
*Multiple Socio-Economic Relationships
Improvised between the Turkana
and Refugees in Kakuma Area,
Northwestern Kenya*

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Introduction

Refugee studies have concentrated on the refugee population as their first concern and focus, and there has been little academic research about the host populations, although the need for such research has been long recognized (Harrell-Bond 1986; Chambers 1986). Some analysts have argued that this lack of attention to the host populations is unsatisfactory, not only because it is unfair, but because it may well undermine efforts at project management (e.g., Lassailly-Jacob 1994).

Refugee camps exert profound impacts on the host population, in many and various aspects of their lives (e.g., Chisholm 1996; Whitaker 1999; Waters 1999). Some scholars assume that refugees represent a problem or a burden for the host community, rather than an opportunity. However, others claim that refugees can also benefit their hosts—by providing cheap labor, attracting foreign aid to improve infrastructure, etc. (e.g., Callamard 1994). It is also important to recognize that the impact of refugees on the hosts vary according to the gender, class, region and generational characteristics of the host community. Thus it is necessary to conduct concrete research to ascertain precisely who benefits, who loses, and why (Callamard 1994; Lassailly-Jacob 1994; Whitaker 1999).

How can we measure the costs and benefits? We might be able to identify the different kinds of opportunities that open to the hosts after the establishment of a refugee camp and what resources are depleted. However, even where a resource or an opportunity exists, its utility and value rest with the perceptions and actions of the social actors themselves. People are not passive beneficiaries or losers, but actively work upon their

environments to make their lives better. There have been few empirical studies of host populations from this perspective. In this chapter, then, I aim to provide an alternative representation of the hosts, who have typically been depicted as either shrewd exploiters or wretched losers.

The Turkana who live in the Kakuma area in northwestern Kenya provide the ethnographic data for this research. They received a refugee population of more than 80,000 people, and coped with the abrupt emergence of the refugee camp. This chapter begins with an outline of the history and characteristics of the Kakuma refugee camp. Then, the multiple relationships that have developed between the Turkana and refugees will be described and examined from socio-cultural and economic viewpoints. Finally, I will discuss how the Turkana and refugees spontaneously improvised mutually beneficial conditions, which humanitarian interventions have never anticipated. I will also discuss how this process may have been significantly assisted by the Turkana's cultural background of extroversion.

I commenced my initial anthropological research in the northwestern Turkana District in 1978, and continued to visit there every 1–2 years. The Kakuma refugee camp was established in 1992, adjacent to the village of my host family. Although my focus since has been on other topics of research, I have followed the developments between the Turkana and refugees through daily conversations with the Turkana. In 2001, 2002 and 2003, I conducted field research, about three weeks each year, focusing on their relationships. The data presented here are based on these experiences.

Background

History of Kakuma refugee camp

The majority of refugees at Kakuma camp are Sudanese. In Sudan, there was armed conflict between the North and the South before its independence in 1956. They made peace in 1972, but it proved to be temporary, as civil war started again in 1983, and continues today.¹ In May 1991, the socialist government in Ethiopia collapsed, and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)—which had a cooperative relationship with Khartoum—came into political power. Groups opposed to the Sudanese government (e.g., Sudan People's Liberation Army: SPLA) that had been operating in Ethiopia were driven out, together with 150,000 refugees who had been living in the Gambela area of southwestern Ethiopia. In March 1992, the Sudanese government's

army found an opportunity to attack the SPLA in southeastern Sudan and in July 1992 the SPLA lost its base in Torit.

In May and June 1992, Sudanese refugees who had fled from Gambela and walked more than 400 km began to arrive in the border town, Lokichoggio, in the northwestern corner of Kenya. The UNHCR, with the aid of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), immediately established a camp at Kakuma, to which they transferred the refugees from Lokichoggio. Ethiopian refugees also poured into northern Kenya in response to the political changes there. At about the same time, in January 1991, military forces had overthrown the former government of Somalia, and many Somalis also took refuge in Kenya, mostly in the northeastern and coastal areas.

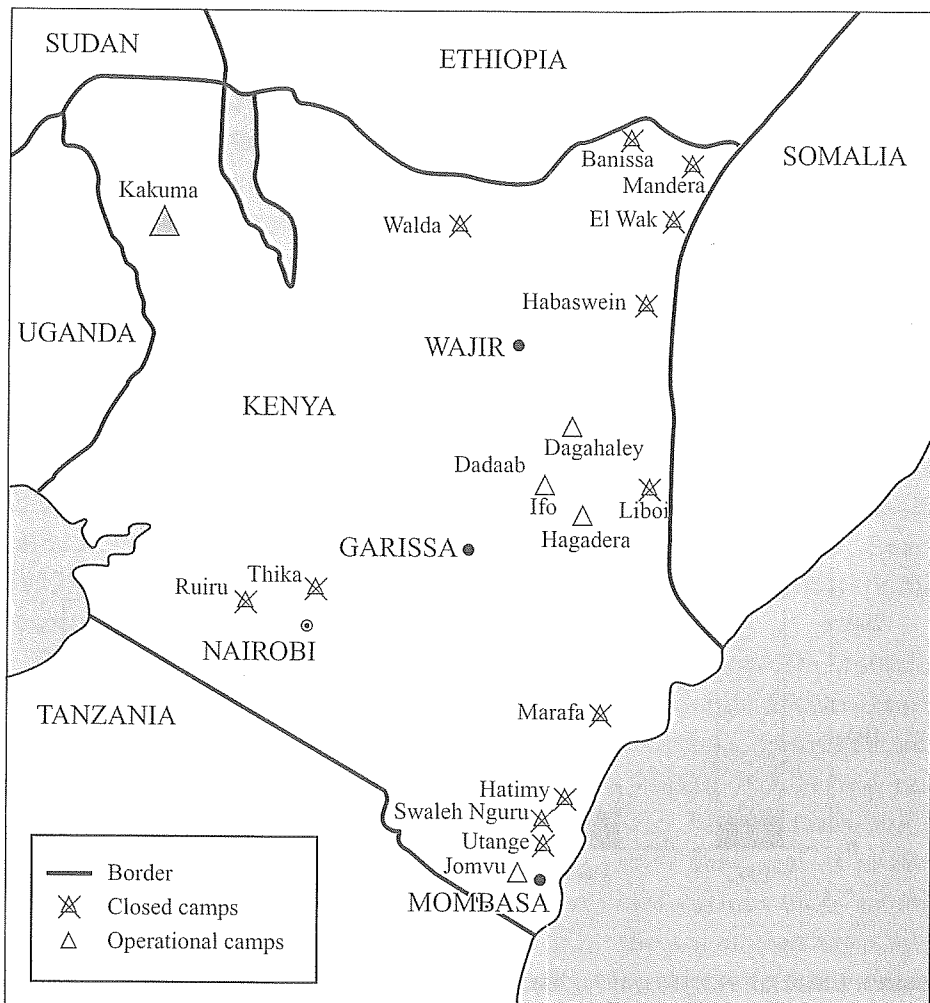
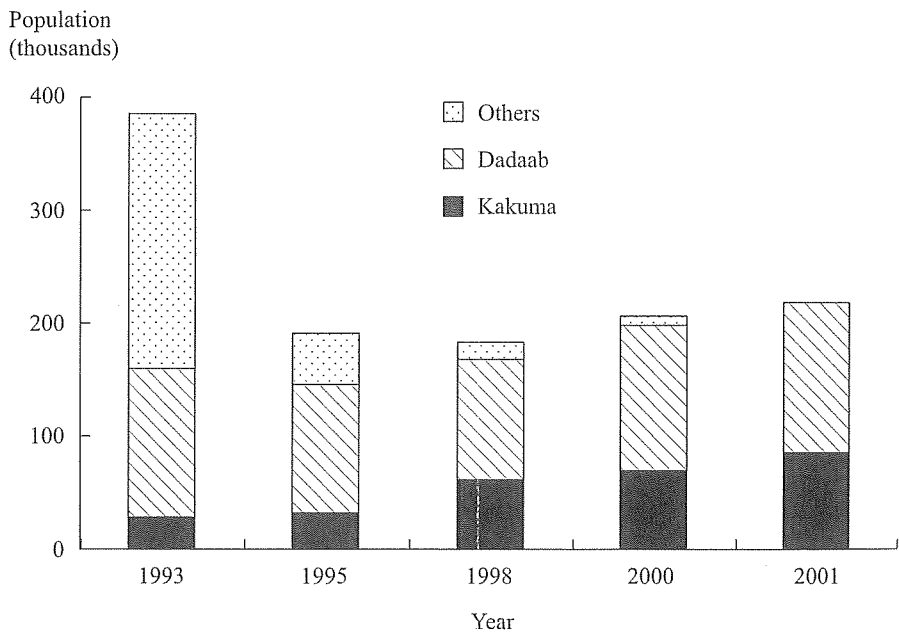


Figure 9-1. Refugee camps in Kenya (UNHCR 1998, modified)

The UNHCR established 17 refugee camps in Kenya in the early 1990s (Figure 9-1). But they have been closed one-by-one, and now only two camps remain: Kakuma, the focus of this paper, and Dadaab, which comprises three neighboring camps that are typically regarded as one. Kakuma camp is located in the northwestern corner of Kenya, while Dadaab is in the eastern part. Both of them are situated in dry and remote areas, where population density is low and the land is not privately owned. The Kenyan government built refugee camps in order to control refugee movements, and located these camps in remote, less densely populated areas for the same reason. Another reason to select these areas was to minimize the resistance of the host communities.

As the camps were closed, some of the refugees went back to their countries of origin, but others were transferred to Kakuma. Figure 9-2 shows the changes of refugee population in Kenya. In 1993, there were nearly 400,000 refugees. However, the numbers were drastically reduced in 1995, and have been relatively stable ever since. The refugee population in Dadaab was quite stable, but the population in Kakuma continued to increase each year, as some of the refugees from each camp that was closed have been transferred to it. The Kenyan government has been eager to close other refugee camps because, among other things,



Source: UNHCR, 1993; 1995; 1998; 2001; 2002.

Figure 9-2. Changes of refugee population in Kenya

the refugees (mostly Somalis) had quickly become involved and begun to dominate the local economy, creating tensions with the local population (Verdirame 1999).

Characteristics of the Kakuma refugee camp

Table 9-1 shows the refugee population of the Kakuma camp in August 2001, by their countries of origin. It has a population of more than 80,000 people from nine countries, making it more than four times larger than the UNHCR's recommendation to avoid camps of more than 20,000 people wherever possible (UNHCR n.d.). Almost 80% of Kakuma's refugees are Sudanese, but few of them had any contact with the Turkana prior to the camp's establishment. Somalis are the second largest group at Kakuma (15%), followed by the Ethiopians (3%). It is also clear from Table 9-1 that the male population far exceeds the female. The camp occupies an area of about 2 km x 5 km (Figure 9-3), divided into eight zones for administrative purposes. It is not fenced. Refugees can leave the camp, and the Turkana can enter the camp freely.

The majority of the refugees had never had any contact with the Turkana before they arrived in Kakuma. That is, the refugees and their Turkana hosts commenced their relationship as absolute strangers, sharing no linguistic, social or cultural backgrounds. In contrast, most of the refugee camps that were located near international borders in Africa have been populated by refugees who had already had close relationships with their hosts before the camps were established. They occasionally belonged to the same ethnic group and spoke the same language. They also shared the same cultural background and, through kinship relationships, maintained close social relationships with each other (Hansen 1993; Leach 1992; Lassailly-Jacobs 1994; Kok 1989; Merx 2000; Horst 2001). In this respect, Kakuma refugee camp is unique.

The camp is not simply a refugee settlement, but a 'town' (De Montclos and Kagwanja 2000; Kurimoto 2001). It has significant infrastructure, such as a hospital, clinics, schools, vocational centers, churches, and mosques. Its shopping centers comprise many kiosks, butcheries, restaurants, bars, satellite TV and video theatres, etc. Bicycle taxis busily pass through the camp, carrying customers on their back seat. It is very economically active, and as we shall see, provides various cash-income generating opportunities for the Turkana. With the population exceeding 80,000, passers-by in the streets and shops are strangers to one another. This sort of economic and social situation was entirely foreign to the Turkana before the refugees began to arrive.

Table 9-1. Population of refugees in Kakuma by nationality, gender and age groups (28 August 2001)

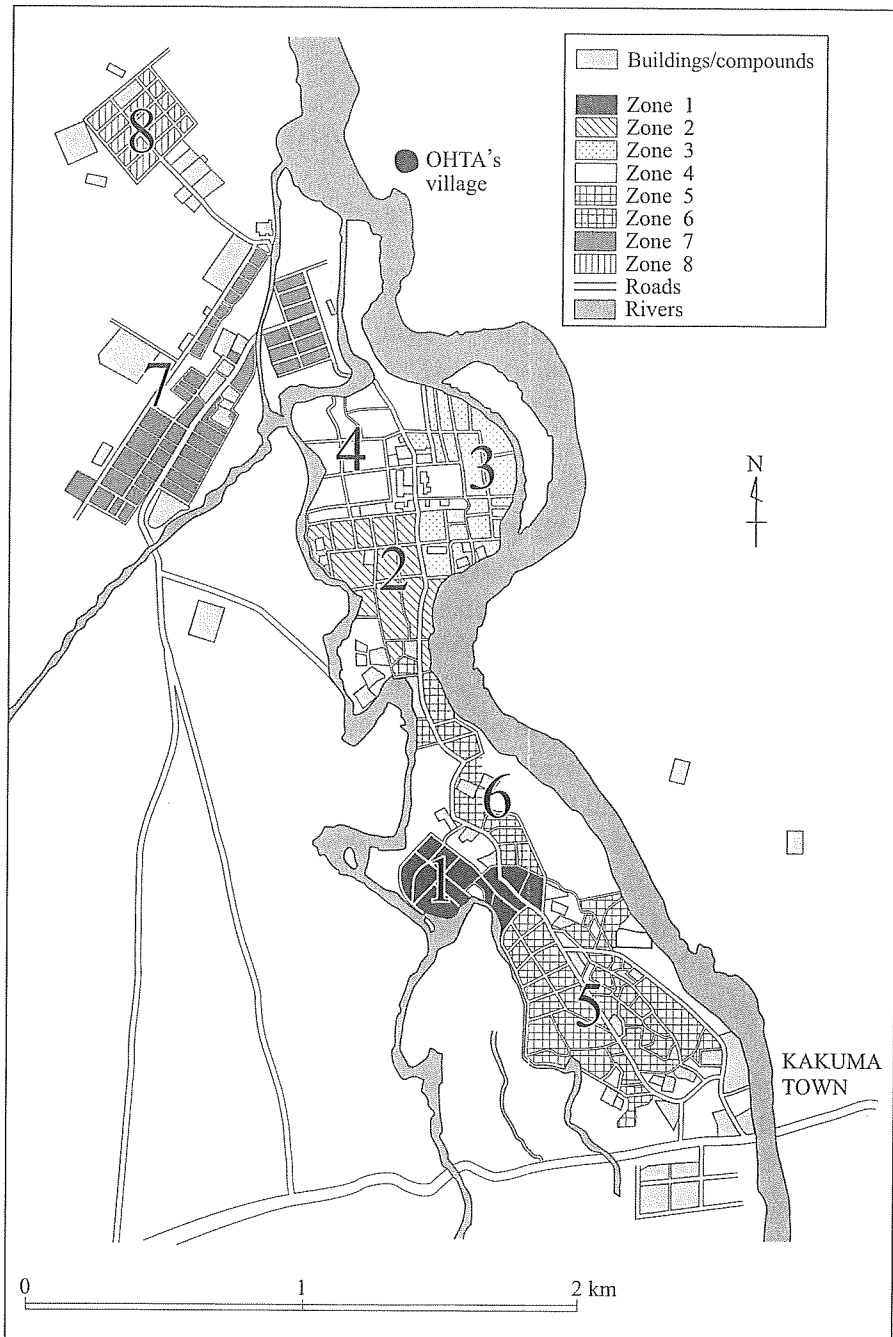
| Ctry of origin | Sex | 0-4 yrs | 5-17 yrs | 18-59 yrs | ≥ 60 yrs | Total | % |
|----------------|-----|---------|----------|-----------|----------|--------|------|
| Sudan | F | 4,169 | 9,539 | 10,508 | 418 | 24,634 | 30.7 |
| | M | 4,764 | 15,597 | 19,153 | 332 | 39,846 | 49.6 |
| | T | 8,933 | 25,136 | 29,661 | 750 | 64,480 | 80.3 |
| Somalia | F | 796 | 1,826 | 2,819 | 110 | 5,551 | 6.9 |
| | M | 964 | 2,119 | 3,557 | 71 | 6,711 | 8.4 |
| | T | 1,760 | 3,945 | 6,376 | 181 | 12,262 | 15.3 |
| Ethiopia | F | 83 | 171 | 342 | 8 | 604 | 0.8 |
| | M | 104 | 242 | 1,436 | 9 | 1,791 | 2.2 |
| | T | 187 | 413 | 1,778 | 17 | 2,395 | 3.0 |
| Uganda | F | 38 | 51 | 56 | 0 | 145 | 0.2 |
| | M | 27 | 56 | 114 | 2 | 199 | 0.2 |
| | T | 65 | 107 | 170 | 2 | 344 | 0.4 |
| DR Congo | F | 18 | 38 | 44 | 1 | 101 | 0.1 |
| | M | 18 | 35 | 141 | 1 | 195 | 0.2 |
| | T | 36 | 73 | 185 | 2 | 296 | 0.4 |
| Rwanda | F | 14 | 29 | 41 | 1 | 85 | 0.1 |
| | M | 15 | 36 | 79 | 1 | 131 | 0.2 |
| | T | 29 | 65 | 120 | 2 | 216 | 0.3 |
| Burundi | F | 2 | 14 | 23 | 1 | 40 | 0.0 |
| | M | 14 | 15 | 54 | 2 | 85 | 0.1 |
| | T | 16 | 29 | 77 | 3 | 125 | 0.2 |
| Eritrea | F | 0 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 6 | 0.0 |
| | M | 2 | 1 | 21 | 0 | 24 | 0.0 |
| | T | 2 | 2 | 26 | 0 | 30 | 0.0 |
| Liberia | F | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0.0 |
| | M | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0.0 |
| | T | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0.0 |
| Stateless | F | 0 | 15 | 37 | 0 | 52 | 0.1 |
| | M | 6 | 14 | 35 | 1 | 56 | 0.1 |
| | T | 6 | 29 | 72 | 1 | 108 | 0.1 |
| Grand totals | F | 5,120 | 11,684 | 13,876 | 539 | 31,219 | 38.9 |
| | M | 5,914 | 18,115 | 24,591 | 419 | 49,039 | 61.1 |
| | T | 11,034 | 29,799 | 38,467 | 958 | 80,258 | 100 |
| % | | 13.7 | 37.1 | 47.9 | 1.2 | 100 | |

Source UNHCR Sub-Office Kakuma (modified)

F: Female, M: Male, T: Total

The Turkana

About 350,000 Eastern-Nilotic speaking Turkana (Gregersen 1977) live in northwestern Kenya, mostly in the Turkana District. The average annual rainfall at Lodwar, the center of the District, is about 200 mm, but we must



Source: UNHCR Sub-Office Kakuma, modified

Figure 9-3. Kakuma refugee camp

note that Lodwar is located in the most arid part of the area. Because of its dryness, agriculture is not extensively practiced. Most of the people keep five species of livestock—cattle, camels, goats, sheep, and donkeys—and lead a nomadic lifestyle, depending on the distribution of both water and the plants on which livestock feed.

However, the Turkana are currently experiencing rapid social changes. To the best of my knowledge, the severe drought in 1979–80 had the first large-scale and drastic impact. Emergency food aid was extended, and various developmental projects have since been carried out, all of which had a profound impact on the Turkana. A tarmac road reached Kakuma in 1988, and the traffic in people and commodities, as well as channels of information, subsequently increased considerably. The market economy, formal education, modern medical systems and national administration have since infiltrated Turkana society.

Kakuma was a small town of slightly more than 2,000 people in 1989, before the refugees arrived (Government of Kenya 1994). But its population increased significantly after the refugee camp was established, reaching more than 9,000 in 1999 (Government of Kenya 2001). Many traders, for example, came to Kakuma from central parts of Kenya and opened kiosks and restaurants, or sought other business opportunities.

In order to comprehend the effects that aid activities for refugees have had on the Turkana, the development of Lokichoggio town also needs to be taken into consideration. This was also previously a small town, not even achieving the status of a ‘township’ when the population census was conducted in 1989, but had grown to more than 13,000 by 1999, largely because many international aid agencies established offices there to oversee their assistance programs for the refugees and internally displaced persons in southern Sudan.

The population in and around Kakuma and Lokichoggio increased again during 1999–2000. During this period, the Turkana once again suffered from a very severe drought, as well as increasing rates of livestock raiding, and many became destitute. Although emergency food aid began to be distributed throughout the District in 1999, many Turkana swarmed around Kakuma, sometimes traveling more than 100 km, and settled on the peripheries of the town and refugee camp.

It is difficult to estimate what proportion of the Turkana population were, to a greater or lesser extent, directly or indirectly influenced by the refugee-aid activities. According to UNHCR, the local Turkana population in Kakuma urban area was estimated to be 35,145 in 2001 (Silva 2002). More broadly, the Turkana District is divided into three constituencies

Table 9-2. Population of Turkana North constituency

| Division | Male | Female | Total |
|-------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Kakuma | 13,401 | 15,674 | 29,075 |
| Oropoi | 7,055 | 9,808 | 16,863 |
| Lokichoggio | 14,458 | 16,999 | 31,457 |
| Total | 34,914 | 42,481 | 77,395 |

Source: LWF Food Supply Project (July 2001)

(North, Central and South), and we can assume that people in the Turkana North constituency—with a population of about 77,000 in 2001 (Table 9-2)—were touched by the aid activities.

Multiple relationships between the Turkana and refugees

Socio-cultural relationship

Insecurity and conflicts

When the camp was established in 1992, some of the Turkana were obliged to move their homesteads. Several perfunctory meetings were held to explain to the local Turkana some of the details of the construction of the refugee camp. UNHCR and Kenyan administrative officers (District officers and Turkana chiefs) emphasized that the establishment of the camp was approved by the Kenyan government, and that the local people would also benefit from the camp because the infrastructure such as clinics and boreholes would become available to them. Most of the Turkana men present at these meetings did not express any clear or strong objection to the plan, although some of them personally expressed to me anxiety about the arrival of strangers. Because the Turkana, as a pastoral people, do not claim exclusive territorial rights, they did not think that the refugee camp had confiscated their land, or that they should be compensated for the land.

However, the refugee camp undermined public security of this area (Crisp 2000). There were many violent conflicts, not only among the refugees themselves, but also between the refugees and the local Turkana, especially in the first few years after the camp was established.

As mentioned, the Kakuma camp had many of the characteristics of a large town, in which people regularly encountered strangers. The local

Turkana have never before had this experience. Furthermore, the refugees were complete 'cultural others' to the Turkana. Although the Turkana did already have experience in associating with other ethnic groups, this was mostly with the neighboring peoples, whose cultures and languages were more or less similar. But the arrival of the refugees was the first time that the Turkana had close and regular contact with complete strangers, with completely different cultures, on a large scale.

The sources of conflict were multiple. The Turkana informed me that the refugees have cut trees that were vital for the Turkana, that they have beaten Turkana children, that they have stolen the Turkana's livestock, and that they have killed many of the Turkana's donkeys that roamed into the camp, etc. The Turkana are very prideful and sometimes take a confrontational stance even among themselves. For example, when I was walking in the camp with Turkana friends of mine, they sometimes spoke abusively to the refugees, calling them thieves or similar. Likewise, I was walking in the camp with some Turkana women one day when they told me that we should stay in a cohesive group because they were afraid of the refugees.

Many Turkana men have had violent encounters with the refugees. I came across two cases in which Turkana killed refugees. The first occurred around November 1993, and came to my attention when a local Turkana youth got sick. He complained that he had lost all of the strength in his body and could not even stand up. He explained that about a month earlier, he was walking with several Turkana men when he encountered a refugee man in the bush. According to the youth, the refugee was fighting with a Turkana child. The group intervened to rescue the child, and in the struggle the Turkana men had beaten the refugee with sticks and killed him. The youth who had become ill had been the first person to grapple with the refugee and had thrown him to the ground. Turkana occasionally commit murders while raiding the livestock of neighboring ethnic groups. When this occurs, the murderers typically fall ill like the above-mentioned youth, and must conduct a special purifying ritual. Once the youth had performed this ritual, he recovered. The Turkana explained that his sickness was really caused by the murder of the refugee.

The other case occurred in October 1994. When a young man in his twenties was herding goats, three refugees came and tried to steal one, according to the Turkana. The Turkana youth fought with them and struck a severe blow with a stick to one's head. The injured person was quickly taken to Lokichoggio hospital. The Turkana youth was identified and arrested by the Kenyan police, but the case was settled locally. Several meetings were held by Turkana elders and representatives of refugees, and the Turkana youth's family paid 60 goats for compensation.²

Trafficking in small arms, such as AK-47s, became easy and prevalent, which enhanced insecurity. Many Sudanese refugees were soldiers of SPLA (the male population of the camp is far greater than the female, see Table 9-1) and they sold small arms to the Turkana in exchange for livestock. Some of them allegedly engaged in livestock raiding with the Turkana.³ Violent incidents between the Turkana and refugees, as well as among refugees themselves, caused social unrest among the Turkana, which hastened the moral decline. Social insecurity was one of the most serious problems caused by the establishment of the Kakuma refugee camp. Some of the Turkana distanced themselves from the Kakuma area to avoid the insecurity, although many remained because of the economic advantages of the refugee camp, which I will discuss shortly.

Intermarriage and bond-friendship

On the contrary, some Turkana and refugees developed close social relationship. As the Turkana started interacting with the refugees, they began to learn other languages, and became multi-lingual. They learned not only Swahili, a public language in Kenya and in the camp, but also Arabic dialect, a common language in southern Sudan. The girls were the first to develop these language skills, because they had more opportunities to visit the refugee camp to sell firewood, charcoal, building materials, and milk.

There have been some marriages between Turkana and refugees. In most cases, Turkana women married refugee men. I know only three reverse cases, in which a Turkana man married a Sudanese woman. The majority of these marriages were without any bridewealth transaction, and were therefore not formal marriages for the Turkana. Even among the Turkana themselves, it is very common for girls to have sexual relationships without bridewealth transaction. When a girl gets pregnant, the baby's biological father should pay a fixed amount of livestock to the girl's patrilineal family, and the baby belongs to this family.⁴

When Turkana women became pregnant by refugees, the Turkana demanded this payment from the refugees. However, some refugees regarded this custom as unfair and unacceptable because the girl's partner would receive nothing after paying the compensation. There were many conflicts over this issue, sometimes involving physical violence, between the women's families and their refugee partners.

When such troubles occurred, most refugees sought advice from the UNHCR protection officers, sometimes in genuine fear that the Turkana would take strong measures. When the parties concerned could not reach agreement about the payment, they sought arbitration from the local

Turkana chiefs. Both parties were called to the administrative office in Kakuma town to attend an inquiry. After several meetings, a judgment was made.

For example, I attended a series of meetings in September 2002, which were called by the Turkana chief of Kakuma Division. A Turkana girl had delivered a baby boy, allegedly with an Ethiopian refugee, in 1999. At the meetings, the girl, her parents, and a male relative of the parents attended from the girl's side, and the Ethiopian attended with his friends and a UNHCR protection officer. The Division chief, a sub-location chief, and several elder Turkana men acted as mediators. At the meetings, the protection officer tried to understand the Turkana way of settling disputes, and recommended that the Ethiopian comply with the custom. In the end, the Ethiopian paid 30,000 Kenyan Shillings to the girl's parents, which was regarded as a payment of 30 goats.

One might question how far these marriage-like relationships might endure, in the context of a refugee camp that is not permanent but provisional. This is a difficult question with both positive and negative implications. Some of the refugees established enduring social relationships both with other refugees and with the Turkana. But others felt that life in the refugee camp was transient, and approached affairs with Turkana women as such. Some of the Turkana women living in Kakuma town had sexual relationships with several men, and were thus tainted by accusations of prostitution. Although this phenomenon cannot be attributed wholly to the refugees, as it was also a product of the growing urban lifestyle in Kakuma, the presence of the refugee camp undoubtedly amplified this trend.

Another form of sociable relationship that has developed between the Turkana and refugees was 'bond-friendship'. This is also a customary practice among the Turkana, in which two individuals, together with family members of both sides, establish a close social relationship through the exchange of gifts. Starting with small gift-giving, such as tobacco, both parties repeatedly visit the partner's homestead, getting the partner to slaughter a goat or sheep, which is a typical way of giving a cordial reception. Going through this process, they eventually build up an interdependent relationship, which is very important for the Turkana (Gulliver 1951, 1953).

The Turkana seemed to have no difficulties extending this practice to the refugees. Most of these relationships were initiated by Turkana women or youth who regularly visit the refugee camp to sell things such as milk, firewood and goats. They repeatedly encountered and conversed with specific refugees, and exchanged small gifts. Eventually they took

their husbands or elders to the camp to introduce to their refugee friends. Then, they repeatedly visited each other's home and gave some gifts. The Turkana offered goats and sheep, as well as firewood and milk, to the refugees, and in return, the refugees gave rations, blankets, and cooking pots, etc. Some of the refugees helped their Turkana partners to access the benefits within the camp, such as arranging to visit the clinics or hospital, or to buy commodities.

Economic relationship

Livestock trade and herding 'contracts'

Prices of livestock went up, especially in the early stage of the camp. For example, the price of goats rose threefold between June 1992 and October 1993. After 1995, when Somali refugees were transferred from other camps in Kenya to Kakuma, demand for camel meat increased, and the price of camels escalated.⁵ The creation of the refugee camp proved to be a significant opportunity for the local Turkana to sell their livestock.

Some of the Turkana started to enter 'contracts' with refugees to look after the latter's livestock. Formally the refugees were prohibited from keeping livestock, but some Sudanese, Somali, and Ethiopian refugees had them anyway. The Kenyan police and administration officers turned a blind eye to it. The refugees' purpose in owning livestock was not to multiply the herd; they purchased livestock from a Turkana, contracted its care to another for some period, and then sold it to the butcheries in the camp. In short, they were brokers.

The relationship between the Turkana herdsmen and refugee brokers could be termed a 'contract'. The Turkana herdsmen's duty was as follows: they kept the animals, and when animals needed to be slaughtered, they took them to the slaughtering place in the camp, slaughtered and skinned the animals. They were not paid in cash for their efforts, but were given the hide of the animals that they had been keeping, and certain parts of the meat. They could sell the hide after drying it.⁶ Although it has long been the practice that destitute Turkana sometimes put themselves under the protection of relatives or friends and worked as herders, it is the personal social relationship that makes this state possible. The herder might be given some animals at some stage, but there is no fixed payment and, if given, the animals are gifts. On the contrary, the Turkana got a fixed return for taking care of refugees' livestock. The Turkana complained to me, however, that their refugee partners were stingy. This relationship of herding 'contract' was a quite new phenomenon for the Turkana.

Many young Turkana men entered the livestock trade, trying to take advantage of the sudden rise in livestock prices. They bought commodities such as beads, adornments and clothes, and took them to remote areas to exchange for livestock. Then, they brought the livestock back and sold it in the refugee camp, earning the balance of the trade. The more successful men, although they were few, maintained a herd consisting of only male goats and sheep near the camp, and sold them when the prices were attractive.

The refugee camp opened up a range of opportunities for selling livestock, introducing not only the market economy, but also the commoditization of livestock among the Turkana. They once sold livestock only when they needed cash to pay hospital bills and school fees, to buy tobacco, maize flour, sugar, tea leaves, beads, ornaments, etc. But like other East African pastoralists, their livestock were not a simple commodity for the Turkana—they were symbolic and inalienable assets of social and religious importance (Broch-Due 1999; Ohta 2001). The emergence of the refugee camp has considerably accelerated the commoditization of livestock in the area.

Wage labor

The refugee camp provided employment opportunities for the Turkana. Some Turkana with higher formal education were employed by the offices of the UNHCR and its implementing partners (IPs), such as LWF, Don-Bosco, International Rescue Committee, World Vision, etc. Others got various jobs, as drivers, night watchmen, gatekeepers, and part time construction workers, etc. However, the job market was not large enough to fulfill the expectations of young Turkana who had higher formal education, and they complained that they were discriminated against by the members of other ethnic groups who favored their fellows to fill vacancies.

I have no quantitative data on how the Turkana spent their salary. Some of the Turkana whom I know well got jobs as night watchmen and construction workers. They were paid about 140 Kenyan Shillings per day in 2000, which was quite a good salary.⁷ One of them, in his middle thirties, worked for six months. He bought 15 goats and sheep spending about 15,000 Shillings, which were equivalent to 60% of his total salary. Some of the remaining money was given to relatives and friends, and some was spent on food, tobacco, clothes, etc., and drinking alcohol.

In addition to the UNHCR and its IPs, the refugees themselves also employed the Turkana. Many refugees from Somalia and Ethiopia had

enough money to start various businesses in the camp. Some opened kiosks selling miscellaneous goods; others started vegetable shops, butcheries, restaurants and bars. Kakuma refugee camp turned out to be the biggest town in the area, and offered the local Turkana opportunities to be employed to do physical labor. However, most of them were paid very little and, thus, found it difficult to save money to invest in goats and sheep.

Some Turkana, primarily young boys and girls, were hired as housekeepers. Their tasks included cleaning the compound, fetching water, bringing firewood, cooking, watering trees, building fences and houses, etc. Most lived in their employers' houses, and some were registered as members of their employers' families, and thus got free rations. For their work, they were given food, and paid as little as 150 Kenyan Shillings per month.

I do not have any statistical data, but the local chief of Kakuma Division confirmed the refugees' reports that about 10% of Sudanese households and more than 90% of households from other countries employed this kind of housekeepers. If we make a simple calculation, assuming that one household consisted of five persons, and each household employed one Turkana, it follows that about 4,000 Turkana children were employed as live-in housekeepers. The number could have been higher, however, because, when a boy or girl was employed and stayed with the refugees, his/her siblings often visited and worked with them.

This exploitation of child labor attracted the attention of the local Kenyan administrators. The chief declared that it was illegal to employ children, and that children should be sent back to school. However, it was difficult to enforce this decision, because it required great effort to make a house-by-house search of the refugee camp. If this situation continues, though, it may well have considerable influence on the development of these children, and consequently on the Turkana culture, although the precise nature and extent of these effects cannot be predicted.

Petty trade by women

Turkana women took firewood, branches of trees for building materials, charcoal, sun-dried bricks and milk to sell in the refugee camp. Although the range of items that they traded in was limited, this trade had become very important for the livelihood of their families.

To secure the supply of firewood, UNHCR and its IPs invited tenders and then entered contracts with the successful bidder. Traveling through the northwestern part of the Turkana District, one could see firewood

piled along the roads here and there, which had been collected by local Turkana, and was awaiting the contractor's lorries. Since the beginning of 2000, however, this system has begun to atrophy. Turkana politicians and young elites formed an organization, named TERA (Turkana Environment and Resource Association), and demanded that all tendering and bidding of firewood should be channeled through them. They argued that if the UNHCR regulations, which requested an open and competitive bidding process were strictly applied, suppliers from outside of the Turkana District could also tender. They insisted that tendering and bidding should be open only to the Turkana, because the materials (firewood) were locally sourced in Turkana District. When the UNHCR subsequently awarded a firewood contract to non-members of TERA, some members of TERA tried to block the contractors' lorries, and a Turkana woman died when Kenyan police interfered on 12 July 2002.⁸

The UNHCR's supply of firewood to the refugees was not sufficient even before this trouble started, with the refugees having to buy some of it from the Turkana. After the tender system hit turmoil, though, the distribution of firewood came to a standstill within the camp, creating a highly profitable situation for the local Turkana women to sell firewood to individual refugees.⁹

Cutting live trees was strictly prohibited around the refugee camp, and it was very difficult for refugees to collect firewood. Turkana women living near Kakuma sometimes had to walk more than 10 km to bring firewood. Others began digging up the stumps and roots of trees that had died long ago. Once they got the timber out of the ground, they cut it into pieces and took them to the camp to sell. The majority of Turkana women had their regular customers, to whom they took firewood directly. Others sold their firewood to refugee traders, who divided it into smaller units and sold it on to the refugees.

Typically, a woman could carry a bundle of firewood that she could sell for about 50 Kenyan Shillings in August 2003. At that time, according to the local Turkana, they never failed to sell their firewood. With this money, a woman could buy, for example, about 5 kg of maize flour, which could satisfy about 15 people. I witnessed many Turkana women buying food, tobacco etc., in the refugee camp after selling firewood.

According to RESCUE (Rational Energy Supply, Conservation, Utilization and Education, a UNHCR/GTZ household energy project in Dadaab area in Kenya), firewood consumption is 0.7 kg per capita per day (Hoerz 1995). On this basis, the Kakuma camp of 80,000 people consumed about 56.0 metric tons of firewood every day. Another simple

calculation, assuming that all necessary firewood in the camp was brought in by Turkana women, and that each woman sold 10 kg of firewood a day,¹⁰ it follows that more than 5,500 women sold firewood daily in the camp. As of August 2003, the Turkana said that it was easy to make a living by selling firewood.

In the early years of the camp, some of the refugees' firewood had been brought from outside the Turkana District by the UNHCR. But in 2004 it was all procured locally. Moreover, trees had been cut to provide building materials for the refugees, and to supply charcoal to refugees and town dwellers. The vegetation around the camp has obviously been devastated,¹¹ contributing to the Turkana's antagonistic feeling towards the refugees, despite the inconsistency of the fact that they were themselves deriving a profit by selling firewood, charcoal and building materials to the refugees.

Concluding remarks

Multiple and contradictory relationships between the Turkana and the refugees

In studies of the host population of refugees or those displaced by development projects, the kinds of benefits and/or losses that the hosts encounter have become a central issue. In order to understand the hosts' experience, it is necessary to first identify the range of resources and opportunities available from an external perspective, and their decline, because the local people cannot utilize what is not present. For example, vegetation cover around Kakuma has obviously been destroyed, and it is important to objectively assess this ecological problem, no matter how locals perceive or deal with the state of affairs. The same can be said of assessments of the economic and social environments.

From the outsiders' perspective, e.g. the aid agencies, the Turkana are generally seen as failures because the majority of those living near the refugee camp are heavily dependent on the unreliable refugee camp for their livelihood and on emergency food aid in times of drought. Some might see them as losers because their land and its vegetation has seriously deteriorated since the creation of the refugee camp, and the Turkana themselves, as well as the refugees, were major contributors to the destruction.

However, to understand how people cope with uncertain and changing circumstances, it is essential to try to understand the 'insiders' perspectives and strategies, upon which decisions are based and measures taken to deal

with the situation at hand. Only then might we understand how they are utilizing their resources and opportunities. The Turkana perceived and understood their situation differently to outsiders. As far as I can tell, the Turkana did not consider themselves to be failures or losers. Facing new opportunities, people repeatedly made decisions, selecting what was profitable, utilizing whatever lay ready at hand, according to their necessity and priority.

As we have seen, the Turkana's attitude towards the refugee camp was ambiguous and contradictory. They were apparently aware of the benefits, mostly economic, which they were exploiting. However at the same time, they complained loudly about the insecurity and environmental destruction caused by the camp. Their relationships with the refugees were also multiple, and seemingly contradictory. On the one hand, they were bitterly antagonistic to each other, even to the extent of the occasional murders. On the other hand, however, they have fostered close relationships. Some of them were employers and employees, partners in petty trade, and others have cultivated bond-friendships through exchanging gifts, as well as marriage-like relations.

This pattern of complicated relationships is similar to the Turkana's relationships with neighboring ethnic groups. They have a history which has alternated between periods of alliance and periods of opposition, and in which livestock raiding was repeatedly a factor in the changes. For the Turkana, a neighboring group may represent a deadly enemy for a time, but when a peace proposal is accepted, they stop fighting each other—and then not uncommonly cooperate to attack a third group. But even when the overall relationship is hostile, the individual members of different ethnic groups maintain social relationships as affines and friends, visiting each other and trusting livestock to one another. They do not find it contradictory to sustain overall hostility while individual close relationships are kept intact. Moreover, ethnic affiliations are not rigidly fixed. The boundaries between ethnic groups are commonly transgressed. When one has moved to the area of a neighboring group, speaking its language and observing its customs, s/he might be incorporated to the group.

Self-assuredness of the Turkana

In the development of personal and positive relationships with the refugees, the Turkana have a certain unique style—an important element of Turkana culture—that plays a vital role. That is, they have a propensity of tirelessly working on others, so to speak, in face-to-face communication (Kitamura 1997). They are relatively free of the nervousness and hesitation that we usually feel when interacting with 'cultural others'. The Turkana are

self-assured and carry their way of doing things throughout; this is often perceived by outsiders as arrogance.

For example, they demanded that I should behave just as they did from the very first day of my research. They spoke to me tirelessly in Turkana language, which I didn't understand, in the manner of someone who has never imagined that somebody does not know their language. Evans-Pritchard evocatively described a similar experience in the introduction to his book, *The Nuer*, explaining how the attitude of the Nuer was different from that of the Azande: 'Among Azande I was compelled to live outside the community; among Nuer I was compelled to be a member of it. Azande treated me as a superior; Nuer as an equal' (Evans-Pritchard 1940: 15). The latter aptly describes my experiences among the Turkana.

They are self-confident and straightforward when engaged in face-to-face interactions. It is this unique attitude of self-assuredness that makes it easy for them to approach and associate with strangers, and thus enables many Turkana boys and girls to be employed as live-in housekeepers, and for Turkana women to 'marry' refugees.

Another element of the Turkana culture that provides a key to understanding their relationships with the refugees is their propensity for territorial and social expansion. In the 25 years since I first visited the Turkana, they have been continually expanding their territory east and southeast. They have not only enlarged the space for livestock herding and habitation, but have also settled in and on the peripheries of towns and private ranches. They do not hesitate to intrude themselves upon others' territories, and settle there. On the peripheries of towns, they earn a living by selling firewood, charcoal, etc., and by engaging in physical labors. They are not reluctant to work on private ranches to do miscellaneous odd jobs, such as housekeepers, watchmen, herders, etc., which people of other ethnic groups sometimes disdain. It seems that such jobs do not affect the Turkana's pride at all.

The Turkana's self-assuredness, combined with their inclination towards expansion, has greatly contributed to building personal relationships with the refugees. But of course these relationships are not grounded only in the Turkana's extrovert attitude, but through their repeated mutual interactions. Further research is necessary to explore this process.

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Notes

- 1 Sudan's government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) signed a memorandum of understanding on 19 November 2004 in Nairobi, in which they agreed to conclude a final peace deal by the end of the year 2004.
- 2 Traditionally, the murderer's family pays a blood-price in livestock, called *ngibaren-lu-a-ekwori* (lit. livestock of contention [trouble, hostility, collision]) to the family of the victim. The amount of this payment is decided in an elders' meeting that considers the solvency of the wrongdoer's family. However, the Turkana do not pay this compensation when they kill humans whom they regard to belong to other ethnic groups. However, in this case, they had little choice but to pay, because the Turkana youth was arrested by the police, which approved a local way of problem resolution. The Turkana disliked and avoided taking the case through formal channels because they knew that policemen were sometimes very brutal to prisoners.
- 3 Livestock rustling causes serious insecurity. In earlier times, when people raided livestock they would take the animals home and add them to their flock. Any weapons used then were not very destructive. But since the collapse of Idi Amin's government in Uganda in 1979, there has been an influx of small arms on a large scale in northwestern Kenya, and the flow increased tremendously in the 1990s, fueled by civil wars and political instability in Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia and Uganda. Livestock raiding has changed into mere robbery, and plundered animals are taken directly to urban areas to sell (see Hendrickson et. al. 1996; 1998).
- 4 Traditionally, for the first child, the genitor's family should pay 10 big animals (cattle, donkeys and camels) and 20 small animals (goats and sheep) to the girl's family. For the second and thereafter, 1 big animal and 10 small animals should be paid. However, today it is possible to give small animals in place of big ones. When the genitor maintains close social relationships with the girl and her family members, this payment can be postponed for quite a long time. I know one Turkana

- man who had six children with a woman out of formal marriage, but had only finished paying for the first born and about half of the animals for the second.
- 5 For example, the price of the largest castrated goat rose from 500 Kenyan Shillings in 1992 to 1,500 in 1993. The price of a castrated camel was about 10,000 in 1994, and rose to 25,000 in August 2004. 1US\$=80 Kenyan Shillings approximately.
 - 6 The price of a goat skin was 100–120, while that of cattle was 500–700 Kenyan Shillings in August 2004.
 - 7 This was equivalent of 4,200 Shillings per month. The monthly salary of a primary school teacher could be between 2,250–8,000 Shillings at the same time.
 - 8 After the general election in December 2002, when the former ruling party, KANU, lost office, TERA began to lose the support of the Turkana people and became inactive.
 - 9 According to the chief of Kakuma Division, the County Council of Kakuma Division began to charge 5–10 Shillings on each firewood sale from around July 2004. A market place was established in the refugee camp where Turkana women should take and sell their firewood, but many women evaded this supervision (and thus the tax) and continued to sell firewood individually.
 - 10 The firewood bundle that a woman carries at a time was roughly 10kg, and most women went and sold the firewood once a day.
 - 11 A joint project to assess the environmental destruction of the vegetation destruction around the Kakuma, utilizing GIS and RS, was in progress at the time of writing (Tachiiri and Ohta 2004).

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