nationality' — if he wishes to be regarded as a Rendille I have no objection provided he does not change back to Samburu to suit his own convenience." 11

And in 1942 it was agreed that

"a hard and fast boundary line between these friendly and closely related tribes would be impracticable and undesirable, and that the divisions between them should be marked by joint wells and waterholes, with much give and take as regards grazing in the boundary area." 12

Those pastoralists, who had been repatriated by the colonial administration — whether they were Rendille, Samburu or Ariaal and on the tax list of 1930 or not — could cross this boundary again without much difficulty. For only a relatively short period, during which the colonial administration had experienced some trouble with the Samburu over the Leroghi land dispute, the Samburu-Rendille boundary became an issue. Concepts of ethnicity, which necessarily had to neglect the bi-cultural character of the Ariaal and thus the strong links between Samburu and Rendille, were applied to these groups by using tax-registers of a certain year or a rather general idea of what constituted a Samburu.

The first attempt to deal with the Ariaal in a more elaborated form was carried out by Spencer and resulted in his study Nomads in alliance — Symbiosis and growth among the Rendille and Samburu of Kenya. He focuses in one of the six chapters on the Ariaal or southern Rendille, as he also calls them. Following Spencer (1973:2) the Ariaal "occupy a position geographically, economically, and socially somewhere between the Rendille proper in the north and the Samburu" in the south. Economically, the Ariaal are often regarded as a combination of the camel-herding Rendille and the cattle-

11 DO Maralal to DC Marsabit, 15.01.1940, KNA: DC/MBT/ Native Tribes and Their Customs, The Samburu.
herding Samburu pastoralists since they keep both cattle and camels. In reference to their culture, the Ariaal employ both Samburu and Rendille elements. The performance of rituals with a Rendille background, like almádo and soorriyo, is seen as vital for the well-being of camel herds while the ilmugit rituals are connected with Samburu age-set ceremonies. In rather static conceptualisations about the Ariaal the composed character of their economy and culture usually serves as a definition for this group and there is some reluctance to designate them as a distinct ethnic group. To fully understand ethnicity among the Ariaal it is necessary to take into consideration the dynamics and flexibility of those features which otherwise might be interpreted as unique and indispensable to a specific ethnic group. Indeed, as Barth (1969:11) rightly points out, the sharing of a common culture should be regarded as “an implication or result, rather than a primary and definitional characteristic of ethnic group organization.”

**Ethnic dynamics and the development of the Ariaal in the past**

By discussing inter-ethnic migrations and economic differences between the Rendille, Ariaal and Samburu, Spencer (1973:134) emphasizes that the Ariaal are not just a mixture between Rendille and Samburu, but “the result of successive generations of immigration from both Samburu and Rendille.” The general tendency of migration, which is from the Rendille to the Ariaal and to the Samburu, is basically ascribed to economic differences between these groups. The Ariaal “economy offers a better selection of opportunities” for impoverished Rendille immigrants since many of the Ariaal also possess cattle which in turn “provides a ready outlet for their surplus human population to become Samburu.” Cattle herds reproduce at a faster rate than camel herds and it is often argued that the relative low potential of the Rendille camel economy cannot match the subsistence of an increasing human population. As a result of this imbalance there is a predominant drift of impoverished Rendille or Ariaal emigrants to the Ariaal or Samburu where they take up cattle-raising (Spencer 1973)

13 Cf. Spencer 1973; Fratkin 1987; Sato 1980; the latter views the Rendille sabaade institution, which delays the marriage of Rendille girls whose fathers are members of certain clans and age-sets, as a complicated mechanism for regulating population growth in response to environmental constraints. Sabaade had a negative impact on population growth, but as Roth (1993:597) rightly points out, “the tradition was adopted despite, rather than because of its dampening of population growth.” The existence of sabaade is linked by Rendille informants to times of prolonged inter-ethnic warfare, when the marriage of girls was postponed in order to make them take over the herding tasks of the warriors who were going for wars (Roth 1993:606). In case of an attack on a Rendille camel-camp by Boran cavalry, Rendille girls had to prevent a stampede of the camel herd, since the camels would have instinctively followed the horses of the raiders; interview with Sira Gaalboran (Dubshay), 06.07.1993, Korr. (References to informants contain the name, (clan), date of interview, and the location).
or they migrate outside the pastoral sector where they take up wage-labour or depend on relief (cf. Sato 1980; Fratkin 1991).

Yet so far, this model cannot explain the motivation of Samburu to become Ariaal or Rendille. This gap is filled by referring to times of ecological stress which especially occurred at the end of the 19th century. According to Fratkin (1987:61,172) the Ariaal are a social group that emerged from Samburu and Rendille societies during the 19th century, particularly in the period when both groups were decimated by livestock epidemics, famine or smallpox. First, all those groups which were depending on cattle pastoralism, like the Maasai, Boran and Samburu, were heavily affected by the spread of rinderpest, which nearly wiped out the cattle herds of the Samburu. A few years later the population of Rendille and other camel pastoralists was heavily diminished by smallpox epidemics. The reason for the relative immunity of the Samburu and other cattle herders against smallpox has to be sought in the fact that many of them had previously been infected by cowpox and thus developed a resistance against smallpox. After rinderpest had drastically reduced the cattle herds of the Samburu, the camel economy offered better opportunities for subsistence. The Rendille and Ariaal were in a position to support some of their impoverished Samburu neighbours who in turn had to tend and protect their herds of camels and small stock at that time. They especially had to guard against Ilombok, Samburu paupers, who tried to survive by stealing Rendille livestock.

While Chanler (1896:316), who visited the Rendille before the smallpox epidemics, noted that the Samburu "had been forced into semi-serfdom to the Rendille," the relation between these groups had changed considerably when another traveller came to the area a few years later. Arkell-Hardwick (1903:241) remarked that the Samburu had to protect the decimated Rendille after the smallpox epidemic. It can be assumed that during this period the general tendency of migration was from the Samburu to the Rendille or Ariaal since the economy of the latter offered considerable opportunities for subsistence. On the basis of this discussion it has become obvious that inter-

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14 Fratkin (1991) suggests that in comparison to the Rendille, the Ariaal have a more diversified economy and a more flexible pastoral system in terms of labour organisation which contributes to the maintenance of their position as pastoralists while Rendille are more often destined to make a sedentary living in the proximity of towns.

15 According to Sobania (1980:194) the Samburu had acquired some immunity against the smallpox epidemic due to an earlier exposure with this disease via the Dasenech, while Fratkin (1986:280) relates the same effect to a previous contact with Swahili traders.

16 Cf. Spencer (1973:1.2).

17 Although Arkell-Hardwick's (1903:232) estimation that the Rendille "are probably the richest natives in Africa, calculated per head of population" and that "it is not uncommon to find a village of eight or ten families, numbering not more than thirty persons all told, owning flocks of over 20,000 sheep and goats, and large numbers of camels" seems at first sight to be based on an overestimation it should be kept in mind that the Rendille population was drastically reduced and small stock herds were in the past often so numerous as to be uncountable.
ethnic migrations are influenced by a variety of factors which change considerably over the course of time. There can be little doubt that the concepts which we have discussed so far are basically true and may help to explain the dynamics of inter-ethnic migration between the Ariaal, Rendille and Samburu for a certain period. However, after having conducted a number of interviews with Ariaal and Rendille informants on the emergence of the Ariaal and long-term development of ethnicity and inter-ethnic migration, I heard a somewhat contradictory version, which does not go along with some postulates employed in the ecological or economic framework of Spencer and Fratkin.

Firstly, the emergence of the Ariaal goes back much further than the 19th century. There is some indication that most of the lineages found at the present among the Ariaal stem from segments which already had been affiliated with the Ariaal two or three centuries ago. Secondly, the assumption that the Ariaal employed a mixed cattle-camel economy from the beginning appears as a rather bold extrapolation from their more recent economy, which indeed makes use of both cattle and camels. In general, Rendille and Ariaal informants point out that the economic orientation of the Rendille and Ariaal was more or less the same in the pre-colonial past. They kept, besides small stock, mainly camels. The few cattle which Rendille or Ariaal obtained through raids on the Boran were usually given to the Samburu as a gift, a loan or probably exchanged for small stock. It is also held that the cattle, which were kept by a few Ariaal or Rendille families at that time, were left behind due to the threat from enemies. For most of the time the “traditional enemies” of the Rendille and Samburu were the Boran and Laikipiak Maasai, both of whom favoured cattle. There were very few permanent water places which existed by that time in that region. Compared to camels, cattle are very demanding since they have to be taken to the water every fourth day in the dry season, with the effect that cattle herders were easy targets for raiders. There are a number of oral traditions which describe how cattle and herds of small stock were just abandoned at wells. In order to increase mobility in the face of inter-ethnic raids and thus minimise the risk of becoming a potential victim of an assault by enemies, camel nomadism was the better alternative in times of prolonged warfare. The motivation for Samburu migrants to become Ariaal, and keep camels which they obtained through raids, may have been guided by such considerations. It can be safely

18 According to Waller (1988:111), the orientation towards “pure pastoralism” among the Maasai was a form of specialisation which reached its climax in the late 19th century before the pastoral societies were affected by a number of severe epidemics. He attributes this shift towards specialisation to climatic changes in which the region became much drier what finally contributed to the separation of the agricultural and pastoral components of the economy. By that time, which was marked by inter-ethnic conflict and warfare (cf. Fukui and Turton 1979) the trend in the direction of an orientation towards “pure pastoralism” may have been accompanied by a further specialisation within many pastoral systems on different livestock species with the implicit effect to increase the range of nomadic movement.
assumed that the economic specialisation or type of nomadism of the Ariaal and Rendille was also the result of social or political factors rather than solely determined by the adaptation to a certain arid ecological environment.

Due to their composed character the Ariaal can be regarded as a very instructive case for rejecting classical concepts of social anthropology which employ monogenetic models of ethnicity or ethnic development. According to such unilinear concepts, like the segmentary lineage system, an ethnic formation is usually made up by segments who are connected by patrilineal descent from a common ancestor. Tree-like diagrams are often used to illustrate this relation. Following such illustrations, the emergence and development of ethnic formations is marked by the division or split of branches and is thus a matter of fission or disintegration. On the basis of his findings on inter-ethnic clan relationships among Cushitic groups Schlee (1985, 1989) challenges these classical monogenetic concepts by drawing attention to the fact that clans are not simply a sub-unit of a tribe since a clan can be found in more than one tribe. He points instead to the usefulness of the concept “network” which is also capable of grasping affiliations cutting across ethnic divisions.

According to Schlee (1989), the ethnogenesis of the Sakuye, Gabbra, Rendille, Garre and other groups was largely fostered by events which started in the sixteenth century, namely the expansion of the Oromo from the Ethiopian highlands. In the course of time a number of Cushitic elements, which were a part of what Schlee calls the proto Rendille-Somali cluster, came at different times under the influence of the Boran, adopted their language and formed ethnic groups, like the Gabbra, Sakuye and others. The proto-Rendille could resist the Boran hegemony, not at least due to their alliance and close relation with the proto-Samburu who are thought to have separated from other Maasai groups by the end of the sixteenth century (Sommer and Vossen 1993). The integration of various segments to the Rendille was fostered by threats from the Boran and others and accompanied by a partial adaptation to proto-Samburu culture. Over the following centuries, various migrations of segments between different ethnic groups took place and contributed to the mixed composition of each group.

The formation of ethnic groups in northern Kenya is the result of integration processes rather than of disintegration. Integration processes are central for ethnicity and the Ariaal are just an obvious or bold example of this fact which is true for all the other ethnic groups. Ethnic formations of northern Kenya consist of segments with different ethnic backgrounds. The Rendille, for example, have more or less assimilated immigrants from the Samburu, Maasai, Meru, Dasenech, Turkana, Gabbra or Boran, while segments with Rendille origin are found among the today's Dasenech, Gabbra, Samburu, Sakuye and Maasai, to mention only a few. Taking up Schlee's considerations Turton (1994:17) questions the usefulness of treating ethnic formations per se as groups since he points to the fact that “an ethnic group is not a group because of ethnicity but because its members engage in common action and share common interests.”
integration of the members of an ethnic formation is thus based on common interests and action as well as rituals as an expression of unity and solidarity. In other words, the notion of common descent from a common ancestor should be treated as an "ethnic construct" rather as a definitional characteristic for an ethnic group.

While this may throw some light on the maintenance of an existing ethnic group it certainly cannot explain the very process of its establishment. Turton (1994:23) suggests that war is an essential means for the creation and maintenance of ethnic groups, rather than merely being the outcome of ethnicity. The emergence of ethnic groups seems to have been shaped by conflicts or warfare, either with external groupings or between groups which once belonged to the same ethnic group. And, as a result, the integration of segments to a new ethnic formation appears in general as an asymmetric process. The Gabbra and Sakuye, for example, were integrated to some extent by the Boran. They adopted the Boran language, respected Boran ritual leaders and adopted to some extent other cultural features of the Boran, while many elements of their former culture were left behind.

The emergence or ethnogenesis of the Ariaal does not seem to follow that general pattern. Apart from those Ariaal segments, stemming from groups like the Boran, Turkana, or Maasai and who have become more or less assimilated, the integration which has brought Samburu and Rendille migrants together appears as a relatively symmetrical process since the Ariaal can – more than any other group – be characterised as a bicultural group. In many respects they often refer to themselves as Rendille or Samburu. There are some grounds or reasons for assuming that if a strong conflict would have been the constituting element for the formation of the Ariaal, the division between them and the Rendille or Samburu, and thus the accentuation of the affiliation with the Ariaal, would have been more developed.

If a Rendille speaker wants to refer to the "Rendille proper" or "white" Rendille and hence exclude the Ariaal, he will speak of Ren'dillehi daddakhan, while the term Koorro ti daayan, "pure" or "black" Samburu, is used to distinguish the Samburu from the Ariaal. Nevertheless, in popular usage, the term "Rendille" generally refers to both "Rendille proper" and Ariaal. In order to avoid confusion, this study follows scholarly practice and refers to the Rendille as consisting of "Rendille proper" exclusively. Moreover, it is often extremely difficult to make a clear distinction between the Rendille, Ariaal, and Samburu or to decide to which of these groups a particular person or segment belongs since the three categories are not mutually exclusive. There is a considerable degree of overlap between "pure Rendille" and "pure Samburu."

Still there is another way of expressing the difference between Samburu and Rendille which points to the economic specialization of the Samburu on cattle and the Rendille preference for camels. Although the Ariaal and Rendille have now cattle for a number of decades and camels have also become popular among the Samburu, the distinction dahan ti looylo (the side of cattle) and dahan ti gaal (the side of camels) is still common.
In reference to the affiliation with clans, which is in many contexts of greater significance than the affiliation with an ethnic group, the social boundaries still appear as diffuse. The somehow open character of social boundaries is due to the fact that these boundaries can be traversed and, moreover, that there are different opinions on issues like where these boundaries are and when they actually have been crossed. The following interviews give an impression of rather different stands in reference to this issue. I have asked members of certain Ariaal clans how an emigrant from another group may become affiliated with their clan.

**Question:** How does somebody become Lturiya?

**Answer:** You yourself, when you come to Lturiya, you will be swallowed [taken or incorporated] and you will not get out, you just become Lturiya. [...] People are not sorted out, will not be separated. We found out that this is good for us. Have a look, within Rendille is found every clan which is among us. 20

The grandchildren of a person who was circumcised within Ongeli, will become Ongeli ... there are now boys who are circumcised in this village who are [of the Rendille clan] Tubcha, [...] if they stay and their sons also marry within Ongeli, if those children stay and for about four or five age-sets they have not moved out of Ongeli, and they kill *ilmugit* [that is they perform the Samburu age-set ceremonies], for the marriage they have [the Samburu ceremony] rugerret, and they have left their [Rendille] traditions, the bone is those people he came from, and the flesh is Ongeli, so they are now accepted... 21

A binary logic is an unsuitable concept for the interpretation of ethnicity among the Ariaal since double or multiple clan affiliations are common among Ariaal segments, especially with reference to segments of Rendille descent. Accordingly, a popular Rendille metaphor states that, “The bones are Rendille; the flesh is Ariaal.” The saying usually refers to the identity according to the Rendille clan of origin and the recent affiliation with an Ariaal clan. According to Rendille informants the Ariaal are just Rendille.

Ethnicity among the Ariaal is a very complex issue. There are strong affinities between the Samburu and Rendille, and this leaves much room for different interpretations concerning the Ariaal ethnic affiliation. Inter-ethnic clan relations or, if we understand the Ariaal as a Rendille sub-group, intra-ethnic clan relations are a main feature of the Ariaal as a people. Segments of all Rendille clans can be found within the Ariaal clans, and from the point of view of Rendille informants, the Ariaal are simply Rendille.

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20 Interview with Nkutay Korima (Lturiya), 16.06.1993, Laisamis.
21 Interview with Ntusso Tumalo (Ongeli), 10.07.1993, Sapokkilimongi.
The Ariaal have not come from a far place. These Ariaal, some are Lokumay — [who] are Dubsahay; some are Lokumay — [who] are Tubcha. Masula, some are Rengumo. [...] Lturiya, some are Dubsahay, some are Saale, some are Gaaldeylan, some are Nahagan. [They] are just us!  

In contrast to this point of view, an Ariaal informant maintains that the Ariaal are basically Samburu and, in addition, views the Ariaal as a distinct group. The Ariaal are Samburu. They are Samburu. The time god created people, the way he brought them forth, he brought them forth. They, they are also Samburu, the Ariaal. Ongeli, all the other, we are now Ariaal. And in former times they were Rendille. Lokumay, some of them were Rendille. Now they are Ariaal. Just one family was pure Samburu, earlier on they got them. Then they took [Rendille]. Lorugushu, like that. Only one family, they are just pure Samburu, they got many [others]. Masula, like that. So, the Ariaal, where they finally emerged from, are the Samburu. They tended camels, therefore they left the Samburu. They have not become Rendille, they also have not become Samburu, they are five clans: Ongeli, Masula, Lorugushu, Lokumay, and Lturiya.  

The significance of Samburu for the emergence of the Ariaal is manifested in the clan names. Four of them, Masula, Ongeli, Lorugushu, and Lokumay bear the names of Samburu phratries, as Spencer (1973:135) calls Samburu clans. In former times the Ariaal clan Lturiya was labelled in accordance to their corresponding Samburu phratry Lpisikishu. Since in contrast to other Ariaal clans they attracted immigrants from almost every Rendille clan, they got the name Lturiya which refers to their heterogeneous composition. On the basis of oral traditions and clan structures there is some basis for assuming that Samburu migrants formed the nucleus of each Ariaal clan. It is generally held that these migrants obtained camels through raids and decided to join the Rendille, thereby following those Rendille ceremonies which are connected with the well-being of the camel herd. Economically there was no outstanding difference between them and the Rendille, but in reference to the cultural sphere they showed considerable reluctance to break with their former group by following the Rendille age-set ceremonies instead of ilmugit, the Samburu age-set rituals. Few Samburu became assimilated with a Rendille clan by adapting the Rendille age-set ceremonies while the majority of Samburu emigrants maintained their clan affiliation by performing ilmugit and hence respecting the lauoni of their respective Samburu clan or sub-clan.  

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23 Interview with Ntusso Tumalo (Ongeli), 07.02.1993, Sapokilimongi.  
24 The most important age-set role which is established in connection with ilmugit, is the lauoni, a "ritual leader", who is selected from the warriors or moran of a clan or sub-clan after the circumcision of a new age-set. It has never occurred that a lauoni was selected from Ariaal warriors, but has always been chosen from Samburu moran. The lauoni has the privilege to demand livestock gifts from the members of his clan or certain sub-clans.
orientation towards the camel economy was the major factor in Samburu emigrants adopting some Rendille customs, the motives for many Rendille in joining these Samburu migrants and for adopting Samburu elements were necessarily different.

In general, the emergence of the Ariaal is based on cultural differences between the Samburu and Rendille. These are differences in relation to the social and political organization and economic orientation of both societies. To some extent, the Ariaal can be regarded as a blend whereby the favourable elements of both societies were brought together while those elements which were regarded as unfavourable were left behind. I would suggest that the attraction for many Rendille to join these Samburu emigrants and thus to become Ariaal was generated by certain cultural and political characteristics of Rendille society.

The Rendille employ a number of age-set ceremonies which ideally involve the participation of members of all Rendille clans. In connection with these age-set ceremonies there are a number of political institutions which are dominated by certain Rendille clans or segments. I would suggest that these institutions were created or employed by certain groups in order to establish political or economic advantages. Ethnicity or the affiliation with a certain clan or segment can be seen as instrumental for access to positions in these institutions and hence to resources. Social and political differences are manifested in these institutions, and in age-set ceremonies, and thus counteract the egalitarian principle which is often seen as central for segmentary societies. Rendille society can be characterized as a stratified or differentiated segmentary system with a decentralized political system. It does not involve a politically centralized authority but is made up by segments or clans who differ to a considerable extent in reference to their relative political power.

The degree of social and political differentiation among the Ariaal is much lower than among the Rendille. Ariaal clans perform ilmugit and thus follow the age-set ceremonies of the Samburu. The Ariaal have no tribe-wide ceremonies which involve the participation of all the clans. The ilmugit ceremonies are small localized age-set ceremonies which are performed together by members of each Ariaal clan. There is only limited necessity for all the members of a clan to join together for the circumcision of a new age-set which takes place every 14 years. Compared to the Rendille age-set ceremonies, differentiation through certain age-set roles or political institutions is almost absent among the Ariaal.

25) Cf. Sobania (1988:223,n.2), who refers to a personal account by Elliot Fratkin, who regards the Ariaal as a "cohesive society who have a cultural motif built up by by taking elements intact from both the Rendille and Samburu while discarding other features which the same societies find essential to their own continuity."

26) Spencer (1973) and Schlee (1979).

27) Fratkin's (1979:58) characterization of Samburu ilmugit as small localized age-set ceremonies is also true for Ariaal ilmugit.
The high stratification in the political and social system of the Rendille was the main factor for the emigration from the Rendille to the Ariaal in the past. Rendille ceremonies and institutions were not only created or employed by certain clans or segments in order to establish political and economic advantages. Furthermore, they helped to maintain social differentiation and can be regarded as a definitional characteristic of Rendille society and thus Rendille ethnicity. To some extent, Rendille ceremonies involve a feeling of solidarity through the common participation and thus may be characterized as an integrative element, since it brings together functionally different segments in the context of rituals. But at the same time they also maintain differentiation and generate the opposite effect, disintegration.\(^\text{28}\) In comparison to the Ariaal and Samburu, Rendille institutions and age-set ceremonies bear a considerable potential for conflicts and discrimination and thus are of major importance for understanding the drift of Rendille emigrants and the development of the Ariaal.

This potential for conflict which is immanent in the Rendille age-set promotion rituals forms a vivid contrast to the Durkheimian and later the classical functionalist view of ritual as the self-celebration of society, the visualization of its myths and for short: a force of integration. Rather than a locus of integration, Rendille rituals can be depicted as an arena for status competition. As Schlee’s “chronology of the conflict about the marriage rites of the age-set Ilkichili” (1979:365-428) shows, there is a process of continuous and slow escalation over the generations of a lingering conflict within Rendille society attached to these rituals. These resulted even in a change of the marriage rules to facilitate moiety endogamy, a process which enhances independence and may be regarded as a step towards fission.\(^\text{29}\)

A decade later, Schlee (1989:50) takes the theme briefly up again and adds to this chronology some remarks about the age-set which had succeeded in the meantime, Ilkororo. These latter by then, had “already paid a death toll of four and the wounded have ceased to be counted. Tribe-wide rituals, which I [Schlee 1979] describe as an integrative force because of the degree of co-operation they impose, have become increasingly difficult to organise. In 1984 [the clan] Tubcha was excluded from a sacrificial ceremony (ör la gorraho) and the whole clan may well cease to be regarded as Rendille at some time in the future. [...] Suffice it to say that Rendille internal affairs are characterised by constant politicking and occasional violent outbreaks. Though it is small, Rendille society shows clear tendencies towards fission.” It is a society which is “very easy to leave and very difficult to join.” The Ariaal, on the other hand, accept strangers and accuse the Rendille of malicious gossip (mededel). That the Rendille discriminate among themselves, is another common saying: Rendille inenyet a sahta. — “The Rendille sort people out.”\(^\text{30}\)

\(^{28}\) Cf. also Schlee (1989:9,49), who views the attendance at the Rendille gaalgulamme ceremony as a major criteria for the distinction between Ariaal and Rendille.

\(^{29}\) Cf. also Schlee (1989:14).

These remarks from the 1989 book, *Identities on the move*, are fairly general since that book has its focus elsewhere and many information on Rendille age-set promotions and the internal strife have been excluded from it. But from Schlee’s unpublished field notes we learn that the clan Tubcha, who had been victimised in the 1976 age-set rituals, at one point threatened to change their use of arms from clubs to spears in the numerous quarrels with other Rendille clans. This would have marked the symbolic transition from a quarrel with other members of the same political/ethnic unit to inter-ethnic war, since clubs (sticks with iron nuts or gears from dismantled machinery as heads) – contrary to evidence – are classified as non deadly weapons and therefore suitable for the expression of internal dissent while spears are reserved for external enemies and wild beasts.

The high level of internal dissent may be a significant factor in the background if we now examine which particular clan groups are more likely to leave the “Rendille proper” and join the Ariaal than others.

The subsequent diagram (Fig. 1) with a rather confusing web of lines shall give an idea of the complex pathways of immigration in relation to the Ariaal. It refers to the more recent origin of Ariaal immigrants, thereby giving a more detailed mention of the Rendille background of the present Ariaal sub-clans. Those lines which are marked with an arrow at the end, refer to the direction of migration between different Ariaal clans. Emigrants from all Rendille clans (capital letters) have joined the Ariaal and there is no doubt that the bulk of migrants originates from the Rendille. Putting together the accounts of Ariaal informants 61% of those lineages, which are categorised at the present as Ariaal, were established by Rendille immigrants, 24% by Samburu, 10% by migrants which originate from other ethnic groups like the Boran, Meru, Maasai, Somali and Turkana, and finally 5% by migrants from other Ariaal clans. Although some of the lineages, which were categorised as descendants from the Maasai, Boran and other ethnic groups, may have been affiliated with the Samburu or Rendille before they became Ariaal, there can be little doubt that the Ariaal are not merely a mixture of Samburu and Rendille immigrants. Ariaal lineages were in many cases established through adoption of segments from other groups. The chart further reveals the very different composition of each Ariaal clan. Two of them, Lokumay and Ltuiriya, do not at the present contain any lineage which originated from the Samburu since those lineages, who had once formed the nucleus of these clans, had left the Ariaal and became Samburu again or were probably wiped out by a smallpox epidemic at the turn of the century.

In general, there is no indication that those Rendille, who are *waakhkamur*, i.e. without the powers of curse and blessing, and thus potential victims for despised age-set roles, are more significant in numbers among Rendille emigrants than those who

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originate from sub-clans who are *ibir*, i.e., those who have potential curse and blessing powers. This differentiation may only offer an incomplete idea of the structural factors in Rendille migration to the Ariaal, since there is some evidence that the *waakhir* and *ibir* attributes of sub-clans have changed in the course of time.\(^32\) In addition, it has to be taken into consideration that the *waakhir* of certain clans are prone to be selected for the despised age-set role of *dâblakâbiire*. However, there is some evidence that those Rendille emigrants, who have joined the Ariaal in the more recent past and stem from the clans Uyam, Urween, Tubcha and Gaaldeylan, whose members have been among the victims for the age-set role of *dâblakâbiire* in the known past, have all, except one, been affiliated with *waakhir* sub-clans. Although we have to take into consideration that Uyam is entirely made up by *waakhir* sub-clans, there can be little doubt that relatively more *waakhir* than *ibir* emigrants have left these Rendille clans in the past one hundred years in order to evade the threat of Rendille age-set ceremonies.

On the other hand there is some evidence that those sub-clans or segments who have dominant ritual or political positions among the Rendille are relatively insignificant among those Rendille who became Ariaal. The Rendille sub-clans Nebey and Wambile are politically of principal importance. There is some reason to assume that both of them have maintained their influential position since the emergence of the Rendille, as they are the most senior sub-clans of each moiety. The informants could not relate the origin of any lineage among the Ariaal to Nebey, a rather large sub-clan. Furthermore, I could not trace any immigrant among the Ariaal, derived from those two Saale lineages, who was designated for the favourable *gu'dur* age-set role. In reference to emigrants from the Dubsahay sub-clan Wambile, it seems at first sight, that they are adequately presented among the Ariaal. In any case, a closer inspection of these lineages reveals that one has been established quite recently, most probably in connection with the adaptation to the cattle economy, and the other one has a relatively low status among the Rendille due to its association with smiths.

In general, by taking those prevalent political structures of Rendille society which appear to have been maintained for quite a long time into consideration, it can be safely assumed that those Rendille segments who have an adequate share in and play a dominant role in institutions and age-set ceremonies, are generally less significant among Rendille emigrants and thus the Ariaal, than others who have to cope with discrimination and their subordinate role in the framework of age-set ceremonies. In the case of the emergence of the Ariaal, ethnicity or the conversion of ethnic affiliation can be interpreted as a strategy or long-term response in the face of adversity, whereby the especially disfavourable elements of the former affiliation with the Rendille are left

\(^{32}\) Cf. Schlee (1979:183ff), who refers to an oral tradition which suggests that all Rendille had been *ibir* in the past. For a list of Rendille sub-clans with *ibir* attributes, see Schlee (1979:173-180).
Fig. 1. Pathways of Ariaal immigration
behind while others are still in use. In the case of the Rendille, ethnicity is partially an outcome of opposition and alliance with other ethnic groups, but more important, has been shaped by a number of strategic groups within Rendille society who have set up ceremonies and political institutions and thus established a considerable potential of social and political differentiation which significantly generated the flow of Rendille migrants to the Ariaal.

Many authors stress the impact of ecological factors to explain the emergence of cultural traditions or the building and maintenance of institutions in pastoral societies. There can be little doubt that the limited ecological potential of the semi-arid environment of pastoral societies helps to explain the relative lack of hierarchical structures in these societies, but ecological concepts are certainly not sufficient nor adequate for explaining the building and emergence of many cultural and political institutions which are central to pastoral groups. In general, it appears that the Rendille and Ariaal, like the other ethnic groups of that region, have actively responded to challenges and opportunities. Their social and political organization, nomadic movements, inter-ethnic migrations or changes in the economic sector are to a large extent determined by social factors and a result of internal dynamics or interaction with other groups.

**Ethnic development and inter-ethnic dynamics since the pre-colonial period**

In the final part of my article I will deal with the central question of how far the integration of the pastoral societies of northern Kenya into a wider political and economic system had influenced inter-ethnic migration among the Ariaal, Rendille and Samburu.

Nearly 15 years after Kenya had become a part of the British Empire the inhabitants of northern Kenya, who were almost entirely pastoral nomads, became more or less aware of the colonial state. An initial government post was established on Marsabit Mountain by 1909 and northern Kenya was declared as the NFD, the Northern Frontier District. In terms of its territory, the NFD was as large as the rest of Kenya. It was declared as a closed District and the movement of goods and people between the NFD and the south was to some extent restricted by the colonial administration. According to Simpson (1994) the NFD was treated almost as a separate colony from the rest of Kenya and colonial interventions through such means as boundaries, pass laws and quarantine regulations actually impeded the economic development of the pastoral societies of northern Kenya. The imposition of boundaries was seen as an important instrument for the colonial administration to gain control over that area and its people. The authorities had the intention to curb inter-ethnic raiding, restrict pastoral migrations and to support administrative tasks such as the collection of taxes. Within the NFD, which had for most of the time the status of a Province, a number
of District boundaries were established, often with the idea of keeping a certain territory for a certain ethnic group or tribe. Where it became obvious that Districts contained a number of different tribes, boundaries within a District where imposed to define so-called “Tribal Grazing Areas” for the exclusive use of what the British perceived as a certain tribe.  

According to Sobania (n.d.:13; 1991:139) colonial policies had the effect that, in connection with the limitation of the herding range of pastoral societies, social relationships became rather local affairs. The imposition of Tribal Grazing Areas, which went along with colonial definitions of nationality, “worked to crystallise what had previously been relatively open and fluid societal boundaries” and “effectively interrupted the peaceful means of contact and exchange.” Sobania (1988) further suggests that the negative impact of colonial policies on the social and spatial mobility of the pastoral societies was taken over in the post-colonial period by uncoordinated development projects which offered their services at permanent locations.

I suggest that the negative impact of administrative boundaries on the social and spatial migration of nomadic societies has often been overestimated. Pastoralists often found ways to cross these boundaries, either by changing their tribal affiliation or affiliation with a certain district or state. In the archival records there is much evidence that nomadic groups frequently crossed international or district boundaries in order to evade taxation. The Gabbra and Boran, who were living across the Ethiopian-Kenyan boundary made active use of it. At certain times, they probably did not have any objection to be regarded as British subjects under British protection, as long as the taxation was not a burden. On the other side of the boundary they may have regarded themselves to some degree as Ethiopians, as long as the security situation allowed. As it was demonstrated before, the same is true for Ariaal, Rendille or Samburu who frequently crossed tribal and district boundaries, thereby following better opportunities and their own convenience as regards their affiliation with the Rendille or Samburu. In many cases, the imposition of administrative boundaries contributed to inter-ethnic migrations and the achievement of other ethnic affiliations.

My findings on the frequency of Ariaal migration to the Samburu during the past hundred years suggest that the frequency of inter-ethnic migrations reached a climax in the colonial period. Many of the first emigrants of Ariaal lineages who joined the Samburu were members of those age-sets which were initiated during the colonial period. In illustration of my findings I refer to a chart (Fig. 2) which indicates the frequency of migration among the Ariaal clan Lokumay.  

In reference to the historical dimension of migration the Lokumay clan presents a somewhat “typical” Ariaal clan since nearly all the lineages of this clan were established at a time, or by ancestors, who are beyond living memory.

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34 Cf. also Schlee (1984, 1991) and van Zwanenberg (1975).
It appears that in the second half of the 19th century migrations from the Ariaal to the Samburu were not very frequent. This goes along with the assumption that, in connection with the smallpox and rinderpest epidemics, the Ariaal offered better opportunities to emigrants. It can be assumed that the main direction of migration was from the Samburu to the Ariaal by that time, despite the fact that the Ariaal-Lokumay do not at the present contain any lineage which was established by Samburu emigrants.

For the colonial period emigration from the Ariaal to the Samburu appears as a trend, not only for Lokumay but for all Ariaal clans. Although the colonial administration did not really make direct efforts to promote the pastoral economies of northern Kenya for most of the period, but rather tried to separate tribes and imposed limitations which reduced the mobility and the herding range of the Rendille and other nomadic societies, the presence of the colonial state had the unintended effect of promoting an internal market and generating inter-ethnic migrations between the Rendille, Ariaal and Samburu. Although the state could not put an end to the habit of inter-ethnic raiding, it reduced this practice considerably and enforced to some degree its monopoly of violence. The necessity was not seen any longer of not keeping cattle which, in the past, had the disadvantage of restricting the mobility of a group in times of prolonged inter-ethnic warfare. These pacification efforts contributed to the increasing diversification of the pastoral economies of these groups in the colonial period. It is generally held that the first Ariaal began to adopt the cattle economy in the period when the Lkilegu and Lmawuri age-sets were warriors, that is in the 1920s and 1930s. The Rendille followed them in doing so one or two decades later and at the end of the colonial period the bulk of the Ariaal, and a considerable portion of the Rendille, employed a mixed camel-cattle economy besides keeping small stock. Veterinary services offered by the government and the drilling of boreholes had contributed to a further acceptance of cattle pastoralism among these groups. Many

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34 The bars refer to the immigration of Rendille to this Ariaal clan and, in the case of emigration, to the migration of Ariaal to the Samburu. The values of the x-axis refer to the approximate circumcision years of the age-sets. This chart does not show absolute figures of immigration or emigration, because it only refers to the age-set of the first migrant of a lineage who established himself among this Ariaal clan and, in the case of emigration, among a Samburu clan. Nevertheless, it gives some indication on the frequency of migration for more recent and past age-sets and, if we take into consideration that the migration often takes place a few years before the circumcision of the next age-set at the time of marriage, in reference to a certain period.

35 A somehow “atypical” Ariaal clan is Lturiya, since the bulk of lineages were established by Rendille immigrants who still could be recalled by the informants, while considerable few Rendille emigrants established themselves among the other Ariaal clans in the known past. There is little doubt that Lturiya received the bulk of Rendille emigrants in the past one hundred years, not at least due to their remarkable ability to integrate them without much difficulty within their rather open clan structure.

of them acquired cattle in exchange for small stock and camels from the Ariaal, Samburu and other groups.

I would suggest that Spencer's model, which links the emigration of Ariaal and Rendille to demographic growth and the relatively low growth potential of the camel economy, is especially significant for the later half of the colonial period, when the Rendille population had probably again reached a strength that is comparable to the period before smallpox had drastically reduced them. The Ariaal earlier, the Rendille later, had reached a numerical strength which provided some of them with sufficient labour resources for practising a mixed cattle-camel economy. Especially by that time impoverished Rendille may have joined the Ariaal because their diversified economy offered a better selection of opportunities. There is little doubt that those Ariaal and Rendille who emigrated to the Samburu in the colonial period, employed a economy which favoured cattle pastoralism. In order to find better conditions for building up a herd they decided to live amongst the Samburu and, moreover, to become Samburu.

This is even true for the beginning of the post-colonial period. In connection with the civil war in northern Kenya, also known as the “shifta war”, inter-ethnic raiding again reached a climax between the Rendille and Ariaal on one side and the Boran and Gabbra on the other. Due to the growing insecurity many Ariaal families, who were living in the vicinity of the Boran, decided to leave the Marsabit District and moved further south. Some of them, who had preferred to move their houses to safer areas in the Samburu District by that time, are now Samburu.

In comparison to the colonial past the frequency of emigration to the Samburu has decreased in the recent decades. In general, it appears that inter-ethnic migrations...
between all the pastoral societies of northern Kenya have lost some significance. That is not to say that inter-ethnic migration between these groups has become insignificant but has decreased to a considerable extent in comparison to the period some thirty or forty years ago. Apart from the fact that all pastoral economies have become more diversified, I would suggest that inter-ethnic migrations have become less significant in connection with the urbanization process. For the last 30 years many small towns have been established by traders and Christian missions in that area (Vorläufer 1986). In these small market towns the Ariaal and Rendille have also access to non-pastoral resources. I would suggest that, in connection with recent processes of market integration and the emergence of multi-sectoral income opportunities in the urban sector, inter-ethnic migrations between the pastoral sectors have become less important, or, as Fratkin (1993) puts it, have not increased. Migrations from the pastoral to the urban sector have become more integral than inter-ethnic migrations between the increasingly diversified pastoral systems. This has the implication that the achievement of another ethnic affiliation as an Ariaal or Samburu has lost some relevance, since in the urban sector other patterns of affiliation, like church affiliation, have become more important in order to get access to resources.

References


37 Cf. Fratkin (1993:283), who points out that more than 20 % of male stockowners residing in Ariaal settlements are Rendille immigrants. On the basis of a comparison of two surveys from 1976 and 1985 he shows that the immigration of Rendille or Samburu into Ariaal remained virtually unchanged.


