

Astrid Blystad

On HIV, Sex and Respect: Local-Global Discourse Encounters among the Datoga of Tanzania

Abstract

The topic of concern in this paper is the manner in which globally constructed AIDS and HIV control messages are received by the Datoga of Tanzania. The text will reflect on how messages on safe and healthy sex in national/global HIV campaigns are not in accord with Datoga concepts and practices aimed at ensuring proper sexuality and fertility, and the troubled effects of such dissonance. In an attempt to grasp the dynamics at work in the encounters between HIV prevention messages and local sexual concepts and practices, some central Foucauldian questions are asked, such as how and why sexual activity is constituted as a moral domain among Datoga. The substantial Datoga preoccupation with procreation is located at the heart of the argument. The discussion will reveal how Datoga sexuality is becoming increasingly troubled, compounding and accentuating the already severe uncertainties experienced in everyday life. The argument is offered that unless communication about HIV/AIDS takes the cultural contexts that shape risk behaviour into account, such campaigns will fall on deaf ears, and may cause more suffering rather than less.

Introduction

The focus of the paper is introduced with an extract from a discussion that took place in connection with the making of a culturally specific HIV film to be used among the semi-nomadic Datoga of Tanzania. The group that discussed the content of the upcoming film consisted – in addition to the author of the paper – of schooled and non-schooled, Christian and non-Christian Datoga men and women.¹

Datoga herder (Dh): I heard that some people from the Mission said that we can no longer have sexual relationships with our brothers' wives, we can't inherit our brothers' wives and we can no longer circumcise our children like we have always done.

Datoga health worker (Dhw): It is true. These are dangerous customs since the HIV-virus is transmitted through semen and blood. These customs increase the danger of transmission.

Dh: But then we can't marry like before.

Dhw: Indeed, a man must only have sex with one woman, his one wife, or he may easily acquire the virus, and then he will die, and his wives will also die because the virus will be transmitted to them.

Dh: Then we will all die, because our tradition says that when we are healthy and rich we should have more wives. How can we tell our people that they cannot have a proper sexual relationship with their brothers' wives... and tell me, who are then to take care of our brothers' wives if our brothers pass away?

Dhw: Our people are still 'in the dark' and don't understand. Therefore we have to teach them. We will have no development if we continue to follow these old beliefs and customs. We have to live respectfully with one wife like it says in the Bible.

Dh: But why do the Christians then have many more girls (unmarried women) who become pregnant than us who follow Datoga custom? And your village is filled with men who have sex with other than their wives.

Dhw: True. They don't follow the words of the Bible.

Dh: You say we have to talk about the condom. The film will never be taken seriously if we are going to talk about this thing that no one knows what it is.

Author (A): I believe we have to mention the condom since it is the only way to ensure fairly safe sex, even if it will not have to be made a major point at this stage.

Dh: Do you say that if people just put on this plastic thing, they can have sex with anyone? Do you say that 'condom sex' with an Iramba is better than having sex with my brother's wife?

A: Not better, but talking about AIDS transmission, this is true.

Dh: This we can surely not say. Do you know that we used to live respectfully and were rich, healthy and had many children and cattle, but now respect is quickly coming to an end. Datoga youth are starting to ignore our tradition, they drink and have sex here and there, and we are now becoming poor and unhealthy. Before people died of age and accidents. Now even our young start to fall ill and die. It is because they are losing respect for our traditions.

Dhw: It is because Datoga don't want to send their children to school to be educated and learn how to lead a good and healthy life.

Dh: No it is not. Saigilo's prophecy many years before you were born said that one day Datoga will start to ignore respectful coupling. Datoga will start to reproduce themselves like dogs, and that will be the end. It is this we are now seeing. Remember how Saigilo told us that one day we would start to put our cows in our pockets? Indeed, we now see it. Our cows have turned into money. Respect is coming to an end.

Dhw: It will be very difficult to have you in this project if you don't understand anything. These are the kinds of old beliefs that you need to put behind you.

Dh: OK.

The topic of concern in this paper is the manner in which globally constructed HIV/AIDS control messages are received by the Datoga of Tanzania. The text will reflect on why Western/national Tanzanian notions of safe sex in an HIV/AIDS context are not in accord with Dagota notions of proper handling of

sexuality and fertility, and the troubled effects of such dissonance. The exercise is hence not carried out to map sexual conduct *per se*, but is to explore how local concepts and practices related to sexual conduct both contrast and resonate with the national HIV/AIDS discourse. Such knowledge may enhance our understanding on why HIV-prevention messages may be difficult for people who adhere to local African custom to take seriously. In exploring the dynamics in the encounters between 'local African' and 'national Tanzanian'/'global' discourse on HIV/AIDS, the danger of reification of both sets of discourses is substantial. Thus, I shall primarily refer to material collected in the context of the above-mentioned Datoga HIV prevention film project.² The project particularly aims at reaching the non-schooled segments of the population, i.e. the ones who commonly adhere most strongly to Datoga custom. I believe however that the material may also have some relevance in other contexts. The project was carried out within the context of a larger research- and competence-building programme (GeGCA-NUFU) established between the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and the University of Bergen, Norway.³

In the process of attempting to grasp the dynamics at work in the encounters between HIV-prevention messages and Datoga sexual concepts and practices we shall address the particularities of Datoga concern with sexual morality, as well as the vantage points from which such concerns evolve. In the process we shall ask some central Foucauldian questions (Foucault 2001:32) such as how, why and in what ways sexual activity is constituted as a moral domain among the Datoga. The discussion will reveal how Datoga sexuality is experienced as becoming increasingly troubled, compounding and accentuating the already severe uncertainties experienced in everyday life.

There is still to date a very low HIV prevalence among the Datoga (Hinderaker et al. 2001). This is at least partly related to the relative remoteness of their lands and to their relatively limited interaction with non-Datoga. Nothing however indicates that this people will be spared when HIV fully enters this area. On the contrary, there are indications that particular norms and practices may facilitate a particularly rapid spread of the virus. Pastoral movements, relatively low literacy rates, limited competence in Swahili (the *lingua franca* of Tanzania), and relatively strong adherence to local custom, have been pointed out as particular challenges confronting health prevention campaigns among Tanzanian pastoral peoples. The text below will indicate that challenges may lie as much in a generalised HIV language as in forms of adaptation and levels of education.

Despite general and repeated calls for approaches in the communication about HIV/AIDS that take cultural contexts into account (see e.g. Kowalewski, Henson and Longshore 1997; Sumartojo 2000), and documentation of the importance and efficacy of culturally specific approaches (see e.g. Dushay et al. 2001; Nations and de Souza 1997; Parker 2001), culturally designed approaches are yet to gain real influence on global HIV prevention campaigns

(Carey et al. 2004) – a scenario that may have grave consequences not the least in Sub-Saharan Africa. I shall in the present paper explore dynamics at work if global HIV messages are communicated in an unmediated form in a local African community.

The Datoga and the Perils of History

The Datoga are a southern Nilotic-speaking pastoral people numbering around 100,000 individuals. Albeit culturally pastoral, most Datoga are largely agro-pastoral in practice with very small average herds. Sieff's study (1995:59, 62) indicates 4.1 livestock per individual in Yaida Chini, Mbulu, but the numbers vary starkly between individuals and communities. The core Datoga area was for several centuries the Hanang and Mbulu Districts of Manyara Region in northern Tanzania, but Datoga communities are today spread over much of northern, central and southern Tanzania in smaller localised enclaves.

Datoga history for the past 100 years has been characterised by dramatic marginalisation and impoverisation, not least for the part of the population that has remained in the Hanang and Mbulu areas. Colonialists early associated Datoga pastoral life with primitivism, barbarism and savageness. Increasing frustration related to continuous failed attempts at governing Datoga areas led to public executions, arbitrary imprisonment, forced conscription in the army, collective cattle fines, and discriminatory resource allocation (Rekdal and Blystad 1999). Considerable continuation of policy vis-à-vis Datoga dominated areas was experienced after the close of the colonial era. Colonial encouragement of agricultural expansion onto Datoga grazing land, for example, continued unabated after independence. The shortage of pasture was magnified with the coming of a large-scale Canadian-sponsored commercial wheat project in the mid-1970s (Lane 1996). The project not only dramatically reduced available Datoga pasture, but attracted international attention for its gross violation of Datoga rights (Kisanga 1993; Lane 1991). Datoga with sufficient health and wealth fled the area in large numbers during the 1980s and 1990s in search of improved grazing, while the weakest and poorest segments of the population stayed behind, relying increasingly on cultivation.

Along with transformations in adaptation, dramatic cultural transformation of housing, dress, diet, decoration and other key cultural features have taken place. These transitions have partly been elements of complex processes of mixing and merging with the neighbouring Iraqw, partly elements of general processes of modernisation. No modification of Datoga custom has however received the attention given to the transformation of sexual norms and practices. Ongoing modification in concepts and institutions that regulate sexual conduct as well as actual sexual practice is in fact substantial, transitions that many Datoga observe with unease and fear. I shall return to these important transitions below, but we shall first address the customary domain of norms and practices pertaining to sex and procreation that is vested with so much moral

significance among Datoga. Such knowledge will enhance our understanding of the dynamics at work in the discussion on HIV prevention messages presented at the onset of the paper.

Ensuring Respectful Sexual Relations in Datoga Custom

There is a tremendous respect for the sexual act among the Datoga. Coitus is certainly regarded as inherently potent and fertile, but it is simultaneously conceived as potentially risky and hazardous. The notion that the exchange of procreative liquids can lead to conception and new life, but similarly to infertility and death, is located at the core of Datoga anxiety. This notion is made manifest in elaborate pollution practices (*metida*) discussed elsewhere (Blystad 2000). The apprehension linked to the sexual act surfaces both in the everyday sexual preoccupation of lovers and marital partners, and in elaborate normative complexes present in daily and ritual talk, song and prayer related to diverse domains of life. The blessings as well as perils inherent in sexual encounters make them a favoured domain for normative ordinance.

Sexual Play Among the Young

While freedom, excitement, and sexual play are cherished and encouraged attributes of non-marital relations, sexual intercourse is strictly prohibited for unmarried Datoga girls. A number of institutions facilitate and endorse romantic encounters between youth on the one hand, and act as a control of these encounters on the other. Formal youth meetings (*seyooda tangaz*) are mandatory⁴ gatherings headed by female and male youth leaders taking place in hidden bush land. The meetings facilitate proper splicing of potential girlfriends and boyfriends through a formal calling out of clan and generation set names among the participants. In principle the same regulations about relationships are to be followed between boyfriends and girlfriends as between potential marital partners, but the rules are somewhat more relaxed in premarital relations. The meetings facilitate romantic private meetings (*seyooda*) between young men and women, and are a precondition for young couples' engaging in 'youth talk' (*gharemanend dumeed*), highly poetic and ritualised conversations performed between young men and women. The ultimate aim of these lengthy oral competitions that may go on for hours and even days is from the man's point of view an intimate relationship. In cases where a girl outwits a boy, the boyfriend-girlfriend relationship is put on temporary or possibly full hold, ideally resulting in boys taking off to hunt/spear lions, elephants or other large mammals to win the admiration of the girl (*lilichta/lugooda*). During the early phase of the engaging in such youth activity, a girl will have her own formally appointed male guardian (*ng'wasaneeda*). From the point of view of the girl's family, this man is to ensure their daughter's assertive but proper conduct in her dealings with men in order to prevent pregnancy prior to marriage. Girls

also arrange their own secret girls' meetings (*makchameeta haweega*), where approved as well as sanctioned sexual practices preoccupy the participants. The number one principle governing the youth pacts is respect (*mureeda*). The following brief extract from a 'poem of departure' (*gighatta*), performed at the time a young man leaves for a hunt, indicates the concern with respect.

Geenyabwaas performed the song
 It (the song) is like the stick and the spear of the performer
 Even if you (boy and girl friends) are by yourself, do judge
 Keep respectful conduct
 [. . .] the girl Jang calls you
 Whose leather cape has glass beads on its fringes
 She showed the group going to war the path.
 [Geenyabwas gwargu dumda
 Deaschi fayooda nyeashaneeda
 Ii bea geaw adeena
 Waamwana seamda ea mureeda
 Ea goojeagu geaba Jang'
 Bea seaptseapta unbugida
 Nyusu mudador naweeda.]

Marital Sexual Norms

Datoga marriage is ideally polygynous which implies that rich Datoga men will aim at marrying more than one wife. Marital sexual intercourse through the establishment of a proper procreative alliance is, as among so many other people, perceived as the essence of order. For a married woman to have sex with a man who is not simultaneously categorised as a potential procreative partner is culturally inconceivable. Considerable effort is vested in intricate assessment in an attempt to ensure proper and fertile marital unions. A woman in principle marries into her husband's clan, which implies that sexual and procreative relationships with a husband's clan 'brothers' (*rata*) are deemed good and acceptable. An institution related to such extended sexual rights of in-laws (*rata*) is the *orjetedameyda*, which facilitates sexual relations between individuals who have established a fictive kinship relation. This intricate system of potential sexual exchanges (which both men and women in principle may refuse to get involved in) also ideally implies an elaborate transfer of domestic animals which links families, patrilineages and fictive kin together in large procreative and co-operative networks, networks located at the heart of Datoga social organisation.

The generation-set institution (*seygeeda*), albeit formally discontinued, lives on in a simplified form, and complicates the picture of who may establish a boyfriend-girlfriend pact or a marital alliance. Siblings with the same social father are all born into the same set (however far apart in age), and the main principle is that men and women who have a parental generation-set relationship cannot marry, but one may marry into one's own or into a 'grandparental'

generation set. The institution is to ensure proper sexual regulation between generations.

Beyond such institutional frames a number of normative measures aim at regulating sexual conduct in connection with key procreative moments, illness and death. Intricate regulations moreover direct where, how and when sexual activity should take place. Marital sex should be carried out in a woman's bedroom/kitchen preferably at night, while the sexual play of the young should take place in the outside bush land during daytime only. The distinction made between youthful sexual play and marital procreative sex is elaborated on at great length and infused with immense significance.

These norms and institutions are aimed solely at internal Datoga relations as there is substantial culturally established scepticism to sexual relations and marital unions with non-Datoga, although such unions are becoming increasingly common. The major acceptable exception for the Datoga of Hanang/Mbulu is inter-marriage with Iraqw, which has gained acceptance to the point where Datoga and Iraqw move freely in marriage across the ethnic border. The reluctance towards sexual and marital relations with outsiders has complex roots with a general scepticism and partly hostile view of the outside at its base (Blystad 2000).

Breach of Sexual Norms

In real life all Datoga do not manage to adhere perfectly to the intricate sets of rules in a manner as proper as this normative complex attempts to achieve. The intricate inter-relations between human beings that build on diverse codes and principles leave first of all a large and ambiguous arena open for manipulation, an arena that is sometimes stretched beyond what is deemed acceptable. The carrying out of sanctions for the breach of sexual norms in fact makes up both a common and time-consuming Datoga preoccupation among both the married and unmarried. Hardly a youth meeting is convened without the announcement of discovered breaches, and subsequent elaborate discussion of the appropriate response. The most common sanction against illicit boyfriend-girlfriend relations is a forced break-up of the union, followed by fines as well as exclusion of the parties involved from youth activity for a certain period of time. The discovery of full-fledged sexual activity on the part of an unmarried girl and her partner leads to instant substantial fines, permanent removal of the girl from her partner and extended group of peers, and immediate initiation of marital negotiations. A girl's often limited influence over choice of marital partner completely vanishes with such discovery. Physical check-ups of girls by older women, albeit a custom losing its importance, have been carried out to keep incidents of sexual intercourse prior to marriage to a minimum. A worst-case scenario is the discovery of a pregnancy out of wedlock. A child in the Datoga patrilineal system is born into and receives the clan and lineage affiliation of his/her father, and without a formally established social father a child becomes

a person 'without a name' and hence belongs nowhere. If not immediately married, the highly stigmatised unwed mother (*dorowaida*) and her baby will be isolated with remote, usually Christian, relatives, for at least a year. The child will eventually gain the clan affiliation of his/her mother but will remain stigmatised throughout life.

Also in the married population, a large variety of measures are employed to prevent unacceptable sexual, read 'procreative' unions, such as the return of wives when clan bonds turn out to be too close as well as diverse ritual measures. The following was the reaction towards a couple caught engaging in illicit sex. A sexual relationship was discovered between Gidajuri and the second youngest wife of his father. A ritual birth was performed so as once and for all to establish the structural mother/child relationship of the involved parties. The male offender was placed on the lap of the young woman; cow's blood was poured over their heads while the man was instructed to scream like a newborn baby. The performance was said to be an extremely humiliating experience for both the former lovers and their extended families.

In very serious cases of transgression spiritual punishment in the form of illness, difficult births, infertility or even death is said to follow. The substantial time and attention given to the violation of sexual norms indicates the seriousness with which such breaches are perceived. The infringement of the rules that guide the domain of sex and marriage generates tangible distress, and is ultimately associated with Saigilo's frightening prophecy of uncontrolled coupling as an indication of the end to Datoga life. This prophecy is in fact increasingly referred to, as serious sexual breaches are gaining new dimensions. We shall return to the rapid changing norms and practices below, but first we need to gain an understanding of what the complex normative and institutional scenario surrounding sex and sexual relations is all about. To guide the further argument we shall draw upon Foucault's thinking and ask why sexual conduct as well as the activities and pleasures associated with it is the focus of such moral concern, and why sexual activity among the Datoga has become the focal point of apprehension, debate and reflection (Foucault 2001:32). We shall moreover explore in what cultural concerns such norms, structures and practices are embedded.

A Preoccupation with Respectful Procreation

A clue to increase our comprehension of these and related questions lies in grasping the intense Datoga desire to have children; the immense preoccupation with sexual control must be read as an avenue to promote enhanced and proper procreation. Both men and women need children to achieve adult status, and they gain prestige and influence with the birth of every additional child. Population control among the married is a foreign concept as fertility in human and animal populations is the only customary source of wealth. Men or women who die without a son and a daughter may never be given the honour of an 'offi-

cial' Datoga funeral (*bung'ed*), an ultimate goal among Datoga of this part of Tanzania.

The celebration of fertility extends far beyond human physical procreation, and penetrates and imparts meaning and knowledge to nearly every corner of Datoga life. Besides the obvious areas of concern – human and animal pregnancy and birth – metaphors for fertility are widespread, adding an association with procreation to practices pertaining to the hearth, house and homestead, to medicines and healing practices, to rites of passage, and to mythical language. An important domain of meaning, experience, and power is opened up through immediate procreative contexts, engaging young and old, men and women alike in complex, partly complementary, partly contradictory ways. Fertility among the Datoga introduces the centrality of the maternal, and the maternal body, a body that encompasses the regenerative forces of material, social and cosmic continuity.

The centrality of fecundity in African symbolic and social systems has been widely recorded. A book edited by Jacobson-Widding and van Beek (1990a) sums up themes pertaining to fertility in the African ethnographic literature, and points to the articulateness of African folk models of fertility. The editors define fertility in African contexts as 'the whole scope of the perpetuation of life, i.e. human fertility as well as the agricultural variety: of crops and animals' (1990b:15), focusing on the bridges people construct and experience between procreation and other processes of growth. Moore (1999) in a similar manner notes that the larger context of the symbolic engagement in East and Southern Africa is a preoccupation 'with the continuity and maintenance of the social and natural worlds and their relation', and she argues: 'In this context, it is ideas about gender and reproduction that both undergrid and encompass the larger set of symbolic oppositions' (Moore 1999:6). She writes that a range of cultural issues can neatly be summed up as 'the problem of the maternal'.

Many Sub-Saharan writings are dense with feminine symbols, and many rituals are, in Sanders's (1998:239) terms, 'pregnant so to speak, with fertility and sexual symbolism' (see for example, Beidelman 1997; Devisch 1993; Herbert 1993; Kratz 1994). These works indicate how a 'procreative paradigm' (Herbert 1993) permeates and gives meaning to African ritual life. Devisch's (1991, 1993) studies from Yaka of Zaire for example, provide an exemplary illustration on how gender categories are associated with relations between birth, death and the succession of generations. A focus on the centrality of the female has been highlighted with regard to Nilotic cosmologies. Broch-Due's writings from Turkana, for example, substantiate Burton's (1991:81) claim that Nilotic cosmologies are brimming with feminine symbols, and she demonstrates how Turkana 'wind transformation images' around the female body (Broch-Due 1990, 1999). The ethnographic portrait of Turkana preoccupation with uterine images for processes of growth and transformation strongly resembles what is found among the Datoga.

These and other works powerfully reveal the attention paid to procreative processes, whether in human and animal bodies, or in the physical and social environments. Such immense concern with fertility generates immediate and natural links between sexual intercourse and conception to an extent where sexual practices in the married population can hardly be perceived without a procreative element. Talking about the sexual transmission of HIV, Datoga informants would hence instantly debate not sex but a troubled procreative domain as indicated in what is said below:

I think there is no one who knows this, not even one, how this illness [AIDS] is. Normally among Datoga matters of birthing (*jeata*) are hidden/secret. When Udameselgwa [the major fertility spirit] is receiving a child at home there is no one who talks loudly about it. But this illness is not like birthing; it does not fit to be hidden. If it does not respect the sphere of Udameselgwa, which she herself respects so highly, why should we fear [to speak out]? OK, I will tell the women who are here, my mother is here, and even Udameselgwa is here. She will also assist in telling people about this matter. [Iyeang'ulay ng'asheanji sida manala ea dea mandana. Gidurji geyoni eawojusu cara jeata aba Datoga gefunya, ideapishi Udameselgwa aba gah, cara sisi ajuri mandana. Geyoni cara jeata mawurji, mudu efunyeday. Imudu ghowal howa eajisi awali Udameselgweani heda Udameselgwa eajisi ea mebadina, canni geyi gajeweyini gaygudu ghowali naha? Basi, anini gaydayesha gheamadisua bea hijini, gwanda hiji iya ak gwanda hiji Udameselgwa. Eara ninyi gayghommu gwarukida ng'asheanji.]

The 'sphere of Udameselgwa' epitomises an idealised domain of marital sexual and procreative relations where proper conception takes place within the extended group of potential procreative partners. Implied here is that sexual relations that cause AIDS are not part of this proper but muted sphere secretly guided and guarded by Udameselgwa, but are infertile and deadly and should be talked of loudly.

The focus on proper and respectable Datoga procreation requires additional commentary when invoked in the talk on HIV/AIDS. The concern with respect (*mureeda*) is always implied when Datoga talk of customary pastoral life. The focus on respect is however brought to the forefront in talk about sex. In discussion of the many and complex institutions that regulate sexual relations, informants invariably said that they are to ensure respectful and fertile Datoga alliances. In discussing AIDS, allusion to a disrespectful (implied: infertile and foreign) sexual sphere was continuously made, as revealed in the short statement made by an older Datoga woman:

This illness (AIDS) they say has no respect, (therefore) don't be afraid to talk to even your child (about it), don't be afraid. It has no respect. You shall tell your male youth, his father shall tell him, as for female youth, you shall tell her. You cannot hide this matter, right [...] things to be hidden, matters to be hidden are those of respect only. This has no respect (AIDS), what kind of respect would that be? [Miyeanyi geyi manda mureda adiwali eara jeptang'u adiwali, manda mureda, gay ruksina cara jepta balleanda, gay gwaruksa ghwani dea huda gay ruksina ang'ing'i. Memusa gideaba gayduksina nimi [...] dukusinameda jea dukusina, ng'asheanda gedukisa gita siwali mida muredanyini. Nih ea manda mureda, ha gwanda muredeaba enu?]

One work by Heald (1995) can enhance our understanding of Datoga concern with respect. She interestingly proposes that East African cultures can be dubbed 'respect cultures'. She writes:

[...] I am going to propose that many – if not most – East African cultures can be dubbed 'respect cultures', and that the respect draws its power from that accorded to sexuality. There is a preoccupation with the control of sexuality, so that the controls surrounding sex, and the self-control that one must exercise with regard to it, epitomise social and moral behaviour. Coitus is fraught with danger, circumscribed by taboo and subject to restrictions unknown in the West (Heald 1995:492).

The Datoga material presented above substantiates Heald's contention with its immense preoccupation with sexual morality. Sexual control is located at the core of Datoga social and moral reasoning. The dramatic processes of transformation in the sphere of sexuality are however not equally well accounted for in Heald's work. She obviously recognises the processes of transformation in customary sexual norms and practices, but does not appear to take well enough into account the rapid transformation of customary sexual regulation, and how transformations themselves may at least partly account for the present obsession with sexual morality. It is to such transition in sexual norms and practice that we shall now turn.

When People 'Copulate like Dogs'

Increased alcohol consumption and the related night time youth dances (*gerona*), foreign sexual practices conceived as utterly immoral – such as the availability of girls providing sex in community centres – Datoga school-children's refusal to adhere to Datoga regulations for boyfriend-girlfriend pacts etc., are obvious examples of the ongoing transition. The steadily increasing number of girls who become pregnant out of wedlock is causing particular unease. Young Datoga moreover increasingly run off and disregard clan or generation-set affiliation norms and parents' marital partner choice. The concern with a vanishing sexual morality is powerfully revealed in Datoga talk about HIV/AIDS:

It is said that if this illness enters a location like Dang'eyda, it will not leave behind people, not even one. If this illness is transmitted via sex, then these days sex is not like before. It takes place without a plan – people behave like the puppies of dogs. A person (no longer) 'eats things' (has sex) with a plan. Before there used to be a plan, and there used to be borders and now there are none. Have you heard how he says that the 'door' of Datoga had a ladder? These days even the Barabaig³ have no ladder mother, matters have become just a coupling around. Now, won't people all die? It is true. Indeed it is finished. [Ak geyi geyoni iyabisa heayeda urji Deang'eyda ea mayghwabuti sida eara. Isinyasa geyoni luludayedda, deaba gweanyi ea mudu gawurji deaba ghay. Nih hiseadayeamumeda, bunedda nibeshigwani ha ea gawurji bunedda dayega gudedda. Sida mudu ghwaga gida descheda. Haleanjeni ghay gwanda descheda, gwanda monghajega ea mudu gwanda. Gwacha aba ghuta balleanda miyinyi gidecaba Barbayiga ghay gwanda robotka? Gweanyi mudu gwanda eara emeni was Barbayigeani robotiga iya, gida sinyighada gabeachi. Asi bunedda ea maygosha? Humwa gil. *Asi niduleani.*]

When reflecting on the experienced boom in immoral sexual conduct, Datoga informants point to the bad influence of outsiders (*bunga, emojiga*) on Datoga culture. Iraqw bring in the night time dances, Swahili people come with foreign brews and drinking patterns, pregnancies out of wedlock among Datoga girls are linked to the sexual transgressions of teachers in public schools, while disregard for parental partner-decisions is related to official Tanzanian courts' rulings in favour of the complaining girl or couple. The manner in which the Datoga see the dangers of HIV as brought into their communities – referred to as 'the house of God' – through immoral mingling with dangers coming from the outside, is indicated in the following statement by a Datoga woman:

The way of protecting ourselves is listening to God who said 'close the door' (to the outside), and I shall come and help you. If you do not shut the door, things will enter inside. But the house is God's. OK, we shall protect ourselves, let us stop 'eating big' (having sexual relations with outsiders). You my relatives: Do soften this thing! We all agree! [Furitecaba geadhi ghay cara Aseta gwayesha jaba doshta ak abeda wetang'u gaydahidu, imijaba doshita gayghafka ghoh haleanjajega, nea ghwanyawa gheda ea danyi. Ak ghwanung efura geat, genung'wadi agischedayida jea eyeagischeda aba jaronung'weaka. Ea emeda ghaheanya eaniyeac ascheweasa nih. Gemasha!]

Ultimately, however, the rapid transformation of proper sexuality and patterns of procreation is not blamed on others, but is talked about as immoral Datoga conduct that poses a fundamental threat to the continuation of Datoga life. There are some examples that to Datoga reveal such immoral conduct in particularly powerful ways. Schooled and Christian Datoga women's increasing disregard for the leather skirt (*hanang'wenda*), the customary female attire which is loaded with sexual and procreative meaning, is by many perceived as a particularly disturbing example of immoral conduct. The skirt was handed to Datoga women by the spirit Udameselgwa in order to ensure fecundity in Datoga houses. Breach of respectful sexual and procreative norms implied by the disregard for the skirt is read as an omen of a kind of moral disruption that threatens the health, wealth and fertility of the Datoga at large.

In a parallel way the discontinuation of the generation set institution (*seygeeda*) gives us an indication of the dynamics at work. The denunciation of the institution is talked of wholly as a horrible consequence of disrespectful sexual conduct. The argument goes as follows: New generation sets cannot be initiated as one can no longer be sure to find Datoga who have not had an illicit sexual union, and hence can safely receive the sacred butter anointment *required* for the initiation ceremony of new sets. If new sets are initiated with 'impure' participants, God's anger will cause death and infertility throughout the Datoga community. Hence an institution, which in and of itself was to ensure the proper splicing of people, is discontinued due to the increase in illicit sexual relations. The gradual discontinuation of this institution is read as another realisation of the prophecy that people will start to couple like dogs and that an end to Datoga life is approaching.

Local/Global HIV Discourse Encounters

It is time to return to the point of departure, and with the newly acquired knowledge on Datoga concern with proper sex and procreation, address encounters between Datoga discourse and HIV prevention messages. From a Datoga point of view both form and content of the discourse appear to be foreign. First of all it operates with an unacceptably direct talk of sex. Its focus on safe and unsafe practices such as 'wet' and 'dry' sex, detailed demonstrations of condom use etc., contrasts starkly with the secrecy and highly symbolic language employed to discuss sexual matters among the Datoga. We may recall the informant who talked of the 'hidden' or 'secret' 'sphere of Udameselgwa'. Secondly the focus of the HIV prevention messages is perceived as confusing, and is challenging to interpret and act upon. The main focus of the AIDS campaigns is placed on the sexual transmission of the disease, and the ABC of HIV/AIDS 'sexual Abstinence', 'Be faithful' and 'use Condom' makes up the three main pillars. A focus is also placed on how HIV may not be transmitted, referring to conduct such as talking or eating together, sleeping in the same bed, shaking hands and so on, as a part of the general information on transmission as well as part of attempts to confront the HIV stigma. These main themes were addressed thoroughly with Datoga in the context of the making of the film.

There are some interesting overlapping concerns between the national/global discourse on HIV/AIDS and local Datoga thought and practice:

- The concern with the potential dangers of sex: revealed in the concept of the danger related to sex with several partners (global), and in the notion of potential hazards of sexual intercourse particularly with people classified as 'outsiders' and with Datoga who travel a lot (local).
- The concern with sexual morality: particularly revealed in the elaborate notions of 'faithfulness' (global) or 'respectability' (local).
- The consequences of illicit sexual relations: revealed in terms of illness and death (global) and in terms of pollution, infertility, and illness and death primarily as part of spiritual punishment (local).

The apparent commonalities do however remain fairly shallow. Let us for a moment dwell on each of the three central preventive principles commonly focused upon by AIDS campaigns and assess Datoga understanding of them.

The concept of *abstinence* is hardly unknown for Datoga men and women who from childhood have been told about the disaster of children born 'without a name'. The substantial restrictions on premarital sexual intercourse, along with the many practices that endorse romantic youthful alliances make sexual abstinence, or rather, abstinence from coitus, a practice of which large numbers of adult Datoga have had harsh personal experience. Such a concept of abstinence is however perceived to have little relevance in the married population, except in the sense of avoiding sex with individuals from non-acceptable categories.

A far more problematic point is encountered in the second principle, the principle endorsing *faithfulness to one partner*. As we have seen, not only is marriage polygamous, but a large number of married women and men have potential sexual rights to each other through the *rata* and *orjetedameyda* institutions, as described above. A potential marital sexual partner is, as we have discussed, also a potential and acceptable procreative partner, and may be the genitor (biological father) of future children. As was noted, this network of potential sexual partners is a key feature in Datoga social organisation knitting people and lineages together in close bonds of mutuality and exchange. The concept of faithfulness to one sexual partner is thus problematic both with regard to the official marital partner and in terms of the potential sexual rights of the wives of the husband's 'brother/s'. Faithfulness is relevant only in the sense that an individual is to keep to an acceptable category of partners, and not in the sense of sticking to one single individual throughout life. This does not mean that the concept of one wife is entirely new; most Datoga will be acquainted with the Christian concept of one lifetime partner, but in the Datoga understanding it remains an awkward notion.

The use of a *condom* is however an even more foreign concept. Indeed, as we saw in the introductory dialogue, the whole idea of preventing procreative fluids from passing between procreative bodies (within the recognised categories) is a contradiction in terms. Potential risks implied in the exchange of sexual fluids are certainly recognised, but the notion of sexual intercourse without the linked notion of potential conception is highly alien. The relevance of the condom can be comprehended with regards to the highly controversial sexual relations with outside girls who sell sex in district centres where conception is obviously not the aim. Such sexual relations between Datoga men and non-Datoga girls are feared, not the least by Datoga women, for the spreading of polluting substances. In the discussion on condoms and their use, Datoga informants also related that knowledge and access to the condom could potentially lead to sexual intercourse with unmarried Datoga girls, as it would facilitate desired sexual relations while hindering the hazardous consequence of undesired pregnancies. This scenario would facilitate previously prohibited sexual practices rather than add safety to already existing and potentially dangerous sexual practices. The frustration related to a similar notion of opening up for the possibility of accepting sex with groups where intimate relations have customarily been condemned, was revealed in the opening discussion. A Datoga asked in an irritated tone if the HIV message to be revealed was that it was better to have 'condom sex' with an Iramba – a neighbouring people with whom the Datoga have a strained relationship – than having proper sex with a brother's wife.

Troubled Consequences of New Sexual Scenarios

The above section indicates how concepts of sexual abstinence, faithfulness, and the use of condoms appear to be difficult to grasp in the sense aimed at in AIDS campaigns. They easily become incomprehensible or meaningless for a person adhering to Datoga custom. We need to establish that we are obviously not dealing with a 'culture' or 'people' resistant to change. As was detailed above, Datoga custom has undergone radical transitions in recent history, and has adjusted to these in the most diverse spheres of life. We saw however that transitions taking place within the 'procreative domain' were experienced as threatening the core of social structure and moral norms in a manner nourishing anxious Datoga concerns with the continuation of their lineages. Indeed, the content of HIV prevention campaigns with demands for dramatic and often non-comprehensible sexual transformation in a particularly powerful way highlights Datoga concerns with the threats to their own future, while leaving them with little possibility for addressing the situation in a productive way.

What moreover appears through the discourse on HIV/AIDS is the manner in which the messages that are presented sustain historically established notions of Datoga primitivity. The particular local/global encounter we have addressed in this essay is, when painted in broad strokes, a Christian/biomedical/rural Tanzanian encounter with local Datoga custom. In these meetings Datoga preoccupation with sexual morality largely vanishes, and is replaced by a focus on antiquated norms and permissive sexual practices of 'pagans'.⁶ Expressions used about the Datoga in the discussion at the beginning of the paper such as their being 'in the dark', not 'understanding anything', that they must stop following 'old beliefs and customs', and start 'to live respectfully' are neither part of UNAIDS produced or locally produced HIV preventive messages, but reveal a kind of degrading language commonly employed when the Datoga are talked about by neighbouring peoples and Datoga who have removed themselves from Datoga custom. The focus on primitive and promiscuous sexual practices of the Datoga are in HIV discourse spelled out in a way which plays directly into colonial and Tanzanian development discourse with well established dichotomies such as developed/underdeveloped, modern/primitive, civilised/savage, clean/dirty, healthy/unhealthy.

The language employed however has dimensions beyond the humiliating. Underlying global HIV intervention campaigns lies a forceful memorandum that reads 'comply or die'. Until sufficiently cheap medicines fully enter the world markets, people living with HIV in poor parts of the world will not be allowed to survive. These discourse encounters as such epitomise global power relations; global HIV discourse is hence a discourse on life or death. Haydom Lutheran Hospital, which is located at the centre of the area in question, has become one of the first hospitals in Tanzania that offers antiretroviral treatment, which implies that HIV-infected individuals can receive medicines. But the uncertainties involved in the complex of challenges related to complicated

life-time treatment for increasingly large numbers of individuals are still not fully grasped, and until a cheap vaccine is developed, effective prevention regimes remain the true challenge.

Rather than blame the incomprehensible messages of AIDS campaigns, the Datoga will, however, most probably ultimately blame their own disrespectful conduct and the fulfilment of Saigilo's prophecy for their increasing illness and death, a scenario which in most fundamental ways remains at odds with global HIV prevention messages. They will say the same thing as a Datoga woman who in a discussion a couple of months back stated: 'These days we are dying because respect has come to an end' (*Siku hizi tunakufa kwa ajili ya heshima kwisha*).

Concluding Remarks

Espen Schaaning (1997) has commented on the immense speed at which sexuality today is constructed and reconstructed as well as on the attempts to streamline and globalise it. This is not the least powerfully revealed in global attempts to confront the HIV pandemic. However, unless these campaigns fundamentally recognise that sexuality materialises within a large range of heterogeneous practices with diverse geographical, historical, institutional and social origins and let such heterogeneity inform their messages, these campaigns will continue to have relatively limited impact in the areas of the world that need them the most. A Datoga pointed to this challenge in the following way:

We Barabaig, we are different from all other tribes. Simply different among all these tribes. Now among those tribes -- the Iraqw neighbours, Wanyaturu who live close, and the Iramba who are not far from here. Even the Rangi are here in the east, we live with them, and Fioni as well -- all of them. Among those tribes, if you lend me your ears. There are some among you who speak the languages of those peoples. Some have visited these places and seen them with their own eyes. Among all those tribes that I have called out, is there one that has *rata* [sexual rights of in-laws]? [Aseasa ghayi Barbayigea. Gewurjewi geat ghamnewa aba jedeaba emojusu seanini Gewurjewi geadi. Aba jedeaba emojusu seanini. Ghamnewa aba emojiga ghang'edewa Nayagida gescheyewi, Neadega sukwanji, Yeambi earada ea neki. Ea Reangida sukwanji ea ghayecawa nea gendeawa seani ea Goburega suh gendeawi seani. Aba jeda emojiga iyoleydit cara agoga ghanewa gwanda sida iyi ita emojiga ea gea nihita ea gea nidah. Emeda mida rata aba jeda emeni gwanda?]

Rather than generalised HIV prevention messages, attention needs to be directed at what is at stake in concrete local contexts. Only when health-promoting messages are phrased in a respectful and culturally sensitive manner, and when they are moulded to draw upon strengths and not only weaknesses inherent in concrete local contexts, can they be expected to become effective. Indeed, unless the communication about HIV/AIDS takes the cultural contexts that shape risk behaviour fundamentally into account, such campaigns will continue to fall on deaf ears, and may cause more rather than less suffering in many local African communities.

Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks go to all the Datoga who willingly took part in the GeGCA-NUFU film project, to the Norwegian Council for Higher Education's Programme for Development Research and Education (NUFU) for funding the project, and to the University of Dar es Salaam for providing the research permit.

Notes

1. This dialogue is based on notes taken during informal discussion in the early phase of the making of the film. All other references to Datoga statements are quoted from tape-recorded/filmed Datoga meetings where HIV/AIDS and its transmission were discussed. This latter talk is presented in a ritualised, but flexible speech form common among Datoga and Iraqw peoples in this area of Tanzania (*moshta ghwooda*), hence the somewhat formal character of the talk.
2. It should therefore be emphasised that this is no attempt to address the content of or to evaluate local AIDS campaigns. This paper merely addresses Datoga discourse on central messages employed in Tanzanian AIDS campaigns campaigns that to a large extent have adopted the messages developed by UNAIDS and formulated in terms of an ABC: A=Abstinence, B=Be faithful, C=Condom as reflected on in the process of the film production. The larger ethnographic material on which this paper is based has been collected through some three years of ethnographic fieldwork among the Datoga of Hanang/Mbulu (Blystad 1995, 1999, 2000; Blystad and Rekdal 2004; Rekdal and Blystad 1999).
3. The programme is funded by NUFU (Norwegian Council for Higher Education's Programme for Development Research and Education) and is a cross-disciplinary programme with history, anthropology, sociology, nursing, social psychology/education and medicine represented.
4. 'Mandatory' in the sense that youth and even parents may be sanctioned in cases when the young fail to be present. Many Christian or schooled Datoga youths do, however, not attend these meetings at all.
5. Barabaig is the largest subsection of Datoga, the subsection Datoga regarded as least influenced by outsiders.
6. When asked about their religious affiliation, non-Christian Datoga will refer to themselves as 'pagans'.

References

- Beidelman, T. O. 1997. *The Cool Knife: Imagery of Gender, Sexuality, and Moral Education in Kaguru Initiation Ritual*, Washington, Series in Ethnographic Inquiry, Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Blystad, A. 1995. 'Peril or Penalty: AIDS in the Context of Social Change among the Barabaig', in K.-I. Klepp, P.M. Biswalo and A. Talle, (eds.), *Young People at Risk: Fighting AIDS in Northern Tanzania*, Oslo, Scandinavian University Press, pp. 86-106.

- Blystad, A. 1999. "Dealing with Men's Spears": Datoga Pastoralists Combating Male Intrusion on Female Fertility', in H. L. Moore, T. Sanders and B. Kaare, (eds.), *Those Who Play with Fire: Gender, Fertility and Transformation in East and Southern Africa*, London, The Athlone Press, pp. 187-223.
- Blystad, A. 2000. 'Precarious Procreation: Datoga Pastoralists at the Late 20th Century', Dr. Polit. Thesis, University of Bergen, Norway.
- Blystad, A. and Rekdal, O. B. (eds.) 2004. 'Datoga', *Encyclopedia of Medical Anthropology: Health and Illness in the World's Cultures*, vol. 2, 2 vols, New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
- Broch-Due, V. 1990. 'Cattle Are Companions, Goats Are Gifts: Animals and People in Turkana Thought', in G. Palsson, (ed.), *From Water to Worldmaking*, Uppsala, The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies.
- Broch-Due, V. 1999. 'Creation and the Multiple Female Body: Turkana Perspectives on Gender and Cosmos', in H. L. Moore, T. Sanders and B. Kaare, (eds.), *Those Who Play with Fire: Gender, Fertility and Transformation in East and Southern Africa*, London, The Athlone Press, pp. 153-84.
- Burton, J. W. 1991. 'Representations of the Feminine in Nilotic Cosmologies', in A. Jacobson-Widding, (ed.), *Body and Space: Symbolic Models of Unity and Division in African Cosmology and Experience*, Stockholm, Almqvist and Wiksell International, pp. 81-98.
- Carey, J. W., Picone-DeCaro, E., Neumann, M. S., Schwartz, D., Easton, D. and St. John, D. C. 2004. 'HIV/AIDS Research and Prevention: Anthropological Contributions and Future Directions', in C. R. Ember and M. Ember, (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Medical Anthropology: Health and Illness in the World's Cultures*, vol. 1, pp. 462-479, New York, Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
- Devisch, R. 1991. 'Symbol and Symptom among the Yaka of Zaire', in A. Jacobson-Widding, (ed.), *Body and Space: Symbolic Models of Unity and Division in African Cosmology and Experience*, Stockholm, Almqvist and Wiksell International, pp. 283-302.
- Devisch, R. 1993. *Weaving the Threads of Life: The Khita Gyn-Ecological Healing Cult among the Yaka*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
- Dushay, R. A., Singer, M., Weeks, M. R., Rohena, L. and Gruber, R. 2001. 'Lowering HIV Risk among Ethnic Minority Drug Users: Comparing Culturally Targeted Intervention to a Standard Intervention', *American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse*, vol. 27, no. 3, pp. 501-524.
- Foucault, M. 2001. *Seksualitetens Historie 2: Bruken av Nytelsene*, Oslo, Exil. (Original title: *L'usage des Plaisirs. L'histoire de la Sexualité*. Tome II).
- Heald, S. 1995. 'The Power of Sex: Some Reflections on the Caldwells' "African Sexuality" Thesis', *Africa*, vol. 65, no. 4, pp. 489-505.
- Herbert, E. W. 1993. *Iron, Gender and Power: Rituals of Transformation in African Societies, African Systems of Thought*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press.

- Hinderaker, S. G., Kruger, C., Olsen, B. E., Naman, N., Bergsjø, P. and Olsen, O. H. E. 2001. 'Low HIV-Seroprevalence in Pregnant Women in a Rural Area in Tanzania', *Acta Obstetrica et Gynecologica Scandinavica*, vol. 80, no. 12, pp. 1152-3.
- Jacobson-Widding, A., and van Beek, W. (eds.) 1990a, *The Creative Communion: African Folk Models of Fertility and the Regeneration of Life*, Uppsala, Almqvist and Wiksell International.
- Jacobson-Widding, A., and van Beek, W. 1990b. 'Introduction: Chaos, Order and Communion in the Creation and Sustenance of Life', in A. Jacobson-Widding and W. van Beek, (eds.), *The Creative Communion: African Folk Models of Fertility and the Regeneration of Life*, Uppsala, Almqvist and Wiksell International, pp. 15-43.
- Kisanga Commission. 1993. 'Report of the Commission on Violations of Human Rights in NAFCO Wheat Farms Hanang District', Mimeo (Government Commission), Dar es Salaam.
- Kowalewski, M. R., Henson, K. D. and Longshore, D. 1997. 'Rethinking Perceived Risk and Health Behaviour: A Critical Review of HIV Prevention Research', *Health Education and Behaviour*, vol. 24, no. 3, pp. 313-25.
- Kratz, C. A. 1994. *Affecting Performance: Meaning, Movement, and Experience in Okiek Women's Initiation*, Washington, Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Lane, C. R. 1991. 'Wheat at What Cost? CIDA and the Tanzania-Canada Wheat Program', in J. Swift and B. Tomlinson, (eds.), *Conflicts of Interest: Canada and the Third World*, Toronto, Between the Lines, pp. 133-60.
- Swift and B. Tomlinson. 1996. *Pastures Lost: Barabaig Economy, Resource Tenure, and the Alienation of Their Land in Tanzania*, ACTS Drylands Research Series, No. 7, Nairobi, Initiatives Publishers.
- Moore, H. 1999. 'Introduction: Gender, Symbolism and Praxis: Theoretical Approaches', in H. Moore, T. Sanders and B. Kaare, (eds.), *Those Who Play with Fire: Gender, Fertility and Transformation in East and Southern Africa*, London, Athlone Press, pp. 3-37.
- Nations, M. K. and de Souza, M. A. 1997. 'Umbanda Healers as Effective AIDS Educators: Case Control Study in Brazilian Urban Slums', *Tropical Doctor*, vol. 27, no. suppl. 1, pp. 60-6.
- Parker, R. 2001. 'Sexuality, Culture, and Power in HIV/AIDS Research', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 30, pp. 163-79.
- Rekdal, O. B. and Blystad, A. 1999. '“We Are as Sheep and Goats”: Iraqw and Datooga Discourses on Fortune, Failure, and the Future', in D. M. Anderson and V. Broch-Due, (eds.), *The Poor Are Not Us: Poverty and Pastoralism in Eastern Africa*, Oxford, James Currey, pp. 125-46.
- Sanders, T. 1998. 'Making Children, Making Chiefs: Gender, Power and Ritual Legitimacy', *Africa*, vol. 68, no. 2, pp. 238-62.
- Schaaning, E. 1997. *Vitenskap som skapt viten: Foucault og historisk praksis*, Oslo, Spartacus Forlag AS.

Sieff, D. F. 1995. 'The Effects of Resource Availability on the Subsistence Strategies of Datoga Pastoralists of North West Tanzania', Ph.D. Thesis, University of Oxford.

Sumartojo, E. 2000. 'Structural Factors in HIV Prevention: Concepts, Examples, and Implications for Research', *AIDS*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 3, 10.

Astrid Blystad

Department of Public Health and Primary Health Care

The University of Bergen

Norway.