

**Okiek Resource Tenure and Territoriality as
Mechanisms for Social Control and Allocation of Resources**

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1. Introduction

The Okiek¹ are a forest-dwelling hunting and honey collecting people found throughout the higher elevations of Kenya. They are composed of often widely separated local groups, each consisting of several patrilineal lineages. Members of each lineage tend to reside in one general locality part of the year and the rest of the year in various parts of the forest, for the primary purpose of collecting honey. The forest is divided into several types depending on flora differences and into many territories and sub-territories. Each of the latter is 'owned' by an individual.

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individuals of the same lineage tend to 'own' sub-territories in proximity to each other, thus the Okiek speak of lineage territories as well, though there is no corporate ownership as such.

Ownership of sub-territories, however, is defined not in terms of ownership of the land per se but of rights to certain resources which are on the land, specifically honey, trees in which one can place beehives, and trees from which one can make hives. Thus one can speak of the Okiek as having interrelated territorial and resource tenure systems. These rights are inherited from father to son but may also be given, sold, traded, lent and in certain circumstances lost or taken. Sub-territories can be awarded to another in compensation for damages, unusually deriving from intentional loss of life.

The territorial system functions in at least three ways. It provides for the necessity of having to have access to different types of forests to maximize the amount of honey that can be

collected.

It provides an economical way of reaching these forests by the easiest route (along the ridges). And it allows for the efficiency of related men to live together and to utilize the same or adjacent parts of the forest.

The resource tenure system functions primarily as a mechanism for social control by limiting access to the most important forest resource - honey - to individual rights within sub-territories thereby spacing out in separate territories and sub-territories people who are unrelated or more distantly related. It is these people that the Okiek see as most likely to come into conflict over competition for honey if there was no regulation of access to it. They view honey as such a scarce (more in the perception than the fact) resource that competition for it can lead to severe and unacceptable consequences. In this society, lacking authority roles and most mechanisms for social control, its achievement must rely on informal persuasion, the threat of supernatural retribution, and the passive rules of the territorial and resource tenure systems. Numerous conflict cases and transfers of ownership rights confirm these functions and testify to the importance to the Okiek of their territorial and resource

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tenure systems in regulating access to resources and in contributing to social control. Historical data extending back to the mid-19th century including individual and lineage histories, migrations, and environmental adaptation support the conclusion that the functions of the territorial and resource tenure systems were operative in the pre-colonial period. I would suggest that these systems have been the principal attributes of an optimal adaptation by the Okiek to their high montane forest environment and thus are likely to have considerable antiquity.

2. Okiek distribution and adaptation

The Okiek are a surprisingly homogeneous and distinctive people considering that for a long time many Okiek groups have lived in isolation from each other. Today they are to be found on nearly all the highland hills and mountain ranges of Kenya. Many Okiek groups are contiguous, but between others there are hundreds of miles and several other peoples separating the most distant groups from each other. In fact many groups have lost any knowledge of the existence of some of the other groups. Yet all speak, or recall having once spoken Kalenjin dialects as their domestic language. All share a certain number of distinctive and recognizable characteristics of culture, social organization and technology associated with their foraging way of life. And all of them recognize themselves as Okiek by that name. While some early sources referred to the 'Dorobo' as disenfranchised pastoralists or farmers, recent research confirms the long integrity of their forest adaptation². In this respect the Okiek contrast with the San, many groups of which were involved to some degree with a pastoral economy before this century but were more recently and forcibly deprived of cattle and land rights forcing them to turn to foraging. Also in contrast to the San, who live in a marginal environment, the Okiek inhabit an environment with a relatively plentiful, constant and stationary food supply (game and honey but little else).

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The Okiek have a specific adaptation to the montane forests of the highland primarily because of the importance they place on collecting quantities of honey for several purposes significant to maintaining their way of life. It is an adaptation of choice today and probably also in the past. That choice is reflected in their demonstrable emotional attachment to the forest and

the many personal and practical benefits they derive from living in the forest and using its products.

Most of the highland forests are on the sides of hills, escarpments and mountains and thus are subject to different gradations of temperature and rainfall. These variables result in different forest types or ecological zones at successive altitudes. The Okiek recognize five such forest types. Since different rainfall and temperature patterns exist at different elevation, affecting the relative frequency of different species of trees in each forest, so too the occurrence of rainfall and temperature throughout the year varies with time and place so that the flowering season for trees is usually different for each forest. Traversing these forests are streams and rivers between which elevated ridges extend from 2,000 meters up to at least 3,300 meters over a distance of up to 65 kilometers. For the Okiek to collect as much honey as they can, they must therefore be able to go to each forest type as the trees flower and the bees produce honey. Access to at least part of each forest type is most easily had by following one ridge upward in elevation, passing through one forest type after another.

Here is how the Okiek live in the forest. Related families (families of brothers and their sons) tend to live together or near each other most of the time in the second to lowest forest (sasaonet; 2,300-2,500 meters elevation) where it is warm and dry. After there is flowering in one forest type or another they then move for a few days up to a few months to that forest and then to another to collect honey from their hives and in the process make new hives, repair old ones, and hunt and trap for food.

While there is considerable seasonality in rainfall (hence flowering and honey production) over a year period, the forest

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provides a protective canopy and absorbing ground that holds rainfall through the dry seasons and deeps the streams flowing all year. This results in green vegetation all year, allowing for a relatively stable population of fauna. This makes it possible for each Okiek family or group of families to live in one general location. By daily hunting and trapping they are usually assured of sufficient meat to live on no matter what forest they are in during a year. The extent of Okiek family traveling from one end of their ridge or territory to the other is not more than 40 miles, and usually not far in the other direction either as the streams tend to be parallel and not far apart (1-2 miles). A man, his family, or extended family may make several trips up through the various forests each year depending on how much rain there has been in the various forests, and thus how much honey he may anticipate finding.

A man will go to a forest after it has been in flower and the bees are filling the hives. He will spend several days or weeks collecting honey, repairing his old hives and making new ones. If he is ambitious he may go to a forest before the rains so as to repair his hives and make additional ones beforehand so that he will collect more honey than would otherwise be the case. The more ambitious men own as many as 200 hives, the less ambitious perhaps 50. If the rains are good, and one has enough hives, and the honey badger has not damaged many, then a man considers himself pleased if he collects 135 kilograms of honey and honeycombs in a year. For a good deal less effort he may have obtained five to ten times that amount of meat during the same year.

Each family and group of closely related families maintains a base camp in the lower forest (soyua) where they return from collecting and hunting trips to the forests. They prefer to remain in the base camp because it is drier and warmer than the upper forests, especially in the rainy seasons. It gives them access to neighboring peoples for trading and it is more convenient

for visiting other Okiek. Here, if there is plenty of honey on hand, people can relax, brew honey liquor, and hold the ceremonies for which they have been planning and preparing for months.

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3. Territories and sub-territories

The Okiek differentiate two types of land units: the territory (konoito, pi. konoituek) which is usually coterminous with the land between the streams that extends up through the various forests, and a sub-territorial land unit that the Okiek conceive as their basic and most important unit (koret, pi. korosiek) which is a subdivision of a territory. For the simplification of terminology I shall henceforth use the Okiek term koret (pi. korets), anglicized, for this basic land unit within a lineage territory. Some large korets are further subdivided into two or three smaller ones. Most territories on the south side of the Mau Escarpment average about 115 square kilometers in size. Korets vary from one or two square kilometers to as much as 25 square kilometers though most are on the smaller side. Lineages tend to number between 50 and 80 persons including wives. Thus population density ranges between 1.2 and 2.3 persons per square kilometer.

While a territory is referred to by the lineage which uses it, neither the lineage nor any of its members 'own' the territory or korets as we understand the word. Rather, an individual has the right to use certain natural products within certain korets. One owns the right to certain resources, not the land itself. Those resources are geographically defined by korets for reasons that shall become clear.

For the Okiek on the south side of the Mau Escarpment, this system applies to honey above all, but also to the materials required to get honey: trees in which hives are placed, trees from which hives are made, and tree bark for covering the finished hive. A koret is said to belong to one man or to brothers and therefore only he may take honey from this koret, only he can put hives in that area, only he can cut trees for making and repairing hives. Other people, whether related or not are free to pass through a person's koret, to live in it, to hunt and trap, to cut wood for firewood, to do anything. In fact a substantial number of Okiek families reside part of the year in territories that 'belong' to other lineages, though always close to their own area.

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The Okiek assert that their territorial system (the delineation of territories and korets, as distinct from the resource tenure system associated with it) was established long ago so that the people of each lineage would be sure of having access to all the forest types and thus honey whenever and wherever it was produced. Case histories of individuals and families (the founders of pre-sent-day lineages) which entered the Mau forest (much of it uninhabited at that time) during the last century tend to confirm this. Descendants say that their ancestor(s) came down through the forest from the other side of the Escarpment and laid claim to the territory they passed through (a ridge between two streams) and that other Okiek came and took up residence in adjacent territories as they found them available, until no further areas were available. More recent immigrants have found no unclaimed land and have had to acquire korets and/or augment their subsistence from other sources (animal husbandry, farming). In either case they have been considered poor and unfortunate by other Okiek because they lack the opportunity to acquire adequate honey. So some have given or shared rights in their own korets to help them.

4. Honey rights and social control

While the Okiek maintain that their territorial system originated historically out of (1) an economic concern for maximizing access to their most important resource combined with (2) the economy of effort of reaching that resource by traversing a ridge up through each forest type (rather than the exhausting effort of crossing between ridges), and (3) the desire for related men and families to live in one area, they maintain that the function of the resource tenure system is to reduce the temptation for theft of what they believe is a scarce resource (honey) and by so doing help to maintain proper social relations and avoid the demonstrably severe consequences of a breakdown of personal (and thus social) controls. In a society without any form of constituted authority, great effort is made by individuals to avoid situations that might lead to interpersonal friction and aggression. Where self-control has failed, which is not infrequent, arguments

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between men lead to fighting, injury and sometimes death. Ironically, the worst consequences usually follow from too much liquor, the base of which, honey, is sometimes the cause of the altercation. The Okiek, especially the women, recognize the dangers of liquor and rail against its misuse, but the need, even just the pleasure, of drinking is greater than the fear. The consequences of this need and the ramifications of its expression throughout Okiek society and culture as well as the individual are more extensive than any other single factor in Okiek life. I shall not dwell on this now, for I have covered it extensively elsewhere (Blackburn 1971), except to explain its implications for understanding the relationship of social and personal control to the territorial and resource tenure systems.

Numerous cases of inter-personal conflict (some in the past developed into inter-lineage feuds of long duration) demonstrate that the Okiek have a tenuous hold on social stability. These cases have their origin in conflicts over resources (principally honey) aggravated, or even caused, by personal instability (some men have a reputation for having an angry or aggressive personality) which breaks out in uncontrolled anger, most often where inhibitions are loosened by alcohol. The veil of culture lies lightly on everyone's impulses, its fragility barely protected by socialization. This is not to say the Okiek are unsocialized. They are and they demonstrate it in their everyday concern for hospitality, consideration, and compassion. Some of that is quite consciously motivated by the fear of its occasional absence. Social relations are almost always characterized by a conscious effort on everyone's part to avoid situations and topics that would annoy anyone present. Should annoyance be expressed, the Okiek usually try to ameliorate the situation by placating the aggrieved. Much of Okiek social etiquette appears to function in this manner - regularizing otherwise uncertain interpersonal relations and providing a series of conventional actions which are designed to please one's opposite or to gloss over mutual differences. This is most explicit in meetings (kiruget) between persons with a case against each other. There is a standard procedure, a

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stylized form, by which the opponents initially mask their complaints in kind words and present gifts (usually some liquor). They proceed tangentially to present their grievances. Finally, accusations may become explicit but, should either party become annoyed, the other men present will attempt to close off the breach and restore, at least superficially, cordial relations. Frequently a meeting ends without apparent accommodations, the parties being more satisfied to leave for the time being on peaceful terms.

The issue of social control is not only reflected in the territorial system wherein most potential competitors for honey from different lineages are separated geographically by their

residences, by the forest areas they collect in, and by the streams and ridges that divide their territories, but also within lineages this social control function is reflected in the division of korets between close and distant kin.

Within each lineage territory there may be as many as two dozen korets and even some of them are subdivided as well. Among the larger lineages with large territories the collateral lines of the lineage usually have rights to use at least one koret in each forest type. Thus each family can expect to avail itself of any flowering in the same way that the members of the lineage have access to all forests throughout their long territory.

As the sons of a man grow up, they are given or they inherit separate korets in which to put their own hives. In lineages with fewer korets this principle cannot be followed. Rather all persons (usually brothers or sons of brothers) use any koret they wish with more than one persons using each koret. The Okiek are far less likely to admit to others, as well as to themselves, that, lineage members might fight over honey, but this division of korets within one lineage's territory among members of different families clearly reflects the same principle that pertains to the lineage territory. There are cases of fighting, even feuding, within lineages, which were objectively as serious as between lineages, but subjectively more serious because of the disruption of close kinship bonds.

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5. Hunting in relation to territories and resource tenure

The Okiek who live on the south side of the Mau Escarpment define their territorial and resources tenure systems in terms of the distribution and rights to honey and honey-related products of the forest. They specifically exclude other natural resources from the restrictions of these systems. Thus animals found in any koret are not reserved for the person who 'owns' that area, animals can be killed in all forests and in anyone's korets through all seasons. Even though game meat has traditionally constituted a much larger (75%) portion of their diet than honey (15%) and therefore is more essential to subsistence, it is not viewed as an object of competition, and thus potentially dangerous conflict. The Okiek, however, admit that persons who do not like each other have used the pretext of taking game in the other's territory as a cause for dispute. This sometimes has resulted in fighting. Game is seen as being plentiful, a reliable source of food, and highly mobile. Though in actuality it is probably more finite than honey, the Okiek see it as less scarce because there is a higher probability of getting meat on any given day throughout the year than there is honey. Also the Okiek say "How can an animal be yours when tomorrow it may wander into my territory?". The mobility of animals, compared to bees which remain in one hive for a long period of time, is such that the Okiek can't conceive of anyone 'owning' rights to any animal. One could argue that killing animals in one territory would tend to reduce the number remaining. The Okiek do not accept this argument, they see animals as moving about far too much in search of food to result in any area remaining underutilized.

There is at least one exception to this as practiced by the Marashionik Okiek on the north side of the Mau Escarpment. This Okiek group has relative small forests for its population (much of their original forest having been lumbered and replanted with non-honey producing evergreens during this century). They define their resource tenure system as applying to game just as much as to honey. In their eyes they do have a scarcity of game as well as honey and see competition for game as potentially causing the

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same conflicts as honey. Having nowhere near the resources of the Okiek on the south side of the Escarpment it is not surprising that the Marashionik have long relied heavily on animal husbandry and subsistence farming. Their inclusion of game in their resource tenure system for the reasons stated supports the interpretation of its social control function.

For the Okiek on the south side of the Escarpment, explaining their almost single minded concern over honey requires more comment than just comparing it to the plenitude of game. Although the Okiek may feel that honey is a finite quantity in the forest and that if someone takes some from one's koret, the owner's supply will be diminished, they will also maintain that even if there were ten times as many people putting hives in the forest the supply of honey, per person, would not diminish. They point to the many flowering trees and to the fact that probably the overwhelming majority of bees live in natural hives, and hence are potential tenants of many more man-made hives. My own observation is that this estimation is more correct than the feeling that the honey supply is limited.

But what is important here is that the Okiek, on an emotional level, have a feeling of honey as a limited resource and this is what motivates their actions. This feeling is reinforced by a number of variables. If a person finds he has some hives that are empty, he begins to feel that someone has 'robbed' him of his bees, either by placing their own hives too near his or by causing his bees to leave by supernatural means. In the dry season, when no honey is being produced and hives have already been emptied, people are hungry, if not in body, at least in spirit, and the consequent depression that settles over a camp, which is palpable, does not help individuals to feel that the lack of honey is just a consequence of climatic factors. The total lack of honey imparts an emotional feeling that honey is limited and that if another takes honey from one's koret one will be diminished thereby. It is this emotional, non-rational quality of the desire for honey which, in part, makes the Okiek feel that the quantity of honey is finite and, therefore, the gathering of honey

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is competitive. Deprived of their favorite drink for weeks on end, deprived of the honey that their children crave, that they can trade for other things, that they need for holding ceremonies and for arranging marriages, it is small wonder that a dry season camp can be a depressing situation made even more aggravating by the (relative) scarcity of game in the lower forest where dry season camps are usually located.

6. Events and cases involving the transfer of korets

Since ownership of korets is synonymous with a dependable yearly (if not seasonal) supply of honey, it is difficult to imagine an Okiek lineage surviving in the same manner as other lineages if it did not have at least some korets scattered in the various forest types from which it could get honey. In fact not all lineages on the south side of the Escarpment have their own territories, but each of these lineages owns or has rights in at least some korets within the territories of other lineages. Theoretically one could subsist on honey from 'freeland' soyua, but honey is less frequent there than elsewhere. Rights to korets are economically important. They are socially important too, and not merely because of their economic value, but because they are used to satisfy a wide range of social obligations.

Korets are the single most valuable asset that an Okiek man will inherit from his father. While rights to korets are inherited, they can also be transferred to another person. These transfers are of a number of types and depend on the relationship of the two persons involved

and the circumstances. The most socially significant transfer is that made in compensation for the death of another, usually done as part of a settlement of an existing or incipient inter-lineage feud. An example should make clear the ramifications of this dark side of Okiek life.

About 115 years ago Nagul came to the south side of the Escarpment from the north side. Within a few years he had been able to acquire some korets - he is said to have been a very kind person and helpful to others - from the lineages of the Kaplelach

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local group that inhabited those forests and to establish his family. Within a few years his family had become a lineage. About 85 years ago a feud developed between the Nagul and the Mengwari lineages the cause of which is no longer remembered, though the most common incidents for such things are catching another stealing honey or getting into a drunken brawl. But the consequences are remembered. People were killed on both sides. Mengwari killed the father, sister and brother of Rureto, a Nagul. Rureto was young then and so, apparently, were his siblings. Okiek feuds have included the deaths of persons of any age and either sex. After these killings peace was made and in compensation for killing the adult and two children, the Mengwari lineage paid two korets to the Nagul lineage which were to be used by Rureto when he grew up. But when Rureto became a moran, about 15 years later, he still remembered the loss he had suffered and was determined to avenge their deaths despite compensation having already been paid.

As Rureto told it to me, when he came out from his initiation seclusion he went and killed two brothers of Mengwari. After that people said that things were now equal as both sides had killed each other, and the people said no one should kill anymore as they would all disappear (this has happened to more than one former lineage). A peace ceremony (tumodo op naunisto) was held in which the two lineages promised not to fight again and they gave each other korets. The Nagul lineage gave out three korets which are now used by each of Mengwari's sons and their children. Mengwari gave one big koret to the Naguls and this is used today by Rureto's children. In addition Mengwari gave Rureto a blue monkey cape and Rureto gave him some money. Rureto complained he was not given enough so Mengwari also gave him an elephant tusk. The Okiek say that if those korets are not given in compensation, naunisto, a form of supernatural retribution, will continue to strike the lineage causing sickness and death. For this reason it is apparent that merely giving out the balance due is inappropriate; rather both sides must give the full amount even if it is equal for both. In this case the korets became a vehicle for satisfying supernatural 'sins' as well as social debts. Since

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korets are defined by one's right to collect honey, giving a koret is analogous to giving a large quantity of honey every year forever as just compensation for taking a life which is gone for a lifetime but the loss is forever if one counts the descendants that will never be born.

There is a case of killing within a lineage. The differences or the consequences were so severe that it was impossible to come to a resolution. The lineage split, one half moved to the nearby territory of another lineage with whom they had good relations and from whom they were given as a gift the rights to some korets so that they would be able to make a living.

A second case was like this one and also resulted in half the lineage migrating. Lineage histories for those residing on the south side of the Escarpment indicate that many migrated to that area from the north during the 19th century. The Okiek mention as inducements to migration: disease, lack of food, lack of territory, and hostilities such as mentioned here. In the past there may have been other reasons for migration as well. In any case it appears to have been

through migrations, usually by individuals, families, or lineages (no whole local group has been known to migrate at once) that the Okiek have apparently come to settle in all the highland areas of central Kenya.

In the case of korets given in compensation for killing and done in the context of a peace ceremony involving two lineages, we see the lineage acting as a corporate body negotiating a settlement. In this situation the lineage assumes the right and authority to give the koret(s) that 'belong' to its individual members. Other than this situation, a lineage does not have the right to make a decision about any koret. This is analogous to the functioning of the lineage in other dispute cases wherein it negotiates a settlement with the lineage of the plaintiff (or defendant) and imposes a fine to be paid as compensation (usually certain quantities of honey) if its own member is at fault.

Korets are also transferred by their individual 'owners' to others for a variety of purposes. During my field work I collected data on 55 cases involving the transfer of one or more

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korets. Of these 47 have sufficient data to determine the original reason for each transfer which are stated below with the number of cases for each type in parentheses.

- (1) A father may give a koret to his favorite daughter. This is most likely to happen at the time of her marriage. This does not mean that she will become a honey collector - women don't do that. Rather her husband will collect honey for her, the honey belongs to her, and her sons will inherit the right to use that koret (2).
- (2) A man may give a koret to another man to whom he feels a personal bond. They may be close friends of the same age-set or the gift may come from a sense of gratitude for some kindness received (2).
- (3) There are cases (one cited above) of giving one or more korets to members of another lineage who do not have any or enough korets to survive well (2).
- (4) A man may give a koret to a relation of special value such as a mother's brother to his sister's son. They are not of the same lineage, but the relationship is otherwise close (5).
- (5) There are cases where a koret has been given as part of the payment a man makes for receiving a wife. The koret is transferred to the wife's father (10).
- (6) A koret can be sold outright. In one case a man bought a koret in soyua for the use of his own lineage which did not have one there. He paid an adze, a necklace of blue beads (which have some ritual significance), and a big fat sheep (probably acquired from the Maasai) (2).
- (7) A koret can be given for compensation for the loss of another life, as described above (4).
- (8) Korets may be given when a daughter has not produced any children for her husband (2).
- (9) Korets may be returned if the brideprice paid in marriage is not returned in a divorce (1).
- (10) Korets may be given in compensation for the theft of something of consequence (1).
- (11) A koret may be stolen, that is where members of one lineage begin to place their own hives in another lineage's ko-

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ret without permission and as a consequence the owning lineage is forced to give up use of the koret (2).

- (12) Occasionally a koret will go unused by its owner -perhaps it is in a remote area or the owner has more than he can use - in which case another may begin to use it without permission and eventually, if not disputed, comes to be recognized as the new owner (2).

(13) The loan of the use of a koret is known. This has happened where another lineage has no territory of its own or not enough korets and another person or his lineage decide they wish to help the other one (1).

(14) Korets may be shared between the owner and, usually, another relative (2) .

(15) And, of course, korets are inherited, usually from father to sons (4).

These 47 cases by no means exhaust the number recalled nor the total number that have taken place in the last century.

It is worth noting that the Okiek also transfer ownership of hives in a manner closely analogous to transfer of korets. Hives are sometimes given to a relation, a friend, a son's wife at the time of marriage, to one's children and to a wife. In the case of gifts to a woman, it will be her husband who places the hive and collects the honey, but the wife owns the honey. Hives may be shared with a relative or friend. Indeed close friends and relatives can take honey from another's hive without prior permission provided they inform the owner later so that he may not waste time going to an empty hive. Hives can be sold for money or other articles, can be used as part payment for a wife, and compensation for theft. Most hives are inherited by a man's sons. Hives can be loaned to others and hives can be lost to theft, the depredations of the honey badger who break open hives to get at the honey, and to weather (hives eventually rot, sooner than later if the owner does not renew the bark covering regularly).

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7. Consequences of the transfer of korets

Mentioning all the kinds of transfers that are possible might lead one to think that there is almost a commodity exchange for these transfers. Actually the transfer of a koret is not a common event. Most korets are owned by members of the principal lineage in a konoito. Still, this makes for a complex patchwork of ownership. It increases the potential for contact and thus conflict over honey as people of different lineages go into other lineage territories to get to their acquired korets. Thus the mode of compensation and reconciliation in cases involving the breakdown of social controls (korets given in compensation) ironically can contribute to further such incidents.

The consequences of the working out over time of the territorial and resources tenure systems in terms of the transfer of korets are best understood by what happens to an individual, his family and his lineage when ownership of korets increases or decreases over a period of decades as can be judged from the histories of several lineages and their members. To generalize from these cases we can say that for the individual to gain in number of korets means that in the future one may be remembered as the founder of a lineage if one has acquired enough to make up a lineage territory and one's family has prospered and multiplied. There are certain things an Okiek man would wish for: to be rich (as measured in hives and korets) which will allow for the acquisition of and support for wives and thus to produce a large family. These may make it possible to create one's own lineage under one's own name. The urge for immortality among the Okiek is strong. With plenty of korets a man can get enough honey to subsist in periods of hard times, make plenty of honey liquor with which to hold ceremonies, entertain friends and relatives properly, and exchange for all manner of things.

By contrast, an individual or family that loses korets over a period of time may look forward to having to move to other forests, become dependent upon the charity of others, poverty, difficulty in getting wives and supporting children, loose rights to honey in some

forests, greater likelihood of hunger or starvation,
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having to learn new subsistence techniques, having to work harder just to live, higher rate of divorce and loss of children, and inadequate resources with which to pay fines and compensation.

From the perspective of a lineage, the long term gain in the number of korets will mean the establishment of a large lineage territory with member families having access to their own korets in each forest and reduced likelihood of competition from others for honey and thus reduced conflict, aggression and likelihood of feuds. Such a lineage can look forward to supporting an increased population, more supporters in case of feuds, more resources for paying fines and compensation without impoverishing the lineage and its members, and adequate resources to survive hard times such as drought.

A lineage that has not prospered, has lost korets, may find itself frequently short on honey. This could lead to increased competition, conflict, and cases in which they must pay out more korets in compensation, further aggravating their condition. Cases testify to the denouement of some lineages in which they either migrate to other areas or have become extinguished from being killed off.

The processes of development and contraction of Okiek lineages and their resources may be the most significant process in recent, and possibly past, Okiek history. Although a number of case histories have been collected from two Okiek local groups, this is a small universe on which to make broad generalizations. Rather what has been presented here should be treated as a series of hypotheses pending research among the other Okiek local groups.

8. Conclusions

The Okiek are quite unusual for a foraging society in a number of ways. Relative to many foragers, they live in a rich environment which permits quite stationary residence within which they have elaborated a complex territorial and resource tenure system. Much of their adaptation, cultural values, social institutions,

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and especially the territorial and resource tenure system, relate to the central role of honey in their life. In addition, their social structure, composed of exogamous lineages based on patrilineal descent and virilocal residence, is uncommon among other foragers. These factors make the Okiek an interesting subject for controlled comparisons and contrasts to other foragers as we attempt to discover which characteristics and processes will most³

usefully help our understanding of this way of life. It is possible that the Okiek adaptation may have some relevance to those studying early man. The latter, like the Okiek, may have had a richer environment in which to live than most of the present day foragers we have been studying.

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NOTES

1. The Okiek should be seen in the context of Kenya foragers. An increasing number of publications on Kenya's foraging peoples and their relationship to other Kenyan peoples and to Kenya's prehistory reflect a growing awareness of the importance of these foragers for helping us understand Kenya's history during the last millennium. Careful distinction among the various present and past foraging people in Kenya is therefore especially important. This distinction must begin with their names, since some now in use have inconsistent or multiple references. The most appropriate criterion for identifying ethnic groups, I believe, is to use the term which each group of people uses for itself, where known. This will more sensitively and thus more clearly differentiate groups on the basis of their own distinctions and, just as important, it will, accord each group the right to its own name, which I believe is a moral obligation we owe to those from whom we have taken so much and to whom we must return the full measure. If the Eskimos deserve their own name of Inuit, then the Kenya foragers each deserve the same.

The term Dorobo (Wandorobo, Andorobo, II Torobo, etc.), as one example, is usually applied to one or more central Kenya foragers. It had no precise meaning.

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It is not a term any people use for themselves. Those who use it refer to different peoples at different times. Anthropologists have been more consistent, usually using it as a synonym for Okiek, but since much of the literature is inconsistent in the referent for Dorobo, the problem is perpetuated into current discussions.

To the Maasai, who originated the term, it is a pejorative reference to anyone who is so poor that he must eat the flesh of wild animals to survive. Even that reference says more of the speaker than the subject, since foragers do not accept the premise stated. The term Sanye/Sanya, usually applied to foragers of the Kenya coast, is an equally inappropriate and nonspecific term. For the various foragers that live or did live on the coast a better term would be Kenya coastal foragers (or hunter-gatherers etc.) collectively and then the use of their own names individually. Likewise, the various groups of the Kenya highlands ought to be called Central Kenyan foragers (or hunter-gatherers etc.). The principal surviving foragers in central Kenya are the people who call themselves Okiek (not Dorobo). I don't wish to belabor this point but my previous admonitions have not convinced everyone as yet as to the heuristic and empirical value of this change.

2. Stanley H. Ambrose's contribution to this publication, 'The Relevance of the Dorobo to the Prehistory of East Africa', demonstrated from archeological evidence that the Okiek (and other highland foragers) hunter-gatherer lifestyle is of pre-Neolithic (over 3,000 years) age and, with climatic and resource data, that these highland foragers could persist in the face of Neolithic encroachments because they occupied a niche unsuitable to farming and herding. Thus there had been a long period of forager-herder/farmer interaction but its effect on forager adaptations has not been as great as has often been assumed.

3. One conclusion arrived at during the symposium was that the number of East African hunter-gatherer peoples, both in the present and in the recent past, is larger than heretofore realized and that their identity and relationships are still quite confused. To help remedy this situation James Woodburn and I have initiated a survey of these people among any knowledgeable persons who could contribute information on the location and identity of these people in Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. Kindly respond with data or request for the survey questionnaire to Dr. R. Blackburn, Albany Institute of History and Art, 125 Washington Ave., Albany, NY 12210; or to Dr. James Woodburn, Department of Anthropology, London School of Economics, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE, England.