

Reorganization of the Ethnic Framework: The Impact of the 1997 Election on the Gabra Pastoralists in Northern Kenya

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This study concerns social change in the Gabra, a peripheral pastoralist group in Kenya, brought about by the 1997 general election. Supporters of an unsuccessful candidate in the nomination process tried to unite the Algana, one of the phratries of the Gabra, against the elected person, who belonged to another phratry, in the election. This paper analyzes the supporters' attempts to mobilize people and unite the phratry, paying attention to their discourse and behavior. By participating in the election, Gabra society greatly changed. This paper also examines social change from two different points: in methods of manipulating others and the nature of the boundary of the phratry, which suggested the transition of Gabra society from *ethnie* to modern political-ethnic unit.

Key words: Gabra, *ethnie*, nation, election, social change.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to examine the experiences of a people in a society on the periphery of a state in the process of integration into a nation-state, by focusing on the discourse and behavior of those who participated in a national event, namely a national general election.

In December 1997, a general election was held in Kenya, the eighth general election since independence. Day after day, newspapers reported disputes and violent disturbances in urban areas such as Nairobi. Not only the residents of urban areas were affected, however, but also rural people such as the Gabra, pastoralists living in a peripheral area of Kenya. The election, for Members of Parliament and Councillors, gave rise to a political community called the Algana. Then the Algana seceded from the Gabra, and the Gabra were divided into two communities. After the election, there was a movement to recombine these communities, with the Gabra succeeding in recovering its lost unity through a Gabra-wide process⁽¹⁾. It was, however, unprecedented for the Algana to secede from the Gabra and behave like an independent ethnic group.

As I will outline below, the Algana are one phratry out of the five that constitute the Gabra. Before the election, the Algana people had no history of opposing the other Gabra on political grounds. This unprecedented behavior of the Algana is a reminder that the framework of ethnicity is dissoluble. People can be categorized as a new group by forming a new boundary, and can be reorganized into a new ethnic group, according to the situation.

I will analyze the political movements of the Algana from the two different points of view. First, there is a question of why the Algana became a political-cultural community. Put another way, what was the situation that stimulated people to make use of the framework of the Algana phratry as an ethnic political unit? How did they mobilize and gather people to this new ethnic political unit, the Algana?

Abner Cohen (1974: 96), who is regarded as the spokesman of the "instrumentalists"⁽²⁾, has pointed out that

Ethnicity in modern society is the outcome of intensive *interaction* between different culture groups ... the possibilities of capturing these new sources of power have been different for different ethnic groups, so that very often the emerging cleavages have been on ethnic lines.

Cohen's idea is useful in examining the shifting framework of ethnicity, which in this case was triggered by the election. Rent-seeking supporters can expect favors from the successful candidate, and loyalists close to the candidate tried to vitalize an intra-ethnic unit, in this case the Algana, to secure victory in the election through their electioneering behavior.

It was the town living Gabra who were foremost in seeking favors in terms of employment, educational support and new business opportunities. They tried to mobilize the nomadic pastoralists, the Gabra, who were not particularly interested in such advancement. Consequently, this raises the question of how the town residents could mobilize the nomadic pastoral Gabra as members of a new ethnic political unit, the Algana. Cohen has also pointed out that

the old symbols are rearranged to serve new purposes under new political conditions. In ethnicity, old symbols and ideologies become strategies for the articulation of new interest groupings that struggle for employment, housing, funds and other new benefits (Cohen 1974: 39).

By analyzing their method of manipulating symbols, we will show the means used to revitalize the Algana as an ethnic political unit.

Second, there is a question of how the image of Algana society changed among the Algana people in the process of being mobilized for the ethnic political unit. As mentioned above, the divided Gabra reunited in a Gabra-wide meeting after the election. The recombined Gabra, however, is not what it used to be. Participating in such a national event as an election, going through a political campaign and finally settling the dispute has altered the image of Algana society.

This does not mean that the Gabra had never experienced such changes before the 1997 election. Social change had been continuous from the time of colonial rule. In addition, not all the Gabra experienced social change through the 1997 election. It is, however, important that many people did become keenly aware of social change through the 1997 election. It seems that this modification in their image of their society is correlated closely with the transposition of Gabra society from the "outside" to the "inside" of the state, because such a change would not have happened without participation in a national event. Paying attention to the relationship between Gabra society and the regional nation, Kenya, we will consider the kind of change the Algana people experienced.

2. SOCIAL LIFE OF THE GABRA

2.1 The Gabra as an external society of the nation

The Gabra reside in the area from the Marsabit District in Kenya to the Borena Zone in Ethiopia. Having conducted my field research only on the Kenyan side, the Gabra living within the Kenyan border, will be the subject of our consideration. The population of the Gabra in Kenya was around 30,000 in 1989 (Republic of Kenya 1994). Some people had

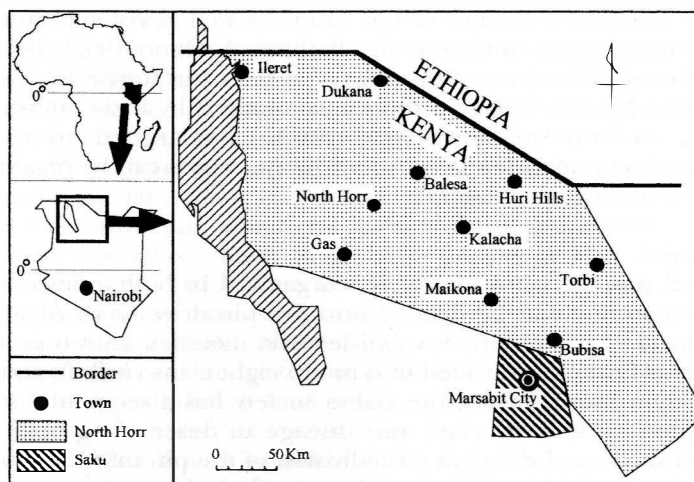


Fig. 1. The Redistricting of the constituency in 1988

settled in towns such as North Horr, Gas, Dukana, Kalacha, Maikona, Bubisa and Torbi in recent years (Fig. 1), while others are still nomadic pastoralists. The nomadic pastoral Gabra have not been drawn into the national ideology as Kenyans, although they are Kenyan. More than a few nomadic Gabra people were not aware that they were now Kenyan. In this sense, until recently, the nomadic Gabra stood outside Kenya.

This should not be surprising if we consider the indifferent attitude of colonial governments toward northern Kenya. As Günther Schlee (1989: 44–5) has pointed out, the colonial government did not take an economic interest in northern Kenya, seeing it rather as a buffer zone, which kept hostile powers, such as Ethiopia and Italy, at a distance of a few hundred miles from the White Highlands. William Torry (1973: 16–18) has also noted that the territory occupied by the Gabra was given only a very partial cartographic survey, while ethnographic, zoological, botanical, hydrological, and geological surveys had never been conducted, except for minute areas near Lake Turkana and Marsabit Mountain, before 1970. Also, the country inhabited by the Gabra had been kept under tight security control since the beginning of foreign dominion, early in the twentieth century. Consequently, it was not until the 1960s that the missionary stations and attached schools, which usually acted as agents of modernization in other countries, had been built near the Gabra⁽³⁾.

We have no intention of ignoring the impact of colonialism, as Neal Sobania (1991), for example, has cautioned⁽⁴⁾. However, we can say that the impact of the colonial authorities and later the regional nation, Kenya, on the nomadic Gabra was rather less than that on the people living in the White Highlands or the area along the Uganda railway. Northern Kenya had been a neglected area since the colonial period.

Anthony Smith (1986) poses the question whether the nation is a purely modern phenomenon and a product of strictly modern social conditions. In a sense, he approves of the idea that the nation is a modern development, but he emphasizes the importance of

grounding our understanding of modern nationalism on a historical base ... to see how far its themes and forms were pre-figured in earlier periods and how far a connection with earlier ethnic ties and sentiments can be established (Smith, 1986: 13).

For analyzing the differences and similarities between modern national units and the collective cultural units of previous eras, he calls the latter *ethnie*. Following his usage, I take *ethnie* to be a collective cultural group that has yet to be politicized. The nomadic Gabra could be considered an *ethnie*, because they had not been politicized under the influence of the nation-state Kenya.

By virtue of the nugatory influence of the nation as well as colonial rule, there existed clear *ethnies* in northern Kenya until recently. Bethwell A. Ogot (1992: 16–17) has skillfully identified the nascent African communities (*ethnies*) in the future Kenya by the end of nineteenth century. He characterized those communities by their interdependence and cultural fluidity. As Paul Spencer (1973: 130–45) has argued, there are symbiotic relationships between communities in northern Kenya, which can be regarded as evidence of interdependence and cultural fluidity.

2.2 Descent group

Taking a general view of Gabra society, it is organized by both a descent group and an age system. Gabra society may be divided into five phratries (*gos*), Algana, Gar, Galbo, Odola, and Sharbana. Each phratry is subdivided into moieties, known as Jiblo and Lossa. Then, each moiety is further subdivided into two to eight clans (*balbal*), and each clan into one to seven lineages (*min*). Thus, the Gabra society has a segmental structure that is organized into phratry, moiety, clan, and lineage in descending order. However, a segmentary model showing the clan as a subdivision of the phratry does not represent the reality of Gabra life. As Schlee (1989: 1–2) has clarified, there are inter-ethnic clans that stand between the ethnic units, such as the Gabra, the Rendille, the Sakuye, the Boran, and so on. Therefore, from the perspective of the clan, its representations in different ethnic units are really sub-units.

Detail of the phratry is important for our theme. The phratry forms the regional group, occupying a certain region and managing the wells in that region. The members of a phratry also tend to put their livestock to grazing in their region. Moreover, members of the same phratry are apt to marry each other (Torry 1976: 187). However, the occupying of a region by the phratry is not exclusive. People can migrate to and reside in another phratry's region. They are also able to use the wells and green pastures in another phratry's region.

What is more important, the phratry is a unit of ritual ceremony or dispute resolution. Every phratry builds a special hamlet, called a *yaa*, which is the center of religious and political activities. Normally, when a dispute occurs, villagers of the person concerned or the elders of that region will arbitrate. In cases that they fail in arbitration, the *yaa* hamlet will be asked to resolve the dispute. Each phratry makes a *jilla*, or pilgrimage, before building the *yaa* hamlet. This is organized every fourteenth year by every phratry, as will be discussed below.

2.3 Age system

Gabra society is also organized in two different ways: by age and generation. Males are classified in three categories, while females are classified in two categories, according to their social status. The male categories are: *kolocho*, or boyhood before circumcision; *qero*, or youth from circumcision to marriage; and *nami dira*, or manhood. The female categories are: *woki*, or girlhood before marriage; and *niti*, or womanhood after marriage⁽⁵⁾.

The age system of the Gabra resembles the Borana's *gada* system (e.g. Baxter 1978; Legesse 1973; Torry 1973, 1978). This system is more important to males, and classifies people under generation-sets⁽⁶⁾. Each generation-set is put in the appropriate age grade. There are four age grades: *luba*, *gadoom*, *dabela*, and *jarsa mata bufate* grade, in order of advancement, with sets advancing up to the next grade every fourteenth year.

In these four grades, people in the *dabela* and *gadoom* grade play an important role in Gabra social life. The role of the *dabela* grade is to pray for peace; it is said that *dabela* has *ebu*, or the benediction. The *gadoom* grade engages in politics. It is said that *gadoom* has *gaas*, or the shade of the tree where people can hold meetings. It means that the *gadoom* grade has a right and responsibility to solve problems among the Gabra. They hold meetings to resolve problems or conflicts, while other grades lack this significant role. Thus, the Gabra centralize political power in the *gadoom* grade and religious power in the *dabela* grade.

2.4 The offices of the Gabra

The Gabra transfer every generation-set from junior to senior grade each fourteenth year. The *jilla*, or pilgrimage, and the construction of a new *yaa* hamlet mark the beginning of this transition. The generation-set who are to be a *gadoom* grade select two different officers, *hayu* and *jalab*, when the transition is about to occur.

Two *hayus* are selected from certain clans only. In the Algana, one is from the Wor Sora Ali clan or the Anmado clan, which are both of the Jiblo moiety, and the other is from the Gadara clan or the Koyot clan, which are both of the Lossa moiety. *Hayu* is the most important office of the Gabra. Each of the three grades *gadoom*, *dabela*, and *jarsa mata bufate* has their two *hayus*. Thus, there are six men acting as *hayu*. In these six *hayus*, *gadoom hayus* are called "*hayu korma*", or "stud-bull *hayu*", which indicates that the *gadoom hayus* are superior to other *hayus*. *Hayus* of the *dabela* and *jarsa mata bufate* support the *hayus* of the *gadoom*. *Hayus* of the *gadoom* and *dabela* live in the *yaa* hamlet. They have a superior right and responsibility to hold meetings to solve problems among the Gabra. However, it is necessary to note that a *hayu* is not the man of power we might imagine in our modern society. The *hayu* does not rule the Gabra by power, nor force anyone to submit. Besides, even *hayu* should keep *ada*, tradition or law, like an ordinary person in their everyday life. Thus, a *hayu* has authority over the other Gabra only as an arbitrator.

Jalab is a representative of each clan. It is an office specific to the *gadoom* grade. Each clan has a small number of *jalabs*. Some of them stay in the *yaa* hamlet to support the *hayu*, others reside in hamlets scattered all over the Gabra lands to resolve local problems or conflicts. This means that the *hayu* and *jalab* living in the *yaa* hamlet will address the problems that the *jalabs* and elders living in other hamlets were unable to resolve.

Other than these offices, there are three different custodians – of *dibbe*, or sacred drum, *magalaat*, or horn, and *uchum*, or fire stick – in each *yaa* hamlet. Since these instruments symbolize the phratry, people regard their custodians as important. There is also another office called *qallu*, which is a hereditary high priest or ritual king. The Algana do not have their own *qallu*, unlike other phratries.

3. THE GABRA FACE THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

3.1 The election system in Kenya

In Kenya, those who wish to vote must register themselves as voters with the Electoral Commission before an election. A voter must be Kenyan, 18 years or older, and have documents such as an identity card for registration. General elections take place every five years for President, Members of Parliament and Civics (Councillors). Kenya has a single-member constituency system comprised originally in 1969 of 158 constituencies for Members of Parliament⁽⁷⁾. Later, these constituencies were redrawn into 188 in 1988, then to 210 in 1997 (Institute for Education in Democracy 1997). The schedule of the 1997 election is shown in Table 1. First, the candidates contested each party's nomination, and then, the nominees stood for President and for Members of Parliament and Councillor respectively in the general election.

Since only one candidate for each party can be put up for the general election, each

Table 1. The 1997 General Election timetable

3 & 4 Dec.	Presidential nominations
7 Dec.	Deadline for political parties to nominate civic and parliamentary candidates
8 & 9 Dec.	Parliamentary and civic candidates present papers to returning officers
10 Dec.	Election campaigns begin
28 Dec.	Close of election campaign
29 Dec.	Election day
3 Jan. 1998	Announcement of election results

Source: *Daily Nation*, 27 November 1997.

party selects a nominee from the candidates by nomination. The queue system or *mlolongo* (Swahili) was introduced into the nomination, and it is still practiced in the North Horr constituency⁽⁸⁾. The queue system is a system to count voters who make a line for a candidate. For example, if there are two candidates, such as Mr. A and Ms. B, voters make two lines, one for Mr. A and the other for Ms. B. Then, the presiding officer for the nomination counts the voters in each line to decide which is the winner. As a matter of course, it is quite obvious to everyone who votes for which candidate. The lack of secrecy is a drawback of the queue system.

The nominees then contest the general election in turn. The Electoral Commission of Kenya administers the general election. A secret ballot, or *kura debe* (Swahili), was introduced into the general election process. However, with the secret ballot, coping with illiterate voters became a problem. On behalf of the illiterate voter, the presiding officer marks the candidate for whom he/she wishes to vote. On this occasion, candidates' agents observe the presiding officer in order to prevent dishonesty.

The problem is, however, the fact that the secret ballot becomes an open secret ballot in the case of the illiterate voter, as the candidates or their campaigners know who votes for which candidate through their agents. Since the literacy rate of Marsabit District is remarkably lower than the national average, as shown in Table 2, candidates and their campaigners in practise knew who voted for and against them.

3.2 Gabra and the election

Until quite recently, the nomadic Gabra did not vote, and it was not until the sixth election, in 1988, that most of them began to vote. Before that, only the Gabra who had settled in a town participated in elections. The reorganization of the Marsabit North constituency in 1988 had a dramatic effect on the nomadic Gabra.

With the 1988 reorganization, the Marsabit North constituency was divided into two constituencies, Saku and North Horr, as shown in Fig. 1, bringing about a new political situation. Before reorganization, the town living Gabra could effectively send their candidate to Parliament, unless there was internal strife. This fact was borne out by election results. As shown in Table 3, all the successful candidates from Marsabit North constituency were Gabra, except in the 1974 election. In this constituency, the Gabra was the majority population, constituting more than half of the electorate, while the Boran, the Rendille, the Turkana, the Burji, the Samburu, the Somali, and the Bantu people were minorities. Thus, as long as the town living Gabra voted together, the Gabra candidate was sure to be elected.

After the reorganization, however, the political situation changed suddenly. In the Saku constituency, of which Marsabit City is the center, the Boran became a majority, thus favoring the election of their candidate. There was only a slim chance, if any, for a Gabra candidate in the Saku constituency. On the other hand, in the North Horr constituency, the Gabra became a super-majority that could send their candidate to Parliament even in the event of internal strife. The Gabra did not need to unite behind their candidate and stand together against other ethnic groups. Often, more than one Gabra candidate contested a seat in the North Horr constituency.

Without gathering a heavy nomadic Gabra vote, no candidate could now win a seat. The town living Gabra began to visit the nomadic Gabra to campaign, and these nomadic Gabra gradually went to the polls. Therefore, not only the town living Gabra but also the

Table 2. The literacy rate of people of 20 years or older (%)

	Marsabit District	Kenya total
Male	24.8	76.0
Female	7.7	53.1
Total	16.1	64.3

Source: *Kenya Population Census 1989*.

Table 3. Elections results in the Marsabit constituency, 1963–1997

Year	Constituency name	Candidate	Ethnicity	Votes cast
1963	Marsabit-Moyale	Galgalo Godana	Gabra, Gar	NA
1969	Marsabit North	Alex Isako Umuro	Gabra, Galbo	1,619
		Galgalo Godana	Gabra, Gar	769
1974	Marsabit North	Elisha D. Godana	Burji	1,799
		Alex Isako Umuro	Gabra, Galbo	1,721
		Jarsa Jilo Falana	Boran	1,601
		Galgalo Godana	Gabra, Gar	710
		Haro Tulu Godana	Gabra, Algana	153
		Ahamed O. Bacji	Indian	42
1979	Marsabit North	Alex Isako Umuro	Gabra, Galbo	7,319
		Jarsa Jilo Falana	Boran	4,118
		Elisha D. Godana	Burji	1,719
		Mark Bulyar	Rendille	9
1983	Marsabit North	Abdikadir Yattani	Gabra, Algana	6,957
		Jarsa Jilo Falana	Boran	4,024
		Galgalo Godana	Gabra, Gar	249
1988	North Horr	Bonaiya A. Godana	Gabra, Gar	3,264
		Abdikadir Yattani	Gabra, Algana	1,609
	Saku	Jarsa Jilo Falana	Boran	5,941
		Gurach D. W.	Boran	2,462
		Guyo M. M.*	Gabra, Galbo	NA
		Guyo A. S. G.*	–	NA
1992	North Horr	Bonaiya A. Godana	Gabra, Gar	5,360
		Abdikadir Yattani	Gabra, Algana	859
		Muhesin Shariff	Arab	1
	Saku	Jarsa Jilo Falana	Boran	5,726
		Mathew L. Loitoime	Rendille	1,238
		Said Wabera	Gabra, Gar	321
		Denge Garucha	Boran	140
		Halakhe D. Wago	Boran	1,831
1997	North Horr	M. Said	Borji	0
		Bonaiya A. Godana	Gabra, Gar	5,404
	Saku	Wario H. Ali	Gabra, Galbo	2,441
		Abudi Tari Sasura	Boran	6,707
		Baraquo Guyo Danso	Boran	3,138

Source: *National Elections Data Book: Kenya 1963 – 1997*; *Daily Nation*, 3 January 1998.

Note: the candidates given in bold type were those elected; – indicates ethnicity unknown;

* indicates that candidate could not be a nominee.

nomadic Gabra now participated in elections.

4. DISPUTES BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE 1997 ELECTION

4.1 Result of the election

In the North Horr constituency in the 1997 election, there were three candidates for Member of Parliament. Two of them, Dr Bonaiya Adi Godana, the incumbent Member, and Mr. Elema Isako Fila, ran for the Kenya African National Union (KANU), the political party in power. The other candidate, Mr. Wario Huka Ali, ran for the National Development Party of Kenya (NDP). Bonaiya originated from the Gar phratry, Elema from the Algana phratry, and Wario from the Galbo phratry. Both KANU candidates contested the nomination, and subsequently Bonaiya, who was nominated by KANU,

Table 4. 1997 election results in the North Horr constituency

Location*	Nomination		General Election	
	Bonaiya	Elema	Bonaiya	Wario
Ileret	10 (3.2)	300 (96.8)	89 (40.1)	133 (59.9)
Dukana	994 (77.8)	283 (22.2)	1,090 (92.4)	90 (7.6)
Balesa	616 (56.4)	477 (43.6)	734 (73.0)	272 (27.0)
Hurri Hills	390 (56.2)	304 (43.8)	468 (79.5)	121 (20.5)
North Horr	593 (36.1)	1,051 (63.9)	524 (43.3)	685 (56.7)
Gas	142 (28.5)	356 (71.5)	126 (33.4)	251 (66.6)
Kalacha	628 (51.5)	592 (48.5)	677 (75.1)	224 (24.9)
Maikona	625 (57.4)	464 (42.6)	491 (52.2)	450 (47.8)
Torbi	634 (89.5)	74 (10.5)	360 (69.1)	161 (30.9)
Bubisa	1,222 (97.8)	27 (2.2)	845 (94.0)	54 (6.0)
Total	5,854 (59.8)	3,928 (40.2)	5,404 (68.9)	2,441 (31.1)

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate the percentage of votes each candidate obtained in each location;

* The majority people in each location is estimated as follows: Dassanetch (Ileret), Gar (Dukana), Gar & Algana (Balesa, Hurri Hills, Kalacha), Algana (North Horr, Gas), Galbo & Algana (Maikona), Galbo (Torbi), Galbo & Odola (Bubisa).

opposed Wario for the seat. Finally, Bonaiya was returned to the Member of Parliament for the North Horr constituency.

Bonaiya won the nomination against Elema by 5854 votes to 3928, while he defeated Wario by 5404 votes to 2441 in the general election. Judging from the number of votes garnered by each candidate, Wario seems to have put up as good a fight as Elema did. It was said, however, that it was a manufactured result, since the people who had voted for Elema at nomination voted for Wario in the general election. In fact, at a meeting held by loyal supporters of Elema in North Horr after the nomination, an appeal was made to the Algana people to vote for Wario in the general election in retaliation against Bonaiya. The voting result subtotaled by location in the North Horr constituency tells us that most Algana voters did heed that appeal (Table 4). For example, in Gas, where most people are Algana, with a Galbo minority, 66% of voters chose Wario, who is Galbo, at the general election. This ratio is nearly equal to that obtained by Elema at nomination. A similar tendency can be seen in the result of North Horr location, where Algana account for more than half of the population, Gar for around a fifth, and other Gabra such as Sharbana, Galbo, Odola, and the other ethnic minorities such as the Wata, the Konso, for the rest.

However, the same movement that made Algana people vote for Wario in the general election in retaliation against Bonaiya, brought about by the loyal supporters of Elema, caused serious disputes between those supporters and the Algana people who voted for Bonaiya.

4.2 Campaign before the nomination

Before the nomination, there was no serious dispute between the Elema and Bonaiya camps. Town living supporters of both camps had an unobstructed campaign. They lauded their candidates and persuaded the nomadic Gabra to vote for him. Above all, campaigners used personal relationships such as agnate or affinal relationships between the voters and the candidate, or the voters and campaigner himself. Each candidate for Member of Parliament and Councillor leagued together against their opponents. Therefore, the personal relationships that were available for each candidate were amplified.

It is also important that they used cross-cutting ties straddling the boundary between the Gabra and the other people in their campaign. For example, the supporters of Elema appealed for cooperation to the Boran, the Wata, the Turkana and even the Dassanetch,

hitherto their sworn enemy, who resided in North Horr constituency, saying that they all were members of the Algana.

Concerted approaches were made to the Boran in this manner, as most Algana thought of themselves as the descendants of the Boran. As Schlee (1989: 200–5) has stated, there is sufficient evidence for most Algana to regard themselves as derived from the Boran. For example, an Algana man of the Koyot or Anmado clan is supposed to keep his *gutu*, or the pigtail on the head, even after he has grown up, like the Boran. All Algana children, except the Boruga clan, also put the *gutu* on their head. Next, there are the words of popular songs that proclaim “*alo lon Borana, Algana Boran*” (Protect the Boran’s cattle, Algana is the Boran), or “*ogole borani, Algana Borana*” (Calf camel is black, Algana is the Boran). Third, the Algana do not have their own *qallu*, the hereditary high priest or ritual king, which other phratries do have. Therefore, at the *jilla*, or pilgrimage, Algana are expected to visit the *yaa* hamlet of the Boran to see the *qallu* of Karayu of the Boran.

By using such historical-social ties, the supporters of Elema tried to enlarge the number of votes for him. We should also note that they enjoyed the cross-cutting ties straddling the boundary between the Algana and the other peoples. However, the result of the nomination altered the attitude of the Elema supporters.

4.3 Raising sectionalism after the nomination

After Elema lost the nomination, his loyal supporters stiffened their attitude. They began to criticize Bonaiya and his camp for resorting to “clanism”. “Clanism” meant sectionalism at the level of the phratry. Elema loyalists insisted that Bonaiya pursued only the interests of the Gar, but not those of the Gabra.

They also criticized how the Gar people voted in the 1997 and the last two elections, which took place in 1988 and 1992. In 1988 and 1992, Bonaiya, who came from Gar, won a seat against Mr. Abdikadir, who came from Algana. Again, Bonaiya defeated Elema, the Algana candidate in the 1997 election. As mentioned above, the method of voting revealed to others who voted for which candidate. Elema loyalists found that “all” of the Gar people voted for Bonaiya and “no one” voted for the Algana candidate, while some Algana people voted for Bonaiya and others voted for the Algana candidate. Elema loyalists regarded Algana people’s voting pattern as pursuing the Gabra’s interests, while the Gar people’s voting pattern was seen as looking after Gar’s own interests. The Gar people’s voting pattern was viewed as sectionalism.

Sectionalism, on which Elema loyalists insisted, represents unscrupulous support to people who belonging to their own phratry. Such sectionalism was accompanied by the idea that the members of a phratry should all vote together, and support a certain candidate for their future interests. However hard Gar people tried to refute the sectionalism on which the Elema loyalists insisted, the ordinary Algana supporters of Elema began to suspect how the Gar people were voting.

Moreover, the Elema loyalist appealed to those ordinary Algana people to unite to oppose the sectionalism of the Gar people. They criticized the Gar people for their sectionalism, while they intentionally introduced the sectionalism debate into the Algana. They even tried to dismiss 11 Algana persons who voted for Bonaiya from the Algana. The sectionalism of Algana had become the critical problem.

4.4 Sectionalism and the Gabra

The idea of consolidating phratry unity for a full-scale contest, which was introduced by the Elema supporters, is very new to the nomadic Gabra.

First of all, the idea of consolidating phratry unity was not familiar to the nomadic Gabra, since the Gabra did not regard the phratry as the structure for accomplishing their goals, which would come through the clan. The phratry was seen as the unit for conducting ritual ceremonies or arbitration.

Second, the idea that the members of a certain structure, such as a phratry, were supposed to conform to a group attitude was also new to the nomadic Gabra. As a matter of course, the Gabra occasionally do conform to a group response, as for example, when

one of your clan members competes with others, it is usual for you to express that you stand for your clan member. However, not all the clan members will support him on such an occasion.

(Case 1)

The son of Mr. Guyo (Koyot clan) got engaged to the daughter of Mr. Galgalo (Nolesa clan). However, Guyo spoke ill of his son's fiancée behind Galgalo's back. Hearing what Guyo had said, Galgalo got angry, and he appealed to his clan's members not to marry their daughters to the sons of Koyot clan. As more than a few members of the Nolesa clan whose daughters were engaged to sons of Koyot responded to his appeal, the engagements of sons of the Koyot clan and daughters of the Nolesa clan were dead locked. However, Mr. Adano, who is a member of the Nolesa clan, gave his daughter to the son of Mr. Katelo, who is of the Koyot clan, without hesitation.

As seen in this example, the Gabra do not always act in unison, even at the clan level. There were clansmen who sided with Galgalo, who was in a bad temper, while some did not heed his appeal, like Adano. The important point is that no one condemned Adano for his "betrayal".

Though the Gabra certainly firm up clan unity rather than phratry unity in order to accomplish the needs of a certain clan member, this clan unity does not mean that all clan members are always supposed to cooperate, nor does the clan restrict its member's activities. Those who do not follow the request of a clan member are not punished or blamed. As for the Gabra, the clan is not a group that demands monolithic solidarity of its members but a human resources. When a member is in real trouble, he can seek support from his clan. Thus, we can say that the Gabra do not automatically follow the trend of clan opinion, but rather consider the personal circumstances and relationship with one who requests assistance.

However, the phratry unity of Elema loyalists meant that all of the Algana phratry members ought to vote for Wario in the general election, by reason of belonging to the Algana. They also tried to dismiss those who opposed them. In this respect, the campaign, which Elema loyalists launched after the nomination, made the Algana phratry less fluid. They tried to maneuver the phratry, with an attitude that was loose and tolerant toward diversity of opinion, into a restrictive conformity that opposed diversity and demanded the unconditional solidarity of its members in order to pursue their own interests.

5. HOW ALGANA UNITY WAS CONSOLIDATED

The Elema loyalists carefully planted the new idea of "consolidating phratry unity" in the minds of the nomadic Gabra, noting which traditional factors were useful for their campaign.

There are great differences between the town living Gabra and the nomadic Gabra in their sense of values and lifestyle. The town living Gabra dress in Western style, engage in business, and think in a "modernized way", while the nomadic Gabra dress in the old style and value the attitude of keeping *ada*, or tradition. The town living Gabra tend to regard the nomadic Gabra as "primitive" or "backward". It appears that the Elema loyalists thought that traditional factors were the key to earn support from the nomadic Gabra. They adroitly utilized Gabra traditions and invented or fabricated new traditions, in the process of planting a new idea.

5.1 Utilizing norms

The main point to which the Elema loyalists paid attention was the traditional war of the Gabra. The Gabra have long raided the neighbors, such as the Rendille, the Samburu, the Dassanetch and the Boran, for livestock. Such traditional wars are called *dula*. The Elema loyalists treated the election as if it was *dula*. A certain supporter of Elema censured Algana persons who did not vote for Elema for their "betrayal" as follows:

On nomination day, we found that not a few Algana persons voted for Bonaiya. This event astonished us. We could understand that Gar people voted for Bonaiya, because he is a 'son' of Gar. But we could not understand why Algana people did not vote for Elema. He is our son, isn't he? We could not run away from the battlefield leaving our injured friend behind. But they forsook our son for another!

A person who runs away from the battlefield leaving his injured friend behind is called *halbaku*. The Gabra regard *halbaku* as dirty and hate him. They apply social sanctions against him – for example, no one will propose marriage to his daughter.

By implying that the election was *dula*, and the voter for Bonaiya was a fugitive from the battlefield, the Elema loyalists appealed to the minds of the nomadic Gabra. As for the nomadic Gabra, it is conventional that those in a battlefield should join forces to defend their livestock. They had gradually consented to the new idea that they had to consolidate Algana unity and exclude from the Algana phatry the Algana persons who voted against the Algana.

5.2 Utilizing traditional offices

In order to win round the nomadic Gabra, the Elema loyalists also utilized the traditional offices of the Gabra. They claimed that the traditional offices of both *hayu* and *jalab* were those of a man of power who gave orders and ruled over people. Originally, *hayu* and *jalab* did not have the power to give orders or rule over others, though they did have authority as an arbitrator or conductor of ceremonies. The Elema loyalists, however, treated them as men of power, and tried to block counter-arguments by saying "That is the order of *hayu*. Do you disobey *hayu's* order?" They thus tried to change the nature of *hayu* and *jalab* into an office of power.

Second, they fabricated a pseudo-*jalab*. I found a certain man who was treated as *jalab* by Elema loyalists in 1997 who was not in 1995 when I had also conducted research about *jalab*. As *hayu* and *jalab* are selected only at the transition of the generation-set, and the transition rite had not taken place since 1986, it was obvious that the new "*jalab*" was a fabrication. This pseudo-*jalab* was a central character at the election campaigner. He also actively participated in a social exclusion of Algana persons who voted for Bonaiya.

(Case 2)

In September 1997, Mr. Ibrae (Algana phratry), who was famous as a *jalab*, died. The family of the deceased buried him, and later they planned the *kabanesa*, or cooling ceremony, which is the first part of the funeral, just before election day in December. However, the pseudo-*jalab* held a meeting and appealed to those in attendance not to participate in the *kabanesa* of Ibrae because his sons were supporters of Bonaiya. He added that this was the instruction of *yaa* hamlet of Algana. Accordingly, supporters of Elema, including ordinary supporters, did not participate in the *kabanesa*.

This pseudo-*jalab* is characterized by his eloquence. He excluded Algana persons who voted for Bonaiya from the Algana through the authority of the *yaa* hamlet. Non-participation in the *kabanesa* of Ibrae became an object of public concern.

However, the attitude assumed by the pseudo-*jalab* was very different from that of the real *jalab*. Originally, the real *jalab* aimed to keep the peace and order. When a *jalab* arbitrates a dispute between two persons, he does not seek to decide who would be a victor and who would be vanquished, but rather to recover the lost peace as soon as possible by developing a mediation plan to which both of them can assent. For example:

(Case 3)

Once, a man who had stolen some goats was caught. Mr. Dofata (Algana phratry), who was the *jalab* in those days, held a meeting for the hearing. Dofata and the elders delivered judgment that the man ought to pay 40 goats as compensation. Later, however, Dofata proposed remitting 10 goats out of respect for the elders. Again, he

proposed remitting 10 in consideration of the good shade of the tree (*gaas*), because without the shade, people would not hold a meeting that brought about peace and order. Moreover, he proposed remitting 10 goats for *karr*, or the gate of goat's enclosure. As a result of repeated remitting, they would forgive the defendant so long as he paid five goats as compensation.

As shown in this case, it is apparent that the *jalab* would not bankrupt the defendant, although he denounced the defendant and imposed a huge compensation on him. The *jalab* made the victim consent by imposing a large penalty that expressed how guilty the defendant was, while he also considered the circumstances of the defendant. As the example suggest, the *jalab* has to consider not only the victim but also the defendant. That is where he shows his skill.

However, the pseudo-*jalab* positively incited Algana people to confront Algana persons who had voted for Bonaiya. It seems that the pseudo-*jalab* was eager for confrontation rather than harmony. Being anxious about the situation, one of the real *jalab* declared, that the *yaa* hamlet of the Algana had never sent such an instruction as the pseudo-*jalab* claimed, and tried to persuade the people to make up the quarrel. However, the excited people did not listen to him, and the nearer to the voting day of the general election, the more they argued.

That people did not heed the real *jalab*, but listened to the pseudo-*jalab*, is related to the election system, a system that decides who wins or loses, and is thus naturally associated with conflicts. However, such a conflict is essentially unacceptable in traditional Gabra life. Pierre Clastres (1989 [1974]: 123-4) has stated that social life against the state is "a 'combat' that precludes any victory. Conversely, if it becomes possible to speak of a 'victory', this is because it concerns someone unfit, that is outside social life." Thus, the election is a new type of "combat" that was not a part of Gabra social life, which did not recognize a winner and a loser. Most of the people, however, were very aware of the different nature of elections. Therefore they did not obey the real *jalab* who regarded the dispute that accompanied election as a traditional conflict among the Gabra.

5.3 The invention of new offices

The Elema loyalists also invented a new type of office, namely the "craftsman of the sacred drum". As stated above, each phratry holds three instruments: *dibbe*, or sacred drum, *magalaat*, or horn, and *uchum*, or fire stick in the *yaa* hamlet. The sacred drum of the *yaa* of the Algana, is made of metal, while other drums of the *yaa* of Gar, Galbo, Sharbana, and Odola are made of wood⁽⁹⁾. It is customary for each phratry, except the Algana, to get a new sacred drum when they construct a new *yaa* hamlet at the transition of a generation-set. Traditionally, they are supposed to ask a certain man of the Boruga clan in Algana to make a new sacred drum⁽¹⁰⁾. They say that sacred drums made by other people were soon broken.

The Elema loyalists seized this tradition. They invented a new special office, the "craftsman of the sacred drum", and won the man over to their camp. They made it known to the people that the "craftsman of the sacred drum" was more powerful than *hayu*, because without the new sacred drum, phratries other than the Algana could not construct their new *yaa* hamlet, and the candidate for *hayu* consequently could not assume office. The man who was now a "craftsman of the sacred drum" attended the meeting held by the Elema loyalists, and in this way, lent authority to their cause. It seems that they intended to electioneer by using the "craftsman of the sacred drum".

Second, the Elema loyalists interpreted this tradition as implying the seniority of the Algana in the five phratries. They claimed that the Algana, who had a fine sacred drum and were responsible to make new drums for other phratries, were *angaf*, or "the first-born" of the five phratries. The Gabra value seniority highly⁽¹¹⁾. For example, first-born males succeed their fathers as the head of the family and inherit most of the livestock when the father dies. Younger brothers, who are called *manda*, live under the supervision of the first-born male. Saying that Algana was the *angaf* of the five phratries, the Elema loyalists

claimed that people who belonged to other phratries were supposed to follow the opinion of the Algana, which meant they had to vote for Elema, because they are *manda*. The campaign was not necessarily successful, as most of the people did not accept this claim. However, some people in the Algana believed it.

Incited by the campaign of the Elema loyalists, the ordinary Algana supporters of Elema gradually participated in the exclusion of the Algana supporters of Bonaiya. The disputes between the two camps intensified all over the Gabra territory. Although they did not use violence, they broke off the promises of marriage or giving a camel, or they did not attend a funeral. In this manner, the Algana, which had been exclusively a cultural structure, became a cultural-political structure. The Gabra became divided into two communities: the Algana and the other Gabra. The former was composed of Elema supporters, while the latter included not only people of other phratries but also Algana people who voted for Bonaiya.

6. DISCUSSION

In this paper, I have pointed out how the Algana people were mobilized to the election, by drawing attention to the election campaign undertaken by the Elema loyalists after nomination. Needless to say, such political foul-play can be found all over the world, and it is not new in any sense. The importance of such political foul-play in the present case is in that it clearly illuminates the profound transition in the nature of Gabra society. In this discussion, I will clarify the points of the transition that were revealed by the election.

6.1 The method of manipulating others

One of the features of the profound change in Gabra society can be seen in the method of manipulating others. A Gabra individual could not effectively exert his influence on another person, if they lacked a social relationship. Which is to say that having a relationship is the major premise for exercising any sort of influence. We shall examine the change in the usage of social relationships on which the Gabra focused for exerting an influence on others.

There are two different types of relationship relevant here. Type I is a personal relationship, so to speak, based upon a traceable relationship. Kinship and affines are typical of this type of relationship. You can trace any kinsman, kinswoman, or affine through the genealogical line or the link of marriage from yourself. Bond-friendship (*jal*), which is the relationship between people who gave and received livestock, is another case. This type of relationship could be called a personal network with the ego as the central figure. It is the social norm to help each other if you are connected by the relationship, which we call here Type I.

Type II is a social relationship based upon an untraceable, but nonetheless real relationship, such as that with a member of same clan (*milo*), a member of the same generation-set (*lub*), the same age mate (*harriya*), and so on. In this relationship, you cannot find any direct trace from you to the other members. You and they are just participants in the same category. Whether or not the norms dictating that you should help each other if you are the members of a certain category do make sense depends upon the category. For example, in such categories as clan, generation-set, age mate, or ethnic group, the norms have meaning, but in case of moiety, or phratry, there was not much meaning.

It must be noted that both types of relationship can set the stage for negotiation. In this stage, the exerciser should negotiate an agreement with the exercised person. In discussing this feature of Turkana society, Itaru Ohta (1996: 210–11) stated that “negotiation” is indispensable to understand each other, as well as to reach an agreement regarding the point at issue. He claimed that the “rules” or the “fact” were brought up at the negotiation as a “trump card” to assert one’s justice. It means that the “rules” or the “fact” are not a universal rule or fact that automatically applies in all cases. Those “rules” or “fact” are used as a “trump card” in a separate negotiation.

Both types of relationships are utilized as a “trump card” at a separate negotiation in Gabra society. However, the effects of these “trump cards” for others are different. A Type II relationship, for example, when both exerciser and receiver only belong to the same generation-set, can bring a limited help to the exerciser in exerting influence on the receiver. The exerciser may entreat for or request the receiver’s favor, using their relationship as a “trump card”. On the other hand, a Type I relationship, especially with near of kin, brings more useful help to the exerciser. It is hard for the receiver to refuse the exerciser’s demand or request. However, the receiver does not always heed the exerciser. A Type I relationship is just a means that is not always decisive, even if it does provide a powerful process.

Before the nomination, Type II relationships were auxiliary called on in the case of the nomadic Gabra in order to win their votes. As we saw above, it was utilized rather for other ethnic peoples, such as the Boran, the Wata, and the Turkana, on the grounds that they all were members of the Algana. The method of vote-catching from the nomadic Gabra had mainly depended on Type I relationships. Campaigners tried to persuade the nomadic Gabra to vote for their candidate, not by explaining the candidate’s policy, but by emphasizing the personal relationship between the voter and the candidate, or the voter and campaigner himself. They requested the votes of the nomadic Gabra, using personal relationships as a strong “trump card”. It was a method common to all candidates’ camps. The voter decided for which candidate to cast his/her vote, considering the relationship: between the voter himself and the candidate, or between the voter himself and the campaigner who requested the vote, as well as between the voter himself and other voters who had expressed an opinion upon which candidate they would cast their vote.

While Type I relationships can be effective in helping the exerciser exert influence on the receiver, the reach of such a personal relationship is limited. It is a weak strategy for the campaigner who wishes to utilize relationships in a campaign to acquire a large number of votes. For example, when a man wants to start a certain campaign, he can exert his influence only on those with whom he has a traceable relationship. So far as it is no more than his personal attempt, the effect of the campaign would be limited. But once the campaigner recruited campaigners from the nomadic Gabra, linking the new campaigner’s personal relationships together, they hoped to overcome the limitation on the numbers linked by personal relationship. Also, cooperating with the candidates for Councillor, candidates for Members of Parliament amplified the personal relationships that were available for their campaign.

After the nomination, however, the Elema loyalists tried to use Type II relationships, particularly the membership of a phratry, as a new method of manipulating others, which was a novel departure from what had been seen before. By changing the nature of traditional authority and norms, the Type II relationship became a powerful means of manipulating others.

Koji Kitamura (1996: 300–1) has distinguished the two different methods of communication to secure a mutual agreement. One way is to regard “my” justice as implicit in the communication. Another way is to depend on an outside standard of justice as shared by most people. We should distinguish these forms of justice: the former subjective justice need not always agree with the justice prevailing in society. It is a justice only for the persons concerned, and it is possible that the same justice may not be considered fair justice on another occasion. On the other hand, the objective justice is a social norm to which everybody always refers. It is not a card that the players, or the persons concerned, will trump or put back into their hand in a separate negotiation, but the justice that always prevails for everybody.

Previously, the Gabra member used both types of relationship as a “trump card” to assert personal justice in a separate negotiation. The social norms dictating that you must help another if connected by a personal relationship, as well as the understanding that you should help each other if a member of a certain category, were not conventional objective justice. These norms based on such relationships were, so to speak, inside the communication. However, the Elema loyalists tried to make the latter into norms, saying

that you should help each other if you are the members of a certain category, and that this was conventional objective justice. The modified traditional officers who appeared in their campaigning, such as the *hayu* and *jalab* as men of power, the pseudo-*jalab* and the “craftsman of the sacred drum”, were powerful authorities for establishing a new conventional objective justice. The Elema loyalists introduced the new social norm into the Gabra as it was a “society for the ruled by authority and the outside standard norms”, from a “society against the state” (Clastres 1989 [1974]).

6.2 The nature of the perceived boundary of the Algana.

The election gave rise to changes in the nature of the Algana. It became a “society for the ruled by authority and norms” from a “society against the state”. Each Algana individual was checked on whether he/she was eligible to introduce him/herself as Algana. Therefore the Elema loyalists drew the boundary of the cultural-political unit of the Algana close to the boundary of the cultural group Algana (*ethnies*). Hereafter, we will examine social change in the Algana, paying attention to the disparity in nature of these boundaries.

Before these events, the phratry, which was the *ethnie* inside another *ethnie* called the Gabra, had a permeable boundary. The permeability of the Algana boundary was greater than that of other phratries, as evidenced by, first, the variety of clan origin within the Algana. For example, Schlee (1989: 200–1) referred to an oral tradition of the origin of the Algana, which holds that a Boran boy who “found” a camel in a field and began to look after the camel, turned Algana, providing the derivation of *al gal* (gone into the bush). He stated that the Boruga clan of Algana, the origin of which is the Boran, according to this oral tradition, incorporated other peoples who had split from the Boran, and others such as the future Rendille or El Molo, thereby forming the Algana.

Second, the origins of lineage in the clan of Algana are varied as well. For example, the Elmale clan consists of four lineages, called the Qape, Lucho, Babo Doyo, and Guuto Boi. It is said that the Elmale clan once contained only the Qape lineage, which was established by a person originally from the Sale clan of the Rendille. The Qape man found Lucho, the progenitor of the Lucho lineage, and incorporated him into the Elmale clan in the same manner as for Babo Doyo, who had split from the Boran, and Guuto Boi, who came from the El Molo.

Third, Torry (1973: 394) stated that a man who was outraged by suffering abuse from clansmen could leave his agnate group to join another phratry. Although this is not a particular feature of the Algana phratry, it is clear that the Gabra approved of the transfer of a member across the phratries as well as the joining of people from other *ethnies* into the Gabra. In this manner, both phratry and the Gabra can be shown to have a permeable boundary. In particular, the Algana is a “microcosm in which we can observe in miniature all the processes of clanship and ethnic dynamics” (Schlee 1989: 205).

The permeability of the boundary of the phratry produced the complicated alliances between clans and lineages that compose the phratries. For example, the Qape man found Lucho and incorporated him into the Elmale clan, as we have seen. This oral tradition was accompanied by an episode as follows:

When the Qape man found Lucho, a man from the Disa clan was also there. Strictly speaking, they found Lucho together. Therefore, they discussed to which clan Lucho should belong. They finally came to an agreement that Lucho should be incorporated into the Elmale clan, but he should adopt the ear-cut-mark, which Disa clan put on their livestock as the Lucho lineage’s mark.

Such an episode provides a sense of solidarity for the Disa and Lucho people in their daily life. They always say unhesitatingly that Lucho is Disa. Such a sense of solidarity can be a useful foothold if either clan’s man needs assistance. In a sense, the Lucho have a double feeling of identification with both Disa and Elmale, although their feeling of identification with the Disa is weaker. We can say that the Lucho is the “insider-outsider”

for both the Disa clan and Elmale clan.

John Wood (1997: 689–91) has presented the concept of “inside” and “outside” to explain the complex group dynamics in northern Kenya. He stated that the Gabra identity seems to be constructed upon frequent shifts within the Gabra community itself between social and moral “insides” and “outsides”. The 1997 election spotlighted this identity shift. Take, for example, the Elmale clan that was said to have actively voted for Bonaiya. Answering the question why they supported Bonaiya even though they were Algana, one of the Elmale men said: “Gar and Elmale, we respect each other. Because of this respect, we even call each other by a specific name (*qalicha*) instead of our personal name. Therefore, I voted for Bonaiya.” Another man explained to me as follows: “Long ago, a Gar man and an Elmale man found a *rad* (female calf) in the field. They disputed who should own this *rad*. Just then, the *rad* disappeared under the ground. They had lost it. Since then, Gar and Elmale have never disputed anything. Thus, I voted for Bonaiya.” In other words, the Elmale people voted for Bonaiya, showing their justice was grounded on the oral tradition that told of the relationship between Elmale clan and Gar phratry. This oral tradition was well known to other Algana. When I conducted other research, I heard the following episode: “Around 1973, a Gar man created seeds of discord with an Elmale man. The Elmale man, however, gave up his right in order to prevent the dispute, referring to this oral tradition.” Although the Elmale are inside of Algana, they think a great deal of the friendly relationship with the Gar. Considering this relationship, Elmale people took sides with the Gar phratry at the election, which is outside the Algana.

Of course, not all Elmale people made their political choice solely because of this close relationship between Elmale clan and Gar phratry. In fact, one of the Elema loyalists explained why Elmale people unanimously voted for Bonaiya. According to his explanation, Elmale people voted for Bonaiya, because of a certain wealthy Elmale businessman who was accorded every facility by Bonaiya. I do not deny the possibility that they voted for Bonaiya by virtue of considering the man’s economic interest. However, I would like to lay special emphasis on the fact that Elmale people, by their own account, voted for Bonaiya on the basis of the relationship between Elmale clan and Gar phratry. Elmale people seemed to take it for granted that the Algana had a permeable boundary. In addition, it seemed improbable to them that the other Algana would blame them.

However, the Elmale people’s justice, premised on the oral tradition, was not accepted by the Algana people after the nomination. It shows us that the permeable boundary of the Algana had become impermeable, with the nomination as a turning point. Each one of those who voted for Bonaiya had his/her own reason to support Bonaiya, as was the case for those who voted for Elema. Some considered the historical-social relationship between themselves and the Gar phratry, some of the more educated voted with the expectation of raising the status of the Gabra in Kenya, and others looked after their own interests. The Elema loyalists tried to compel them to vote for Wario instead of Bonaiya, without considering their own justice. After the general election, they tried to exclude those Algana people who voted for Bonaiya, even though they were warned of the outcome. I observed Elema loyalists pursuing the Algana people who voted for Bonaiya at the general election, saying that they either had to stand together with the Algana or stand apart from the Algana. They were pressed for an answer on whether they would prefer to be Algana or be cast out socially from the Algana. To answer that they would be Algana was to follow the Algana line, without considering the relationship with those who were outside the Algana. It meant that the new Algana object to a society that kept “outsides” in their own society, but approved of a society in which “insides” should be “insides”.

In this paper, I have clarified the social transition that the Algana people experienced when they were involved in the election. Abner Cohen (1974: 42) has claimed that:

when we feel that we are acting as free individuals and following our own individual motives we can in fact be acting as members. During an election campaign, candidates, brokers, mediators and voters manipulate one another, following their own private

interests. They form factions, action-sets and other alliances. But they at the same time, knowingly or unknowingly, act as members of larger political groups or collectivities.

We may say that the larger political group, in this case, is Kenya. The Algana, as well as the Gabra, including the nomadic people, have taken a step on the road to becoming the Kenyan nation, or rather the ethnic group established inside Kenya.

As mentioned in the opening of this paper, the ethnic political unit named the Algana was incorporated into the Gabra through a Gabra-wide process. However, the recombined Gabra was not the same as it had been, because it was the Gabra's turn to experience social transition as a group. The broader questions on what kind of transition the Gabra society experienced, and how the Gabra redefined their society through the process of incorporating the Algana, will be discussed in a succeeding paper.

NOTES

- (1) They say that this Gabra-wide process is their first experience since the beginning of the Gabra. Paul W. Robinson (1985: 108–9), who has reconstructed Gabra history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however, stated that the Gabra held a Gabra-wide meeting in 1884 and 1887. According to Robinson, the 1884 meeting was to discuss civil law. The phratries of the Gabra came together for the meeting, which reviewed judicial matters, especially crime and punishment. In 1887, the Gabra meeting was called to discuss the problem of the poor, in which the decision was made to redistribute their livestock to the poor. These facts are important, as they suggest that the ethnicity of the Gabra has been maintained since the nineteenth century.
- (2) Kosaku Yoshino (1997: 28–9) has studied the sociology of cultural nationalism, focusing on instrumentalism as opposed to expressivism: the former, represented by Abner Cohen, has emphasized that the nation was organized as a political means, while the latter approach explained the revitalization of the nation as an expression of primordial ties, which provided a name and identity for the lonely masses living in the *Gesellschaft*.
- (3) According to Fr. Paul Tablino (1999 [1980]: 6), the year 1963 can be considered as the real beginning of the Catholic mission among the Gabra and the Boran of Kenya. The colonial administration gave permission to Bishop Cavallera to construct a school and dispensary at Laisamis for the Rendille, another at North Horr for the Gabra, and a rectory at Marsabit.
- (4) Sobania (1991: 139–40) has enumerated the impact of the colonial authorities, such as creation of “tribal grazing areas”, the policy of “separation”, levying tribute and tax payments and restrictions imposed on movement. He emphasized that fluid societal boundaries became crystallized by such impacts.
- (5) Strictly speaking, females are also classified under three categories. The third category is called *galitam*, or youth from circumcision to marriage. The Gabra circumcise girls when they reach marriageable age, which is from 14 to 20. Normally, no sooner has she been circumcised than a girl marries her fiancé. Therefore, there are not many girls in the *galitam* stage.
- (6) They classify the newborn baby into a certain generation-set according to his/her father's set. As for a male, his set will be preserved his whole life, while the female set will change according to her husband's set if she marries. The generation-sets are classified into generation-set lines or *gogesa* of which the number differs according to the phratry. For example, the Algana and Sharbana have three generation-set lines that resemble the Rendille, while the Gar, Galbo, and Odola have two generation-set lines (Schlee 1989: 79–88).
- (7) The North Horr constituency contains 10 locations for councillor as a single-member constituency. These 10 locations are listed in Table 4. In the 1997 election, more than 20 candidates ran for councillor. Each candidate for Member of Parliament utilized his social relationships, as I will show later.
- (8) In the 1988 election, the queue system replaced the secret ballot at the nomination stage. However, the queue system had harmful effects, for example, the openness of queue-voting enabled candidates and their agents to intimidate voters at the polling station. Based on past conduct, the choice of voting system was left in each party's hands in the 1997 election. KANU

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