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“Do not give me cows, give me education!” : Herding life in the context of literacy practices among pastoral Buradiga (Datoga)

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Spojrzenie na Afrykę

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**“Do not give me cows,
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Abstract: This paper charts the past and the present lifestyle of cattle herders with regard to education among the Nilotic Buradiga, with emphasis on the changes in the perception of the relationship of livestock inheritance and its substitution by formal Western education. An attempt will be made to observe the connection between the herding life and the schooling process, and how the transmission of wealth among the Datoga is changing due to the missing livestock and the growing awareness of the benefit of formal education. Moreover, the article attempts to answer the question whether formal education could constitute a suitable replacement for the missing livestock.

Key words: herding, Datoga, education, Buradiga

Słowa kluczowe: pasterstwo, Datoga, edukacja, Buradiga

The Datoga herders are among the poorest and the most vulnerable populations in Tanzania. Like many East African pastoralists, the Buradiga¹ have

¹ Buradiga is a name of one of the several Datoga clans, which are dispersed in different Tanzanian regions. I decided to use also the clan name, not only the ethnic group's name Datoga,

become marginalised within the national economy. They are struggling to survive and to retain their herding lifestyle. The forced settlement, climate change, overpopulation, overgrazing and land cultivation, as well as the processes of globalisation and modernisation, have for decades affected them as pastoralists.² Among these essential factors, education plays a significant role in influencing the Buradiga to change their herding way of life. It is perceived as a supportive tool in the process of settlement and also the first step to participate in the formal schooling process from a semi-nomad's perspective.

Education could be seen as an alternative way to pastoralism and also as a means of combating poverty and improving the standard of living. Formal schooling can bring a shift in the future patterns of wealth distribution in the society, which is already seen in many pastoral nomadic and semi-nomadic African communities.³ Despite the long-term resistance to formal schooling, it is possible to find a certain trend among the Chagana people—namely, there occurs the replacement of traditional forms of livestock inheritance with school, according to the current data among the semi-nomadic Buradiga in central Tanzania, which is caused by the inequality in livestock wealth or the absence of cattle. The herd remains as the core of the household wealth, although conversations with the Datoga people in central Tanzania, where the research has been recently conducted, revealed a massive decline in livestock wealth within the past couple of generations. Hundreds of pieces have rapidly decreased into tens or several pieces of cattle. As a result, some families have become fully dependent on agriculture, relying primarily on rice cultivation. The positive evaluation of education could be seen mostly among the poorer families. Conversion to Christianity also strongly influences the positive attitude towards school aspirations.⁴

For the modern Tanzanian society, formal education is an instrument of transforming pastoralists into settled farmers, labourers, modern livestock pro-

due to the differences between single clans caused by isolation from other clans and influence from neighbouring ethnic groups. Both Buradiga or Datoga are, thus, used interchangeably in this article.

² Ch. LANE: *Pasture Lost: Alienation of Barabaig Land in the Context of Land Policy and Legislation in Tanzania*. "Nomadic Peoples" 1994, No. 34/35, pp. 81–94; D.K. NDAGALA: *The Unmaking of the Datoga*. "Nomadic Peoples" 1991, No. 28, pp. 71–82; A. BLYSTAD: *Do Give Us Children: The Problem of Fertility Among the Pastoral Barbayiiga of Tanzania*. In: *Managing Scarcity: Human Adaptation in East African Drylands*. Eds. A.G.M. AHMAD, H.A.A. ATI. Addis Ababa 1996, pp. 295–317; E. FRATKIN: *Pastoralism: Governance and Development Issues*. "Annual Reviews Anthropology" 1997, No. 26, pp. 235–261; A. YOUNG: *Datoga*, 2014. <http://alysongyoung.org/datoga/> [accessed: 11.08.2014].

³ C. LESOROGOL, G. CHOWA, D. ANSONG: *Livestock Inheritance and Education: Attitudes and Decision Making Among Samburu Pastoralists*. "Nomadic Peoples" 2011, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 82–103; E. BISHOP: *Schooling and Pastoralists' Livelihoods: A Tanzanian case-study*. Ph.D. Thesis, University College London 2007.

⁴ E. BIHARIOVÁ: *Avoiding Christianity—A weapon in educating 'savage' pastoralists: A case study of Nilotic Buradiga in Tanzania*. „Asian and African Studies" 2016, Vol. 25, No. 1, pp. 85–105.

ducers, and loyal citizens. This gift of civilisation promises to improve the Buradiga's standard of living. Modernization through education is usually based on the assumption that educated pastoralists will settle, take a job in town, and therefore 'modernise' not as pastoralists, but by abandoning pastoralism. In actuality, there is little modernity in most 'modern education,' delivered through the classroom model. Providing the Buradiga with education is crucial, but it is probably not going to produce a new generation of educated pastoralists. The Western type of education does not offer the improvement of the herder's skills yet, and it is unable to compete with non-formal education passed on from generation to generation. However, this situation might still change, and future development might bring more solutions. Still, currently the level of education remains very low, and it has little impact on the herding life. Thus, we can analyse only some cases and indicators. As the father of my host family pointed out, regarding the education situation:

People are thinking that if a child is studying, they cannot continue dealing with cattle; it is not true, an educated person can tend to cows better than the one without education. If you look at the people, they have cattle, but they still seem poor; they are not able to control the herds properly, to get the best out of them. If you are smart, you can get more milk from ten cows than from a hundred, if you understand the nutrition process, or where a good grazing or water source is. The Masaai are educated more, and even those with high education still keep cows, even when they work in the office, like the last candidate for the president. And, like white people, they can do business with milk or meat. We haven't achieved this level of education yet. And here in our area, there is another problem—no land where to herd the cattle.

Resistance to change and adaptation puts the pastoralists in the position of being backwards and uncivilised. Throughout the decades, they have learned to live with this mark, and denying every invention not compatible with their philosophy—in this case avoiding education—could be a mode of self-protection of a marginalised group. Is there, then, any significant connection between the schooling process and herding? How does the slow abandoning of the nomadic life impact the possible educational aspirations of the Buradiga? Do the Buradiga intentionally pretend to misunderstand the benefits of literacy to protect their community and customs? Could formal education constitute a suitable replacement for their cattle-oriented lifestyles? I hope to illuminate some of these questions regarding the contemporary lifestyle of cattle herders vis-a-vis schooling in a particular location, where the research has been conducted recently.

Methodology

This article is based on data from ethnographic research among the pastoral Nilotic Datoga, a semi-nomadic Datoga section—Buradiga from Chagana. Chagana is situated in Igunga District, in Tabora region, central Tanzania. The research was conducted from September to December 2015, and from July till October 2016,⁵ with a focus on the impact of formal schooling on the Buradiga herding life, the subject matter of the following article. The choice was influenced by the previous four-year research into the semi-nomads in central Tanzania and by the knowledge of the low literacy among the Buradiga. They are behind not only when compared to the Bantu ethnic groups, which constitute the majority of the Tanzanian population, but also in comparison to other Datoga sections (Barabaig, Rotigenga) or the linguistically cognate Maasai pastoralists. An ethnographic approach will be adopted, consisting in participant observation fieldwork, i.e. the core foundation of ethnology, in which the researcher needs to immerse themselves in a different culture every day, observe, collect and then filter everything they have seen or heard through their perspective to write about it. This fundamental technique is needed to establish a solid understanding of the pastoralist culture, the way of Buradiga thinking, and to foster close relationships. A long-term stay in the field adds to the quality of the research findings and gives an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the survey community and, subsequently, the research topic.

Within the context of participant observation, the methods used consisted of unstructured interview, in-depth interviewing, and group interviewing. Groups interviews were spontaneous and took place at different times: over breakfast time, while sitting outside under the stars when the neighbours visited the household, in vehicles, during cooking, herding or on ceremonial occasions. By collecting empiric data, the unstructured interview will be predominantly used to uncover the Buradiga's views on issues such as schooling, the reasons for the resistance against formal education, dropping out from schools, the Datoga's attitude to education and also the economic functioning of the families, for a better understanding of the schooling's influence on livelihood.

The Buradiga of Chagana had no previous experience with ethnographers or scientist at all, so the possible comprehension issues with the direct structured interview may make them feel unnatural and cast doubt on the methods of data collection. However, long-term personal rapport may build a close relationship with the subjects of the study and engender trust, thus the use of the semi-structured or structured interview. This kind of conversation will dominate in

⁵ A research permit was issued by the Tanzanian organisation COSTECH, registration number 2015-200-NA-2015-146.

the cases of teachers of primary and secondary school or officials working in education. Moreover, it is crucial for the researcher to remain sensitive all situations, since the readiness for cooperation is built directly in the field through the daily experience and in a vis-à-vis contact with the Buradiga.

The Swahili, the Bantu language, and the official communicative language of Tanzania and the whole Eastern Africa were used predominantly in collecting data. The Datoga language was needed especially in questioning children or women; they felt more comfortable to answer in Datoga, while a translation into Swahili was mostly mediated by the father of the host family or other members. During the interviews with teachers and education officials, the English language was partly utilised.

The group in question consists of shepherds migrating with the livestock in the period of the dry season. The research was conceptualised to reach this group in at the beginning of the rainy season and to repeat the investigation before they left for different regions because of pasture and water. Therefore the whole research process could be pursued in Chagana. At the beginning of the field work, we focused on continuously mining and filtering the initial data by interviewing parents, their children, the elder generation, teachers, and education official to create an idea about the overall level of education in the area, pastoral upbringing, educational successes of the students, their opinion on formal schooling, the members of the household who did and did not attend school, and the individual stories. We returned to our participants several times to test ideas, learn their opinions and gather statements, or to debunk the myths we created. During data analysis and the subsequent quantitative approach in fieldwork, we purposefully concentrated on establishing a selected group of Datoga families suitable for a deeper analysis of the household, the economy, and consequently the reflection and the impact of formal schooling in the (initially) traditional herding way of life. Selected interviews were focused on the neighbouring families close to my host family, with emphasis on the herding life, current plans for inheritance and education.

When choosing a research sample, the existing links established in the area played a significant role. Upon further search of the respondents, the technique of *snowball* was used to cover all involved parts. During the fieldwork, we interviewed 114 people, out of whom 42 were women and 72 were men, where Datoga of Chagana represented the majority of the interviewed people.



Pic. 1. The girl (the first on the left) from Chagana attends the English Medium School in the nearest town, central Tanzania (by E. Bihariová, 2016)



Pic. 2. During the holiday, she is herding the father's cattle together with her siblings and friends, central Tanzania (by E. Bihariová, 2016)



Pic. 3. The 23 years old boy (on the right) with his nephew, central Tanzania
(by E. Bihariová, 2016)

The study area and population

The Buradiga is one of the dispersed Datoga sections, which is located in central Tanzania in the Singida and Tabora region. In the settled area, the Buradiga are known as Watatutu, which means People. The name, given to them by the neighbouring Sukuma, is not recognised by any other sections because they acquired this name after pulling away from the other sections (*emojiga*). Among themselves, they use their original subsection name—the Buradiga.⁶

The research was conducted in Chagana, located in the Wembere Valley, 42 kilometres from the District Council Headquarter in Igunga (Tabora region) at 33.5° East and 4.5° South. The village was officially established in 1977 and occupies an area of 108 sq.km, which is plain land with black cotton soil bordered by the Wembere swamp in the East. The area was settled in the early sixties by five families, whose members remember the ground as “a bush full of wild animals, grazing land and water. We had a lot of pastures and water. We drank milk and had a lot of cows. Now we eat ugali and grow rice.”⁷ The retreat of the initially swampy area of Chagana is confirmed by the memories of one of the women: “When my daughter was born (approximately twenty years ago), all the area around us was under water.” Even maps of this region show a difference in the borders of the swamp. Due to climate changes, the area became more arid, overgrazed and also overpopulated. Many cows died because of diseases, and the proud Buradiga became poorer and more vulnerable when compared to other ethnic groups.

According to the census from 2015, conducted by the Chagana village leaders, 3050 people live in Chagana, mostly of Datoga origin (95%)⁸ with a few Sukuma and Iramba people. Chagana is an area with a relatively compact ethnic composition of its population. The Buradiga section is a cultural wedge between the Bantu ethnic groups, with whom they keep good trade relations and live in a sort of symbiosis. Because of diseases, climate change and the scarcity of pasture and water, many families experienced the loss of herds. As the father of my host family said, pointing to some real issues, “The area is overpopulated, not enough grazing land for the livestock. My goats are with my sister’s herd

⁶ According to their mythological story, told by one informant from the Chagana village, the Datoga migrated together with the king. At various times, different sections left the unit and settled. My informant continued with the story: “The king said: let us move! Some people told him: we are still tired. So he told them: enough, you are always tired, and they got the name ‘people who are tired,’ which is what Buradiga means.”

⁷ A nourishing dish prepared from maize flour, which is cooked in hot water to a dough-like consistency without any other ingredients.

⁸ Basic data about the area was collected from the District Council Headquarter during my second part of the research.

in a different region, not only because my boys are studying and I do not have a shepherd and I cannot afford to pay him, but also there is no available pasture.”

However, even though the government strives for social modernisation, and the process of sedentarisation has been continuing since the seventies,⁹ the Buradiga still practice the semi-nomadic way of life. In the period of July till August (depends on the rainfall in the ongoing year), herds with shepherds move to the neighbouring regions with enough grazing lands and water sources (Shinyanga, Singida) or a closer area near Loya or Mwanzugi, both within two days’ walking distance. They come back in November, when the rainy season starts. The distribution of livestock is unequal across the population. It can vary between zero to a maximum of 20.000 cows.

Chagana is still a remote area. The isolation of the location, the lack of electricity network, the lack of local transportation or roads, the lack of healthcare and a proper source of drinking water have resulted in a relative isolation from the outside world, from which the Buratoga pick and choose the elements of modernity they employ in their everyday lives (mobile phones, motorcycles or solar panels). The isolation multiplies the prejudices of the surrounding ethnic groups and the lack of recognition of state authorities. They consider Datoga ‘backwards,’ ‘dirty’ ‘barbarians’ who reject any form of modernisation. This ‘view from above’ results in further obstacles, where their close-knit community gives them the sense of personal confidence and stability. “After my car accident I was taken to the hospital; it took them a long time to treat me, and I’m not the only one, who experienced this,” one of my friends sheds light on the healthcare situation when it comes to the Datoga.

All Chagana inhabitants, even large livestock owners, practice agriculture. The land is suitable for rice cultivation, and the Buradiga have started to combine different sources of livelihood since the nineties. With the neighbouring Iramba, the Buradiga exchange rice for maize, one of the main ingredients of their diet. Some families are entirely dependent on agriculture. The emerging links to land rather than to livestock could reflect a possible social transformation as one of the elders compares the past and the present situation: “We were livestock keepers in the past, but the cattle have declined, and Aseeta (God) told us to cultivate; it is a big difference when compared to the past. We are poor now; we were eating meat and drinking milk, no need to sell the cattle or goats.”

⁹ By 1978, the State started with the programme “Operation Barabaig” in order to resettle the Datoga in villages with fundamental social services. Little regard was given to the special needs of the pastoralists and, quite the opposite, the situation of the Datoga deteriorated. More about planned settlement in: D.K. NDAGALA: *The Unmaking of the Datoga*. “Nomadic Peoples” 1991, No. 28, pp. 71–82.

Education situation in Chagana

According to Young, the literacy among the dispersed Datoga¹⁰ is only 1%, and only 5% speak Swahili—the official language of Tanzania¹¹ and the *lingua Franca* in East Africa. Swahili is mastered mostly by men and is used as for communication purposes at the markets where they sell their cattle. However, even though education has been obligatory in Tanzania since 1975, there is still the possibility of keeping children out of the system. According to the last census done in Tanzania in 2012,¹² 72% of the 45.000.000 inhabitants of Tanzania are literate. Interesting statistics are to be found mainly in the age group between 10 and 14 years old, as far as education is concerned. 20% of the total number of children are outside the school system. The long-term lack of interest is characteristic mainly of the hunters and gatherers and pastoral ethnic groups. Although some offspring of the pastoralists complete compulsory education, many of them remain outside the educational system. Formal education often requires from the semi-nomads to settle and leave the mobile way of life which is incompatible with Western formal education and destroys the pastoral values which Parkipuny explained on the example of the pastoral Maasai: “It is not a school that they hate but the effects of such an education on the culture, integrity, and values of the society.”¹³ A primary tool in the sedentarisation and modernisation processes is the availability of educational services.

Due to its geographical location in the colonial period, the Buradiga subsection found themselves in a sort of isolation and experiencing a lack of educational institutions when compared to the other Datoga subsections, where either the missionaries or the state established schools.¹⁴ This critical fact is underlined by Wilson: “Buradik ... appear to enjoy their relative safety from Government interference by living in the excellent cattle country provided by the vast marshy low-lying plains ... It is unfortunate for the future of the Tatoga that some form government could not be instituted in the vast no-man’s-land and tribal bound-

¹⁰ According to Elifuraha (2011), the population estimate for this Nilotic ethnic group (all clans, the Buradiga included) is about 87.978, but according to different sources, the number differs. Their semi-nomadic way of life is also another fact which needs to be taken into account. More in: I. ELIFURAHA: *Tanzania*. In: *Indigenous World 2011*. Copenhagen 2011, pp. 423–430.

¹¹ It is challenging to obtain plausible data about the Datoga. The Tanzanian census does not include the question about ethnicity or mother tongue, while the national politics remains anti-tribalist. Their semi-nomadic way of life is also another fact which needs to be taken into account.

¹² Information on census available at <http://www.nbs.go.tz/> [accessed: 4.04.2017].

¹³ In: E. BISHOP: *Schooling and Pastoralists’ Livelihoods: A Tanzanian case-study*. PhD. Thesis, University College, London 2007, p. 20.

¹⁴ Klima refers to the schools in his book *The Barabaig*, which is the name for the biggest Datoga subsection.

ary laid down.¹⁵ Before the establishment of formal state schooling in 1989, no mission entered to this location.

The first educated, literate representative of the Buradiga from Chagana is a man in his seventies. His father was a leader (*kiongozi*) and, in compliance with the ordinance in the period before independence, every family was supposed to provide one student for the local school. He was the youngest son of his father, and thus he was sent to Itumba’s ‘school,’ where the British established an administrative centre in the colonial period. It was not exactly a school, but rather a room with a local teacher. “My father was the leader in this region, so he had to provide one son for the school; there were five students from Chagana, but the rest had already migrated elsewhere. At that time I was about twelve years old.” He was not only the first student but also the first teacher for other children before the school was officially opened. He started to teach five children (three boys, two girls) in his house and he continued for three years. “Then I got a teacher from Igunga town with the permission of the elders.” The next step was a request to establish a new school, addressed to the government. The request was granted. Thanks to his schooling experience, he was the first chairperson (*mwenyekiti*) from 1982 till 2004. As recalls, his nephew, “also mastered his literacy skills in the prison, where he was locked for two years.”

A primary school in Chagana was established in 1989, so ordinary literate Buradiga are around 40 years old. The teaching staff (mostly Bantu Sukuma) confirm that there are many pupils who are not able to learn Swahili within 3 years or finish the 7 years of obligatory education. As the head teacher suggests, “They should study only reading, writing and counting in Swahili for three years without other subjects; without knowing Swahili it is hard to proceed in other lessons.” From the pupil’s perspective, the children’s drop-out rate is explained by playing in the classroom instead of studying, alcoholism of the staff, the absence of the teacher in the classroom or beating, which is a standard part of the learning process. A young teacher specifies, “It helps to build respect.” On the other hand, it contributes to a more negative attitude among the students: “We are beaten, some have had enough of this, so they are not coming anymore, I did not write the test so that I will be beaten. Even if you are late for the lesson.” The school has a shortage of teachers and children’s consistent attendance is not required, so the gradual absence and drop-out rate in the higher grades are not systematically solved.

The primary school attendance of students oscillates around 50%. Children return home every day and remain in vivid contact with ancestral traditions. One day a child takes part in the schooling process, the next day herds the cattle, the next day cultivates a field. Due to those factors, it was difficult for

¹⁵ G.M. WILSON: *The Tatoga of Tanganyika (Part I)*. “Tanganyika Notes and Records” 1952, No. 33, pp. 35–47.

the students to obtain sufficient knowledge to pass the final examination in the end. In 20 years of producing graduates, 51 out of 401 total¹⁶ were able to pass the final exam. However, not all 51 pupils are Buradiga. It is hard to estimate the exact number of successful Buradiga students because there are no records regarding ethnicity.

Swahili is the language of instruction, and the Buradiga children have a problem to understand. In their homes, only Datog is spoken. In the primary school, no teacher can talk the Datog language. Thus, it is impossible to give any further explanation to the students. As the teachers reported, many children are hidden by parents, some finish only two or three grades; unsurprisingly, many parents send their children to the neighbouring villages to herd cattle, or they might bribe the head teacher as well. The semi-nomadic Buradiga have their own traditions, and the absence of pupils in the school or the refusal to conform to the school system at all is a mix of different factors.

Counterproductive factors in the education process

Education might be a possible alternative for children instead cattle herding, but due to the historical experience with the government and their policy, education is still seen by many Buradiga parents as not trustworthy. It will take time to change the pastoralists' attitude towards the government. The situation around the schooling process in Chagana could be represented as a closed circle with no way out, in which traditions, habits and beliefs, poor conditions of the social facilities and the government's general neglect of the Buradiga hinder the education, and subsequently, hamper any development or attempts at modernisation. It is a mixture of various factors, external and internal. They influence each other, and together, the elements constitute a notional circle, where the "centripetal ideology" of the sedentary state bounces on the "centrifugal ideology"¹⁷ of the semi-nomadic Datoga, who are seeking autonomy, mobility, and free pursuit of their lifestyle. The pastoralists, thus, impose their own limits on education and the absence of pupils in the school or the refusal to conform to the school system at all are a mix of different factors, which I analysed in one of my essays.¹⁸

Some of these factors could be enumerated as follows:

¹⁶ The data was collected from the head teacher of the Chagana Primary school in November 2015.

¹⁷ E. FRATKIN: *Pastoralism: Governance and Development Issues*. "Annual Reviews Anthropology" 1997, 26, p. 239.

¹⁸ E. BIHARIOVÁ: 'We don't Need no Education'. *A Case Study about Pastoral Datoga Girls in Tanzania*. "Ethnologia Actualis" 2015, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 31–47.

- Christianity,
- fear of losing children,
- a curriculum without pastoralism,
- mobility,
- children as herders,
- no benefit of the formal education,
- dismissive attitude,
- study costs,
- reduced competence of teachers,
- language barrier,
- strong ‘tradition’,
- boy’s circumcision,
- dubious investment,
- prohibition of a leather skirt,
- low marriage age.

Children as herders

According to my research data gathered through observation, boys of 3 years old, as well as girls, are given the duty of herding small animals such as calves, sheep or goats in the vicinity of the household (*gheda*). Older boys or girls herd cattle. It might appear that girls, due to the labour responsibilities in and around the household, would have a better chance to attend the school in comparison with the mobile boys herding cattle, because of their daily presence at home. Female labour consists of digging wells, milking animals, collecting water and firewood, maintaining the house, food preparation, and childcare. Agricultural work can be added as well because the subsistence system is nowadays supplemented also by cultivation. Surprisingly, research findings show that women and girls commonly herd livestock if men and boys are not available, and among the Buradiga, there are as many female herders as male ones. “I was a herder until I married. My father had a lot of cattle at that time, almost one thousand pieces,” describes a 27-year-old girl. For small stock, girls and boys are used equally; for livestock, there is a slight preference for male herders. The only circumstance in which the sex might make a difference is if a wild carnivore attacks the livestock. Boys may be more efficient as they have more practice with bows, arrows, and spears.¹⁹ The use of girls as herders only reflects the labour available at home

¹⁹ D. SIEFF: *Herding strategies of the Datoga pastoralists of Tanzania: Is household labour a limiting factor?* “Human Ecology” 1997, Vol. 25, No. 4, p. 537.

and apparently their potential presence at home, and thus the higher possibility to attend a daily school when compared to boys are not as self-explanatory as it could be surmised initially.

We should also consider the number of herding cattle in possession of a particular family, which may influence the probability that the children might attend school. The pastoralists with a few animals have interests different from those of the shepherds with many animals. A parent with an abundant supply of adult labour is willing to send at least some of his offspring to school, while the father with labour shortage may be opposed to the move.²⁰ This assumption made by Ndagala, however, does not seem to correspond with the case of Chagana, as the wealthiest families with sufficient workforce are still not interested in sending children to school. However, it is possible to see a slight indication that this attitude might be slowly changing. Education as a marker of prestige could be recognised in the future among the more prosperous herders. One of them expressed himself, “I do not understand the value or benefit of education, but I let one of my son and one of my daughters study. I will pay it; there is no problem. I can afford it.” In his household of 56 people, one of his daughters is married, while her brother is attending an English secondary boarding school and he could be the first person in Chagana to ever obtain a secondary education. She informed me about this fact and valued it as an essential issue. In wealthier families with sufficient livestock, they do not see any benefit in education, because it deprives the family of herding labour.

Although many Buradiga cultivate rice and many have left the semi-nomadic lifestyle, in a case of a lack of cattle in the family, boys are sent to the neighbouring Sukuma or Iramba to work for them as herders. “There is no food in the family, no herd; the father is not around, so I can earn some money as a herder, and I can help my mother,” explained a 20-year-old boy.

The biggest Bantu ethnic group in Tanzania, the Sukuma, nowadays keep more cows than the smaller marginalised Buradiga. As one of the interviewed people said: “There were times when the Sukuma shepherded our herds; now we send our boys to range their cows because we lost them.” As we can see, there is an alternative in the poorer families: instead of sending children to school, they can be raised as herders among the formerly agrarian Sukuma people.

There are also other possibilities in families with no cattle—herding borrowed livestock from the extended family or herding a flock of your Datoga neighbour. The work can be paid, but this solution is very rare and practised by the family of the Pentecostal pastor: “All children study in private schools,

²⁰ D. NDAGALA: *Local participation in development decisions: An introduction*. “Nomadic Peoples” 1985, No. 18, p. 3.

and the livestock is sometimes used to pay the school fees and for milk. We pay 300.000 of shillings²¹ per year for the shepherd.”

Education or herding?

A positive attitude towards education could be seen among the young generation men between 18 to 30 years old, who did not have an opportunity to study at the primary school level and were herding the fathers’ livestock instead. The process of globalisation and the widespread availability of the mobile phone represents a big boom even among the Datoga. To be able to insert the *vocha*²² and call somebody, one needs to be literate. Writing a short message or entering a name into the phone’s memory are just some basic operations which they would like to be able to perform. These skills of the modern world, which are used by the Datoga, require more than the informal education provided in the families. Apart from that, there exists a strong interest studying among the younger generations. Young men asked me to teach them writing and reading as an alternative for non-literate adults. One of them owns a general store selling flour, sugar, rice, and he realises his disadvantage of not studying in primary school. “I do not know how to read or count correctly, but I have a shop in Lugubu (nearest Sukuma village). Some money can get lost, but I can get from 500.000 shillings up to 1.000.000 per day. I want to attend the school for adults, or otherwise, I would pay a private teacher for me.”

A local primary school established and controlled by the state could be seen as a less ‘harmful’ (to the herding lifestyle) alternative to boarding schools, which are attended by a few Chagana children mostly in the nearest town Igunga. Some children herd the cattle only during the weekends, and they are sent to school by their parents, mostly those who belong to the first graduates of the primary school. Although the boarding schools are valued and seen as superior, there is a fear of losing children and a threat of conversion. Chagana’s residents still retain their traditional beliefs, and there are only a few converts. A child raised and educated at an English boarding school could be lost forever and will never follow the tradition anymore. “I cannot let my son study in the town, I will miss him, and he can be lost!” explained one mother, who considered that possibility for her son. Apparently, the expenses of attending a boarding school consume quite a bit of the household’s wealth. The school fee at the St. Leo School in Igunga is 1.200.000 shillings per year, plus school supplies and clothing—600.000 shillings

²¹ The actual rate from 22.10.2016 between Tanzanian shilling and Euro—1TZS = 0.0004€, available at: <http://kurz-euro.zones.sk/kurzy/TZS-siling-tanzania/> [accessed: 4.04.2017].

²² A form of charging the phone credit.

per year; overall, a parent needs to pay 1.800.000 shillings. In comparison, a middle piece of a cow could be sold at the market for 400.000 shillings. Investment in such an insecure and obscure commodity as education is unprofitable in the case of unlettered Buradiga. Sponsorships are available, but not widely used.

During my research trip, there were two boys coming from non-Christian families, supported by an American missionary, who escaped from the English Medium School in Igunga and walked to Chagana. Although they professed their love for school, they could not explain their behaviour. Rumours spread over the village, claiming that the mothers were strongly against education and exploited witchcraft to entice the children to come back even against their husbands' will. "The mothers are protecting traditions in the family. The men are still around, going to the centre, sometimes absent all day. The women uphold the culture and influence the children as well," clarified a secondary student.

Formal education is perceived as an investment in their children's future by a few parents, and most of them have converted to Christianity. The abovementioned St. Leo school is currently attended by five children; two boys are from the only Catholic family. Their father had the opportunity to receive some cows from his father in law, but there was a simple reason for his refusal—there is no other shepherd in the family nor the money to pay him. The school fees are fully covered thanks to an American missionary. My interviewee believes that education supplies cows. "I hope that my children will live a better life and they can get the opportunity to choose from different jobs." A similar view is presented by the Pentecostal pastor and his family, where the money from the sale of cows and profit from rice is used for school fees. The community of the Pentecostal believers consists of approximately 20 members, mostly sharing familial ties.

The other three children who started to attend the first class of the St. Leo School from January 2016 are from non-Christian families, and that situation brought the need to contend with the pressure from the local community. After coming back to the field, one mother of the studying girl claimed prejudice on the part of the neighbours. At the same time, however, it also resulted in other fathers expressing their desire for their children to study. The pilot project—a sponsored study for pupils—seemed to have potentially required possible assistance from the researcher, after obtaining permission and with the full agreement of the parents. The eventual reaction of acceptance or rejection constituted the extension of the family's interest in education or lack thereof. An example: the parents have agreed to let their third eldest son (approximately 6 years old) study at the St. Leo School, but before the school's opening, the father vehemently opposes taking his son because of night's bouts. The mother firmly supports the child's education, but her husband has the final word. He is a witch doctor, who is absent most of the time, and he is not a Swahili speaker. The two other boys tend their grandfather's borrowed herd; they occasionally attended the primary school until the third grade. As one of them recalls, "we did not learn anything,

we were just playing, so I left the school.” As we can see, the father’s emphasis on livestock grazing is more significant and meaningful in comparison with formal education.

The formal education in general and schools, in particular, are viewed by the pastoral semi-nomads as incompatible with their way of life, as of many scholars claim.²³ An exciting divergence could be seen among some pastoralists. Only a few children attend private boarding schools, as already mentioned. The schooling process consists of three semesters and three periods of vacation. During the holidays, the students transform into herders and are a part of the sibling’s group of shepherds.

Another example of merging ‘school’ and ‘traditional’ life together without refusing to be a vital part of the community is a boy of 23, who might be the first person to finish secondary studies next year (already mentioned above). Although he had attended Catholic schools, he has not yet converted to Christianity, and he keeps his traditional beliefs. During his holidays, he wears traditional clothes and participates in the Datoga social way of life. “If I converted, my family would not support my education, although it was my father’s wish. I know all the prayers from the school, though; maybe I will ask to be baptised after I complete university,” says the young boy.

Even though we discussed some positive attitudes towards education expressed mostly among the young generation, the majority of parents prefer pastoral herding life for their children over the schooling process, and there are several factors possible to establish through field study:

- herding is a way of supporting the future status and social position in the society;
- many children are still out of the school system although education has been obligatory since 1975;
- according to the head teacher, many children leave the school after two or three years of studying;
- before the final examination in Standard Seven, parents persuade their children not to write the correct answers;
- parents bribe the local authorities;
- no awareness of the benefit of formal schooling;
- no Buradiga resident with secondary level of education;
- out of 51 successful students (29 Datoga or half-Datoga), who were able to pass the examination at the primary level, only ten joined the secondary school in the neighbouring village, only one boy still continues his studies in Form One, two girls and one boy entered the private school, and the rest have left the school.

²³ C. DYER: *Nomads and Education For All: Education for Development or Domestication?* “Comparative Education” 2001, Vol. 37, No. 3, pp. 315–327. A. MEIR: *Pastoral nomads and the dialectics of development and modernization: delivering public educational services to the Israeli Negev Bedouin*. “Society and Space” 1986, Vol. 4, pp. 85–95.

Conclusion

The real benefit of schooling services has not yet been seen by the Chagana's people in the central Tanzania. Hence, there is no proper understanding of education. Once formal education is completed among them up to secondary or university level and employment outside the pastoral sector spreads, it is possible this will result in the change of wealth distribution.

The interviews reveal changing patterns about school enrollment and the real degree of encouragement of formal education regarded as a future solution for children, but also a degree of wariness regarding state schooling. The interviewees were positive about school attendance, but their imagination about its value remains obscure. There is no person in the village with education at the secondary level or somebody qualified to perform a different kind of work other than herding or farming, although several small stores have been opened. After the head teacher asked a challenging question: "will you encourage your child to continue studying at secondary school?", the father of a successful son, who passed the final examination at the primary level, answered: "My son passed the examination, so why should he study, if he already knows everything?" For a better explanation, we need to clarify that the state secondary schooling remains relatively expensive. The current president John Magufuli (since November 2015) promoted state secondary schools for free for those who entered form one in 2016 (the fee is only 10% of the expenses), but taking into account all the expenditure (around 200.000 shillings per year), plus the fact that secondary school is 45 minutes by bicycle from Chagana's centre to the high school in the neighbouring village, it cannot be denied that secondary education is very expensive for an ordinary Buradiga family.

Chagana is still a rare and remote area with a high drop-out rate from the state school, a relatively low level of the accessible education, and no secondary school graduates. The literacy skills are missed mostly by a young generation of herders who, due to the herding duties, did not attend school. Surprisingly, the advantage of education is valued more by those who did not have the opportunity to study. The process of globalisation and modernization is relentless and could affect the positive attitude towards formal education. The increasing interest in education is related also to the loss of cattle, which opens up other possibilities for the children; however, herding is still preferred in comparison to formal education.

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