



'We Don't Need No Education'. A Case Study About Pastoral Datoga Girls in Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

The topic of this paper reflects the reasons why formal education is not in accord with Datoga pastoral life in Tanzania and why this marginalized Nilotic tribe hesitates to send children to schools. In an attempt to grasp different reasons of avoiding education, the paper is focused especially on education of girls, which is less preferred than that of boys. The discussion reveals the impact of formal/informal education on traditional life of mobile Datoga and how norms, habits are slowly weakened. The suggestion is offered that unless the communication between pastoral Datoga and the government regarding school attendance and better conditions takes the cultural context, Datoga will remain outside the schooling process and their marginal position in the society will not change and neither their image of savage people.

KEY WORDS: education, Datoga, pastoralists, semi nomads, girls, marginalization

Education is on a long basis term considered as an effective source of income, wealth, social rank and security. United Nation's Millennium Development Goals identify universal primary education as one of the eight development goals for poor populations, including pastoralists. According to Millennium Development goals, all children in the world should have access to primary education till the end of 2015. The real picture in the world does not correspond with the defined target within the five years scope. The process is prolonged not only by war conflicts in some countries and the lack of access to the schooling process, but

also by the fact to be interested in obtaining education. The scarcity of education is increasing the vicious circle of development, low health care or poor quality of education. But is it in all cases like this? Is the right for primary education defended by the United Nations important for a pastoral citizen of Datoga tribe somewhere in Tanzania? Division line between awareness of the right for education and taking concern in education is quite interesting in terms of ethnology. I think that the real division line is not between people with or without education, but between those who have access to education and those who want to have access. Based on particular facts from basic life of pastoral tribe Datoga in Tanzania, I would like to point out the impact of formal/informal education on the traditional way of life. We focus on why children, especially girls/women, because their education is even lower, are absent from schools and how formal/informal education is reflected by members of Datoga tribe.

Only minimum research on the impact and benefit of education on pastoralists has been conducted in part because formal education has not been widespread among herding communities. The role and impact of education are not well understood and very little is known about what pastoralists really think about schooling system and how do they value it. From our side a future research on this subject is planned among Datoga pastoralists. Some researchers contributed to the topic of women education in Tanzania such as Mlekwa or Raymond. The social and political context of literacy on the case of pastoral Maasai was compiled by Semeli, Bishop or in the works of Little, Aboud and Lenachuru. How education is influencing pastoral life is specified in Krätli, Narman, Oba, Muhammad, Oanda or Parkipuny work.

This paper is based on a review of academic literature concerning pastoralism and education provision and on participant observation during my stay as a volunteer/teacher in central Tanzania over a period of four years between 2011 and 2014 and during my pre-research in one Datoga village within the Easter of 2013, when I was gathering basic information about a potential topic for my Ph.D. thesis.

Education in Tanzania

Before the independence period, education was limited and only a few elite were privileged to acquire this skill. The first step in pastoralists' development by colonialists was settling them down, adopting fixed habitations, peaceful occupation and the change of their life from nomadic to an agricultural one. The expansion of literacy education for all citizens began after the independence especially in the 70's. Mass literacy campaigns were a key feature of President Nyerere's vision for the new and independent state. 'Education for Self - Reliance' became the catch term (BLYSTAD 2000:160). A number of schools were

established (both missionary and run by the government) even in different parts of pastoral's territories, but Datoga rarely sent children to schools and were sceptical of education from the beginning. Each family had to provide one student for the local school but many of them were constantly running away and fathers were forced to pay fines. Despite the fact that formal western education was introduced to pastoral groups and many girls and boys managed to complete two or three years of studies, they returned back to their herding duties for a lack of opportunities and simply because education skills were irrelevant and incompatible with their herding life.

There are many reasons why certain parents let their children attend schools. Some pastoralists became curious about the new institution, some of them had positive relationship with missionaries who encouraged them to send offspring to schooling process. A strong factor is also the pressure from local offices or being a late born child by third wives.

Education often requires settlement of pastoralists and the presence of youth which commonly herds cattle in cyclical pattern depending on the availability of grazing land and water. Education does not guarantee a job, but it could enhance the probability of possible income which can be a supportive supplement to pastoralism, especially during droughts. Unfortunately, sedentary models jeopardize mobile livelihoods and are not compatible with the rigors and needs of pastoralism (LITTLE-ABOUD-LENACHURU 2009:154).

In 2001, Tanzania implemented the Primary Education Development Program and eliminated public school fees in order to increase access to primary education. Enrolment has dramatically increased, but Tanzania has not yet achieved universal primary education (DENNIS-STAHLEY 2012:47), although according to the law the school is mandatory for children aged 7-15. The last census in 2012¹ uncovered the actual literacy situation - 72% of 45 million of Tanzania's inhabitants know how to read and write. Interesting statistics is especially in the range of ten to fourteen year olds, for whom the formal education is mandatory. There is a loss of 20% of children, who are not attending the schooling process. Long term disinterest is characteristic mostly among the hunter-gatherers and pastoralists. However, some pastoral children attend basic primary school but many of Datoga children still remain outside the education system. The literacy among Datoga is only 1% and only 5% speak Swahili – the official language of Tanzania and the *lingua franca* in the East Africa. Swahili is necessary mostly for men as a communication

¹ All census info available on: <http://www.nbs.go.tz/>

language on markets where they sell their cattle. Semi-nomad Datoga have their own restriction and the absence of Datoga pupils in school desk is a mix of different factors.



Figure 1: *Traditional way of dressing is considered backwards.* Photo: author 2013.

Pastoral Datoga herders are among the poorest and most vulnerable populations in Tanzania. Like many East African pastoralists, Datoga have become marginalized within the national economy. They are struggling to survive and to retain their traditional lifestyle. Reaching them with formal or informal education has become a major challenge. For the modern Tanzanian society, education is seen as an instrument for transforming pastoralists into settled farmers, labourers, modern livestock producers, and loyal citizens. The education-for-development approaches are accounts of pastoralists' poverty and the assumption that education will bring an improvement of their standard of living.

According to the state, the most essential intervention for the development of pastoral people is the establishment of an effective formal and informal education programme which will train both the children and the adults through their hearts, heads and hands (KUNEY 1994:105). The problem comes with the view of effective programme suitable for semi-nomad Datoga.

The population study

The Datoga (also called Datog, Tatog, Tatoga, Tatur, Mang'ati or Barabaig) are Nilotic people mainly concentrated in small localized enclaves around the Rift Valley, in Arusha, Dodoma, Singida, Mara, Tabora and Shinyanga regions. About 70% of these people are concentrated in the present Hanang and Mbulu District of Arusha region. Semi nomad Datoga consist of more than ten sections – sub-tribes (emojiga) with their own names, some of them arerapidly assimilated. The most homogenous and biggest section is Barabaig, whose name is often used for the whole tribe. Population estimates for the Datoga is about 87.978 (ELIFURAHA 2011:423) but according to different sources, the number differentiates from 30 000 to 100 000.² Their language is closely linked to the Kalenjin cluster of the Southern Nilotic Languages, a branch of the eastern Sudanic language family. Very little is known about their early history, but it is believed that between 1000 and 1800 they once dominated Northern Tanzania and Southern Kenya, and that in the nineteenth century they were displaced from much of this area in the course of the Maasai expansion (BUTOVSKAYA 2012:31).

The Datoga are polygynous and patrilineal with a strong warrior tradition and male domination of social and political life. Eighty five percent of women are in polygynous

² Tanzanian census does not include the question about tribes or mother tongue and the national politics is against tribalism, so it is hard to obtain faithful data about the population of Datoga. Their mobile way of life is also another fact which needs to be taken into account.

marriages (SELLEN 2000:93) and women are central actors in Datoga political and religious life (BLYSTAD-REKDAL 2004:630). Datoga polygyny is of non-sororal type.

Datoga depend on livestock for their subsistence. They herd East African short horn zebu cattle, goats, sheep and donkeys. They practice transhumance – moving with their livestock around the range at different times depending on forage conditions and water availability (LANE 1994:81). Cattle has the highest social and economic value and is not used as a regular meat supply, but when it dies, almost all part will be utilized. The primary importance of cattle is for milk. Goats and sheep are valued as a source of meat and they can be sold at the market to provide cash income. Donkeys serve as a transport.

Every homestead (gheda) is an independent social and economic unit which normally consists of one married man, who is the head of the household, his wife/wives and their children. There might also be other related family members. In the homestead there are mud huts surrounded by acacia thorn fence and separate kraals for herd.

From fame to marginality

Mang'ati - meaning enemy is one of the Datoga names given by their famous pastoral neighbouring relative Maasai. In the name is mentioned the power, which Datoga used to have and respect from the bigger pastoral tribe. Over last decades, their image of strong, feared and also respected and admired enemy has been substituted with an image of a primitive and barbaric neighbour. Actually the same frustration and disappointment has met even wealthy and proud Maasai. Their downfall is not directly associated with ethnic conflict, but with their inability to act politically as group (KUNEY 1994:103).

Datoga herders are today characterized not by grand political leadership and fame, but by marginality, migration and acculturation. There is an intensive force from government to settle them down, an effort to make them a part of the modern Tanzanian society. The most prominent changes have taken place since the seventies. Several of the most dramatic transformations that occurred have more or less directly received justification from the Tanzanian government. This may be partly explained by the lack of the consequences of official policy, but also partly by the fact that the population has been regarded as unruly and ungovernable since the colonial times (BLYSTAD 1996). One of the biggest issues between government and Datoga represented the conflict around The Tanzania Canada Wheat project (TCWP) in 1970, when 100 000 acres of prime grazing land of Datoga in Mbulu region were allocated for wheat farming. This programme violated the pattern of grazing, sacred tombs and many homesteads were destroyed including the confiscation of cattle and protests of people restrained by the troops. The villagization process – a resettlement of rural population under the first president Julius Nyerere started in the mid-

1970s but in the onset, Datoga were left out. They were marked as people who were hard to deal with. 'Operation Barabaig' – the settlement of pastoral Datoga initiated in 1978 and lasted three years. Planned social and health services were not fully accomplished and the new territory attracted other ethnic communities which caused over-utilization of provided services and Datoga life situation became worse.

Strong antagonism and stereotypes against Datoga are characterized by some of their neighbours as well. In 1968, an Iramba school teacher was murdered and Datoga were blamed. Government troops entered into their homesteads, a big number of cattle was stolen, people raped and the whole interference was accompanied by violence. The most strain comes from the relation between Datoga and a Bantu tribe Nyaturu caused by ritual murders. The hostility is also influenced by 'Kihonda murders' during the drought in 1976. A murder of a young Datoga girl occurred shortly before and affected already tightened relationships between these neighbours. A truck with the food aid was sent from Singida to help in this hard situation of drought season. Datoga (Barabaig clan) visited Kihonda and found some Nyaturu stealing food aid from the truck and killed all of them. The government responded by arresting Datoga men, by confiscation of a big number of cattle. Another example of ethnic tension is represented by the death of Sukuma people in 1985. The conflict arose from a set of cattle raids between Datoga (Burediga clan) and the biggest Tanzanian tribe. Although Sukuma joined other Bantu tribes (Nyaturu, Iramba) and they were equipped by advanced weaponry such as machine guns, Burediga clan supported by the Barabaig clan achieved the victory with spears and sticks. 48 Sukuma men were killed and in this incident, the media pointed at Datoga.

Especially nowadays Datoga are seen as backwards, living in darkness and far from modern society due to several factors. Datoga are strongly linked up with a ritual killing tradition. Lions and also men of other tribes (traditionally all Bantu-speaking tribes) were termed 'enemies of people' and a man who would kill such an enemy was honoured in extraordinary ways. A girl often provoked a young man to kill anything for her. A group of friends used to accompany a young warrior as helpers and witnesses, although ears and nose of the 'enemy' were cut as a proof. Customs do change and the government punishment almost entails the total disappearance of this custom. 'Savageness' is also displayed by remaining illiterate, by wearing a leather skirt, by half naked women, by strong adherence to their traditional religion and rituals such as delivery on cow-dung covered by cow hide, fear of colostrum or leaving death members in the bush for hyenas.

Impoverishment of Datoga people continues today by forcing them to more marginal places with no sufficient and eligible grazing lands. The loss of land and cattle disrupted the subsistence strategies and many Datoga started to cultivate maize or rice to ensure the survival of their families. Education might be a possible supplement, but due to the

historical experience with government and its policy, education is not seen as trustworthy. The fear is well-founded and it will take time to change Datoga attitude towards the government.



Figure 2: *'We don't need no education'*. Photo: author 2013.

A better pastoralist?

When we look closer to find reasons why Datoga do not value education, we should realize a very important fact. Education in primary schools is not preparing kids to be better pastoralists, but it is preparing them to be a part of the modern society. Achieved knowledge is mostly not applicable in the daily life of common Datoga man. Parents need to experience and see in reality utilization of formal education in their practical hard life. How to survive in scarce environment, how to herd livestock in the dry season, which pasture is the most fertile, how to deal with diseases and all the other important information have been always transmitted to the young generation on a continuous basis through parents, older relations and peer group (MLEKWA 1996:57). All of this experience is needed for the young generation to survive in harsh pastoralist's life and parents need to see

brighter future for their offsprings. Education should improve the welfare of nomads and their ability to manage a risky environment. The parents' trust to Tanzanian education system can grow if the teaching process will ensure implementation of basic pastoral knowledge.

Other problems regarding schooling process in these communities include lack of schools, long distances to schools, poor educational facilities, lack of teachers, many teachers are not prepared to work in pastoral areas and a generally negative attitude of the community towards schooling as a whole.

No need to invest

In traditional African societies, men are not equal to women. Among Datoga, according to the traditional law, women are not responsible for their actions and in every case fathers, not husbands, are forever legally liable for their daughters' offenses. Why to invest effort and money in a girl - a less valued member of the family? And to somebody who is also considered to be less capable? Plus we have to mention another strong factor against girls' education – no need to invest into a lost member. Since Datoga are patrilocal and patrilineal, girls immediately after marriage leave the father's house and in reality it means minus one labour member. All children which will come from the wedlock are considered members of husband's clan. Fathers of daughters may prefer to invest in sons, who will remain to live with them and all invested money will come back to the household. It is unprofitable to have daughters because they also take away livestock from the clan to husband's clan in a form of dowry. In the future herd stock received as a dowry from the family will become a possession of bride's sons. Only male offspring can continue the membership and existence of a clan or lineage. But a large dowry 'closes the mouth of husband' and gives a woman certain economic power in her relation with the husband.

Female as a herder

Herding the livestock among Datoga should be considered as a privilege of boys and men. Older males are herding cattle and younger ones goats, sheep and calves. It might appear that girls due to their labour responsibilities in and around the household would have a better chance to attend school comparing to mobile boys herding cattle because of their daily presence at home. Women labour consists of digging wells, milking animals, collecting water and firewood, maintaining house, preparing food and childcare. Agricultural work can be added as well, because subsistence system is nowadays in some pastoral areas supplemented even by cultivation. For example Wembere valley in Igunga district in Tabora region is suitable for rice, which became a part of Datoga's trade article

and is exchanged at markets for maize.³ Surprisingly, researches report that women and girls commonly herd livestock if men and boys are not available, and among the Datoga there are as many female herders as male ones. For small stock, girls and boys are used equally, for cattle 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 livestock. Boys may be more efficient as they have more practice with bows, arrows and spears (SIEFF 1997:537). The use of girls as herders simply reflects the labour available at home and obviously their potential presence at home and higher possibility to attend a daily school comparing to boys is not evident as I could estimate.

We should consider even the number of herding cattle at home, which may influence probability for some kids to attend school. Pastoralists with few animals have interests different from those with many animals. A parent with a large supply of adult labour is willing to send at least some of his children to school while the parent with labour shortage may be opposed to the move (NDAGALA 1985:3).

Fertility contra education

Schooling in Tanzania is mandatory for children aged 7-15 as mentioned above, which already includes the suitable age for Datoga girl's marriage. Young girls used to marry when they reached 13-14 years.⁴ According to the Tanzanian law, they are still obliged to attend the school. Since they marry, a leather skirt is worn exclusively by married women and is one of the most visible means to identifying the marital status of a female. Every Datoga girl must marry, whether or not she is physically desirable, in order to be eligible to wear the leather skirt designed by Udameselgwa – a female deity and patroness of Datoga. She taught the women how to make the skirt and assured them that if they followed the instructions, they would have many children. The leather skirt has its magic-religious significance. A special sheepskin panel is sewn in front of the skirt and it is believed to promote fertility (KLIMA 1960:9). There is absolute prohibition on removing the leather skirt which is refused with most potent fertility connotations. In the Datoga society, fertility plays one of the most important roles in their life. A childless married couple will never be fully considered adults and will not become officially buried (BLYSTAD 1996). Education

³ Maize is considered by Datoga a more nourishing part of the diet than rice and an important crop for preparing ugali – the most common dish in East and Southern Africa although not a traditional dish for Datoga.

⁴ Boys marry much later, usually around 24 years. Formerly, men served as warriors and married life was reserved for older men (KLIMA 1960:63).

seems to be inadequate to offset the whole marriage system and thus not supported by the community, especially for young girls. School regulations simply do not allow wearing a leather skirt, which is not a part of the uniform and by the majority population, it is seen as a hangover.



Figure 3: *Children start herding since they are three years old.* Photo: author 2013.

Another danger for young Datoga schoolgirls (and girls in common) is undesirable pregnancy and births out of wedlock. A quite high number of pregnant students influenced some missionaries to establish boarding secondary schools for girls in order to avoid unwanted pregnancies and simply help young girls to complete the education⁵. Pregnant girls are normally expelled from schools and they have to face the verdict of Datoga. Pregnancies before marriage are greatly condemned and indeed feared among Datoga. A child being born in its maternal grandfather's home is a 'clan-less' child just because it has no father to whose clan it can belong. Without a clan a person cannot contribute to the creation of alliances at marriage, and cannot reproduce his/her lineage and clan. The

⁵ Belgian missionary Albert Bolle (White fathers) established one secondary boarding school for girls in Igunga, Tabora and in 2012 four Datoga girls, succeeded to complete the school.

'fatherless' person and his mother will be stigmatised, and they will commonly have to endure years of relative isolation (BLYSTAD 2010:303).

Girls will not listen

As I was told by my Datoga male friends at Malendi market (Igunga region)⁶, girls with education will not listen to their fathers anymore and will refuse to marry in young age or they will reject a suitable partner chosen by their family. The solution for the young girls is to run away from home and search for the protection in a mission, nearest town or they can escape to the lover's house. Some elopements may result in an acceptable marriage alliance, but it is not a rule. Datoga girls generally do not marry boys for whom they feel affection or love. Although there are formal youth meetings taking place in a hidden bush where freedom, excitement and sexual play is cherished, but sex is strictly prohibited. Girls are protected by their own formally appointed male guardian and once a closer relationship is discovered, it will lead to fines and permanent removal of the girl from the lover boy and group of peers. The family immediately starts searching a suitable husband.

Battering allowed

The school process does not include only transmission of information and knowledge, but also involves the way of thinking, habits, moral code and certain preferred culture taught by teachers. How the traditional cultural view could be influenced is demonstrated by a research on wife-battering by Russian anthropologist Marina Butovskaya. Wife-battering is a widespread practice among Datoga pastoralists and is seen as a part of coexistence of the husband and his wife. The customary law traditionally provides certain means of protection of women's rights. It prescribes that abusive husbands should pay a fine both to the battered women and to their relatives to compensate misbehaviour (BUTOVSKAYA 2012:31). From 142 interviewed women 47% mentioned beating by their husband. Almost all women - 91% have never attended school and the rest - 9% visited primary school, but only two of them succeeded to complete primary education. The results are interesting in one point. Women culturally tolerate men's aggression against them, those dissatisfied were mainly women with basic primary education or those with social and economic independence. In one case, a woman sought help at the police station. She was actively criticized by other

⁶ A place where I use to attend the Friday cattle market frequently and talk informally with my Datoga friends between years 2011-2014. In this period I worked in Tanzania as a volunteer/teacher.

Datoga women. According to the customs, she was supposed to have called a local meeting, which could solve her problem without including the police. The woman who addressed the complaint to the police was one of two respondents who completed the primary education. As we can see, the spreading of education is indicative of new trends in rural Datoga environment and is opening different views how to solve the problem and how strong norms are slowly broken.

Informal education

Attendance of basic primary/secondary school is not the only source of educational influence. A plumbless impact is definitely caused even by informal education organized by different NGO programs in cooperation with government or non-governmental organization, which also might bring possible moral or cultural changes into Datoga traditional life. Let us demonstrate an example.

There is still a very low HIV prevalence among Datoga semi nomads comparing to their neighbours⁷. Since there is a particularly rapid spread of the virus in African countries, a project was carried out between the University of Dar es Salaam and the University of Bergen, Norway. A specific HIV film⁸ was used to educate Datoga about the virus and HIV transmission within the communities. First of all, the direct talk about sex is unacceptable for them, things to be hidden are those of respect only and procreation is one of them. There is a tremendous respect for sexual act, coitus is certainly regarded as inherently potent and fertile (BLYSTAD 2004:51).

The main focus of the AIDS campaigns was built on three pillars: 'Abstinence', 'Be faithful' and 'Use condoms'. The concept of abstinence is hardly known among Datoga and even a second pillar cannot be acceptable due to the traditional polygamous marriage, but also from another perspective - a large number of married women and men have a potential sexual right to each other. The use of a condom is, though, the most obscure claim. Access to condoms could potentially lead to sexual intercourse with unmarried Datoga girls without hazardous consequences of undesired pregnancies. It will facilitate more open sex before marriage than add safety to the sexual practices. As mentioned above, the pregnancies out of wedlock will be followed by strong sanctions and stigma for the 'clan less' baby.

⁷ In Tanzania approximately 6% of the population is infected by HIV.

⁸ Available on: <https://bora.hib.no/item/93>

Such campaigns might fail if they do not include the cultural context and respect manners. On the other side Datoga are confronted with slow loss of their norms.

Mobile school as a solution?

Tanzanian government is and has always been planning education for pastoralists together with their settlement. Formal education should be viewed as a supplement to the pastoralism support rather than replacement for it. School calendars should adjust to the cyclical nature of mobile Datoga, especially in peak dry season periods and the schools need to reflect the pattern of key water points and pastures (LITTLE-ABOUND-LENACHURU 2009:164). Similarly to these conditions a project of mobile schools among pastoralists was implemented by Nomadic Primary Health Care Programme (NPHC) in Wajir, Kenya in from 1994 to 2003. This way of acquiring literacy skills has the flexibility to preserve the nomadic lifestyle, culture and other traditional behaviours. A mobile teacher was living with the family or herding group. Lessons were designed to fit to the household labour and the need to move with the stock. Children could at the same time continue to learn informally and non-formally from older members of the community. The program challenges previous ways of education and parents were more interested to sign children to the primary school. Notable is the approximate equivalence in enrolment for girls and boys. According to the report, there was a high teacher drop out, clan conflicts and lack of funds (ABDI 2010:28), although the model of mobile schooling system introduces a quite convenient design of teaching.

Concluding remarks

Essential questions are still open in Datoga case. Must nomads settle? Should education lead to permanent settlement? Government policies and educational programs will slowly force more and more to settle and in globalization process soon or later will be achieved higher level of basic primary education.

Understanding of Datoga traditional way of life might be a key for the government. A successful project of mobile schools in Kenya could be one of the possibilities how to increase literacy among pastoralists but it is accompanied with many practical obstacles like a lack of teachers, training staff or poor social network. An alternative to a mobile school, a boarding school could be considered, which might be financially challenging. More information for understanding how migratory groups acquire, use and retain literacy skills need to be collected in future research.

The right for basic primary education is reflected differently among Datoga pastoralists comparing to the modern society. Especially for Datoga girls, barriers are built by strong traditional norms which on the other hand protect them. The pastoral and mobile way of life, mistrust to the Tanzanian government and according Datoga useless schooling knowledge are the main reasons why education is still neglected by Datoga. But without basic education, individuals are limited to marginal existence in rapidly changing technological societies.

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