

# Commission on Nomadic Peoples

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Nomadic Peoples, Number 10, April 1982

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'OPERATION IMPARNATI': THE SEDENTARIZATION OF  
THE PASTORAL MAASAI IN TANZANIA

by

D.K. Ndagala

In this short paper I shall examine the resettlement of pastoral Maasai in Tanzania as a part of the nation-wide exercise carried out in the mid-seventies. Though limited in scope it is an attempt to contribute to the literature on sedentarization of nomadic peoples which has been very sparse (Salzman 1980: 1).

The establishment of villages in which the people lived together and worked together for the good of all had since 1967 been considered crucial in rural socialist transformation. By 1970, however, it became clear that the pace at which these villages were being established was so slow that it would take a very long time, and be unnecessarily expensive to supply the basic social services to the rural population in their scattered settlements. It was thus argued that since every citizen had a right to enjoy the services provided by the government, and since it was easier and cheaper to provide such services to people who were permanently settled in dwellings which are close to each other, resettlement programmes should be designed so that all the people would live in villages. Initially, unlike the ujamaa villages programme in which people were to be persuaded and not forced, the new programme required the people to live together in permanent settlements, with the freedom to work or not to work communally. While the first programme emphasized communal working and living, the new programme emphasized permanent and proximate habitations.

In 1971 Dodoma Region took the lead in mobilising all its people into villages. Mwalimu Nyerere personally and physically participated in this resettlement exercise. The speed and vigour with which this work was undertaken earned it the name 'Operation Dodoma'. Operation Dodoma was followed by 'Operation Kigoma' which was equally comprehensive. Following the apparently successful completion of the above operations in terms of the numbers settled, CCM, the ruling Party, ruled in 1974 that living together in villages would no longer be optional for the regions. Resettlement operations were to be undertaken by all the regions, and the end of 1976 was fixed as the time by which all the people in the rural areas were to have moved into the villages. The whole country was immediately set into one of the most hectic moments since independence. Every region was bent on beating the deadline. Maasailand, hitherto excluded from the ujamaa villages programmes, was no exception under 'Operation Arusha', as the resettlement programme came to be known in Arusha region. The Maasai were excluded from the ujamaa villages programme because, like other pastoralists, they were considered to be a problem by the policy makers (Nyerere; 1968: 140). Efforts were thus put on groups believed to be easier to deal with, the cultivators. In the new programme which was compulsory, the Maasai could not be left out since they were said to lack both permanent and proximate dwellings. The Maasai case, however, does not fall in any one of the models provided by Salzman

(1980: 11) although it has some characteristics of the «defeat and degradation» and «failure and fall-away» models. Neither Maasai nor other pastoral groups were singled out for settlement. Like all other Tanzanians who were settled it was not out of fear but out of the belief by the authorities that permanent, proximate dwellings would hasten the country's socio-economic development.

### Preparations

The directive to resettle people in villages was received with varied feelings in many parts of the region. In areas of private land ownership those with plenty of land were threatened by the directive, while the landless rejoiced since they hoped to secure at least an area on which they could produce their subsistence without being harassed by the land-lords. The directive was issued at a time when in Maasailand the people were already being organised for Ranching Associations. The differences and relationships between the villages and the associations had to be clarified. Some individuals went around spreading false information to the people. At several meetings, for example, the pastoralists claimed that they had heard that the resettlement programme aimed at taking over their pastoral land and handing it to cultivators. This lie instilled stronger fear in areas which had not been registered as Ranching Associations.<sup>1</sup> In some areas the people believed that 'the government wanted all the people to be wajamaa by force since persuasion had given little results'. And to some, ujamaa meant the sharing of everything including wives and children.<sup>2</sup>

In the light of the foregoing, the preparatory period became crucial in Maasailand for winning people's participation. And, after all, the villages were meant for them. As part of the preparation land was to be surveyed in order to establish its size, and to identify the flood-free areas on which to build the permanent houses. The regional authorities in Arusha organised seminars which involved regional and district leaders to discuss the various stages which were to be taken to ensure a smooth implementation of the Operation. At the end of the regional seminars it was agreed that before they were resettled seminars be organized at district, divisional and ward levels in order to educate the people on the significance of living together in permanent settlements. Upon completion of these seminars the people were to be involved in selecting sites for their settlements with the experts as advisors. Thereafter, each family was to be given a plot of at least 1/2 acre for housing. Apart from these general guidelines, each district was to draw up its action plan including all the necessary details.

Unlike other districts in which the Operation was known under individual district names such as Operation Mbulu, Operation Hanang, etc; the resettlement programme in Maasailand was termed 'Operation Imparnati'. The Maasai word imparnati (sing. emparnat) means «permanent habitations». Permanence of habitation was emphasized here probably because of the belief in several quarters that one of the main snags in Maasai development then was nomadism. This, of course, as mentioned elsewhere (Ndagala 1974, 1978; Hatfield 1977) is a misconception of pastoral problems. The Maasai have been undergoing sedentarization for several decades so that Operation Imparnati was just an acceleration and completion of that process. The two pasture rotational grazing system has at times been confused with 'nomadism', which in government

circles was seen as a «primitive», unpredictable way of earning a living. Given the level of technology, however, seasonal movements were a necessary adjustment to the seasons by the pastoralists who maintained a permanent base near permanent water supplies.

The registration of the people in Maasailand was relatively very difficult due to the size of the area, and the seasonal variations in the distribution of population. The special implementation teams registered some of the people in their rainy-season grazing areas only to find out later that they, in fact, had already been registered by the families back at their dry-season (permanent) habitations. Poor communication made the exercise even more difficult because it took a long time to get the necessary information to the local leaders from the district headquarters.

### Resettlement

The resettlement of the people physically started in 1975. The boma a circular cluster of houses belonging to one or several households was adopted as the basic settlement unit, and each could have as many as ten families. Individuals were free to choose the people with whom they wanted to share bomas. Members of each boma-grouping were allocated a plot on which to construct the boma, and were required to complete the construction of its houses as soon as was considered appropriate by the implementation teams. The interval between bomas was to be 1/2 a kilometre with the exception of a few localities in which the bomas could be situated closer to each other.

There were very many difficulties to attend to during this phase. Assistance ranging from building materials and transportation of personal effects to food, was demanded by some people. Some were genuine demands while others were mere delay tactics. We were told, however, that, all things being equal, the pastoralists were easier to deal with than the cultivators.<sup>3</sup> Where the settlement-site was within easy reach of water, and had good grazings, the pastoralists lost no time in moving to new plots for their bomas. This is due to a number of reasons. First, unlike cultivators the Maasai have their fields on the hoof so that they can transfer them from one place to another at short notice. Secondly, the possession of limited consumer goods (Ndagala: 1978) made their movement to their new sites easier since they had very little to transport. Consequent to these reasons the Maasai generally cost the government very little in terms of transportation because they moved most of the personal effects by donkeys. Moreover, the whole exercise did not mean real change in the Maasai settlement, but was often, apart from increasing spatial proximity, a re-arrangement of existing bomas into lines around existing facilities. This is because the people were already living near or around these facilities.

A look at Monduli Juu village five years after it was established under the Operation gives us some indication as to how the villages were responding to the policy of socialism and self reliance.<sup>4</sup>

### Monduli Juu

The village is on the northern slopes of Komolonik Mountain and covers an area of 78,208 acres. It falls into three distinctive localities

namely Emairete, Enguiki and Elwai although the latter is officially said to belong to Emairete. Elwai locality includes the Elwai plains and Tarasero peak. Emairete includes the eastern slopes of Komolonik and the Emairete crater. Enguiki which borders the Monduli Forest Reserve up the mountain is the highest of the three localities. High up on the mountain are a number of springs while the plains and valleys have no water except the new Monduli Juu Dam, and several wells in Emairete crater which belong to individual clans.

The village enjoys a wide range of ecological features and presents a wide view of some of the surrounding areas. When facing northward from Monduli Juu Dairy Farm in Enguiki locality, Kitumbeine peak stands provocatively from the Rift Valley below. Gelai Mountain peeps on the right from behind Kitumbeine. On the north-east stands Longido peak with its conspicuous rock pinnacle clearly visible over forty miles away. In the northwest can be seen Oldoinyo Lengai and Kerimasi peaks while Essimingur mountain can be seen beyond Purko in the southwest. On a clear day the western wall of the Rift Valley can be seen very clearly with its rugged face from Mto wa Mbu to Engaruka with the Ngorongoro highlands dominating the background.

The Monduli-Loliondo road passes through Emairete and Enguiki localities leaving Elwai in isolation. There is no bus service between the village and Monduli town sixteen kilometres away. Donkeys and occasional hired vehicles are the main means of transportation between the two points. Other facilities are located in favour of Emairete and Enguiki. Each of the two localities has a dip, a shop and a school. While Enguiki houses the village dispensary and the Dairy Farm, Emairete houses the milk collection centre. The relative ease of transportation and the proximity to facilities seem to have an influence on the development of the respective localities.

#### Boma Structure

Out of 65,600 people in Monduli District in 1980, Monduli Juu village had 2,910 people living in 537 houses clustered in 56 bomas. In 1974 the village had 1,359 people living in 76 bomas. The boma as a settlement unit has survived the operation, but it has undergone considerable transformation. The traditional thorn fence which used to enclose all the houses belonging to a given boma has disappeared. Houses are built around livestock enclosures which are now built with very strong poles. As shown in Table 1 only 4.5 percent of all houses in the village are traditional Maasai houses, ngajijik omudiok. Traditional houses have mostly been replaced by Waarusha type of house which is circular with walls made of strong wooden poles and plastered with cattle droppings and a thatched roof.

TABLE 1 MONDULI JUU HOUSE TYPES IN 1980

LOCALITY	NO. OF BOMAS	NO. OF HOUSES	NO. OF TRADITIONAL HOUSES	NO. OF IRON ROOFS	AVERAGE NO. OF HOUSES/ BOMA	AVERAGE NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS PER BOMA
ELWAI	16	138	13	5	9	5
ENGUIKI	14	213	-	31	15	7
EMAIRETE	26	186	11	14	7	4
TOTAL	56	537	24	50	9.6	5.25

What is noticeable from Table 1 is that the fewer the number of traditional Maasai houses the greater the number of iron roofs. Enguiki with two thirds of the total number of iron roofs in the village has no traditional Maasai houses. As pointed out earlier both Emairete and Enguili are leading in adopting more permanent houses and are easily accessible by road and thus can transport building materials easily apart, from being more open to outside influence. Moreover the leadership of the village is concentrated in these same areas. For example both the Member of Parliament for the District and the Chairman of the village government live in Enguiki while the village Secretary and the ward Secretary live in Emairete.

TABLE 2 AVERAGE FAMILIES PER BOMA AND PEOPLE PER FAMILY IN MAASAILAND BEFORE OPERATION IMPARNATI

AREA	FAMILY PER BOMA		PEOPLE PER BOMA	
	NON-MAASAI	MAASAI	NON-MAASAI	MAASAI
TALAMAI	-	2.2	-	12.3
ENGARUKA	1.3	2.4	7.4	7.2
KITENDENI	1.4	2.6	7.7	6.6
KOMOLONIK	1.3	2.2	12.1	9.2
TINGATINGA	1.3	2.7	6.6	5.3
LONGIDO	1.3	2.5	7.2	5.3
NABERERA	1.1	3.0	6.3	7.3
SHAMBARAI	1.6	2.6	4.8	8.1
MANYARA	-	3.4	-	8.5
OVERALL-ALL AVERAGE	1.4	2.5	6.5	7.8

Source: Adopted from Hatfield and Kuney, 1976.

Although the Maasai boma was shrinking while maintaining its basic characteristics, the process of shrinkage seems to have stopped in Monduli Juu after the Operation. Table 2 places the average number of families at 2.2 for Komolonik Ranching Association to which Monduli Juu village belonged before the Operation. The average number of households per boma five years after the Operation, as shown in Table 1, was 5.25. The household here is taken to include a man, his wife or wives and unmarried children.

There are variations in the average number of households between the individual localities of the village. Elwai, for example, has an average of 5 households while Enguiki and Emairete have an average of 7 and 4 households per boma respectively. This may have something to do with the size and layout of the localities. Emairete has the best layout for boma construction. And inspite of the fact that the distance between one boma and another is 1/2 a kilometre there is still plenty of room for new bomas. Steepslopes, ravines and valleys, the suitability of the soil for agriculture, and the fact that the locality itself is small necessitate intensive utilization of land in Enguiki. The 14 bomas of Enguiki have a

total of 213 houses. These bomas are so close to each other that in some instances the distance between them is just fifty metres or so. The average number of households per boma in Enguiki is 7. The geographical differences between the localities are thus reflected by the boma size. In both Elwai and Emairete the major bond which brought individual households into the respective bomas is friendship. In Enguiki members of the respective bomas were mainly brought together by kinship.

Throughout Monduli Juu the bomas reflect the permanence of settlement. For example, together with the strong poles with which livestock enclosures are built, hedges and trees are being planted around enclosures for reinforcement and shade. This change from temporary to permanent structures has affected the traditional division of labour and the relations of production. The new type of house demands the muscle and skills beyond those possessed by women who are traditionally the house builders in Maasai community. Today house construction tasks are done by men except for plastering and putting grass on the roofs, which are done by women. Both men and women carry out their respective tasks cooperatively at the boma level and when necessary at inter-boma level. House construction is a new area of cooperation among men. Women on the other hand have been relieved of the constant task of repairing houses every rainy season.

#### Economic Position

Monduli Juu is supposed to have livestock keeping as its leading economic activity although agriculture is practised. Every locality has at least of 395 acres for food crop production. These acres are owned and managed by households individually. Households are limited to 3 acres of agricultural land since the basis of the village economy is livestock keeping. The Ward Secretary, who is himself a member of the village explained that agriculture was allowed to make the villagers self-sufficient in food crops, namely maize and beans. This, he continued, would save the village herd from depletion through sales or exchange of stock for food crops.

Data from the 60 people interviewed (Table 3) give some indication on the relationship between the amount and type of agriculture practised in individual localities and the latter's geographical features. Emairete which has more land has a comparatively larger number of ploughs. The proportion for Emairete is approximately one ox-plough to two people while that for Elwai and Enguiki is approximately one ox-plough to three people. The village average number of ploughs per person is 0.35 so that Emairete is above that average. At the same time it has the lowest average number of hoes per person. The location is relatively more suited to ox-ploughs and other forms of mechanised agriculture than the other localities. Enguiki on the other hand has relatively more hoes per person (2.75) than the village average (2.5). This is partly due to the terrain which is more suitable to the hoe.

Although the village average acreage per household is 2.13 the locality average is 2.1 for Elwai, 2.8 for Emairete and 1.6 for Enguiki. It was noted that all able bodied persons in individual households participated in agriculture regardless of sex. Crop production, however, often fails due to rain shortage so that the people continue to depend on their livestock for livelihood.

TABLE 3 DISTRIBUTION OF ACREAGE AND  
AGRICULTURAL TOOLS IN MONDULI JUU 1980

LOCALITY	RESPONDENTS	ACREAGE CULTIVATED	OX-PLOUGHS OWNED	HOES OWNED
ELWAI	19	39.5	6	50
EMAIRETE	21	51	10	51
ENGUIKI	20	37.5	7	53
TOTALS	60	128	23	156
AVERAGE PER RESPONDENT		2.13	0.35	2.5

TABLE 4 LIVESTOCK POSITION IN SAMPLE HOUSEHOLDS

AREA	RESPONDENTS	MONDULI JUU IN 1980 LIVESTOCK OWNED			
		CATTLE	GOATS	SHEEP	DONKEYS
ELWAI	19	388	323	454	54
EMAIRETE	21	602	691	468	42
ENGUIKI	20	281	206	381	60
TOTALS	60	1271	1220	1303	156
		21	20.3	21.6	2.5

The livestock distribution in Monduli Juu village corresponds to the individual locality sizes as shown in Table 4. According to the sample the average livestock units (LSU) per household is 32.25 made up of 21 cattle; 20.3 goats; 21.6 sheep and 2.5 donkeys. The figures show that the average LSU per household changed very little over the 1976 average (33.79 LSU) although the average number of cattle fell (30 cattle in 1976).

The traditional two season grazing schemes is still practiced in Monduli Juu. During the rainy season stock are grazed in the Elwai and Kipongor plains and valleys. The stock owners make use of the rain ponds for watering their stock. Stock retreat gradually from these areas so that at



the height of the dry season grazing is done on top of hills and mountain slopes where grass maintains its freshness for a considerably longer period of time. Wells and mountain springs are used in watering stock during the dry season in Emairete and Enguiki respectively. Of late Elwai depends on the newly constructed Dam which has the capacity to cater for the whole village. This grazing scheme ties in well with the agricultural activities of the village. Most cultivation is done on relatively higher ground which is not grazed till the dry season when all the crops are already harvested.

Livestock ownership in Monduli Juu is very unequal. Table 5 shows that about two thirds of the households own less than 30 L.S.U. which is below the village average.

TABLE 5 OWNERSHIP OF LIVESTOCK UNITS IN

MONDULI JUU IN 1980

LOCALITY	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS IN EACH LIVESTOCK BRACKET								
		0	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	30-40	over 40
ELWAI	19	1	2	5	3	3	-	-	-	5
EMAIRETE	21	3	4	2	1	-	2	-	3	6
ENGUIKI	20	-	2	6	1	4	1	2	-	4
TOTALS	60	4	8	13	5	7	3	2	3	15

When we look at the concrete figures the inequality comes out more sharply. The five respondents in Elwai locality who owned over 40 LSUs had 457.7 LSU out of the 597.6 LSUs owned by the 19 Elwai respondents. And two of the said five respondents owned 298 LSUs. This means that 5 percent of the people owned about 50 percent of the herd. At the same time in the same locality 5 percent of the people had no livestock. Out of the 21 respondents in Emairete three owned no livestock while the remaining 18 owned 899 LSUs. While 9 of the livestock owning respondents had under 30 LSUs and, therefore, below the village average, 3 respondents owned 545 out of the 899 LSUs. All the respondents in Enguiki owned livestock. The four respondents who owned over 40 LSUs had a total of 232.8 LSUs out of the 458.4 LSUs owned by the Enguiki respondents. In short then 15 respondents (25 percent) owned 1362.4 or 70 percent of the total herd (1955 LSUs).

The inequality in stock ownership presented by Monduli Juu is not a result of permanent habitation nor is it new to Maasai Community. Maasai Community has always been unequal except that the surplus produced by the «haves» was shared between members of the community particularly the «have nots» thus making ownership inclusive.<sup>5</sup> Moreover as long as the subsistence needs, the aim of the pastoral mode of production, were fulfilled one would not mind giving a loan or gift to a needy friend, neighbour or relative.

Over the years, however, circumstances have changed. The pastoralists consume large quantities of agricultural goods which they either grow themselves or have to buy with cash. Most people in Monduli Juu produce less crops than their actual needs due to rain failures and vermin. Stock sales become the alternative source of cash with which to buy food. The new type of house which has been adopted by the people of Monduli Juu demands materials, particularly poles which they have to buy. Since agriculture even without its attendant problems is meant for subsistence needs the only dependable source of cash short of selling one's labour is sale of stock. The role of cattle and livestock in general has thus changed. Livestock have increasingly become exchange values so that giving one head of cattle or goat to a friend, for example, means parting with the ability to acquire goods and services which have now become important.

The milk collecting centre mentioned earlier has made milk a cash product and not the subsistence product it used to be. This is the case in spite of the fact that about a third of the respondents indicated that they consumed all the milk they got from their stock. In fact others were buying milk from the village dairy farm to complement their needs. It is no longer easy for the «have nots» to obtain milk from the «haves» freely since the surplus produced is sent to the market. In the evenings at Monduli Juu, for example, several people used to call at the dairy farm to ask for milk for their children in return for their labour. These were people who had few or no cattle and could not get milk from their neighbours because the latter were under an obligation to sell milk to the milk collection centre. The diminishing of hospitality among the «haves» was also pointed out by several participants at a locality meeting in Elwai on December 9th, 1980 and at the village government meeting held at Emairete on December 11th, 1980. The development of commodity relations in respect of livestock and the products thereof has individualised livestock contrary to the pastoral mode of production in which ownership was inclusive.

The potential contradiction between the communal ownership of land and the individual ownership of livestock is likely to surface into an open struggle. This potential contradiction developed along with the monetisation of pastoral production which 'individualised' the ownership of cattle. Hitherto, a surplus produced in one household unit ultimately found its way to the household(s) which had a shortage. The use of communal pastureland by the «haves» therefore, benefitted the «have nots» thus eliminating struggles. Today, however, the surplus produced by the «haves» through the use of the still communally owned pastureland is accumulated or utilised by them for their personal gains. Nobody will prevent the «have nots» from challenging the use of communal pastureland by the «haves» for private gains. In responding to the question on what difficulties faced a man with little or no livestock at all, all the respondents pointed out that such a person had a lot of difficulties. The main problem pointed out is that such a person was unable to obtain sufficient food since he has no stock to sell, he has no cash with which to buy grains and other food items. For the same reason he cannot obtain enough clothing, let alone put up a good house. Moreover, if unmarried he may not get a wife for lack of cattle with which to pay bridewealth. Production and reproduction which were ensured by the communal character of the pastoral mode of production are now individualised and threatened respectively.

Ownership and Control

We pointed out earlier that ownership in pastoral communities was inclusive but distinguishable from control. Although anybody in Maasai Society could own cattle irrespective of age and sex, their control at all levels rested with men particularly elders. The utilization of milk, the fruit of household labour, was controlled by women. It is the women who allocated milk to its various uses and determined the use of the amount which was over and above the family or household subsistence needs. The same was true of Monduli Juu in 1976.

Our investigation in Monduli Juu in 1980 showed change from the traditional pattern. The responses in respect of who controlled livestock and milk in the household are provided in Table 6.

TABLE 6 CONTROL OF LIVESTOCK AND MILK IN  
MONDULI JUU IN 1980

CONTROLLER	PASTORAL ITEM CONTROLLED		
	LIVESTOCK	SUBSISTENCE MILK	CASH FROM SALE OF MILK
FATHER	15	1	11
MOTHER	-	9	-
ELDER BROTHER	3	1	1
HUSBAND	7	3	5
SELF (MEN)	34	11	35
WIFE	-	34	-
TOTAL	59	59	52

One respondent out of our sample of 60 did not answer the questions on the control of livestock and milk. Seven respondents out of the remaining 59 said they sold no milk when asked about control of cash from milk sales. The Table shows that livestock control was entirely in the hands of men. Male respondents who stayed with their fathers or their elder brothers had their livestock controlled by their fathers or elder brothers respectively. Although women were in control of subsistence milk some men had already taken over this role. This is probably due to the need to see to it that as much milk as possible went to the milk collection centre to maximise the cash returns which seem to be completely under the control of men. This change in the role of livestock, particularly cattle and the products thereof, and the change in the division of labour are both transforming the relations of production from their traditional character.

The initial aim of operation Imparnati, that is, the establishment of pastoral villages, has been achieved. Land, the communally owned means of production, has been divided into communal easily manageable units and put in the hands of defined groups for their management and utilization. Nevertheless,

the type of villages aimed at by the country's socialist policy have yet to be formed. Their formation will depend on how efficiently the pastoral variables are balanced in relation to existing circumstances. Monduli Juu is evidence of continuity and change taking place in the villages with respect to pastoral institutions which were crucial to the traditional social organization. The effect of this change to the problem of socialist reconstruction can best be analysed by examining how best the ecological and social factors can be balanced for increased productivity and rising standard of living.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Ranching Associations were established under the Maasai Range Management Act. For more information see Moris, J. (1973; 1975) and Parkipuny in Coulson, A. (eds.) 1979: 136-157.
2. This was raised at several meetings in the form of questions by the pastoralists to the Party and Government functionaries during the preparatory stage.
3. The compliment was given by Ndugu Kissenge, then Area Commissioner of Kileto District, one of the three districts of Maasailand, in his office at Kibaya in August, 1977.
4. These data for Monduli Juu village on which the current analysis is based were collected during the months of November and December, 1980.
5. The question of 'inclusive' ownership is crucial in understanding the impact of the market economy on the pastoral mode of production. Rigby (1978) points out the difference between control and ownership among the Ilparahuyo. Lindström (1977: 13) advocates the presence of «inclusive» ownership because (a) the whole herd exploiting unit subsists from the same herd and (b) a number of people often have rights in the same animals. This traditional reality of Maasai ownership of cattle is summed up by the Maasai saying that, «Meeta enkiteng' olopeny» literally meaning «the cow has no owner». The proverb means that the milk of a cow may be given to anyone (Massek and Sidai 1974: 42).

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