

# Ndorobo Notions of Relationship with Other

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## Abstract

*Among the Maa-speaking Ndorobo people on the southern Mau escarpment in Kenya, basic assumptions concerning Other are foundational for how an individual interacts with all that is outside of Self.<sup>1</sup> In the course of field research in the Ndorobo homeland, three categories of significant Other were distinguished in Ndorobo world view.<sup>2</sup> In this article these three Ndorobo categories of Other will be discussed with particular attention given to how these categories govern notions of relationship between Ndorobo and their classifications of Other. Classificatory distinctions are made between relationships of an individual Ndorobo with: (1) community Other (community in-group), (2) earthly Other (ethnic out-groups), and (3) supernatural Other (spirit beings).*

**Keywords:** Community, Harmony/unity, Relationship, Ndorobo, Supernatural, Ethnicity

## Resume

*Parmi les personnes Maa -saxons Ndorobo sur le sud escarpement de Mau au Kenya , les hypothèses de base concernant les autres sont à la base de la façon dont un individu interagit avec tout ce qui est en dehors de soi . Dans le cadre de recherches sur le terrain dans la patrie Ndorobo , trois catégories de Significant Other ont été distingués dans Ndorobo vision du monde . Dans cet article, ces trois catégories de Ndorobo Autre seront examinées avec une attention particulière à la façon dont ces catégories régissent les notions de relation entre Ndorobo et leurs classifications des Autres . Classificatoires distinctions sont faites entre les relations d'un individu Ndorobo avec : ( 1 ) Autres communauté ( communauté en groupe) , ( 2 ) Autres terrestre (hors- groupes ethniques) , et ( 3 ) Autres ( surnaturels êtres spirituels ) .*

**Mots-clés:** Communauté , Harmony / unité , relation,

## Introduction

The centrality of categorization to human cognitive processing is well established across academic disciplines. Anthropologists such as Barth (1969:p.10) and Jenkins

1 Self is a world view universal category. It accounts for both collectivist and individualist orientations. Self awareness is the beginning of self identity whether oriented toward group or an individual focus.

2 Interviews with Ndorobo informants were conducted between 1997-2000 in the Olchorro Area of the southern Mau Escarpment, Kenya and included two Maa-speaking Ndorobo groups: the 1) Ilekiminkish Group, and 2) Saleita Group.

(1997:p.54) recognized ethnic groups using classification to distinguish one's ethnic identity and expected behavior between Self and all who are not. It is possible to study categories of self identity at the macro-race or macro-national level and at the micro-individual, unofficial level (Brubaker et al 2004:p.33). The micro-individual level operates as self understanding by a smaller bundled community which serves to bring meaning, identity, and obligatory expectations to daily life. Ethnography has documented categories people use in everyday life which invariably supersede official macro-categories (Longman 2001:p.350; Levine 1987:p.71). In Kenya, the idea "we are all Kenyans" is trumped by one's ethnic classification (i.e. Ndorobo, Maasai, Kikuyu...), "I am Ndorobo."

Distinguishing between Other is an interpretation by the perceiver of how the world is relationally organized. The Ndorobo perspective on their life experience believes significant distinctions of Other affecting their lives fall into either the category of community Other, earthly Other, or supernatural Other. These cognitive categories serve to structure for Ndorobo what Zerubavel calls the "socio-mental" domain (1997:p.5). Ndorobo world view notions of Other is a kind of socially shared cognition organized in this socio-mental domain (Edwards (1991:p.517).

The present article first discusses why a Ndorobo individual is taught to look on the horizontal plane to community Other for support and guidance. Further consideration examines self-in-community as the prime directive in individual experience for the relationship between individual Ndorobo and community Other. As Tajfel and Turner's social categorization research has suggested in general, Ndorobo classifications reveal "a robust tendency toward in-group bias" (1986:p.13).

In-group bias is heightened by accentuation effects. There is a tendency in human cognition to exaggerate the closeness of in-group members and magnify differences between the in-group category and categories of out-groups (Hogg and Abrams 1988:p.19). Those outside Ndorobo community are thought of in terms of Them vs. Us. Earthly Other is a salient category in Ndorobo world view that contains those who are viewed as living the life experience on a parallel course toward death. Ndorobo view this parallel plane as that which must be defended against and exploited. Why? Because earthly Other is characterized as just that - Other.

The section will highlight the relationships of mistrust Ndorobo have with earthly Other characterized as self-in-opposition to outsiders. Ndorobo cognitive structures of Other like many ethnic classifications transform "unique persons to exemplars of named groups" (Levine 1999:p.169). Individuals are depersonalized by their Other classification. Ndorobo relationship with earthly Other is marked by a seemingly endless series of plots and counterplots to contend against schemes by outsiders. Ndorobo and earthly Other relate around the dance of exploitation.

The final class of Other, supernatural Other, to be discussed is recognized by Ndorobo as vested with controlling authority over the life of each and every individual. This class

distinction is true to the Ndorobo perception of what they believe to be naturally so. The supernatural holds a prominent place in Ndorobo world view and requires recognition and an organizational plan for relationship. The category of supernatural Other allows Ndorobo to explain elements of daily life unexplainable by any other means. Ndorobo look up to a vertical plane and acknowledge dependency on Creator *Enkai* to explain negative causality by evil spirits. The relationship between a Ndorobo person and supernatural Other may be depicted as self-in-subjection to a hierarchy.

## Self and Community Other

A Ndorobo individual is defined and life experience played out in an inherent union with their community in-group based on interdependency. That is, the Ndorobo community an individual Ndorobo has membership in is a closed society operating on in-group membership (insiders). It is at once a relationship of mutual benefit and mutual need by divine design.<sup>3</sup> Community Other is perpetuated by single members, and individual selves find personal definition through interrelations with the community in-group. This interdependent image makes individual Ndorobo and their relationship with community Other the primary relational consequence in discussion of Ndorobo world view.

A wholesome individual only comes through relationship with community Other. In fact, this relationship is a moral imperative and not viewed as voluntary. Each person born into a Ndorobo community has been placed there according to the will of *Enkai*. If you are born a Ndorobo, then you remain a Ndorobo forever. One's destiny as a Ndorobo is to assume the role and duties of a community member. The relationship between Self and community Other recognizes self-in-community as the prime directive in individual experience. Community Other works towards a relationship with each Ndorobo community member that restricts or curves personal elements such as emotion and desire in submission to the authority and expectations of the community. Self autonomy is not lost but cooperation and the need for cooperation to achieve self fulfillment is emphasized.

Strategic to Ndorobo interdependence with community is a greater awareness of members in the sense that all behavior is expected to conform to the social norm. Coelho and Figueiredo use the term intersubjectivity to describe this interconnectedness between one's community in-group and one's self (2003:p.193). Ndorobo view community Other as those on the same plane following the same course of life. A Ndorobo individual sees community Other as a horizontal distribution of equals each supporting the other.

The relationship between each Ndorobo community member and community Other is founded upon the common interest and identity of Ndorobo-ness. It is believed there is a general Ndorobo character (*empukunoto*) each individual inherits from the social

<sup>3</sup> *Ndorobo believe the divine Creator Enkai created the earth and the Ndorobo ethnic group.*

environment, described as: (1) attitude of avoiding conflict, (2) attitude of respecting elders by accepting discipline and advice, (3) attitude of community support and cooperation, and (4) attitude of individual responsibility of social role.<sup>4</sup>

Ndorobo-ness includes the willingness to extend mutual help for whatever reason and cooperate in effort for the good of the whole. The social relations one shares with kin and community members is a high cultural value. A person is emotionally attached to community Other, external control is high, and personal values tend to be social. The closeness of Ndorobo to their community in-group is reflected in life meaning derived from being a Ndorobo community member and the social pressure levied on behavior.

The relationship of a person with community Other begins with social acceptance conceived in explicit terms of behavior. The desirability of social acceptance is very high and has two relational values: (1) harmony in interpersonal relations, and (2) sensitivity to the social courtesies of hospitality and reciprocity. Key terms in one's relationship with community are defined in collectivist terms such as harmony, unity, friendship, hospitality, respect, and sociability.

The social world one occupies with community Other is a world regulated by harmony and unity, both features of Ndorobo-ness. Harmony here requires *aning*. *Aning* is translated many ways but in its basic form begins with the meaning of 'to hear.' Community Other are persons to be heard and responded to as a voice, not merely to be noticed as a passing presence. Relations are held together by a harmony of sounds, in other words a blending with others by obedient conduct. To coin a phrase used by Ong, Self perceives community Other in terms of "world-as-presence" (1969:p.646). A Ndorobo is enveloped by community in immediacy of being and relevance for life. In this way, community Other is to be the guide and supporter of Self.

Harmony is derived from the Ndorobo concept of unity. Relations with community Other give Ndorobo a sense of belonging and generate deep rooted loyalty to one's community in-group. Solidarity and camaraderie are coupled with a protective and sympathetic attitude toward community. Every Ndorobo is obligated to exhibit loyalty toward other community members and accept a measure of responsibility for their welfare. A proverb advises, "Be as familiar with your surroundings as you are with your home," meaning one should develop friendship with neighbors as extended kinsmen. Thus a feeling of unity binds a person with community Other psychologically in shared interests and activities. Harmony and unity are synonymous with love and togetherness.

The feeling of togetherness in the life experience comes across in sayings such as: "Love one another's noses," "Have a sweet smell," *Matoningoto!* or "Let us hear!" meaning, "Let us agree!" A blessing spoken by an elder over someone traveling begins with, "O God, may [this person] have a sweet fragrance!...Return home sweet smelling".<sup>5</sup> A general blessing given for family prosperity speaks to the intertwining relationship between

4 Julius Ngayami, personal interview, September 14, 1999.

5 Impaayo Ngayami, personal interview, August 18, 1997.

the family homestead and community: "O God, may this community have a sweet fragrance! Live long! Live long! Be victorious over life! Be a wise community of elders!"<sup>6</sup> Here family is synonymous with community and all members of both are compelled to live together in love. The phrase "sweet fragrance" is used to refer to love encompassing the community with peace.

Phrases such as "Love one another's noses" are commonly spoken at community ceremonies and figure significantly in the value of ceremonies. One informant explained the most important reason for ceremonies or rituals is to bring the community together. The most valued statement an elder speaks at all ceremonies involves love, respect, and unity. All are values attributed to a life surrendered to society and thus deemed virtues.<sup>7</sup>

The bond of unity and display of friendship at social events define a meaningful existence for a person. Events of community ritual are not numerous among Ndorobo, however they are valued for the in-group solidarity each promote. And in-group solidarity contributes to greater conformity of each community member to community expectations. The sacrifice of olive leaves is one community ritual performed two or three times a year to prevent or resolve challenges between community members. The purpose is to invoke peace and prosperity from God by committing to or restoring community harmony. Women gather fresh olive leaves and vine leaves from the forest to be used by the men to make a fire in the middle of a sheep/cattle pen or where there are many beehives. As the leaves are burned and smoke rises, chosen elders pray a ritual blessing over the community for continued peace, love, and prosperity.

The prayer given at the sacrifice of olive leaves speaks of the community being blessed "with the sweet fragrance of the olive tree and sweet as honey in the Morintat Forest". The olive tree symbolizes that which is holy, and honey represents purity. These are attributes of relational harmony. Prosperity will only visit the community if this harmony, practiced through loving actions, is present between community members. The text of the Sacrifice of Olive Leaves Prayer is as follows:

### Section One: Given by first elder.

Metoropilo metaa inaishi naishi metaa oloinea ole morintat.

May the community be blessed with a sweet fragrance of the olive tree and sweet as honey in the  
Morintat Forest.

Nai aatoomono Pasinai nchoo iyiook enkishon, nchoo iyiook inkishu, nchoo iyiook iltungana, nchoo  
iyiook inkera.

O God, I pray you will give us life, cattle, people and children.

Pasinai aatoomono Enkai ai naishu wena sipa naishu Enkai ina atomono

Oh God, I pray to my earthly God [surroundings/concerns] and true God who cannot be seen.

6 *Impaayo Ngayami, personal interview, August 18, 1997.*

7 *Julius Ngayami, personal interview, January 14, 2000.*

Pasinai nchoo iyiook pooki toki. Nchoo iyiook isidain torishe iyiook intorrok.  
 Oh God, give us all things. Give us good things and keep away bad things.  
 Torishe iyiook enyamali torishe iyiook ilowuarak le kewarie ole dama.  
 Prevent any problem from us and protect us from wild animals both day and night.  
 Inchooki nkerá nikicho inkishu nikicho ntononok nikicho pooki toki.  
 Grant me children, cattle, wives and all good things.  
 Tadamu olosho lang intaba anaa oldoinyo Keri intaba iyiook anaa oldonyio Oibor  
 Remember our nation and make it [big and strong] like Mt. Kenya and Mt. Kilimanjaro.  
 Aatomono Pasinai atoomono mbunga iyiook openy.  
 Oh God, I pray you will hold us in your hand.  
 Tipika iyiook enkilata enanka narok tipika iyiook enipik ilakir dama.  
 Hide us where evil cannot find us in the heavens with the stars.  
 Kitoomono iyie nonkipa ai kitoomono iyie nchoo iyiook pooki toki.  
 God who sends rain, we pray you give us all good things.

## Section Two: Given by second elder.

*Nchoo iyiook nkishu nchoo iyiook imbarbali nemelang ilmotonyi eirag.*  
 Grant us herds of cattle [so great in number] that the birds cannot fly over without resting.  
 Nchoo iyiook imemut owurak nememut motonyi.  
 Give us so much food that wild animals and even birds cannot finish eating it.  
 Kitomono iyie pa Sinai nchoo iyiook inkera nicho ntononok nicho inkishu nicho pooki toki.  
 O God, we pray you give us children, wives, cattle and all good things.  
 Intonyorra iyiook olosho.  
 Let us live in peace with all peoples.<sup>8</sup>

Relational harmony is a facility for avoiding outward signs of conflict. This does not preclude open disagreement moving toward resolution but does exclude any physical violence or outward sign of rage. Harmony denotes being agreeable in difficult situations and connotes the smile, friendly lift of the eyebrow, hand shaking, head patting, a word of concern or interest in each other, etc. It is personality overtly manifested as a social duty. An elder who has an extended earlobe untorn is respected as someone who able to control his emotions and allow his good *olkuak* to guide his behavior. Earlobes are frequently targeted in a fight so as to damage the honor of those in dispute.

Disruption of harmonious relationships require the mediation of elders or the village *loibon* (diviner). The use of mediators is utilized to avoid possible conflict or remedy an existing problem. Prayers for forgiveness and restoration do not admonish either party directly. Statements tend to rebuke and state fact and reconciliation all at once. Supplication integrates community Other into the actions and consequences of self(ves),

<sup>8</sup> *Ikayo Lolokula, personal interview, August, 16, 1997.*

hence the affect of individual action always includes community Other. Of foremost importance is restoring social harmony and preserving group affiliation for offending members.

Elders or the village *loibon* offer a blessing for reconciliation after a dispute has been resolved.<sup>9</sup> The emphasis being on outward signs of love and acceptance of others by “fighting for your age-mates” and living in harmony and unity through this love. The attitude is that once said, it is then law and relationships have returned to a peaceful, natural state.

It is the conscience which presses upon the individual to seek resolution and restore proper community relations. The person yields to social pressure because his conscience has been leaned upon in such a way as to cause shame and guilt. This comes from the knowledge elders remind offending parties that one’s actions affect not just one but the entire community in-group as well. Love is found in the actions of community relationships that are without conflict. Community members must live in unity and harmony, if they do not calamities such as famine, sickness, and drought will come from Creator *Enkai* to cause repentance. Prosperity will only visit the community if this love of close friendship is practiced between community members. This means sharing good fortune with community Other to insure against the withdrawal of favor by the divine power dispensing it.

The fabric of village relationships is sewn together by two compelling social courtesies, hospitality and reciprocity. In actuality, hospitality is a form of reciprocity. Generous hospitality is generally reciprocated and smiled upon by community Other. The mechanics of hospitality and reciprocity are represented in the way Ndorobo refer to the legs, “Two legs represent unity because they work together and share all things together”.<sup>10</sup> Hospitality encourages solidarity of relationships between individuals and community Other and reciprocity ensures the means necessary for defending interests through cooperative efforts.

The more relationships one enters into, the more benefits become available. Reciprocity in Ndorobo relationships is defined in terms of friendliness, hospitality, or an extraordinary service, each of which may or may not be solicited yet demand some type of return. The return given need not be equal in value or time; and giving is rarely, if ever, anonymous. Part of the significance of giving is in the action as a witnessed event. The question being, “How can others reciprocate without knowing to whom they are indebted?”

Hospitality carries ideas of personalization. Pascasio (1981:p.81) contends that personalization (recognizing the person as such in relationship) conforms to cultural norms and concept of self, and this is certainly true for Ndorobo. How a person overtly

<sup>9</sup> *A loibon is a person with spiritual sensitivities and knowledge of African Traditional Religion practices to engage the supernatural entities.*

<sup>10</sup> *Julius Ngayami, personal interview, June 15, 1998.*

treats another community member is significant. Social hospitality is a strategic action in relationship between an individual and community Other. Ndorobo pursue these social relations under conditions that maximize incurring social obligation.

One illustration is the custom of offering *chai*, a concoction of tea, milk and sugar, to passing neighbors. Food is essential for the maintenance of life; therefore, if one provides this essential commodity, they will have established a positive relationship with the receiver. In this regard, it is an essential step toward friendship and closeness. The proverb, "Friendship comes from the stomach," is indicative of this belief. The word 'friendship' is *osotuaa* and is translated 'love,' 'the one of close relationship,' 'peace,' and 'umbilical cord.' It also has the meaning of 'a gift out of friendship.' Hospitality is a validation of the worth of the guest and reconfirms the commitment of the host to the relationship.

The role of any community member forbids refusal of a request by another community member in order to maintain smooth interpersonal relations. To do so would be to sever relations with the requesting neighbor and this is intolerable in community affairs. It is viewed as a breach of community harmony and thus weakens community solidarity i.e. threatens survival. Failure to reciprocate places a certain amount of shame on the individual but more importantly, the person is perceived as selfish and condemns himself in the eyes of Creator *Enkai* and community Other. Ndorobo use shame more in the sense of moral propriety than social which gives conformity to community norms greater emphasis. Failure to live up to social standards is a breach with that which *Enkai* has ordained.

Consequences for unsociable and inhospitable behavior are manifested in varying ways. For instance, a head first birth is normal, a feet first delivery is abnormal. There must be a broken taboo or cultural sin in the family to cause a feet first delivery. Examples include failure to care for elders, ignoring the needy, hoarding resources, etc. The baby is then expected to have abnormalities after such a feet first birth (fainting, early death, bad spirit). People treat the baby differently as if it was cursed. However, a celebration called *Emasho e inoto e nkerai* is always given after the birth of any child. If a feet first child turns out to be a good person, it is thought the birth celebration washed whatever impurity away through the blessings and prayers spoken.

The interdependent relationship reflected in Ndorobo conduct, norms, scripts for social interaction, events, and linguistic conventions among others have been shown to ensure a self-in-community relationship forms between every Ndorobo and community Other. Community Other serves as the supreme object of importance to Ndorobo and in doing so functions in Burnett's (1979:p.308) understanding as religion. Each person relates to community Other by submitting to Ndorobo way of life which pervades all of life and greatly influences behavior. Behavior is dependent on whether the interaction is with a Ndorobo (community member) or earthly Other. Who the Other is must be identified for the terms of the relationship to be implemented.



A Ndorobo individual has a dynamic relationship with community Other and supernatural Other. The relationship of a person to Ndorobo society directly affects the relationship between a person and supernatural Other. A Ndorobo actively participates in the general condition of his community. If the relationship has been strained for some reason, one can expect the relationship with supernatural Other will become disturbed as a result. The moral rules of life are bound up in keeping harmony in the relationship a community member shares with community Other.

#### Self and Earthly Other

The common thread of Ndorobo-ness which lumps an individual with community Other also differentiates Ndorobo from earthly Other. Anyone not a member of a Ndorobo community is automatically deemed a competitor, foe, or an exploitable resource. Earthly Other are viewed as living the life experience on a parallel course toward the finality of death but just that - parallel. A proverb teaches, "Enemies cannot get to know each other." People who do not live together with a shared identity, that is share daily struggles for survival and share the resources to meet those challenges, cannot possibly know each other in the sense of seeing and understanding the person. Ndorobo and earthly Other are headed in the same direction and probably with the same desires for happiness, but the two cannot and will not meet. Quite simply, they are unknown to one another.

Relationship with earthly Other is marked by a seemingly endless series of plots and counterplots to contend against or prevent the schemes of community outsiders. Self and earthly Other shuffle in and out of gaining the upper hand in the exchange of resources. The steps are measured to see who can exploit who first and for how much.

It is natural to desire more in life and generally speaking, Ndorobo believe no one is ever truly satisfied with their station in life. A proverb states, "The hide of your calf is not enough for you," meaning a person is never satisfied with his own possessions. This being the case, "Do not ever tempt warriors with cattle." Never leave cattle unguarded if warriors (young men) from another group are near because the cattle will surely be stolen.

Traditionally, raiding cattle and stealing were considered a legitimate means of economic survival. However, taking from another community member is taboo and self defeating to community vitality, ergo the custom of stealing from earthly Other became the norm. Pillaging from outsiders to improve one's own situation is thought to be clever even today. Earthly Other are to be exploited while community Other are to be supported.

It is not surprising that Ndorobo have a defensive relationship with earthly Other. The world outside the community is hostile and seeks to encroach upon an individual and their community at any given time. The relationship with earthly Other is one of mistrust. This attitude of dubiety comes from the basic cultural character contained in a person's character (*empukunoto*). It is believed the Ndorobo character element is naturally

suspicious of out-group members by divine design and environmental training. A proverb warns, “No one is so clever that he cannot be cheated.” Anyone can be swindled, however chicanery goes both ways. One can cheat others no matter how powerful or clever they may be, and one can fall victim to thievery by a multiplicity of others.

The immense loyalty Ndorobo feel toward community Other is replaced with a firm division marking the lines of contention between themselves and earthly Other. It is a relationship of self-in-opposition to outsiders. It is not so much that Ndorobo wish earthly Other would disappear for the resources exploited from earthly Other are necessary. Rather, Self seeks to maximize this opposing relationship to the sole benefit of each person and the community as a whole.

## Self and Supernatural Other

Supernatural Other is recognized by Ndorobo as vested with controlling authority over the life of an individual. *Enkai* as Creator God and spirit entities allowed to work evil or good are looked upon as the hierarch in relations with a person. An individual entertains a vertical relationship with supernatural Other based on the need of humanity for supernatural services. People cry out in prayer to *Enkai* for him to send spirits to intervene in the cause of a person, but *Enkai* and spirit entities neither pray nor need humanity (see Figure 1).<sup>11</sup>

As *Olaitoriani* or Leader over all, *Enkai* is the Supreme Master an individual looks to for decisions of survival, blessing, and consequence. He rules the heavens and the earth and “everything happens by the will of *Enkai*”.<sup>12</sup> In a ritual prayer offered at a community sacrifice in times of drought and famine, elders beseech *Enkai* to provide the very essence of survival:

Nai injoo iyiook enkare pus.  
 O God give us pure (blue) water.  
 Nai nailepu reyieta.  
 O God make (milk) the rivers flow.  
 Nai midung inkulak.  
 O God do not stop the rain (urine).  
 Nai mimut iyiook intayio.  
 O God do not finish (kill) us and all your creation (you fashioned).  
 Ni torrinyo enkarrii.  
 O God keep drought away.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *Ikayo Lolokula, personal interview, June 24, 1998.*

<sup>12</sup> *Nkarusel Ngiria, personal interview, June 25, 1998.*

<sup>13</sup> *Maleta Matulel, personal interview, September 8, 1997.*

Creator *Enkai* *fashioned* or created all things so it is within his divine right to *finish* or kill all creation. Creator *Enkai* has ultimate power over all and designs the life experience of all. This ceremony is a very solemn occasion for the will of the divine to bend toward favorable treatment of his creation.

Spirits likewise have a certain amount of ruling power in that these entities occupy a controlling position in the life of every person in prompting behavior and dispensing divine judgment and will. Spirits have appointed authority in creation with either the best interests of people in mind or an opposing motive. Good spirits (*inkiyanget supati*) are thought to represent the Spirit of *Enkai* in the role of patron for protecting a person.

Evil spirits (*inkiyanget torrok*) represent all that is void of divine character and meaning. The role of destroyer replaces the defender role of *Enkai*. The Creator and good spirits are contenders for goodness in the life of a person, and evil spirits are contenders for any and all evil doings. The one seeks to benefit life experience, the other works to destroy life experience; one is to be heard and followed, the other is to be ignored. *Enkai* and *inkiyanget supati* seek to overcome evil in and around a person; *inkiyanget torrok* work to overcome a person with evil. Thus the relationship between a person and supernatural Other may be depicted as self-in-subjection to a hierarchy.

### **Figure 1: Three types of Relationship with Other distinguished by the Ndorobo.**

The relationship between an individual and supernatural Other is founded on the principle of if I-do-do-do the right things, then *Enkai*-must-give-give-give from his unlimited goodness to honor my conduct. As ultimate benefactor, *Enkai* must give to each person their due and always use his creator power to intervene with help. He is called *Olaietoni* or Helper understood as *Olanapani*, the Bearer or Carrier, meaning someone who carries another. It is his divine nature as Father of mercy, *Papa lolngurr*, which evokes divine pity toward people.

Creator God as the giver of *enkishui* is the keeper of life. As such, Ndorobo feel rather adamantly the use of *Enkai's* services are mandatory on his part. He is the guarantor of life and has the responsibility to mete out judgment fairly by honoring good with happiness and evil with calamity. The Creator is the keeper and protector of life force by using whatever he deems necessary to protect a person from an evil end. A proverb explains, "Treatment brings pain but results in recovery," meaning discipline hurts but eventually leads to happiness. Creator *Enkai* rewards a good life with visible blessings and will discipline a bad life through bad consequences to alter behavior.

It is a divine duty of *Enkai* as caretaker of humanity to aid the needy and help those in distress. As benefactor of humanity, the divine has a charitable relationship with a person in which all possible advantage is to be pursued. The commissioning of a new

family leader is just such a case in which Ndorobo appeal to *Enkai* for all possible divine blessing. The Ceremony of Eldership, *Enpikata o Ilkataari*, is conducted at the death of the oldest male, usually the father. The prayers offered correspond to the following text:

### 1<sup>st</sup> Prayer

Metoropilo, mikinchoo Enkai inkera nabaanaa iyiook o nkishu mikitashyie Enkai endukuya.

Be blessed, may *Enkai* [give/bleess] you children like us [elders] and cattle. May *Enkai* give you a long life.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Prayer

Mikitareto kuna amulak, tuudungie ilmasin omelok anaa enaisho enkidong.

Let this blessing [of spit] help you perform your ceremonies successfully.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Prayer

Metoropilo, mikinchoo Enkai inkera o kishu olporror.

Be blessed, may *Enkai* [give/bleess] you children, cattle and age-mates.

### 4<sup>th</sup> Prayer

*Tumanyana, torropilo, mikichoo Enkai enkishon tobikoi naabik ildonyio noto omom.*

Many blessings, may God let your life be long like the mountains.<sup>14</sup>

The oldest son is then commissioned to assume the role as family elder and usher him into greater manhood and responsibility. The ritual text of the prayers is spoken to obligate *Enkai* in the matters of the family. The new family elder is dependent on *Enkai* to continue the family line, provide daily sustenance, and give a long life to guide the family as leader. These are conditions only *Enkai* can supply. The prayers seek to show the dependence and humility of the new leader on *Enkai* and impress upon the new elder the gravity of his responsibilities.

Ndorobo have relationship with the supernatural because it is profitable to do so. *Enkai* dispenses all good and has the power to stay the hand of evil. His relationship with people is characterized by munificent qualities. The advantage of having an interested Supreme Creator on one's side is self explanatory. The blessing of *Enkai* is needed to extend life for the individual and community with continued blessing and he does so with openhandedness. For prosperity to thrive, the relationship between humanity and their Creator must remain humble subservience as client to the great Patron.

<sup>14</sup> Kamunge Oloosir, personal interview, August 12, 1997.

## Conclusion

The Other in Ndorobo world view is divided into three categories that aid an individual in survival, life meaning, and success. The three classifications provide a relational understanding for Ndorobo toward their community, those outside their community, and those in the noncorporeal dimension. Self is taught to look on both sides of the horizontal plane to other community members for support and guidance. Intergroup bias studies has shown this is the norm when people are divided in two categories (Messick and Mackie 1989:59). Like so many others, Ndorobo look with favor and preference on their community while sharply distancing themselves from other out-groups.

Self looks across to the parallel plane to see who to defend against and exploit in earthly Other. Ndorobo reject the notion that their communities would benefit from overcoming “a divided past in such a way that ‘The Other’ becomes ‘us’” (Young 2012:p.127). It is just not possible for Earthly Other to become an expanded version of Ndorobo community. Earthly Other is categorically different so to merge earthly Other with community Other would destroy Ndorobo-ness.

And finally, Ndorobo look up to the vertical plane to acknowledge dependency and need for protection from supernatural Other. The category of supernatural Other makes the strength and benefit of being a member of community Other possible. It is the highest resource for individual and community blessing and the defense against all that threaten. The consequences for relationship with supernatural Other curtail social behavior and uphold Ndorobo-ness.

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