

ATrA

Aree di transizione linguistiche e culturali in Africa

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Materiality and Identity

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Ilaria Micheli (ed.)

with the contributions of Ilaria Micheli,
Franco Crevatin, Ilaria Incordino,
Gianni Dore and Moreno Vergari,
Dario Nappo, Gianfrancesco Lusini

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Materiality and Hunt among the Ogiek of Mariashoni (Kenya)

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Abstract

This paper, whose first aim is the ethnolinguistic documentation of the hunting tradition of the Ogiek of Mariashoni, also represents an opportunity for a thorough reflection about the concept of *materiality* and its multifaceted implications.

In the first part of the article I present a detailed description of the currently used cultural lexicon, hunting methods (alone or in group), weapons (bow, arrows, knives spears and traps) and materials used by the hunters of the region. I also describe apprenticeship, the mechanisms regulating the transmission of knowledge and those regulating the education of dogs inside the community, before passing to the second part of the paper, where I discuss how the concept of *materiality* is central and multifaceted in the gathering and interpretations of the ethnolinguistic data collected in the field.

To understand this last point the theories of *signification-emanation-circulation* by Silverstein (cf Silverstein 2013) and of *metaform* by Danesi (cf Danesi 2013) will be particularly useful.

Keywords

Hunting, Ogiek, Hunters and Gatherers, Kenya

1 – INTRODUCTION

In the last few years human sciences researchers such as archaeologists and anthropologists have become more and more interested in a particularly intricate issue: “*materiality*”. *Materiality* is not an easy concept in itself. The word contains the root “*material-*”, which lets us think first of all of objects, or anyway of something which can be seen, touched or smelt, something that has an external, visible surface, moulded or decorated by man. In this sense, it is true that “*materiality*” must undoubtedly have something to do with “*material culture*”, i.e. with artifacts, tools, their production and their story.

However, the number of scholars who think that these aspects cannot offer a complete picture of what can be defined as “*material*” is increasing.

Manufactured objects and their production are ultimately just a part of the story.

In our view, “*materiality*” has to do with many other issues, such as ways of doing things, linguistic possibilities, in-cultured de-codification of the environment, situations and possibilities of action, gender, education, behavior, common sense, the intricate concepts of “*right*” and “*wrong*”.

Being part of a specific culture (not only *material* culture), the world we live in is in our mind specifically (or possibly) codified according to our own habits. What we see as *material* responds to the same rule of en-cultured decoding. Therefore, the ancient myth of a *materiality* universally perceived and “*sensed*” in the same way by everyone in every time in history, has no reason to survive. In our perspective, “*materiality*” becomes instead the essence of specific socially given/constructed *microcosms*, and therefore its traces are to be de-codified according to its specific context.

Considering things in this way allows us to establish a dialogue between concrete, scientific data emerging from, say, archaeological excavations and the cultural, economic and social framework to which objects belong (or belonged) for the people who use (or used) them.

This position finds today many supporters also among archaeologists, as, for example, Hurcombe (2007: 535-536), who states:

“Science provides measurable objective knowledge (e.g. trace elements or hardness) but such data can be seen as presenting raw material characteristics devoid of social meaning, whereas to use a personal sensory perception of the performance of materials relies on subjective experience which are difficult to present for independent assessment. Although an interest in “*materiality*” offers an opportunity for a rapprochement between these two points (Jones 2004) there is at present no comfortable place for an analysis of artifacts which stresses the analyst’s sensory perceptions, despite a clear recognition that materials and material culture are sensual extensions to the body and part of a melding of mind, body and objects which cannot be disaggregated into Cartesian dualities of object/thing and subjective/objective”

(Knappet 2005a)

Another central point in our understanding of the concept of “materiality” derives from the idea that everything “material” is “material” in its own way and that there is no “materiality” in an abstract sense. If this is true, as we think it is, we must admit that things which are “bearers” of “materiality”, are also “bearers” of the meaning these things have in their own system of reference. All this means that we cannot separate material things from their meaning. Specific objects or tools used in daily activities, or artifacts in general, but also gestures, behaviors, the flavors and smell of a specific type of regional cooking, the music and sounds surrounding a specific type of religious temple, the specific colors used in decorating a house, even the tone and words used in a familiar or in an official conversation, the turns of speech, the themes allowed in a conversation and the like are all elements bearing a specific social meaning, which enrich the “material” part of the message. In this sense, we believe that Henare, Holbraad and Wastell were right, when they stated that: “Rather than accepting that meanings are fundamentally separate from their material manifestations (signifier v. signified, word v. referent etc.) the aim is to explore the consequences of an apparently counter-intuitive possibility: that *things might be treated as sui generis meanings*. (...) So the starting-point instead is to treat meaning and thing as an identity.” (Henare, Holbraad, Wastell, 2007: 3).

Manufacturing techniques are another pivotal element to be considered, since a culture-specific way of transmitting knowledge is entailed in them, which is one of the basic points on which a microcosm is built. The establishing of the French techno-cultural school is an example of how much more productive this way of looking at things can be. More recently, other scholars have expressed their faith in the productiveness of a similar approach, too. For example Gosselain, who in 2000 stated: “I consider techniques and tools rather than objects; that is, I consider a category of cultural traits for which transmission through time and space requires specific modes of interaction between individuals” (Gosselain 2000: 194).

Trying to sum up our personal view, we believe that interaction between material, handmade objects, the social position of manufacturers and their ways of doing things and transmitting their knowledge, the ways in which new apprentices are admitted to education in a specific field, the possibilities for people of different genders to take part in the production process and the manipulation of objects, the rituals or ceremonies in which objects are involved, the words, borrowed or original, used to describe the objects and their constitutive parts, the stories, riddles and proverbs in which the objects are mentioned, the attitude of people towards what is meant and what is done with and for specific things are all elements revealing a particular, cultural way of staying in this world and therefore they are all meaningful (in the sense that they are bearers of meaning) in the same way.

In this work we take all this as a premise. Concerning the language, this paper will discuss the Ogiek domain-specific lexicon of hunt. Elements such

as specific materials involved in the production cycles (iron and poison in particular), the transmission of knowledge and other cultural issues (e.g. the presence of words for hunters' age sets) will be the topic of the following paragraphs.

2 – FIELD RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

Field research for this paper was done in the months of January-February 2013 and January-February 2014 in the Ogiek village of Mariashoni (South-Eastern Escarpment of the Mau Forest, Kenya) and in some surrounding locations (especially Kaprop, Ndoswa and Kiptunga).

Mariashoni is a recently built village, and business center of the region, where a dispensary with a maternity, a health center and some other shops are to be found.

Anyway the village is rather poorly inhabited.

Being traditionally used to live in quite isolated locations in the woods, Ogiek settlements are usually made up of up to three-families, where the father and mother lived together with their son, or two sons with their wives and children for a maximum of about 30 people. Ogiek people prefer to live quite far from the centre of the village, in locations at least three or four kilometers far from one another.

The Ogiek, who speak a Kalenjin (Nilo-Saharan) language very close to Nandi, are traditionally hunters and gatherers. Until 30 years ago they were semi-nomads and moved from the highlands to the lowlands of the Mau Forest following the seasonal migrations of their bees. Honey in fact, still today, represents for them the principal source of energetic food. The bond between the Ogiek and their bees is so strong that traditional beehives were, until some years ago, the only good sons would inherit from their fathers.

Concerning hunting, as we will see later on, the Ogiek still hunt. Hunting is their second essential source of sustenance, after bees and honey. Until recently they were used to hunting big game, such as elephants or buffalos, in group, acting as a team and sharing the meat with the whole community. Due to the savage deforestation of the region during the last generation and to other effects of climate change, today the Ogiek hunt only small game, above all deers, small antelopes, gazelles and the like, while they have started practicing horticulture and rearing sheep and cows to make a living. Children are anyway still taught how to hunt from an early age.

Data have been collected through participant observation, ethnolinguistic questionnaires and the recording of semi-structured interviews with Ogiek hunters. Interviews were conducted in Ogiek with the help of an interpreter of the region, even though I could easily understand the language, since my primary concern in the field was writing a descriptive grammar as well as a

cultural vocabulary of the language. My principal informants were Busiene, Simon Maina, Peter Tureya, Wilson Kiprono, Peter Tiondo Tiemonos, Kiplimo Sabila, and Wilson Kiprono Kipbet. They were all old, but in some cases still very active hunters, whom I'd like to thank here sincerely.

3 – A PRELIMINARY LINGUISTIC OVERVIEW

Aim of this work is to give a thorough description of the Ogiek's hunting practice, of its social and economic meaning and of its context and evolution. Having a mainly linguistic formation, I will try to get to the point starting from the analysis of the cultural lexicon used in this domain.

I will thus focus on words, trying to understand the intrinsic meanings' values people attach to them.

The presence of a detailed lexicon to describe each single small component of the point of an arrow, for example, reflects the special attention and dedication the Ogiek put in the manufacturing and moulding of their most important weapons, while the absence of a specific word to indicate the black and white decoration of the blades, points out the presence of a probably forgotten past tradition, which must have had its own meaning, but has disappeared from the conscious level of knowledge, leaving some traces at an unconscious level.

In this section, after a brief introduction about Ogiek hunting techniques and practices, I will thus consider all the Ogiek words used to describe, define and identify all tools and objects they commonly use while hunting or preparing for the hunt, focussing on two different aspects: 1. Weapons and 2. Traps.

3.1 – ETHNOLINGUISTIC DESCRIPTION OF MATERIALS, TECHNIQUES AND SOCIAL INVOLVEMENT

The Ogiek of Mariashoni, as many other hunters and gatherers, have recently assisted to a painful reduction of their habitat, due to deforestation and climate change. With the reduction of their habitat they had to subsequently reduce their hunting activities, because of the always growing lack of preys. During my interviews with the hunters of the eldest generation, I came to know that until some 50 years ago, the Mau forest around Mariashoni was still a territory in which elephants and buffalos, as well as lions and other big felines, were very common. It is really a pity to acknowledge that all these species have simply disappeared.

With the disappearance of these species, whose hunt was a business that brought many people together, the Ogiek also witnessed the end of traditional social ties between families living in the same neighborhood. Hunting

big game alone is in fact impossible. Bringing together the right number of hunters, united under the same leader and having the same aim, was a question of political and economic exchange, whose management was a skill one learned from a very early age only following the older hunters of the family. Today, with the impossibility to find big game and no need to act in group, this social practice has been relegated to a minor position and generating a growing sense of isolation and loss of identity, given the fact that many Ogiek have now turned into farmers to earn a living and feed their families.

The disintegration of social ties in communities of hunters and gatherers is unfortunately a common trait. If what Foley wrote already in 1991 is true, and I am sure it is: “When food comes in large packages, then both cooperation between individuals and provisioning are much more likely to occur, either through kin selection, mutualism, or generalized reciprocal altruism (...). Recent interpretations of Late Pleistocene HG indicate that they displayed greater social complexity than many recent HG”¹.

Thus, what we can witness now when attending a Ogiek hunt is rather what is left of it, or better, what it has become, due to the huge changes in habitat, environment and social context occurred during the last 50 years or so. I do not want to say that the current hunting practice among the Ogiek of Mariashoni has something less than “before”, but I am sure that what we can see now is something slightly different from what we would have found in 1950.

However, hunting continues to represent one of the strongest identity factors for the Ogiek, together with beekeeping, and, therefore, we cannot speak of a process of progressive abandonment of an activity considered as surpassed, but rather of a process of adaptation of an important tradition as a result of the completely changed ecological condition.

However, if it is true that hunting in team is something which is now relegated to a few memories of the eldest hunters and is destined to die out, it is also true that the Ogiek children continue to start hunting at the age of 4 or 5, and that their education still proceeds as it proceeded when big game still crossed the Ogiek lands.

Hunting alone has thus become the rule in the region. The most used weapons are bows and arrows, followed by a certain number of traps which the hunters place in the woods and which are checked daily with the precious help of dogs. Dogs, according to the Ogiek oral tradition, were created by God together with the world, the bees and the Ogiek themselves.

¹ Foley, R. (1991), “Hominids, humans and hunter.gatherers: an evolutionary perspective”, chap. 13 in Ingold, T.; Riches D.; Woodburn J. (eds.1991) *Hunters and gatherers vol 1. History, evolution and social change*. New York, Oxford: Berg, p. 219.

As in most hunters and gatherers groups, hunting among the Ogiek is considered an activity suitable only for men. Children begin their training as hunters (*túrindét* – pl. *túrik*²) around the age of 4, while their sisters start following their mothers in other activities, like herbs and berries gathering and house building. The only way an Ogiek female could participate in hunting was helping to carry the meat home after a particularly lucky hunt.

In the Ogiek tradition there is nothing similar to the Hunters' associations, so common instead in West Africa (cf. Micheli 2011 and the Kulango *Sawalege*, the Senoufo *Poro* and the like), and there is no initiation ceremony to be admitted to the group of experienced hunters. Being a hunter is not a choice for an Ogiek man, but rather a *natural* condition one cannot escape from.

Before entering the *tòrjót*, i.e. the place where preys were likely to be found, the hunter had to respect at least 4 days of abstinence from sexual intercourse, in order to gain protection and strength from the spirits living in the forest. Contrary to other hunters, according to my informants, the Ogiek hunters did not use to wear any special protective amulet.

We have already said that, in ancient times, the Ogiek organized themselves in a team of hunters (*pik ak tòrjót*), whose number could vary from 8 to 20 men, in order to hunt very big preys, such as buffalos or elephants.

The old Busiene told me that in those times they probably used to communicate with a special set of gestures and vocal signals to organize the movements of the hunters in the forest, but unfortunately today nobody remembers such codes.

When they went hunting like this, the team was lead by a hunting leader, the *kòndvindet* (pl. *kòndvik*) *ak tòrjót*, who was responsible for the hunting techniques to be used and for the assignment of his fellow hunters to the various zones of the forest. The trails the Ogiek hunters used to look for and which they could recognize with surprising precision were footprints and dung. The lexicon of these trails is quite rich: *kééldò ak jinet* “fresh footmark”; *kééldò ak ra* “footmark of today”; *kééldò ak jmv* “footmark of yesterday”; *kééldò ak negip jin* “old footmark (which has more than two days)”; *survyot* (pl. *survek*) “dung” (*ak ra / ak jmv / ak negip jin*). It is interesting to notice that, for the trails left by the most precious preys, the Ogiek probably had a set of specific lexemes, as the presence, still today, of a special word to indicate the dung of buffalos testifies (*sojót* – pl. *sojénik*): *tereryet* (pl. *tererik*) *ak ra / ak jmv / ak negip jin*.

Unfortunately today these big preys have disappeared from the region and the only animals the Ogiek can find in the Mau forest around Mariashoni

² For the graphic rendering of the Ogiek words I follow the rules I have proposed in Micheli in print, which were agreed upon with my interlocutors, a group of Ogiek teachers and primary school directors of the region of Mariashoni in 2014, adding, where possible, the appropriate tones.

are: antelopes (*póinèt* – pl. *póinik*); black duickers (*mindet ne tug*), red duickers (*mindet ne biriir*), wild pigs (*tóórét* pl. *tóórvok*) and a kind of large antelope they call *puyeyotik*.

Anyway, in the past, when they had a lucky hunt and they could secure many preys, the Ogiek hunters did not perform any particular ceremony, nor did they sing any ritual songs. They just called everybody to feast with them whistling and singing common joyful songs.

The *kòndvindet* (hunting leader) was usually the one who could kill the biggest prey. He was therefore the one who, after the slaughtering (*kéézè̀m*) of the prey, received one thigh (*tfáátit* – pl. *tfóótik*), the heart (*múguleldò* – pl. *múgulelvék*), the head (*méétit* – pl. *méétòkwek*) and the tongue (*ηέlieptà*) of the animal, which he could bring home and keep exclusively for himself and his family. The liver (*kóóžèt* – pl. *kóóžòik*) of the animal was divided into two pieces, one for the hunter, the other for his wife, while the rest (its leg *kúistò* – pl. *kúisiék*; its neck *káátit* – pl. *kóótvèk*; its back *súgwèt* – pl. *súgwék*; its lungs *puónùt*, - pl. *puónik*; its kidneys *sóròmiét* – pl. *sóròòmók*; its stomach or belly *móóžèt* – pl. *móóženik*; its feet *kòrvòktá* – *kòrookwèk*; its nails *sijèt* – pl. *sijò* and its ears *ítit* – pl. *ítik*) was shared (*kééptfè̀m*) by the other hunters who were with the *kóóηindét* during the hunt. The animal was tore into pieces according to the joints of its bones.

The meat was cut off the animal in the woods and chopped into pieces, then it was brought to the Ogiek settlement tied with vegetal ropes (*túnòòjèt* – pl. *túnòòjik*) and wrapped up in the leaves of the dobea tree (*slibuét*) or of other similar trees for which I unfortunately could not find the corresponding scientific names, and which in Ogiek are called *sóósnét*, *tfémurmuriét* and *sérérét*.

Once arrived at the settlement, the Ogiek women used to spread honey (*kóómèk*) all over the meat and then dry and smoke it, close to the fire. The sticks they used to smoke the meat were called *sáártit* (pl. *sáártisiék*) and were about one meter long, while the smoked pieces of meat took the name of *sírgònùt* (pl. *sírgònik*) – Picture 1.

When a brave hunter hunted a buffalo alone, the other hunters were summoned on the site. In the forest they cut the tail of the beast and the hunter who killed it marked his cheeks with two lines made with the buffalo's blood. Then, they put the buffalo's tail in the buffalo's nose and brought the meat to the settlement, where they shared it with the members of the same age-group (see paragraph 5.1 on this topic) and ate it together with their women and children.

On that occasion, if the brave hunter was not married, he had the privilege of choosing a wife for himself, or at least a girl to sleep with for some nights.

Elephant hunting was instead a practice carried out only in group. When a group of hunters managed to kill an elephant, it was impossible for them to carry all the meat to their original location and the only solution was to make

everybody migrate and settle near the carcass of the dead elephant until all the meat was finished. One single elephant could feed up to 30 people for at least 3 to 5 months.

3.1.1 – Weapons

Traditional Ogiek hunting was carried out quite exclusively with bow and arrows. Knives and spears were used only to slaughter and skin big preys, while the largest number of animals were killed with arrows. Arrows could be made simply of wood, having a sometimes poisonous metal point. The use of bow and arrows is practiced still today. During the meeting when we discussed weapons, some young Ogiek hunters were present. I dared to ask them if they still felt comfortable with bow and arrows or if they would rather use guns. Their reaction was meaningful. They actually stared at me and laughed, then one of them told me: “Bow, arrows and spears are the weapons we need to hunt... When you hunt you have to be silent!” and this was the end of the discussion.

The Ogiek arrows have many different forms. They can be long and thin, or have a rounded metal point (Picture 2), or even have a thin point with iron wings all around. Each form is thought for a specific prey and purpose, as we will see in a while. What is common to all metal points, however, is that they are always painted half black and half white. This decoration must, in my opinion, have had a specific meaning in the Ogiek tradition, a meaning which unfortunately today has been forgotten. Anyway, as Somjee wrote in 2000 referring to the Marakwet beads³, such decorations must be the visible counterpart of an ancient symbolism, which in some ways used to “speak” to the people involved in the social context in which it was used. According to Somjee 2000:101 in fact, “1. Both visual and oral traditions are active, living modes of communication in Africa. 2. Both are in the arts domain and have parallel social and esthetic material (...)”.

Even though this symbolism is today no longer transparent to the Ogiek, they still continue to produce arrows with the same decoration. Some of them say that they do it just because “it has always been done like this”, while some others are quite sure that the decoration can help the arrow strike the target. Returning to the concept of *materiality* discussed in the introduction to this paper, this specific case shows how, even in the absence of any verbal, visible or actual memory of its meaning, the decoration itself is somehow *speaking* to the Ogiek hunters. In this sense, that specific material representation is beyond any doubt equivalent to the meaning it bears.

³ Somjee 2000: 101 “intimate knowledge of the beads (among the Marakwet ndr) *kari simwua* and social context of the beads’ use is necessary in understanding the visual symbolism (...)”.

The descriptive lexicon of the Ogiek weapons is surprisingly rich. There are not many names for the different types of arrows, but many are the words describing in detail every single component and part of them, so that, in order to single out an arrow used for a certain purpose, the Ogiek describe how the arrows is made.

The arrow as a weapon has only two names:

kóisît – pl. *kóisîsiék*, which is very light, made of bamboo-wood and lacking a metal point. This arrow was (and still is) used in the training of small children, four to eight years old. In this way, children can learn how to handle bow and arrows without risking to hurt themselves too seriously, but having the possibility to kill birds or small rodents of the forest. The birds and rodents killed by the children are not shared with the community, and are eaten by the children themselves. Every time a child kills a prey, he shows his father the arrow stained with the animal's blood in order to receive his compliments and to show that he is growing up as a true Ogiek.

ñérùt – pl. *ñérùsiék* are the arrows used by adults. These arrows have a seven/eight cm long metal point, which can have different forms. The arrow must have the same length as its owner's arm, from the elbow to the top of the middle finger.

Great part of the metal used today for the moulding of the arrow point comes from the old, dismissed railway running from Nairobi to Molo.

According to my old informants, in ancient times there was an Ogiek clan specialized in metal work, the *kibirgeik*, who were made slave (*námanèt* – pl. *námaník*) by a Maasai tribe, the *kipfɔik* about 500 years ago and therefore for ages the Ogiek had to give the Maasai their honey to have some iron in exchange. Still today the Ogiek of Mariashoni are not able to extract iron from their own land. They probably never learnt how to do it and, therefore, they have always relied on outsiders for this very precious metal. We will examine this issue more closely in paragraph 4.1.

Despite their incapability to extract iron from their land, the Ogiek are however able to mould it, as well as other metals, when they have it at their disposal.

Forging (*kéétàn*) iron into arrow points is usually the grandfather's task, even though each Ogiek male starts learning forging methods at about the age of 15, sometimes even before circumcision.

The name of the metal point of the arrow is *kirabanet* pl. *kirabanik* (Picture 2).

The shaft of the arrow is called *ùruméét* (pl. *ùrumɔik*) and is usually made of the wood of *olea africana* (*másaitá*) or of other similar trees common in the Mau forest, of which I unfortunately do not know the scientific names, and which in Ogiek are called *iémdît*, *léletfuèt* and *téégàt*.

order to place the point of the nail in the fire without burning his hands. The aim is to make the iron so hot that it gets soft⁴. The hunter has then the possibility to shape (*kéébàrbar*) the metal in the desired arrow point.

Once the point has been fashioned, the hunter makes his arrow joining (*kéémì*) the point (*kirabanet*) to the shaft (*kétit*). The *kirabanet* is then fixed to the shaft using a string obtained from the tendon of a cow (*mááisiét*, pl. *mááisiét*), which has been previously chewed for about ten minutes.

After this, the hunter cuts the other end of the shaft with his *róótwèt* in order and makes a let fly notch (*sàitá* – pl. *sàjújék*). The end of the bow is wrapped in the *mááisiét* to prevent the let fly notch from getting too long.

At this point, three pieces of black eagle (*vòtʃegwéét* – pl. *vòtʃegwósiék*) feathers (*kóròriét* – pl. *kóròrik*) are fixed close to the *sàitá* in order to give the arrow good aerodynamics and balance.

In the past, the feathers were fixed with the *mááisiét*, but today the Ogiek use common nylon wire (*ínet*, pl. *ínòik*) instead. The small cut where to place the feathers is sometimes made with a very small knife (*wísa*, pl. *wísaisiek*), which is also used to stick the feather in the wood.

Ogiek arrows are usually poisoned, but we will discuss the poison issue in paragraph 4.2.

3.1.2 – Traps

Apart from the traditional hunting techniques with bow and arrows, the Ogiek catch many of their preys just placing traps in the Mau Forest. I asked my Ogiek informants if they choose specific spots where to place their traps in order to be sure to catch a certain prey, but they answered that they have no rule in this sense. They place their traps everywhere, as long as they find a tree where to fix them. Therefore, traps can be found near the streams and rivers, in the deep forest, or even outside the forest in the savannah. All these scenarios have the same name, that is *tímdò*, i.e. the “bush”.

The Ogiek have specific names for two different types of traps:

- 1) the *kipkáátit* (pl. *kipkáátisiek*), and
- 2) the *kipkélit* (pl. *kipkélisiek*).

The *kipkáátit*⁵ is a trap supposed to close on neck of the animal. The same word has also the meaning of “noose” (Picture 5).

The *kipkélit*⁶ is the type of trap supposed to close on the animal’s leg or foot (Picture 6).

Both these traps were traditionally made of *pisinda* (pl. *pisinik*), a vegetal fibre the Ogiek obtain from different types of liana and which they use to

⁴ The iron *rù ne ma:t ʃumoit sikò:ɲáɲarit ɲitoneʃ* “sleeps in the fire in order to become soft to press”.

⁵ Lit. Kip (?) + Ka:tit = Kip + head.

⁶ Lit. Kip + Kéldò = Kip + leg, foot.

make ropes. The stronger the rope must be, the larger is the number of *pisinda* fibre that are intertwined together.

Only two other words have come out from the observation of the placing of these traps:

1. the name *serút* (pl. *serúník*), which is a unique name used for the different types of knots made to fix the different sticks (simply *kétit*) and *pisinda* ropes, and
2. the verb *kéérñf*, which is the only really technical term indicating the act of shaping the noose, or better, in the Ogiek view, the act of placing a *kipkáátit* trap.

The lack of technical terminology, above all for what concerns actions and processes, is quite typical in traditional languages (see for example Crevatin 2010) and it mirrors the different attitude traditional people have towards formal education and knowledge transmission. Instead of relying on classification and description, many traditional peoples entrust their apprentices with the task of observing and imitating (see also Wallaert-Pêtre 2001) and therefore the necessity of developing a rich lexicon is in fact non-existent. We will see in a while what explaining to outsiders these practices and techniques (paragraph 6.2) implies for people used to this kind of education.

4 – SOME REFLECTIONS ON SPECIFIC MATERIALS

4.1 – IRON

As we have already said in paragraph 3.1.1, the Ogiek have never learnt to extract iron from their land nor to produce iron tools by themselves. However, according to the legend, in very ancient times there were clans specialized in metal works. These Ogiek clans were the *Kibirigeik* and the *Kaapkpitoik*, whom unfortunately were made slaves by the Maasai *Kipchoik* about 500 years ago⁷.

Due to the obvious lack of archaeological data, nowadays it would be very hard to verify how things really went in the region. Anyway, looking at the absence of manufacturing techniques among the Ogiek of Mariashoni, who do not seem to know how to make pottery nor how to weave (their traditional containers – *kisùjo*, pl. *kiswàt* – are made of vegetal fibre, while their traditional clothes – *ǎgurièt*, pl. *ǎguròik* – were made of goat or antelope skins and their bags – *motogéét*, pl. *motogoík* – were made of leather), whose traditional food is not cooked (only the meat is smoked as I have described in paragraph 3), I would rather think that the story of the two Ogiek clans of blacksmiths could be a legend.

⁷ Information emerged during one of my meetings with the Ogiek old hunters in Mariashoni in February 2014.

However, it is true that the Ogiek, like many other hunters and gatherers groups around the world, have probably started using iron as soon as this material has become available in the region⁸.

From historical data (see for example Huntingford 1927, 1929, 1931, and 1955) and from many pieces of evidence coming from Ogiek traditional tales or songs about the long-lasting relationship between the Ogiek and their neighboring peoples, the Maasai and the Nandi, it is clear that a basic good like iron could not but come from bartering.

Of course this exchange was not fair and the Ogiek, as it is the rule in exchanges between hunters/gatherers and pastoralist or agricultural people, represented the weaker party. It is no coincidence, in fact, that until some years ago the Ogiek were called *dorobo*, i.e. “servants”, both by their neighbors and by outsiders such as colonial officers or researchers.

However, also the weaker party enjoys some benefits from this unequal relationship, usually in terms of social protection or economic support in case of need, as it is stated also in the following passage by Bird-David (1991:24) “(...) individual ties between Naikes and non-Naikens are dominated by economic cooperation. This is personalized and of a contractual type (...), which means that the persons concerned are economically interdependent for the duration of the cooperation (...)”⁹. It is also obvious that as soon as the necessity of negotiating for a particular good disappears, the necessity of maintaining the relationship alive disappears with it.

For what concerns iron, as we have already seen, since some decades the Ogiek of Mariashoni have found a practical way to obtain it from a source which does not imply any bartering with neighboring peoples: the abandoned colonial railway running from Nakuru to Molo.

This recently acquired independence in obtaining iron supplies has surely contributed to the weakening not only of the economic, but also of the social ties they once had with the Maasai and the Nandi.

4.2 – POISON

The second most important aspect in the study of the Ogiek hunting practices is poison.

⁸ On this point cf Hall, M. (1991) “At the frontier: some arguments against hunting-gathering and farming modes of production in Southern Africa”, chap 9 in Ingold, T.; Riches D.; Woodburn J. (eds.1991) *Hunters and gatherers vol 1. History, evolution and social change*. New York, Oxford: Berg p. 140 “Although hunter-gatherers do not seem to have manufactured iron implements themselves it has been argued that, once the new technology was available, metal implements were used by HG, perhaps over considerable periods of time (...)”.

⁹ In “Hunter-gatherers and other people: a re-examination” chap. 2 in Ingold, T.; Riches D.; Woodburn J. (eds.1991) *Hunters and gatherers vol 1. History, evolution and social change*. New York, Oxford: Berg.

The lethal power of the Ogiek arrows is beyond any dispute, and it comes surely from the poison the elder hunters obtain from the bark of two trees growing in the Mau Forest.

The name of the Ogiek poison is *ngwònéét* (no plural), while the trees used for its preparation seem to have no specific name even in Ogiek. My informants, in fact, used the general term *kééliiwt* (lit. tree) to refer to the trees and unfortunately refused to let me see them and take photos. All that I know is that one of them produces edible fruits, while the fruits of the other one are toxic.

In an Ogiek community of about three or four settlements, there is usually only one elder in charge of the preparation of the *ngwònéét*. This “expert” is called *kipsóhɔniwt*. Since his job is very dangerous, he is usually the eldest man of the neighborhood. The poison is a concoction of the bark of one or of both the trees. The steam coming from the boiling pots alone is so toxic that it can make a man barren. For this reason, the *kipsóhɔniwt* is usually a widower or anyway too old to have children). In certain cases, the steam can also kill in a few seconds.

If the *kipsóhɔniwt* has a wife, he has to avoid sleeping with her at least for two weeks after the preparation of the poison.

Once the poison is ready, it must be applied to arrows and knives very carefully. The *kipsóhɔniwt* must avoid touching it with his hands, because even a very small quantity of it touching a small cut on a fingertip can cause immediate death. The weapons are considered “ready” when the poison applied on them is dry.

Two other details prove the danger posed by the *ngwònéét*:

- 1) When a poisoned arrow does not hit the targeted animal and falls to the ground, the hunter, while retrieving it, takes away a quite large portion of soil and burns it in order to avoid accidental poisoning of animals or human beings stepping on.
- 3) When a prey is killed with a poisoned arrow, the hunter takes away and burns a piece of meat at least 10 cm large, in order to avoid poisoning.

According to my informants a single poisoned arrow can kill a big prey, such as a buffalo or even an elephant.

5 – THE TRANSMISSION OF KNOWLEDGE

The transmission of knowledge differs among the Ogiek of Mariashoni according to gender. Children grow up together under the eyes of their mothers and sisters until the age of 4. Afterwards games and daily activities take two very different paths for young boys and girls, as it is the rule in almost every traditional society.

In the past, young girls used to stay at the settlement and started helping their mothers with their domestic duties: they learnt how to weave baskets and containers for honey and berries, how to choose and intertwine the vegetal fibre needed to strengthen their huts and went with their mothers and older sisters in the forest to collect roots, vegetables and berries. Nowadays, the Ogiek live in mud huts made by men and most of the times they practice a little farming. They have much reduced their gathering activities due to the disappearing of many of the edible species in the forest and therefore the girls' duties have significantly changed. Today the Ogiek girls' activities are very similar to those of the Nandi and Maasai ones. They have to help their mothers doing gardening, they graze cows, sheep or goats and take care of their younger brothers and sisters.

The Ogiek boys, on the other hand, are still educated like their fathers were.

At the age of four, they receive their first bow and their first wooden arrows and start going hunting small game (rabbits, birds and the like) in the forest, together with other children of the neighboring settlements. Running into a group of 4/5 children hunting alone in the Mau forest, in the surroundings of Mariashoni or Kaprop is not unusual. When they go in the forest, their mothers give them just some honey as energetic supply for the day. They usually eat the preys they are able to kill. When they catch a bird or a rabbit, they imitate their fathers and take away the feathers or the skin of the animal. They divide the meat in equal parts, reserving the biggest one for the brave child who killed the prey, then smoke the meat and eat it together in the forest. When they cannot get meat, they just eat their honey and the berries they can find.

Only when a boy demonstrates to have the skills required to kill bigger preys without damaging his arrows, he brings his father both the prey and the arrow stained with the prey's blood and receives his father's congratulations. When a boy is old enough to have "hair under his armpits", he is circumcised and admitted to the group of adult, active hunters.

For both boys and girls, the transmission of knowledge among the Ogiek proceeds by observation, imitation and practice. There are no verbal instructions and the children have to learn how to become adults just looking at their parents and at their ways of doing things.

There is no room for explanation or definition, no formal knowledge to be transmitted from master to apprentice with the use of language. The process of learning proceeds gradually making attempts and mistakes until the needed skills are acquired in a natural way.

Constant practice is the best way to improve one's abilities.

Verbal communication and verbal exchanges are odd in this context. Young people who ask too many questions are considered different, strange or even dangerous.

An appropriate use of language and a good understanding of the right moments, places and people to talk to, according to the communicative event, is pivotal in any simple society. Journeying from childhood to boyhood and from boyhood to adulthood means also learning when, with whom, and what to speak about, according to the circumstance.

On this point, see also Silverstein, who wrote about a group of Australian Aboriginal hunters who, in order to obtain better weapons, have first of all to learn how to improve their language and linguistic exchanges in society. With respect to this point he wrote:

“Everyone in a social formation does not communicate directly with everyone else about everything that is on his or her mind, notwithstanding fantasies about happy rational communications in otherwise structured mass “public spheres”. Even my adult Australian Aboriginal friends in a society of fifteen hundred revealed extraordinarily well-kept lines of demarcation about who could communicate with whom (...) if someone normatively unauthorized to have heard – and therefore to know – something actually knew it, that person would never think of ever communicating it in any public acknowledgeable way”

(Silverstein, 2013:237)

Now, if we agree upon the fact that the transmission of knowledge in “natural” societies has much more to do with this *material* dimension involving action, observation and imitation, than with the *immaterial* dimension of thought, abstraction and ideation, we must also agree that it should be taken into account in every discourse about *materiality*.

5.1 – A MAJOR PROBLEM IN OGIEK HUNTS: *ÍBENDA AK TÚRÌK*, THE HUNTERS’ AGE GROUPS

The table below represents a major concern for me and a real challenge for interpretation. It contains the names both in Kipsigis and in Ogiek of 8 age-groups which my informants regard as characteristic of their tradition.

The problem would not be that hard to solve, if only those age groups corresponded more or less to the different stages in human life, let’s say for example childhood, boyhood, adolescence, youth, maturity, marriage, old age and very old age, but in this case things seem to be much more complex.

At least 4 of the 8 age group correspond, in fact, to ages that no human being could ever reach. The age groups are the following: 16+; 60+; 90+, 100+; 150+; 200+; 250+; 300+.

Now, even though we might (with some difficulty) admit that finding living members for each age group up to the fourth class could be possible, from the fifth to the 8th it is out of the question.

To understand how the data should be really interpreted, I tried to ask my informants about their idea of life after death and if they believed, a person

could continue growing old even after death, journeying through different stages, as it happens in this world. Much to my surprise, I came to know that the Ogiek do not believe in any form of life after death and that they are sure in ancient times people could reach the age of 300.

I then tried to come up with some other possible interpretations of the 8 steps. I thought this partitioning of human life could be due to a different way of measuring time, maybe typical of the region. I also asked my informants if the different names (which are definitely not understandable in the language, nor are they partially understandable composed nouns) could maybe correspond to the different stages in the upbringing of a particularly brave hunter.

Assuming that prestige in the community increases with old age, this last interpretation could be in my opinion a good way to explain the age groups: from the new hunter of 16 (when “hair starts growing under his armpit”) to the experienced “forefather” with an age of 300. Even to this interpretation the answer of my informants was “no” and they stated again that those numbers corresponded in their mind exactly to the years a man could live in this world.

Anthropological investigation alone could not bring me very far. Therefore, I also tried to consider things from a linguistic perspective. The words my informants agreed on after a couple of hours of animated debate (Picture 7) are placed in the table below:

Age	Kipsigis	Ogiek
16 +	kempige	rambau
60 +	kaplelatj	sogwe*
90 +	korogoro	iŋenɕere
100 +	sɔgwɔɔt*	illegen
150 +	bɛɛɛ?***	***oldiyegi
200 +	mainek	***olmerotorot
250 +	ɲɔŋɛ	***olderito
300 +	koosigo	***ɔlbeles

As it is evident from the table, even a purely linguistic analysis is made impossible by the uncertainty of the forms in the system.

First of all, the name of group 2 (60+) in Ogiek (*sogwe*) seems to be the unmarked form of the name of group 4 (100+) in Kipsigis (*sɔgwɔɔt*): the addition of the morpheme *-(e)t* is in fact in Nandi, Ogiek and Kipsigis the signal of determination in nouns.

Secondly, the words my informants suggested for the groups 4 to 8 (*oldiyegi, olmerotorot, olderito, olbeles*) presenting the morpheme *ol-* in front of the root of the noun, which could be a Maa determinative article, made me think that these could, in fact, be Maa words and not Ogiek. Unfortunately I did not have the possibility to counter-check this idea with any Maasai of the region and in my Maa dictionary (Mol, 1978) I could not find any correspondence. The same words have no special meaning in Ogiek.

Last but not least, the name for age group 4 in Kipsigis (*bulu*) seems to me the neutral version of the name for age group 8 in Ogiek (? *olbeles*), of course without the ante-positioning of the Maa article.

The question remains open to further research and hopefully luckier researchers.

6 – SOME CONSIDERATIONS ON THE CONCEPT OF “MATERIALITY”

6.1 – SYMBOLIC MATERIALITY: HOW TO IMPROVE ONE’S ACTIVITIES AND HOW TO LEARN THROUGH IMITATION AND APPLICATION OF OLD METHODS. AN EXAMPLE: THE OGIEK OF MARIASHONI AND THEIR DOGS

According to the Ogiek of Mariashoni, the first Ogiot in this world had his bees and his dogs (*ηδτωκ*, pl. *ηδγικ* – Picture 8). Bees and dogs are the Ogieks’ best friends. The first give them honey, while the other help them hunting. When hunting, dogs depend on the Ogiek just like the Ogiek depend on their dogs.

The hunter is in fact the one who finds the trail of the prey, but only his dogs are able to follow its smell and lead the hunter to the target. When an Ogiot wounds a prey with one of his arrows, the dogs smell its blood and chase the prey until they find its hiding place.

Moreover, the Ogiek dogs are trained to follow their preys’ trails, keeping the hunter downwind to prevent the animal from smelling the scent of human beings in the forest.

To raise puppies into good hunting dogs, the Ogiek give them some of the prey’s blood mixed with its dung, so that they get used to the smell of the animals they will have to hunt once adult.

The training of Ogiek hunting dogs starts when they are still very young and it goes on in a quite *natural* way. Puppies are taken into the forest to hunt together with trained dogs and, in this way, they learn how to behave just imitating them. The Ogiot hunter supervises his puppies’ behavior in these circumstances. Only seldom is he obliged to personally intervene to correct and punish a particularly undisciplined young dog.

The most important lesson a puppy has to learn is to keep silent in the forest, in order not to scare the preys away. Barking or making noise while in the forest are the only two reasons why a puppy could be beaten by his master. As

puppies grow up, living in a symbiotic relationship with their owners, sleeping in their huts and eating their food, they learn which animals to chase just on the basis of the weapons their owners bring into the forest. If they see the hunter carrying bow and arrows, they know that they are looking for any kind of prey, while if their owner carries a spear, they know that they are now looking for very big animals, like buffalos or (at least in the past) even elephants.

Dogs are very useful also when the Ogiek hunters hunt with traps. Dogs are, in fact, trained to remember where their owner sets his traps and they know that every day in the morning, when the hunter opens the door of his hut, they have to go in the forest on their own and check if some of the traps have caught something during the night.

If one of the dogs finds a prey trapped in one of his owner's traps, the dog has to stay there and see that the prey is not stolen or eaten by other predators. When the hunter notices the absence of one of his dogs he understands that it is guarding a prey and starts looking for the trap. In some cases, when the same hunter has more dogs, one or more dogs may wait next to the trapped prey, while the others go back to the owner and *call* him, waving their tale, barking loudly and guiding him to the trap where the prey and the other dog(s) are waiting.

One of my elder informants, Mr Kiprono, told me that his father had trained four dogs that used to go check the traps together. When a trap had caught a prey, three of them would stay there, while the fourth would come back to Kiprono's father to call him.

Dogs are always the first to eat the meat of the prey just after their owner has slaughtered it in the forest. This is the way the Ogiek hunters show their dogs how much they appreciate their help.

When more Ogiek hunters live together in the same settlement (it can happen that two or three brothers choose to live close to one another), all their dogs go hunting also when the owner of some of them does not. The dogs work together. If, on those occasions, the lone hunter kills some preys, the meat is equally shared between all the families.

I add here an element which is particularly meaningful with regards to our discourse on the concept of *materiality*.

Since cattle and sheep rearing has been introduced in the region, those Ogiek who turned to farming understood that their dogs could be useful to them also in this newly adopted activity. Therefore, after some years of practice using their forefathers experience as dog-educators, they came to develop a new training method for those puppies destined to become sheepdogs.

To explain it in a few words, they just applied a syllogistic and metonymic thinking to the new situation, starting from the practices they were traditionally used to. While the hunting dogs are fed with a pap made mixing the preys' blood and dung (metonymy – a part for the whole), so that they learn which animals to chase, the sheepdogs are fed with a pap made of their

owner's cows' milk and dung, in order to teach them how to recognize which animals to care for (syllogism – if A and B, then C).

Anyway, if we want to look for a more scientific explanation of this mechanism turning to the current socio- and neuro-cognitive studies, we can find it for example in the recent theories by Silverstein or Danesi (both 2013).

We could apply, in this case, Silverstein's theory of semiosis¹⁰ and his idea of semiotic cycle of signification-circulation-emanation¹¹.

According to this theory:

“Phenomenally and epistemologically semiotic signification emerges in the first instance in events of discursive interaction (...). Circulation as such encompasses a social organization of communication, frequently and especially as institutionalized across structural sites that are implicitly referenced (...) emanation defines an overall structure of tiered nodes in a network of sites of practice, generative centers of semiosis and paths to their peripheries”

(Silverstein, 2013: 363)

The author presents this theory providing as example the prestigious vocabulary of enology, which after a first period of development and acceptance among experts of the field (signification), has started to become of more common use also among non-experts (emanation) and in a relatively short time, has become the model on which many other more or less prestigious vocabularies of other “edible and potable commodities” such as coffee, cheese and the like, have been built up (circulation).

In our case study, it is not of course a lexicon we refer to, but eventually an idea, or rather *a way of doing things which is intrinsically an idea in itself*, which is at first *significant*, then *emanating* and finally *circulating*. What is *significant* in our example is the traditional way of feeding and educating hunting dog puppies, what is *emanating* is the idea of applying the same method to other situations (the feeding and education of sheepdog puppies), what is *circulating* is the actual application of the method to a newly adopted economic activity (the pap made with cattle or sheep milk and dung).

In this sense our example fits well also with Danesi's concept of *metaform*¹². According to Danesi: “a metaform” can be defined as the form that is interpretively (semiotically) connected to a conceptual metaphor as a consequence of the metaphor being spread throughout the cultural network of meaning. The cultural network of meaning is called a “distributed sign” (DS).”

In our case study, the *metaphor* could be “an animal blood, milk or dung is *like* the animal itself”. The *metaform* is the shift from the idea of feeding a hunting dog with the prey's blood and dung to the idea of a feeding a sheep-

¹⁰ Silverstein: “semiosis as significant behavior and the like “does” something in and to its social framing” (2013:329).

¹¹ Ibidem, p.349.

¹² Danesi 2013: 35.

dog with a similar pap made with cattle or sheep milk and dung. This shift happens through an indisputable *network of meaning*, while the actual application of the model is exactly what Danesi calls a *distributed sign*.

Be it as it may, I completely agree with Danesi when he says that the theory of *metaform*, or whatever we want to call it, goes hand in hand with the theory of connectives:

“Connectivity theory does not imply that people are prisoners of their sign systems. The utilization of the systems is constantly subject to the vagaries of human users, who unlike machines are not automaton-like relayers of meaning; they are creative users of these meanings, always searching for new meanings, no matter how conventionalized these may have come. Cultural orders give historical continuity and stability to meanings, but these are not static. This is why cultures are always in flux, always reacting to new ideas and new needs”¹³.

6.2 – MATERIALITY IN THE TRANSMISSION OF KNOWLEDGE: DESCRIBING THE INDESCRIBABLE

Before drawing my conclusions, I would like to make a few other remarks on how materiality, or better, the *material processing of thought* is central to the transmission of knowledge in societies whose cultures are based on oral tradition and in which narration, imitation and mirroring are definitely prior to definition and abstraction.

I will try to do this, referring to my experience with my old informants in Mariashoni.

First of all, some considerations about the settings.

To let emerge all the contents I collected in this paper, we organized four collective meetings on the lawn outside the offices of NECOFA and only two, with younger hunters, in the forest of Kaprop, some six km far from Mariashoni.

The two different settings required two different communication strategies.

In Mariashoni my informants had to verbally express themselves much more than usual while, in the forest of Kaprop, verbal communication was relatively unimportant, since *material* observation was much more instructive than any words.

The two different settings were thus critical to the attitude my informants had towards me and towards the topics I asked them about.

Undoubtedly, the young hunters I followed in the forest of Kaprop were much more at ease than the elders who took part in the meeting in Mariashoni, even though both of them were willing to share their experience with me and saw in my research activity a way of showing the world something good about themselves.

¹³ Ibidem, p. 46.

The meetings in Mariashoni were held in the presence of John Kemoi, a NECOFA local operator who was my interpreter. All the dialogues between him and my informants were held exclusively in Ogiek. I could, on my part, understand a good 60% of what they said in Ogiek, even though I spoke quite exclusively English.

From a linguistic point of view, my informants were thus allowed to establish a dialogue platform according to their own rules. The language they used to relate should not be a problem.

However, things were not always easy, since many times the Ogiek language was not able to convey the message my informants wanted to transmit to me and for this reason they had to switch to a more *material* form of communication. They decided to *dramatically perform* certain scenes in front of me, in order to make me understand what they could not express in words.

This happened, for example, the day we discussed hunting traps. I have already underlined in paragraph 3.1.2 how the technical vocabulary for the making and placing of traps, above all the one concerning specific procedures (how to intertwine ropes, how to create certain knots and the like) is significantly poor and lacks precision. This lack of technical terms forced my informants to “materially” make and place trap models in front of me and, in some cases, to *play* the part of the prey falling in the trap, in order to make me understand how the mechanism *materially* worked (see Pictures 9 – 10).

This simple example suggests that in this kind of cultures *materiality* is central also to the transmission of meanings which are non conveyable in words. *Performance* i.e. a *practical way of doing things* becomes in some cases the only way to replace *language*, i.e. a *verbal way of describing unperformed actions*, which can sometimes be inadequate.

7 – CONCLUSIONS

This paper, whose first aim was the ethnolinguistic documentation and description of the hunting tradition of the Ogiek of Mariashoni, has also been an opportunity for a thorough reflection on the concept of *materiality* and its multifaceted implications.

For what concerns the first aspect, we have seen how the Ogiek of the region once used to hunt in groups and to kill also big preys, like buffalos and elephants. Today, although their original ecological habitat has been reduced and spoiled, Ogiek continue to teach their children their traditional hunting techniques, even though their preys are now just deers, other small mammals, rodents and birds.

The Ogiek hunt mainly with bow, arrows, knives and spears (the latter made fixing their *róótwèt* knife to an appropriate stick). Ogiek weapons are usually made poisonous following a procedure which requires the barks of

two specific, but unfortunately unidentified, trees, which are however still very common in the Mau forest.

To obtain and iron they needed for the forging of the arrow points and the blades of their knives, the Ogiek once bartered it with their Maasai and Nandi neighbors, giving them women and honey in exchange. Today they steal iron from the abandoned colonial railway which once run from Nakuru to Molo.

Still today, Ogiek hunters place traps in the forest. Both when they hunt with bow and arrows and when they place and check their traps, Ogiek hunters are accompanied by their most faithful friends, their dogs, which they still educate according to traditional methods.

Concerning the second and more theoretical aspect, i.e. the concept of *materiality*, I hope that, from the analysis of the data presented in the paper my readers will now agree at least on the following points:

- *Materiality* cannot be simply understood as a synonym for *material culture*, but has to be re-thought as the omni-comprehensive experience of *being in the world*. Each different culture represents a different microcosm, in which the importance of the different aspects of materiality and sensory experience changes on the basis of many factors;

- People submerged in “systems of thoughts” (microcosms) different from our own can think not only *of* things, but also *through* things (cf Henare, Halbraad, Wastell 2007)

- *Things* and *performing* in the sphere of the visible and audible (i.e. material perception) are in most cases prior to the transmission of knowledge and also to the definition and learning of specific technical proceedings and activities. The theory of *signification-emanation-circulation* by Silverstein (cf Silverstein 2013) and the concept of *metaform* by Danesi (cf Danesi 2013) can be useful.

APPENDIX 1

Ogiek-English and English-Ogiek Lexikon of Hunt

OGIEK-ENGLISH

<i>ibenda</i> (no pl.): age group	<i>kibirigiek</i> : name of the legendary Ogiek blacksmith clan made slave by the Maasai in 1500
<i>iémdit</i> : tree from which the wood for the arrow shaft is obtained	<i>kipkáátit</i> – pl. <i>kipkáátisiek</i> : trap which closes on the prey's neck
<i>illegen</i> : age group 100 +	<i>kipkélit</i> – pl. <i>kipkélisiek</i> : trap which closes on the prey's leg
<i>inet</i> , pl. <i>ínòik</i> : nylon wire	<i>kiptfumarat</i> – pl. <i>kiptfumaru</i> : big, iron nail used in house building
<i>ijendgere</i> : age group 90 +	<i>kipsóhòwòt</i> : old Ogiot, expert in poison making
<i>ísugít</i> – pl. <i>ísuguisiék</i> : lance, spear	<i>kiptfòik</i> : name of the Maasai clan who, according to the legend, made slaves the Ogiek blacksmiths
<i>ítít</i> – pl. <i>ítùik</i> : ear	<i>kirabanet</i> – pl. <i>kirabanik</i> : metal point of the arrow
<i>káátit</i> – pl. <i>kóótvek</i> : neck	<i>kisùŋo</i> , pl. <i>kiswòt</i> : traditoinal container made with vegetal fibre
<i>kéébàrbar</i> : to shape	<i>kóisít</i> – pl. <i>kóisìsiék</i> : bamboo arrows without metal points used by children
<i>kééldò</i> (<i>ak òinet</i> / <i>ak ra</i> / <i>ak òmvt</i> / <i>ak negip òn</i>): footmark (very fesh / of today / of yesterday / old)	<i>kòndvùndet</i> (pl. <i>kòndvik</i>) <i>ak turwòt</i> : leader of the hunt
<i>kéélio</i> : general name for “tree”, commonly used also to refer to the trees from which poison is obtained	<i>kóóžèt</i> – pl. <i>kóóžòik</i> : liver
<i>kéémì</i> : to join	
<i>kééžèm</i> : to slaughter	
<i>kééptfèm</i> : to share	
<i>kééròtj</i> : to shape a noose knot	
<i>kéétàŋ</i> : to forge	
<i>kíbmòdò</i> : short knife used to slaughter small preys	

kóómèk: honey
kòròkṭá – *kòrookwèk*: foot (only for animals)
kóròriét – pl. *kóròrík*: feather
kúístò – pl. *kúisiék*: leg
kúleìtṣ – pl. *kú(lè)lḡik*: handle of the knife, made of bone or wood
kùriṣṭ pl. *kùróóno*: bow
léleṭṣuèt: tree from which the wood for the arrow shaft is obtained
mááisiét pl. *mááaisiék*: tendon used as a small rope
màgatét (*ak téétà*): cow skin used to make shoulder bags
másaitá: *olea africana* (tree), used to make the arrow shafts
méétit – pl. *méétḡkwek*: head
mindet – pl.?: duicker; black *mindet ne tuḡ*; red *mindet ne biriir*
móṣèt – pl. *móṣṭerḡik*: belly, stomach
móṣṭièt – pl. *móṣṭòk*: shoulder bags for arrows
motogéét, pl. *motogóik*: traditional Ogiek bag made of leather
mòṣímdá – pl. *motónik*: common eagle
múguleldò – pl. *múgulelvék*: heart
námanèt – pl. *námanik*: slave
ḡélieptà: tongue
ḡérùt – pl. *ḡérùsiék*: arrow (with metal point, for adults)
ḡgwònéṭ (no pl.): poison
ḡvòṭk, pl. *ḡḡḡik*: dog
ḡṭṭiṭṭ, pl. *ḡṭṭṭik*: embers
ḡgurièt, pl. *ḡguròik*: traditional Ogiek clothes, made of antelope or goat skin

ṭbeles: age group 300 +
olderito: age group 250 +
oldiyegi: age group 150 +
olmerotorot: age group 200 +
pik ak tòrṣót (lit.: people of the place who are able to hunt): team of hunters
pisinda – pl. *pisinik*: vegetal fibre used by the Ogiek to make ropes, obtained from different plants (?)
ṭóinèt – pl. *ṭóinuk*: antelope
ṭuṣṣuèt, - pl. *ṭuṣṣḡik*: lungs
puyeyotik (pl.): large antelopes
rambau: age group 16 +
róótṭwèt pl. *róótòk*: big knife, used by Ogiek hunters, which is also used as the point of the Ogiek spear
róótṭwèt ák ṭfók: sheath of the knife
sáártit – pl. *sáártisiék*: stick used to smoke meat on the fire
sàitá – pl. *sòjvék*: let fly notch
sérérét: ? tree whose leaves are used to wrap up meat in the forest
serút – pl. *serúnik*: knot (different kinds)
síjèt – pl. *síjò*: nail
sílibuèt: dobea tree
sáártit – pl. *sáártisiék*: smoked piece of meat
sogwe: age group 60 +
ṣṭóét – pl. *ṣṭóénuk*: buffalo
sóròmiét – pl. *sóròdòmók*: kidney
sóṣṣónét: ? tree whose leaves are used to wrap up the meat in the forest
súgwèt – pl. *súgwék*: back

survɔt (pl. *survek* – ak *ɔnet* / ak *ra* / ak *ɔmvt* / ak *negip ɔn*):
dung (very fresh / of today / of
yesterday / old)
téégàt: tree from which the wood to
make arrow shafts is obtained
teɛɛt – pl. *teɛɛúk*: lance, spear (rare)
tereryet (pl. *tererik*) ak *ɔnet* / ak *ra*
/ ak *ɔmvt* / ak *negip ɔn*: buffalo
dung (very fresh / of today / of
yesterday / old)
tímdà: bush
tímdà: a kind of an antelope

túnððjét – pl. *túnððik*: rope
túrindét – pl. *túrik*: hunter
tòròót: place in the forest suitable for
hunting
tʃáátit – pl. *tʃóótik*: thigh
tʃémurmuriét: ? tree whose leaves are
used to wrap up meat in the forest
vòtʃegwéét – pl. *vòtʃegwósiék*: big,
black eagle
ùruméét – pl. *ùrumɔk*: arrow shaft
wísa, pl. *wísaisiek*: small knife used
to make the flies for the arrows

ENGLISH-OGIEK

age group: *ibenda* (no pl.)
age group 16 +: *rambau*
age group 60 +: *sogwe*
age group 90 +: *iɛnɛgere*
age group 100 +: *illegen*
age group 150 +: *oldiyegi*
age group 200 +: *olmerotorot*
age group 250 +: *olderito*
age group 300 +: *ɔbeles*
antelope: *póínèt* – pl. *póínik*
antelope (large): *puyeyotik*
antelope (?): *tímdà*
arrows (bamboo) for children
without metal point: *kóisít* – pl.
kóisísiék
arrow (with metal point) for adults:
ɛrùt – pl. *ɛrùsiék*
back: *súgwèt* – pl. *súgwék*

bag, traditional Ogiek, made of
leather: *motogéét*, pl. *motogoík*
belly; stomach: *móóèt* – pl. *móóteník*
blacksmith, name of the legendary
Ogiek clan made slave by the
Maasai in 1500: *kibɛrɛɛk*
bow: *kùriót* pl. *kùróóno*
buffalo: *sɔót* – pl. *sɔóénik*
buffalo dung (very fresh / of today /
of yesterday / old): *tereryet* (pl.
tererik – ak *ɔnet* / ak *ra* / ak *ɔmvt*
/ ak *negip ɔn*)
bush: *tímdà*
sheath of the knife: *róótweèt ak tʃók*
cloth, traditional Ogiek, made of
goat or antelope skin: *ógurièt*, pl.
ógurðik
container (traditional, made of
vegetal fibre): *kisùjo*, pl. *kiswòt*

dobea tree: *sílibuét*
 dog: *ηòτək*, pl. *ηòγík*
 duicker: red d. *mindet ne biriir*; black
 d. *mindet ne tuz*
 dung (very fresh / of today / of
 yesterday / old): *svrvyot* (pl.
svrvək – ak ɔnet / ak ra / ak ɔmut
/ ak negip ɔn)
 eagle, big black: *ɔðtfegwéét – pl.*
ɔðtfegwósiék
 eagle, common: *motómdá – pl.*
motónik
 ear: *ítít – pl. ítìk*
 embers: *ηəτətiət*, pl. *ηəτətik*
 feather: *kóròriét – pl. kóròrík*
 foot (only animal): *kòrəkətá –*
kòrookwèk
 footmark (very fresh / of today / of
 yesterday / old): *kééldò (ak ɔnet*
/ ak ra / ak ɔmut / ak negip ɔn)
 forge (to): *kéétàp*
 handle of the knife: *kúleítɔ – pl.*
kú(lè)lìk
 head: *méétit – pl. méétəkwek*
 heart: *múguleldò – pl. múgulelvék*
 honey: *kóómèk*
 hunter: *túrìndét – pl. túrík*
 join (to): *kéémì*
 kidney: *sóròmiét – pl. sóròdmók*
 knife, big, used also as point of a
 spear: *róótwèt -pl. róótòk*
 knife, short to slaughter small preys:
kíbmò
 knife, small, used to make flies for
 arrows: *wísa*, pl. *wísaisiék*
 knot: *serút – pl. serúnik*
 lance, spear: *ísugít – pl. ísuguisiék*
 lance, spear – rare: *teɛɛ́t – pl. teɛɛ́k*

leader of the hunt: *kòndvundet* (pl.
kòndvik) ak tvrɔt
 leg: *kúístò – pl. kúisiék*
 let fly notch: *saita*, pl. *saiuek*
 liver: *kóóžèt – pl. kóóžòk*
 lungs: *puónòt,- pl. puónìk*
 nail: *síjèt – pl. síjò*
 nail, big, iron used in house building
 and to forge the arrow points:
kipɬumariat – pl. kipɬumaru
 Maasai, name of the Maasai clan
 who, according to the legend,
 made the Ogiek blacksmiths
 slaves: *kipɬɔk*
 neck: *káátit – pl. kóótvek*
 olea africana (tree): *másaitá*
 place in the forest suitable for
 hunting: *tòrót*
 point of the arrow (metal): *kirabanet*
 – pl. *kirabanik*
 poison: *ηgwònét* (no pl.)
 poison maker: *kipsóηɔɔt*
 rope: *túnòžjèt – pl. túnòžk*
 shape (to): *kéébàrbar*
 shape (to) a noose knot: *kéérìɬ*
 share (to): *kééɬɬəm*
 shoulder bag for arrows: *móótièt – pl.*
móótòk
 skin (of cow), used to make shoulder
 bags: *màgatét (ak téétà)*
 slaughter (to): *kééžəm*
 slave: *námanèt – pl. námanik*
 smoked piece of meat: *sáártit – pl.*
sáártisiék
 stick used to smoke meat on the fire:
sáártit – pl. sáártisiék
 shaft of the arrow: *ùruméét – pl.*
ùrumɔk

team of hunters: *pik ak tòróót*

tendon, used as a small rope:

mááisiét pl. *mááaisiék*

thigh: *tfáátit* – pl. *tfóótik*

tongue: *ηélieptà*

trap (which closes on the prey's

neck): *kipkáátit* – pl. *kipkáátisiek*

trap (which closes on the prey's leg):

kipkélit – pl. *kipkélisiek*

tree, general name, used to refer to

the trees from which poison is

obtained: *kéélicit*

tree whose leaves are used to

wrap up meat in the forest:

tfémurmuriét, séréréét, sósónét

trees from which the wood to make

the arrow shafts is obtained:

másaitá (olea africana), *iémdit* (?),

léletfuèt (?), *téégàt* (?)

vegetal fibre used by the Ogiek

to make ropes, obtained from

different plants (?): *pisinda* – pl.

pisinik

wire (nylon): *ínét*, pl. *ínòik*

APPENDIX 2

Pictures



PICTURE 1 – *sáartisiék* sticks with smoked meat (*sírignik*)



PICTURE 2 – Ogiek arrows (*ηέρùσιέκ*), metal points (*kirabanik*)

PICTURE 3
The Ogiek bow
(*kûriót*)



PICTURE 4 – The Ogiek knife (*róótwèt*), its handle (*kúleitš*) and its sheath (*róótwèt ák tšó*)



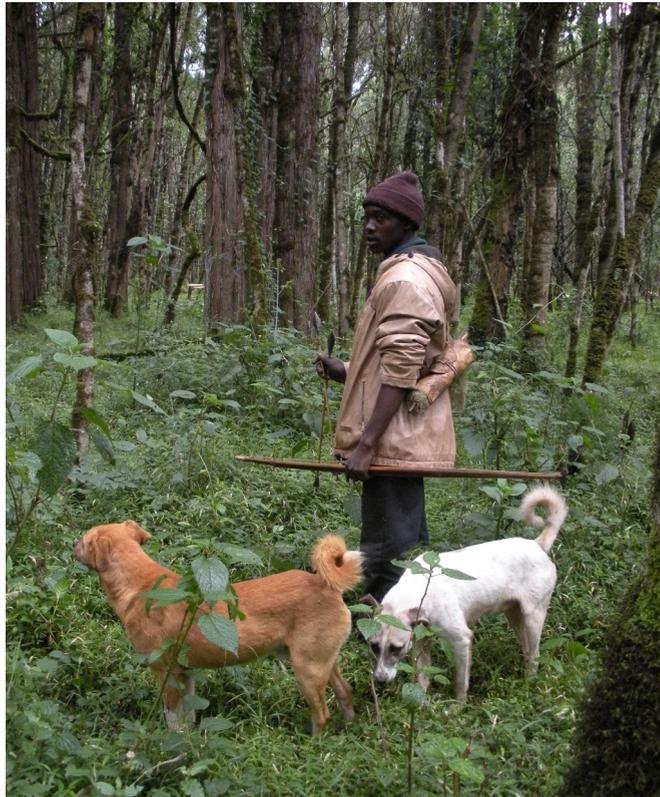
PICTURE 5 – The *kipkáátit* trap



PICTURE 6 – The *kipkélit* trap



PICTURE 7 – The animated debate about the *ibenda ak túrik*



PICTURE 8
An Ogiek hunter
with his dogs
(*ηḡgík*)



PICTURES 9, 10 – Old Ogiek hunters *performing* to convey technical information about the mechanisms of the traps

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