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History in Africa, Volume 32, 2005, pp. 199-220 (Article)

Published by Cambridge University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.2005.0012>

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BEYOND EPONYMY: THE EVIDENCE FOR LOIKOP AS AN ETHNONYM IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY EAST AFRICA

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I

During the early nineteenth century, European travelers and residents in east Africa wrote of an important pastoralist society, called Loikop, that dominated the plains of the Rift Valley, and whose divisions included, among others, the rapidly expanding Maasai. These pastoralists were described in detail by three missionaries: Johann Ludwig Krapf, Johannes Rebmann, and Jakob Erhardt. Their various journals, letters, and published articles, written during the 1840s and 1850s, are widely recognized as the earliest documentary evidence for Maasai and Parakuyo history. But they have often been neglected, and sometimes deliberately shunned, in favor of later written or oral sources, perhaps because their views of pastoralist history, including the idea of a pastoralist Loikop community, seem rather incongruous when compared to those of more recent vintage.

This skepticism was fueled partly by the fact that during the course of the nineteenth century, Maasai expanded dramatically, demolishing and absorbing other Loikop sections; eventually, Maasai pastoralist identity superseded and erased that of Loikop. By the time of European colonial conquest, the term “Loikop” carried negative connotations, and scholars from this point forward had difficulty in seeing any other valid meaning for the term. This essay is devoted to making the case for restoring the idea of Loikop pastoralists in our narratives of east African history. In many ways, it is a response to John Berntsen’s “The Enemy Is Us: Eponymy in the Historiography of the Maasai,” published in 1980.¹

¹John Berntsen, “The Enemy is Us: Eponymy in the Historiography of the Maasai,” *HA* 7(1980), 1-21.

Despite the skepticism of Berntsen and other scholars, I argue that Krapf and his contemporaries provided a coherent and convincing picture of Loikop pastoralists during the mid-nineteenth century, one that can be supported in many of its essentials by comparison with other forms of evidence.

II

In January 1844, only a month after he had landed in east Africa, Johann Ludwig Krapf learned of “a very wild people” called “Okooafee” or “Quapee.”² By 1845 Krapf also had learned that “Wakuafi” (the standard spelling he adopted) were pastoralists who subsisted on milk and meat, and that they made “distant depredatory expeditions, to intercept the herds of other tribes.”³ While Krapf was not the first person to record the existence of Wakwavi, he was the first to write of “a tribe called Maasai,” in February 1846.⁴ The following year, Krapf wrote that the Maasai language was identical to that of Wakwavi, “of whom they are, in fact, only a division,” and he added that Maasai had recently defeated Wakwavi near Chagga, making the Maasai the most powerful group “strolling about in the plains.”⁵ In 1852 Krapf began to note consistently that both Wakwavi and Maasai referred to themselves by the name Loikop, a fact he and his colleagues would state dozens of times in both published and unpublished documents over the next few decades; the Swahili name Wakwavi, in fact, was derived from the name Loikop.⁶ During his time in east Africa, Krapf was occupied with several kinds of work, both missionary and academic, but he remained interested in Loikop peoples and kept an eye open for any new information about them. In 1853 Krapf met Lemasegnot, a Loikop slave, who had been kidnapped as a child, transported to the coast, and sold in Mombasa. Lemasegnot’s owner gave permission for him to reside at Krapf’s cottage in Rabai, a small village outside of town. Lemasegnot was an extraordi-

²Johann Ludwig Krapf, journal entry, 4 January 1844, CA5/O16, Church Missionary Society, “Records, 1803-1914,” microfilm copy of the CMS archives courtesy of the Center for Research Libraries. Documents from the Church Missionary Society archives are hereafter cited as CMS.

³Krapf to Coates, 22 January 1845, CA5/O16, CMS.

⁴Krapf to Coates, 25 February 1846, CA5/O16, CMS.

⁵Krapf, journal entry, 11 October 1847, CA5/O16, CMS.

⁶Although Krapf and the other early missionaries noted that the proper term for these pastoralists was Loikop, they continued to use the term “Wakuafi” in their correspondence and journals, because it was the conventional term used on the coast (“Wakuafi” or Wakwavi is, in fact, simply the Swahili derivation of Loikop).

nary informant, indeed the best Loikop historical source until the employment of Justin Lemenye in research work nearly fifty years later.⁷ Krapf enthusiastically organized the information supplied by Lemasegnot and combined it with information he had collected from Swahili caravan traders. The information supplied by Lemasegnot formed the basis of Krapf's *Vocabulary of the Engutuk Eloikob*, published in 1854, and an essay titled "Short Description of the Masai and Wakuafi Tribes of East Africa," published in *Ausland* in 1857.⁸

The numerous and diverse records left by Krapf are generally recognized as an invaluable source for east African history, but they not always have been consulted in a rigorous manner. Krapf's records exist in several different versions, involving revision, translation, and abridgement.⁹ His daily journals and letters from 1844 to 1855, kept at the archives of the Church Missionary Society, must be considered the most authoritative. The *Ausland* essay of 1857 is just as important but, regrettably, has been ignored by most modern scholars, perhaps because it was printed in a difficult-to-read German script. Despite its obscurity, Krapf himself obviously saw the this essay as his definitive statement on Loikop and Maasai. It is inarguably the result of a systematic effort on Krapf's part to shape the information supplied by Lemasegnot into a coherent statement.

The introduction to Krapf's *Vocabulary* of 1854, which has been treated with skepticism by many researchers, is in fact merely a less detailed version of the *Ausland* essay, despite its earlier publication date. Next, there is the 1858 *Reisen in Ostafrika*, which was published in two volumes, and its English-language abridgement, *Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours*, which unfortunately is both the least authoritative and most widely distributed of Krapf's works. Krapf himself seemed to be aware of this problem: he included a note in *Travels* suggesting that interested readers refer to the *Ausland* essay for a more thorough description of Loikop and Maasai.¹⁰ For the purposes of this essay we will make ref-

⁷Krapf, journal entry, 30 August 1853, CA5/O16, CMS; Johann Ludwig Krapf, *Vocabulary of the Engutuk Eloikob or of the Wakuafi-Nation in the Interior of Equatorial Africa* (Tubingen, 1854), 3-6, 11, 25-26.

⁸Krapf, "Kurze Beschreibung der Masai- und Wakuafi-Stämme im Südöstlichen Afrika," *Ausland* 30(1857), 437-42, 461-66.

⁹I am grateful to Thomas Spear, whose published comments on my first attempt at examining the early missionary sources helped to clarify priorities regarding Krapf's records. See Spear, "Section Introduction: Documentary Sources" in *Sources and Methods in African History: Spoken, Written, Unearthed*, ed. Toyin Falola and Christian Jennings (Rochester, 2003), 169.

¹⁰Krapf, *Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours, During an Eighteen Years' Residence in Eastern Africa* (London, 1860), 366.

erence as often as possible to Krapf's journals and letters, as well as to the *Ausland* essay. The amount of ethnographic and historical detail found in these sources alone rivals that of a doctoral dissertation, and provides a more than solid basis for comparison with other sources of evidence.

Krapf's fellow missionaries Jakob Erhardt and Johannes Rebmann provided valuable independent information. Erhardt, like Krapf, acquired much of his information directly from a native speaker, in this case a Maasai slave who had been captured in war by another section of Loikop and sold to the coast. His input, combined with that of the "Masai traders" (i.e., Swahili caravan leaders) interviewed by Erhardt at Tanga, provides a solid source with which to compare and contrast the information gathered by Krapf. Erhardt was particularly impressed by the fact that "Kikuafi" and "Kimasai" were identical languages, and by the thoroughness which the Loikop language had filtered even to the coastal areas of east Africa. "The Masai traders and my Masai," he noted, "have not the least difficulty in conversing with the Wakuafi slaves who are very numerous at Tanga."¹¹ Erhardt's *Vocabulary of the Enguduk Iloigob* of 1857, when compared with Krapf's earlier publication, provides a well-rounded picture of Loikop pastoralists, since each approached the subject from an opposite angle. That the information they collected agrees in its particulars to such a degree of consistency, as demonstrated below, is compelling reason to give credence to the comprehensive view of Loikop society and history contained in their writings.

Rebmann, for his part, collected some useful information during his travels inland in 1848 and 1849, but his closest and most dramatic experience with Maasai occurred during their large-scale attacks on Mombasa and its hinterland in 1855 and 1857. Rebmann kept himself out of harm's way during the fighting; after all, as he wrote to the home office, "I need scarcely say that I do not consider it our duty to brave danger in which the great question is only about cattle."¹² He nonetheless took great care to get as many eyewitness accounts as possible, checking them against each other for accuracy, and his information agrees with the account left by the explorer Richard Burton, who actually dashed off to Rabai with his companion John Speke to protect Rebmann before the three decided to retreat to Mombasa.

In sum, then, the records left by Krapf, Erhardt, and Rebmann constitute a body of material that must be taken seriously by historians of east Africa. For our purposes we will emphasize two ideas in particular, which

¹¹Jakob Erhardt to Venn, 27 October 1854, CA5/O16, CMS.

¹²Johannes Rebmann to Venn, 18 April 1855, CA5/O24, CMS.

these missionaries stated clearly, consistently, and repeatedly in their written records (which, as noted above, were compiled from independent sources). First, they agreed that Loikop were the most widespread and dominant pastoralists of the early nineteenth century.¹³ Second, they agreed that in recent years, Maasai, a sub-group of Loikop, had emerged to become a formidable and expanding society in their own right, driven by a potent military system. It is worth noting that, aside from the fact that Maasai still called themselves Loikop at this time, the missionaries also pointed out explicitly that Maasai constituted one (among many) sections of Loikop. Krapf reported that Maasai were “in fact, only a division” of Wakuafi, while Rebmann noted that Maasai were “a tribe of Wakuafi.”¹⁴ Regardless of the veracity of these statements, we must at the least conclude that Krapf, Rebmann, and Erhardt stated their views clearly and consistently, and that they agreed with each other on these points.

Modern researchers have not done well in acknowledging these clear-cut statements by Krapf and his colleagues, usually burying the issue in footnotes. On the rare occasions when they have included the offending statements in their essays, later writers have often treated them as an embarrassment to be brushed aside. “Krapf and Erhardt stated that all the Maa-speaking peoples called themselves Loikop,” John Berntsen has written. “If so, Krapf’s and Erhardt’s evidence is the last independent testimony of that practice.”¹⁵ Berntsen neatly avoids the issue here; there is no later evidence of Maasai calling themselves Loikop because they stopped doing so—in fact, it is possible that they were beginning to abandon this self-designation even as Krapf and his colleagues were resident in east Africa.

But modern scholars rarely admit, or perhaps even realize, that several later observers came independently to conclusions similar to those of the early missionaries. This does not include writers such as Leon de Avanchers or Charles New, who met or borrowed material from Krapf, Rebmann, or Erhardt, and from whom they might have received these ideas. As Berntsen has rightly noted, these sources, while valuable, cannot

¹³Krapf, journal entry, 18 March 1852, CA5/O16, CMS; Krapf, journal entry, 30 August 1853, CA5/O16, CMS; Erhardt to Venn, 27 October 1854, CA5/O9, CMS; Jakob Erhardt, *Vocabulary of the Enguduk Iloigob, as Spoken by the Masai-Tribes in East Africa* (Ludwigsburg, 1857), 48, 51, 57; Jakob Erhardt, “J. Erhardt’s Mémoire zur Erläuterung der von Ihm und J. Rebmann,” *Petermann’s Mittheilungen* (1856), 19–24.

¹⁴Krapf, journal entry, 11 October 1847, CA5/O16, CMS; Rebmann, “Account of a Journey to Madshame,” CA5/O24, CMS.

¹⁵Berntsen, “Enemy is Us,” 19.

be treated as independent observers. Yet there remains a thin but persistent strand of writing that has continually reintroduced ideas similar to those of Krapf and his colleagues. J. R. L. Macdonald, who led an expedition to Uganda, wrote in 1899 that the Maasai, Wakuafi, and Samburu “are three divisions of the one tribe, the Eloegop, and speak what may be considered one language with slight dialectic differences.”¹⁶ Throughout his article Macdonald referred to Maasai simply as Eloegop.

Colonial administrator F. J. Bagshawe, after making “a scrutiny of the combined oral traditions,” concluded in 1924 that northern Tanganyika had once been occupied by “the forerunners of the present Masai, the O’Oikop or ‘Lumbwa,’ soon to be scattered and almost exterminated by their successors, the ferocious Masai proper.”¹⁷ Fellow administrator Henry Fosbrooke, conducting his own research into oral traditions during the 1930s, noted that “the Kwavi—so called Lumbwa, Loigop, or Baraguyu—are the less numerous forerunners of the true Masai, who, in adversity, took to agriculture,” and that in early times the Maasai and Wakwavi “were indistinguishable, merely two-subtribes of a pastoral tribe.”¹⁸ Gillian Solly, in her 1953 textbook on Kenyan history, stated crisply that the Maasai “were from a Nilo-hamitic people known as Il Loikop.”¹⁹ Clearly, then, the ideas of Krapf and his colleagues have been echoed by at least a few later writers.

III

In contrast to these scattered references, the majority of academic writing on Maasai and related groups has moved steadily away from the ideas of the early missionaries. In one sense, this was probably to be expected. As Berntsen has pointed out, Krapf and the other Church Missionary Society representatives formed the only European community living permanently on the east African mainland between roughly 1840 and 1880.²⁰ The missionaries had a virtual monopoly on certain kinds of information about

¹⁶J. R. L. Macdonald, “Notes on the Ethnology of Tribes Met With During Progress of the Juba Expedition of 1897-99,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 29(1899), 228.

¹⁷F. J. Bagshawe, “The Peoples of the Happy Valley (East Africa),” *Journal of the African Society* 24(1924), 32.

¹⁸H. A. Fosbrooke, “The Masai Age-Group System as a Guide to Tribal Chronology,” *African Studies* 15(1956), 191; H. A. Fosbrooke, “An Administrative Survey of the Masai Social System,” *Tanganyika Notes and Records* 26(1948), 4-5.

¹⁹Gillian Solly, *Kenya History in Outline* (Nairobi, 1953), 14.

²⁰Berntsen, “Enemy is Us,” 6.

the interior (among “reliable” European sources), and visitors often relayed this information back to Europe with little modification. When Europeans began to live and travel in east Africa in greater numbers, however, the opportunities for independent research and diverse perspectives would naturally increase. It seems only reasonable to expect debate on any issue when there are several independent observers at work.

In particular, two crucial modifications advanced by late nineteenth-century writers had a dramatic impact on scholars’ understanding of the term Loikop. First, there was the idea that defeated Loikop sections were actually sub-groups of Maasai society, rather than vice versa. Joseph Thomson, a Scotsman who advanced his own expedition directly on the heels of Fischer, was apparently the first to make this subtle departure from previous observers, stating that the “Kwafi” were “one among many septs” of Maasai, rather than the opposite.²¹ This inversion of the order laid out by Krapf and Rebmann would become the standard interpretation in years to come, perhaps influenced by the fact that the Maasai had indeed reduced the once-larger Loikop society to mere scatterlings, and had subsumed earlier concepts of Loikop identity within a new Maasai cultural system.

Second, there was the new and influential notion that the “Kwafi” communities were not really pastoralists, but farmers. J.P. Farler, the archdeacon of Magila in Usambara, interviewed Swahili traders who had recently journeyed along the newly reopened routes from Pangani to the interior. Farler’s informants led him to introduce a new distinction between the “Kwavi” and Maasai, one that would have been unthinkable to Krapf and his colleagues. The “Wakwafi,” Farler wrote, “seem to be an agricultural branch of the Masai people, [who] are found scattered over four degrees,” and who spoke a mere “dialectical variety” of the Maasai language.²²

This new interpretation led Farler to make several confused statements in the itinerary of caravan routes published by Royal Geographical Society. For example, he believed that the “regular dynasty” and “settled government” of Mbatian at Kisongo (the very heart of Maasai society), was in fact an achievement of the agriculturalist “Wakwafi,” who had “reached a much higher stage of civilisation” than their pastoralist Maasai relatives.²³ Thus, added to the inversion of social standing which somehow

²¹Thomson, “Through the Masai Country to the Victoria Nyanza,” *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society* 6(1884), 692.

²²J.P. Farler, “Native Routes in East Africa from Pangani to the Masai Country and the Victoria Nyanza,” *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, 4(1882), 731.

²³Farler, “Native Routes,” 731.

made “Kwavi” a mere subgroup of Maasai, there would now be a persistent notion that the “Kwavi” were essentially farmers, while their “pure” Maasai relatives were essentially cattle herders of the open plains.

Harry Johnston, a botanist and explorer who began his expedition to Kilimanjaro just as Joseph Thomson returned from his own, reinforced the image of the agricultural “Kwavi” versus the pastoralist Maasai in his popular 1886 book. After acknowledging that both Maasai and “Kwavi” referred to themselves as Loikop, for example, Johnston went on to define the term as “people of the soil,” and ventured that it was “more especially affected by the latter [“Kwavi”], as it implies a settled residence.”²⁴ Johnston’s interpretation of the Loikop wars imagined them as conflicts between pastoralists and agriculturalists, but his attempt to narrate their history was so vague as to be nearly unintelligible.²⁵

The precocious Johnston, who fancied himself an expert in any academic discipline, was perhaps the first to dismiss as useless the writings of the early missionaries. Johnston declared Erhardt’s and Krapf’s *Vocabularies* to be of poor linguistic quality, and deemed inexplicably that “neither [Krapf nor Erhardt] seemed to be aware that they were studying the same language.”²⁶ This statement is demonstrably false, as even a casual glance at the two *Vocabularies* will attest. In a letter to the CMS secretary, Erhardt wrote “[t]hat the Kimasai and Kikuafi are but one and the same language . . . I have ascertained beyond doubt.”²⁷ Johnston’s casual, and mistaken, dismissal of Erhardt and Krapf, antedated several later writers who would also neglect to give more than a superficial glance towards the early missionary sources.

The notion that the “Kwavi” were and always had been a farming subgroup of Maasai gained prominence quickly (abetted by the fact that many non-Maasai Loikop communities had indeed been forced to take up farming by the 1880s), and became entrenched as the standard interpretation of Maasai history. Most colonial writers on Maasai and Loikop adopted the agricultural-pastoral distinction uncritically; some even made further speculative advances. As Berntsen has noted, colonial writing on Maasai and Kwavi reflected both administrative concerns and the racist view of evolution then in fashion. “In this revised version,” Bernsten wrote, “all the Maa-speaking groups who had been referred to as ‘Loikop’ or ‘Kwavi’ [in recent years] . . . became agriculturalists by defini-

²⁴H.H. Johnston, *The Kilima-Njaro Expedition* (London, 1886), 313.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 405-08.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 449.

²⁷Erhardt to Venn, 27 October 1854, CA5/O9, CMS.

tion, despite the evidence of earlier writers and the oral traditions of the people themselves.”²⁸

A.C. Hollis wrote in 1905 that there were two divisions of Maasai: the pastoralists, who called themselves Il-Maasae and lived in British territory, and the agriculturalists, who were called 'L-Oikop or Il-Lumbwa and lived in German East Africa.²⁹ In his introduction to the Hollis book, Charles Eliot speculated that “the difference between the two is evidently not ancient,” and that it was “quite probable that there was a large agricultural settlement on the Uasin Gishu plateau from which the more adventurous warriors detached themselves.”³⁰ G.R. Sandford's 1919 paper on the history of the Maasai, written for the colonial record books, advanced the view that “the Masai tribe originally consisted of both pastoral and agricultural sections, of which the latter was almost annihilated by the former.”³¹ The 'L-Oikop were settled agriculturalists, Sandford wrote, while the nomadic Maasai pastoralists never practiced agriculture.

Henry Fosbrooke, who began work as a colonial administrator in Tanganyika's Masai District in 1935, was the first serious colonial-era scholar of Maasai history, and perhaps not coincidentally, the first to question received wisdom. Fosbrooke published his account of Maasai history and society as a lengthy essay in the 1948 volume of *Tanganyika Notes and Records*. Fosbrooke had conducted interviews with Maasai, and felt that his information did not agree with that of his earlier colleagues. His informants told Fosbrooke repeatedly that they shared a common pastoralist origin with the “Lumbwa,” who they told him had only recently taken up agriculture. Further, these Maasai had specific traditions about when and how they had taken each of the areas they now inhabited from their previous pastoralist Loikop occupants. Fosbrooke reviewed the literature on Maasai, and found much to agree with in Krapf and Thomson, especially their convictions that Maasai and “Kwavi” (or “Lumbwa”) sections were essentially part of one broadly-defined pastoralist community. He also dismissed the idea that there was a longstanding traditional division between pastoralist and agriculturalist sections, and he rejected Eliot's suggestion that pastoralism had been a recent innovation in Maasailand.³² Fosbrooke's oral and archeological

²⁸Berntsen, “Enemy is Us,” 14.

²⁹A. C. Hollis, *The Masai: Their Language and Folklore* (Oxford, 1905), iii, 260.

³⁰*Ibid.*, xi.

³¹G.R. Sandford, *An Administrative and Political History of the Masai Reserve* (London, 1919), 8.

³²Fosbrooke, “Administrative Survey,” 1, 4-5.

investigations match up quite well with the early missionary sources, and can be used to construct a chronology of Maasai expansion in the nineteenth century.

IV

Alan Jacobs revived the debate over nineteenth-century Maasai and Loikop with his 1965 doctoral thesis, combining his own research in oral history with selected contemporary written accounts. Jacobs concluded that not only were Maa-speaking peoples divided into “purely pastoral” Maasai and “semi-pastoral” Loikop sections, and that the Loikop wars were conflicts between these two groups, but that the “semi-pastoral” Loikop were actually the “more militant” warriors of that era, while the Maasai did not even have a powerful military system.³³ As one might expect, Jacobs disregarded much of the early missionary material in order to reach his conclusions. Jacobs felt that these early missionaries had “failed to give an adequate picture” of nineteenth-century Maasailand.³⁴

Earlier, Jacobs had presented a paper at a seminar that readily indicated the level of attention he was devoting to the early missionary sources as he prepared for his dissertation. “We are all aware of Kraft [*sic*] and Rebman’s [*sic*] journeys,” Jacobs wrote, “. . . but how many of us have read these works carefully enough to note that neither of them probably never [*sic*] actually met a Masai proper? What clearly emerges . . . is the fact that they were reporting the tales of the Bantu African’s conception of the Masai.”³⁵ Youthful carelessness aside, this complete misreading of the early missionary sources is fairly representative of the treatment they received at the hands of later writers. Jacobs opted instead to use the writings of Wakefield and James Christie’s *Cholera Epidemics*, which presents a second-hand view of Maasailand drawn from other sources, to provide an 1868 “baseline” from which to reconstruct Maasai history.³⁶

As an anthropologist, Jacobs also placed great emphasis on the oral interviews he conducted in Maasailand, and took too often at face value

³³Alan H. Jacobs, “The Traditional Political Organization of the Pastoral Masai” (D. Phil., Nuffield College, Oxford, 1965), 2-3; idem., “A Chronology of the Pastoral Maasai,” in *Hadith I: Proceedings of the Annual Conference of the Historical Association of Kenya 1967*, ed. Bethwell A. Ogot (Nairobi, 1968), 21.

³⁴Ibid., 20-21, 37-38.

³⁵Jacobs, “Some Neglected Aspects of Masai History,” paper read at “The Development of East Africa” seminar, March 1959, Matson Papers, 3/68, 110-11, Rhodes House Library, Oxford.

³⁶Jacobs, “Traditional Political Organization,” 20-21, 37-38.

the Maasai version of events that had taken place a century earlier. Thus, the nineteenth-century Maasai are seen, in Jacobs' view, as provoked by the harassment of the semi-pastoralists, until they eventually managed to fight back and rid themselves of the Loikop threat. Yet, as he readily admitted, Jacobs was still somewhat at a loss to explain the fact that his Maasai informants still sometimes called themselves Loikop, "in a boastful sense."³⁷

Historians John Berntsen and Richard Waller, working in the late 1970s and 1980s, challenged many of the popular notions that had infused writing on Maasai for the past century. Berntsen challenged some of Jacobs' conclusions, noting that the idea of a division between "pastoralist Maasai" and "agricultural Kwavi" dates back no earlier than the 1870s, when it was adopted by Farler and Johnston.³⁸ Uncritical acceptance of this stereotype, he wrote, "resulted in a serious distortion of that history and an avoidance of more complex and important issues."³⁹ But Berntsen's reading of the early missionary sources was at times inattentive. He portrayed their view of pastoralist society as one of two broad divisions—Maasai and Loikop—while barely acknowledging the fact that they repeatedly stated that both of these groups called themselves Loikop.

Berntsen also felt that the early missionaries had misread the basis for warfare between Maasai and (other) Loikop, accusing them of portraying the conflict as territorial rather than over cattle ownership.⁴⁰ But the missionaries were well aware of the role of cattle in the conflict. At the same time, Berntsen failed to acknowledge the strategic importance of wells and other water sources, not to mention grazing areas and contiguous access to them (i.e., territory), in the conflicts between pastoralist groups. Berntsen was also somewhat taken in by present-day Maasai ideas of identity and history. For example, he claimed that the word "Kwavi" did not derive from the word *Loikop*, which he translated as "murder." Berntsen felt that "Loikop" would have been a term used to refer contemptuously to a group other than one's own, rather than a term of self-identification; with this in mind, he dismissed the assertion made by Krapf, Erhardt, and others, that nineteenth-century Maasai and "Kwavi" pastoralists in fact called themselves Loikop.⁴¹

³⁷*Ibid.*, 31.

³⁸John Berntsen, "Pastoralism, Raiding, and Prophets: Maasailand in the Nineteenth Century" (Ph.D., University of Wisconsin—Madison, 1979), 45–46.

³⁹Berntsen, "Enemy is Us," 1.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 6.

⁴¹Berntsen, "Pastoralism," 47–48.

Richard Waller's work covers much of the same ground as Berntsen's, but added a stronger reappraisal of the early missionary sources. Like Berntsen, Waller rejected the idea that Maasai and Loikop were traditionally divided by their mode of subsistence into conflicting pastoralist and agriculturalist sections. Citing the early missionary material, Waller concluded that Maasai and Loikop sections had very similar, perhaps identical, subsistence practices during much of the nineteenth century. Maasai may have idealized the idea of "pure" pastoralism, Waller wrote, but in day-to-day life they almost certainly supplemented their diet with just as much agricultural produce as the other Loikop.⁴² Further, he disagreed with the assertion that Maasai sections were not highly militarized, noting that this viewpoint "ignores a great deal of contemporary evidence," and theorizing that the expansion of Maasai sections during the Loikop wars involved a high level of military coordination in order to complete such massive cattle raids successfully.⁴³

Going beyond Berntsen, Waller recognized that the word *iloikop* probably did not always carry negative connotations, pointing out that both Krapf and Erhardt were firmly convinced that both Maasai and "Wakuafi" sections called themselves Loikop. Waller also took seriously the fact that his Maasai informants were "emphatic" in declaring that they had once been the same as the Loikop.⁴⁴ But Waller stopped short of considering the possibility that Loikop was actually the designation for an entire pastoralist society, despite the early missionaries' insistence on this. More recently, Waller has taken the view that the distinction between Maasai and Loikop is itself a result of the conflicts of the nineteenth century, and that neither term antedates those events.⁴⁵ Overall, Berntsen and Waller did much to restore an appreciation of the early missionary material, and to sort out many of the confused aspects of nineteenth-century Maasai and Loikop history. Yet they both persisted in maintaining the inverted order of social groupings, in which the Loikop are seen as a subgroup of an overarching "Ol Maa" family, rather than vice-versa. "The Maasai community," as Waller wrote, "for part of the nineteenth century at least, also included the Iloikop."⁴⁶ However, our reading of the early missionary sources indicates that the Maasai sections were originally but

⁴²Richard Waller, "The Lords of East Africa: The Masai in the Mid-Nineteenth Century (c. 1840-c. 1885)" (Ph.D., Darwin College, Cambridge University, 1978), 25, 28, 137.

⁴³Ibid., 89-90.

⁴⁴Ibid., 138-39.

⁴⁵Richard Waller, personal communication.

⁴⁶Waller, "Lords," 136-37.

one part of a wider Loikop community, a viewpoint that is stated clearly and consistently by the early missionary observers.

V

In reviving the question of the place of Loikop in east African history, we will have to overcome a well-established notion among scholars that the issue is more or less dead and not worth reviving. On one hand there is a persistent feeling that the evidence is simply too thin to make the case either way. "The Iloikop themselves remain shadowy figures," in Waller's words, "hardly more than a list of names and associations, to be filled out by inferences rather than by facts. . . . Most of our information now comes indirectly through the eyes of their conquerors and from the reports of European travellers."⁴⁷ Leaving aside the fact that it is unfair to designate as "travellers" men who lived in east Africa for more than a decade, it is clear that many basic points about Loikop society need not be inferred at all, since the missionaries devoted considerable time to writing them out in clear and careful detail.

On the other hand, there is the equally inert suspicion that, in Waller's words again, "[i]n a sense, the 'Iloikop,' as such were a myth, created out of the need of the pastoral community to maintain its boundaries and given substance by changes in the economic status of particular Maa-speaking groups."⁴⁸ Perhaps the long history of confusion and misdirection regarding differences between Maasai and Loikop has left scholars with the feeling that the issue is simply too messy to sort out. When Berntsen and Waller (not to mention Fosbrooke) successfully laid to rest the false pastoralist/agriculturalist dichotomy, there may have been a sense that it was acceptable also to discard the question of who, exactly, the Loikop were.

For example, in their *Being Maasai*, Spear and Waller actually refer to the Loikop question as a "much debated non-issue."⁴⁹ This attitude does a great disservice to Krapf, Rebmann, and Erhardt, who, despite their flaws, nonetheless took great care in compiling their information. In the absence of any compelling reason to ignore the records left by the early missionaries, any scholar who aims to develop an accurate understanding

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Waller, "Economic and Social Relations in the Central Rift Valley: The Maa-Speakers and Their Neighbours in the Nineteenth Century" in *Kenya in the 19th Century*, ed. Bethwell A. Ogot (Nairobi, 1985), 116.

⁴⁹Thomas T. Spear and Richard Waller, eds., *Being Maasai: Ethnicity and Identity in East Africa* (London: James Currey, 1993), p. 19.

of the history of east African pastoralists should take these sources seriously. With this in mind, we should take it as a worthwhile exercise to reconsider the existence and importance of an early nineteenth-century society called Loikop.

In many ways, this issue turns on the meaning of the word Loikop. Berntsen, Waller, and other scholars have attempted to trace, and have often disagreed about, what this word has meant at any given time during the past two hundred years. The idea that Maasai and Parakuyo once called themselves Loikop has been underemphasized by recent scholars, but it remains a key piece of evidence. A key factor in considering Loikop (and other related terms) is that they have been “in motion” since they were first put to paper; in other words, the early missionaries captured these terms at a particular point in their development, and later writers have considered them when they had evolved quite different meanings.⁵⁰

Many writers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries simply disregarded the definitions provided by Krapf and his colleagues, because they seemed to be incongruous with received wisdom or apparent realities. Berntsen and Waller, while more attentive to the early missionary sources, nonetheless also disagreed with the early definition of Loikop, albeit for different reasons. After conferring with his Maasai informants, Berntsen rejected the notion that Wakwavi was derived from Loikop and concluded that *iloikop* was not ever really a term of self-identification, but had always been associated with its present-day connotation of murder and blood-guilt. Waller, on the other hand, accepted the notion that Wakwavi derived from *loo nkuapi*, which he translated as “people of other places,” but still felt that it had not been a term of ethnic self-identification. Rather, Waller speculated that it was a generic word used to refer to other, neighboring sections or communities. I argue that both Berntsen and Waller fail to appreciate the weight of evidence, not to mention the sheer explanatory sensibility, of the definition provided by Krapf and his colleagues. There is an array of complementary evidence, from earlier and later sources, to support their observations.

The definition of Loikop used by Krapf and his colleagues during the 1840s and 1850s appears clear-cut. The basic scheme was as follows: Loikop was the name by which the entire network of pastoralist communities, inclusive of Maasai and “Wakuafi,” referred to themselves. Loikop was an abbreviation of the word *enkop* (land or country) combined with the article *loi*. The word Loikop would then be defined, according to Krapf, as “possessors of the land, similar to the Greek word *autoch-*

⁵⁰Berntsen, “Enemy is Us,” 5, also noted this.

thonos, aborigines, primeval inhabitants.”⁵¹ The Loikop language was called *enguduk ilokop*, the word *enguduk* meaning “mouth” or “entrance.” All sections of Loikop (including Maasai) spoke this language, with only slight variations.⁵² Each group also referred to their common language as *enguduk ilokop*, the “mouth” (language) of the Loikop.⁵³ Maasai and “Wakuafi,” now more or less distinct factions as a result of Maasai expansion, both referred to themselves as Loikop, and the name Kwavi was simply a variation of Loikop used by the Swahili-speakers of the coast.⁵⁴ (It is worth noting that some contemporaries of the early missionaries such as Richard Burton found this explanation of the derivation of “Wakuafi” to be sensible).⁵⁵ The missionaries used this model consistently throughout their written work. On a map drawn in the 1850s, Erhardt labeled their country as “Iloigob (the land of the Masai and Wakuafi).”⁵⁶ Krapf listed the Loikop language in the index to his *Travels* as the overarching tongue encompassing both “Wakuafi” and Maasai dialects, as represented by their complementary published vocabularies.⁵⁷

Berntsen dismissed the assertion made by Krapf, Erhardt, and others, that nineteenth-century Maasai and “Kwavi” pastoralists in fact called themselves Loikop. He concluded that the word “Kwavi” did not derive from the word *ilokop*, which he translated as “murder.” Berntsen felt that *ilokop* would have been a term used to refer contemptuously to a person or group that has committed violence within the community, rather than as a term of self-identification.⁵⁸ “Particular examples of the use of Iloikop,” Berntsen wrote, “imply a status of power and prestige in relation to the users: the pastoral Maasai as a group are ‘Iloikop’ to all those groups, including other pastoral Maa-speakers such as the Parakuyu, who have not successfully defended themselves against Maasai raiders.”⁵⁹

⁵¹Krapf, *Travels*, 358; see also idem., *Vocabulary*, 6-7.

⁵²Erhardt, journal entry, 27 July 1854, CA5/O9, CMS; Erhardt to Venn, 27 October 1854, CA5/O9, CMS; Erhardt, *Vocabulary*, 65; Krapf, *Travels*, 563-64.

⁵³Erhardt, *Vocabulary*, 18, 47-48, 57, 65; Erhardt, journal entry, 27 July 1854, CA5/O9, CMS.

⁵⁴Krapf, journal entry, 30 August 1853, CA5/O16, CMS; Krapf, *Travels*, 358; Krapf, *Vocabulary*, 6-7; Erhardt, *Vocabulary*, 57.

⁵⁵Richard F. Burton, *Zanzibar: City, Island, and Coast* (2 vols.: London, 1872), 72.

⁵⁶Erhardt, “J. Erhardt’s Memoire,” 19-24.

⁵⁷Krapf, *Travels*, 563-64.

⁵⁸Berntsen, “Pastoralism, Raiding, and Prophets,” 47-48; Berntsen, “Enemy is Us,” 20.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

Richard Waller added context to this argument by noting that in twentieth-century Maasai communities, *iloikop* was used as a term contrary to *osotua*, a word used to describe good relations and cooperation within Maasai communities. When one Maasai killed another, payment of cattle was required as compensation (*inkishu l'oo iloikop*). "Groups which refuse to recognise this obligation," Waller wrote, "and so repudiate *osotua*, 'have bloodguilt' and could be termed *Iloikop*." Waller noted that this agreed with Jacobs' view of the Loikop wars, since in the Maasai view, other (Loikop) groups were the ones who "broke *osotua*" with their aggressive behavior.⁶⁰ Waller has raised a different objection to the early missionary definition of Loikop. Waller readily acknowledges that the early missionary sources state that both Maasai and Wakuafi called themselves Loikop, but feels compelled to explain the incongruity away with a bit of speculative logic. Apparently with help from anthropologist Paul Spencer, Waller suggests that Loikop is actually a contraction of *loo nkuapi*, "people of other places," rather than *loo enkop*, "people of this place (or country)." The implication is that one would have used this term to refer to members of other (presumably related, pastoralist) groups, and Waller notes that this use of Loikop would not have carried negative connotations.⁶¹ We have no problem admitting that the word might have been used this way in recent times, but the nineteenth-century evidence is clear that Loikop was a term of self-identification until it was superseded by Maasai ethnic dominance. Further, Waller's only bit of evidence to support his "other places" suggestion is that *loo nkuapi* is "a phrase still used by the Maasai to refer generally to members of other sections."⁶²

The objections raised by Berntsen and Waller to the early missionary definition of Loikop are basically arguments in reverse, using post-1880 examples to argue for pre-1880 history. But because the word *iloikop* evolved new meanings and nuances during the nineteenth century, historians should first give close attention to any available sources from earlier years. For example, we should examine written documents that antedate the arrival of Krapf in 1843. There is a substantial written record of the Portuguese period in east Africa, but as far as anyone knows, none of it mentions Loikop or Maasai. Likewise, the written chronicles of the Swahili city-states on the coast do not provide information relevant to this question.

⁶⁰Richard Waller, 144.

⁶¹Waller, "Economic and Social Relations," 144n98.

⁶²Waller, "Lords of East Africa," 139.

But between 1811 and 1844, a handful of documents do mention Loikop (as Wakwavi), and it is important to note that none of them mention Maasai. In 1811 Captain Smee, sailing along the east African coast, wrote of the “Maquafees,” who lived inland from Mombasa. Smee noted that these people built only temporary residences, and that they offered to trade ivory, rhinoceros horns, amber, and goats, in exchange for cloth, copper wire, and iron. In 1823 a German officer made a reconnaissance trip to Pongwe, near Wasini Island, south of Mombasa. His report, recounted in a travelogue by Thomas Boteler in 1835, noted that the fence surrounding the town had been built to “keep off the Quavas . . . who at times are in the habit of quitting their native inland territory in great numbers to plunder the more peaceable inhabitants of the sea-coast.”⁶³

The fact that Smee, Boteler, and Krapf (during his first two years in east Africa) specifically refer to Wakwavi, and not Maasai, is significant. It can hardly be coincidence that three independent sources visiting the east African coast during a span of more than thirty years did not record even the name Maasai, but did record the name and a few ethnographic details of Wakwavi. The implication can hardly be missed; Maasai were not a widely-known group until the mid-1840s, but Wakwavi (Loikop) were. It might be objected here that Krapf did not record the word Loikop until 1852, six years after he recorded the word Maasai (and eight years after he first recorded the word “Wakwavi”). However, as Krapf and others firmly maintained, the name Wakwavi was nothing more than the Swahili variant of the name Loikop; it simply took Krapf a few years—and specifically his making the acquaintance of Lemasegnot—to discover what Loikop people called themselves.

In fact, most of the neighboring societies of east Africa also referred to Loikop (including Maasai) by some variant of their self-chosen name, using words based on the roots *kop*, *kob*, *kor*, *kap*, or *kuap*. Bantu-speaking peoples living west and east of the Rift Valley areas occupied by Loikop used varying forms of *kabi* or *kwavi*. The Swahili, of course, used Wakwavi, as did other groups along the coast and its hinterland. The Kamba and Kikuyu referred to Maasai as Akabi (well into the twentieth century).⁶⁴ To the west, Bantu-speaking Luyia and Kuria also used forms of *kabi*. Berntsen has suggested that during the nineteenth century, all

⁶³Log of Capt. T. Smee, L/MARK/586, British Library: India Office; T. Boteler, *Narrative of a Voyage of Discovery to Africa and Arabia*, (2 vols.: London, 1835), 2:180. I am grateful to John Lamphear for sharing these references.

⁶⁴Berntsen, “Enemy is Us,” 18.

Bantu-speakers in present-day Kenya probably used variants of *kwavi* or *kabi*. (Some Bantu-speaking groups today still use the word Wakwavi to describe both Maasai and Parakuyo.)

In the area of present-day Kenya this pattern was maintained. Ludwig von Höhnel, accompanying an expedition in northern Kenya in 1887, reported that the people of Laikipia (itself a term most likely derived from the same roots) were called “Leukop,” obviously a German phonetic spelling of Loikop.⁶⁵ In 1930 G. W. B. Huntingford listed the names for Maasai in six languages from northwestern Kenya. Nandi called them *Ipuap*, Keyu called them *Kipkop*, Kony called them *Ipkop*, Sapei called them *Kipkobis*, and Torobo called them *Ipkwap* (only one group, the Suk, called them *Maasai*). Huntingford recognized that these names probably “derived from the same source as the Swahili term for Masae, Wakwavi.”⁶⁶ Samburu people of northern Kenya still refer to themselves as Loikop today, and consider it to be their “original” name. Rendille camel keepers, who lived in close alliance with Samburu, used *Lokkob* to refer to any cattle-keeping people.⁶⁷ To the northeast, Oromo (“Galla”) and other peoples referred to all Loikop (and Maasai) people as *Kore*.⁶⁸

The pattern did not hold to the south of Loikop territory, in present-day central Tanzania, where Loikop were known to their Bantu-speaking neighbors as Lumbwa or Humba (“the well-diggers”), because Loikop occupied the dry steppes dotted with ancient wells. Krapf noted that the “Wakuafi [were] called Wahumba in the language of Uniamesi,” referring to the Bantu-speaking communities of present-day central and western Tanzania.⁶⁹ Like other related terms, Lumbwa would later become a pejorative, bearing a vague connotation of degrading agricultural work, but there is little doubt that during most of the nineteenth century it simply referred to Loikop pastoralists.

Traveling through central Tanzania in mid-century, Richard Burton noted that the Wahumba were pastoralists who “stain their garments with ochreish earth,” despised vegetable foods, and fought with spears, long daggers, and clubs.⁷⁰ Maasai pushing south in the mid-nineteenth century often were seen as another group of Lumbua by these central

⁶⁵Höhnel, *Discovery of Lakes Rudolf and Stefanie* (2 vols.: London, 1894), 1:384, 400; 2:290.

⁶⁶G. W. B. Huntingford, “Tribal Names in the Nyanza and Kerio Provinces,” *Man* (1930); also see also Berntsen, “Enemy is Us,” 2-3.

⁶⁷C. H. Stigand, *The Land of Zinj* (London, 1913), 207.

⁶⁸Berntsen, “Enemy is Us,” 2.

⁶⁹Krapf, journal entry, 23 March 1852, CA5/O16, CMS.

⁷⁰Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa* (New York, 1961), 312.

Tanzanian societies. As the years wore on, Maasai began to refer to themselves as such, specifically to distinguish themselves from the other Loikop groups.

Neighboring societies probably adopted the term “Maasai” because of the readily apparent fact that Maasai had distinguished themselves by crushing other Loikop sections, and sending the survivors fleeing into the midst of these Bantu-speaking agricultural groups. In documents written by J. T. Last and other observers in central Tanganyika during the late nineteenth century, the term Wahumba often was used to describe the (Loikop) pastoralists who lived close to, or even among, agricultural peoples, while the term Maasai was reserved for the more dominant people who now controlled the steppe lands and important wells.

As might be expected of an aggressively expansionist faction, Maasai invented a variety of disparaging terms for other Loikop sections, whom they now considered socially inferior. The most common slur, recorded by the early missionaries as well as later writers, was *embarawuio*, created by adding a feminine article to the Parakuyo section name.⁷¹ Probably applied only to people of the Parakuyo section in the mid-nineteenth century, by the end of the century it was being applied indiscriminately by Maasai to any Loikop peoples not yet under the sway of the Maasai, including members of the resurgent Loikop confederation centered at Laikipia, which was defeated in 1875.

By the 1880s Maasai also used Humba or Lumbwa as an insulting designation for other Loikop groups.⁷² Most of these defeated groups had increased their reliance on agricultural products out of necessity after Maasai took their cattle, so the designation Lumbwa (not to mention Loikop and Kwavi) gradually picked up a connotation of degrading agricultural subsistence (in the Maasai view). This association with farming was in turn recorded by European observers of the late nineteenth century, and led to a great deal of confusion in the historiography. It is also worth noting, from a concerned historian’s perspective, that some of the later “ethnic” designations used by Maasai to refer to their former Loikop enemies might well be invented slurs. For example, Maasai traditions describe a series of conflicts with “Loogolala,” a Loikop group, in northern Tanzania. However, Krapf and his colleagues do not mention Loogolala in their lists of Loikop sections. Richard Waller has pointed out that Loogolala, which can be translated as “people of the hard teeth,”

⁷¹Krapf, journal entry, 18 March 1852, CA5/O16, CMS; Krapf, *Travels*, 564; Erhardt, *Vocabulary*, 57; Johnston, *Kilima-Njaro*, 213, 407.

⁷²Waller, “Economic and Social Relations,” 144n95.

is most likely a term of insult, “since it carries overtones of gluttony,” and has cautioned that “it may not be the word which the ‘Loikop’ group used of itself.”⁷³

Just as changing circumstances led to changes in the use and connotations of the terms Parakuyo and Wahumba, so too did the meaning of Loikop change. In dismissing the early missionaries’ definition of Loikop, Berntsen did not adequately trace the historical development of his preferred definition of Loikop as “murder” or “blood payment.” It is important to note that Krapf and Erhardt do not list murder or violence among the meanings of Loikop in their vocabularies. To my knowledge, the earliest recorded instance of this definition comes from the turn of the century, when Hollis used it in a journal article, and then again in his book on Maasai.⁷⁴ Merker also mentions this definition in his book.⁷⁵

It seems a reasonable hypothesis then that this use of the term developed at the end of the nineteenth century. If this is indeed the case, then it is telling that the association of the term Loikop with violence comes from a period after the end of major conflict between Maasai and other Loikop sections—after Maasai ethnicity superseded Loikop; after a devastating “triple disaster” of epidemics had severely tested pastoralist social cohesion; and during a time when inter-Maasai relations had broken down and serious fighting had begun between Maasai groups. Further, Berntsen did not explore the implications of his own explanation that the word today is not a direct equivalent for murder, but rather also signifies bloodwealth, the social ramifications and consequences of violence, cultural prohibitions and prescriptions in the event of violence, and a general sense of “taboo.”

In other words, the term *iloikop* today has connotations of fighting that tears at the social fabric, not an unexpected development if in fact the non-Maasai Loikop sections had been violently displaced by the expanding Maasai sections, and then demoted to inferior social status. The hypothesis that *iloikop* as murder is a later development can be supported by the evidence that there is, in fact, a more straightforward word in Maa for murder, *aar*, which means “to beat, to kill.” As would be expected, this root forms several related words, such as *aa-ara*, “to fight (each other),” *en-ara*, “battle,” and *ol-arani*, “killer, murderer.”⁷⁶

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Hollis, *Masai*, 311-12.

⁷⁵Moritz Merker, *Die Masai* (Berlin, 1910), 214-15.

⁷⁶A. N. Tucker and J. ole Tompo Mpaayei, *A Maasai Grammar With Vocabulary* (London, 1955), 243, 244, 299.

On a related note, Waller's suggestion that Loikop would have been used in the nineteenth century to refer to other, presumably aggressive, sections of pastoralists, can also be countered with a term that was certainly in widespread use during the Maasai expansion. While the missionary sources state clearly that Loikop was a term of self-designation, they also state just as clearly that the word used to refer to enemy pastoralist groups (especially other Loikop groups) was *Ilmangati*, which Erhardt defined as "any person of whom one has reason to be afraid of—enemy."⁷⁷ The missionary sources make clear that this term was used both by Maasai in reference to other Loikop groups, and vice-versa. Waller himself admits that his Maasai informants "do not refer to other Maa-speakers collectively or individually as Iloikop."⁷⁸

Finally, we should consider the implications of the fact that the modern Maasai oral traditions collected by Berntsen and Waller do not use the word Loikop to refer to their nineteenth-century enemies. "Maasai informants," Berntsen noted, "always identified their enemies by a particular group—Il Parakuyu or Ilumbwa, Ilaikipiak, Iloogolala, Il Uas Nkishu, Il Siria—thereby recognizing each of them as a distinct enemy in time and place, and not an amorphous common enemy vaguely and routinely defeated."⁷⁹ Waller noticed the same phenomenon: "Maasai do not refer to other Maa-speakers collectively or individually as Iloikop. Instead, they refer to them either specifically by name—Ilaikipia, Iloogolala, and so on—or generally by one of a number of insulting epithets—Ilumbwa (well diggers), Mbarawuio, for instance."⁸⁰

Note that at least a few of the "specific" names applied by modern Maasai to their past enemies (Loogolala, for example) are most likely designations invented after the fact. Since at least the time of Fosbrooke, scholars have noted that Maasai oral tradition is infused with creative retellings, especially when referring to times more remote than the lifetime of the informant's grandfather. Conceptions of the past, and especially of the moral lessons of the past, were almost certainly modified to meet the needs of the present day, and dissonant memories or transmitted information were likely changed or ignored, or perhaps more often simply considered unimportant. Incongruous facts, in the context of a soci-

⁷⁷Johann Erhardt, *Vocabulary of the Enguduk Iloigob, as Spoken by the Masai Tribes in East Africa* (Ludwigsburg, 1857), 47-48; see also Erhardt, journal entry, 1 May 1854, CA5/O9, CMS; Krapf, journal entry, 18 March 1852, CA5/O16, CMS; Krapf, *Travels*, 564.

⁷⁸Waller, "Economic and Social Relations," 114.

⁷⁹Berntsen, "Enemy is Us," 19.

⁸⁰Waller, "Economic and Social Relations," 114.

ety's use of oral tradition, really don't matter all that much. What matters is that the moral lessons of *iloikop* in today's society are clear to the people who use this new definition. In a scholarly context, however, this dissonance is unacceptable.

V

The current definition of Loikop, influential and widespread as it may be, simply does not agree with the nineteenth-century evidence available to historians. The evidence clearly suggests that Loikop was a term of ethnic self-designation, and meant "the people who live in this country." Further, it is indicative of the powerful cultural and military influence of Loikop pastoralists that neighboring peoples referred to them by their own self-chosen name. These are not merely obscure historical points. If there was indeed a broad society of Loikop pastoralists, which encompassed *both* Maasai *and* other "Maa-speaking" sections, then this fact would have considerable implications for our view of East African ethnic and social history in general, and more specifically, for our view of Maasai "origins" and expansion. At the least, we might reconsider our use of the term "Maa-speaking peoples" when referring to years prior to the late nineteenth century.

Most importantly, we should give serious consideration to the possibility that Maasai, as such, did not exist before the nineteenth century, and that Maasai did not migrate as a corporate body from the north, but built themselves from within the Loikop heartland (most likely in present-day north-central Tanzania). The idea of "being Maasai," then, is of relatively recent invention, dating back no more than two hundred years. The issue is not merely an obscure academic debate. It is important, because if the evidence presented in this essay is correct, the existence of a widespread Loikop society points to an underappreciated level of dynamic change and development in east African ethnic, political, ecological, and military history. This requires a difficult rethinking of east African history, to be sure, but it also opens up several interesting lines of inquiry.