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Two East–African Entrepreneurs

In the course of fieldwork it is common to collect data which is interesting though not central to one’s enquiries. The material presented here is of this sort. It concerns two entrepreneurs whom I encountered in two different areas of East Africa. The first, Simei Okidi, was a villager in Labwor, northern Uganda, when I met him in 1967. He was at that time a middle-aged farmer, and he had given up his business activities. I have not seen him since. He does, however, appear as an informant in John Lamphear’s study of traditional Jie history.¹ The second, Julius Brush, is a business man in Kahama Town, Tanzania. I first met him briefly in 1959, but I only began to get to know him in 1974 when I returned to Unyamwezi for a second spell of fieldwork. I had been staying in Mwanza, and a worker at the hotel there told me to try Brush’s guest house in Kahama. He was sitting outside when I got there, and I asked him if it was true that his was the best place in Kahama. “That remains to be seen” he replied jovially, knowing better than I did that there was not much competition to beat anyway. We have met on many occasions since that time, and we correspond in a desultory fashion. I think of him as a friend, and I believe that he reciprocates this feeling. I last saw him in March 1986. In 1975 he gave me a short account of his life to that time, and I promised to try to see it into print. In part this paper is a late fulfilment of that promise. In presenting this material on these two men, I am conscious of the fact that they themselves are the main source of my information. I have been able to check some of their accounts, but much has no doubt been censored out and I cannot vouch completely for the accuracy of all the detail.

Simei Okidi

The Labwor area lies in the western corner of Karamoja, and it is in many ways a border zone.² Like the Acholi and the Lang’o to their west, the people are Luo-speaking agriculturalists. They have, however, had close ties over a long period with the Jie and some other pastoralists of the Karamajong cluster. Gulliver (1953:95) describes them as the main traders and ironworkers of the region, and it is clear that some of them have penetrated well into Turkana country with iron goods and other merchandise. Jie and others also sometimes come to Labwor to get spears, and the area is in fact the main regional source of supply for these weapons. Labwor livestock holdings have to a substantial extent developed through these trading contacts, which have commonly been built on a basis of friendship links between

¹ Cf. Lamphear (1976:148). Okidi was also one of Ralph Herring’s informants for his Ph.D. study (1974). Lamphear (1972:484) describes him as a good informant. He gives a lower estimate for his age than my data suggests, placing him at 45 at the beginning of the 1970s.

individual Jie and Labwor. Okidi’s trading, which seems to have taken place mainly during the 1940s and 1950s, has to be considered against this background. It appears, however, to have involved a marked expansion beyond normal trading areas and practice.

Okidi was born about 1915, and he was briefly in the army before joining the police for two years, probably in the early 1940s. During his police service he became friendly with two Karimojong’ policemen, Yakobo Lowok (later county chief in Bokora) and Kedia. These men introduced him to trading. They bought five-shilling pieces of cloth and traded them among the Jie and Karimojong’. One piece of cloth would fetch a big he-goat which they could later sell in Soroti (In Teso to the south) for 10 to 15 shillings. After working with these men for a couple of years, Okidi decided he had enough experience to trade under his own steam. He claimed that he was the first to bring this trading pattern to Labwor, the main innovation being the three phase process from cash via trade goods and livestock back to cash.

Okidi formed a partnership with Angelo Awok, another Labwor man, who had been a local government askari (armed staff, lit. “soldier”). They began to trade in spears and cattle bells among the Jie. They bought spears for 8 to 10 shillings a pair and the bells cost from three to five shillings each. They carried the goods on their heads from Labwor to Kotido, the administrative centre of Jie country about 40 miles away. This was probably in the late 1940s or early 1950s, and well before the first bus services began. They took 20 to 30 pairs of spears and perhaps five or six cow bells each on a trip, and they made as many as 7 or 8 trips in a year. They traded throughout the year rather than simply in the dry season. They would get two goats for a pair of spears and one for a cow bell, and sometimes they would get a small bull for spears and a bell together. They would always exchange such a bull for goats before beginning their next phase.

This commenced with getting an official licence for goat trading. Armed with this they would take their goats to Acholi and elsewhere to sell them. They could expect to get 25 to 30 shillings per goat, though sometimes they accepted cassava and honey, which they ate en route, in part payment. In Jie they stopped at local homesteads and slept in the cattle enclosures. Sometimes friends could put them up. In Acholi they stayed at the home of the leader of the village younger generation (rwot me awobe).

In general they tried to take their goats well out of Labwor. They would go as far as west Acholi and even into West Nile District. Sometimes they drove them south into Lower Teso or Busoga, since prices were better in these areas. On one occasion, albeit on a later trip to the Dodoth area, it took three months to sell all the goats which he and his companions amassed. There were, it seems, 421 goats in the herd and most of them were sold in Acholi.

The Jie trade lasted for about three years. At first he and Awok worked as a pair, though each obtained his own supplies and sold his own goats. Later they were joined by others, and sometimes as many as 10 of them would set out for Jie. Except for one young Karimojong’, all of them were Labwor men.

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3 Awok was also an informant of both Herring and Lamphear. His account to me of his trading activities did not wholly coincide with Okidi’s, and it is possible that it is more reliable on some points, e.g. where Awok’s account suggests more flexibility on trading terms. More generally, however, I found Awok to be a somewhat bountiful and not wholly reliable informant in the field.
Eventually they found that terms of trade in Jie were deteriorating, apparently owing to inflation in goat values there. The group broke up, and Okidi decided to try his luck further north among the Dodoth. He knew some Jie who engaged in trade up there. They sold a variety of iron goods, such as knives, axes, bells and spears, which they had themselves obtained in many cases from Labwor traders. Despite reluctance of their part, Okidi joined these Jie on one of their forays. He went purely to observe, and he seems to have consciously assessed the market and to have been strongly impressed by the possibilities for trade in knives. These were light in weight and they were cheap in Labwor. There, they could be got for a shilling each, whereas in Dodoth a knife would fetch a goat.

Sketch Map of Uganda and Adjacent Countries

Labwor, and areas and peoples visited by Okidi are underlined.
On his way back from this trip, Okidi bought a cow in Jie for 30 shillings and he brought it back to Labwor where a local chief and some of his friends were keen to get hold of it. Cattle were scarce in Labwor at this time, because of cattle disease, and they apparently wanted to slaughter it to eat. He asked for 70 knives and 10 goat bells, and they obtained these for him quickly from some of the local smiths. Okidi and one of his former trading partners called Blasion took these goods and some axes up to Jie, carrying them as head loads. There they borrowed donkeys which were not available in Labwor itself. He and Blasion were not charged for this, but the Jie seem to have lent them out of friendship and on the basis of an understanding that he would reciprocate by leading them to good Acholi places to sell goats. He and his companions regularly took 200 or more goats into Acholi and elsewhere as a result of these trips.

After a couple of years trade became unprofitable in Dodoth, as goat values rose there also, and Okidi shifted his attention to the Turkana area. He once again made use of Jie contacts to get started. He found that the best trade there was in women’s small chain aprons (aqita) and in ostrich eggs. He had three Labwor companions in this trade. The ostrich eggs were obtained from the Jie, and the chain aprons were made in Labwor and Jie. In either place they cost 10 shillings each, but they could fetch as much as a bull in Turkana. He traded for four years in Turkana, and then he began to look further north to the Topotha area and neighbouring parts of south Sudan. This took him as far as Juba.

His Sudan ventures lasted two years, and only the first of these was a success. He traded in metal necklets and wristlets, buying bulk lengths of material and selling it in suitably sized pieces. He purchased his material from shops, transported it on donkeys from Jie, and sold it for goats. He usually accompanied him and he was the only Labwor person on these trips. He visited a variety of places including the Mining’, Lotome, Didinga, Logira and Lotuko areas. He noted how Topotha speak a language similar to Jie, and that there is even a place called Jie there. He was struck by similarities of head-dress and iron-working between Lotuko and Labwor, though their languages are quite different. He noted too that Lotuko also trade in iron goods with neighbours.4

On his last trip to Sudan, shortly after it became independent, he was trapped in a village during north–south hostilities, and he was lucky to escape with his life. His marriage also made it hard for him to be away on longer journeys.

Okidi never worked in partnership with smiths but simply purchased his requirements from them. He dealt with smiths all over Labwor, and he claimed that they always got goods ready for him quite quickly. Some smiths traded their own goods in Jie and some other parts of Karamoja, but he did not think they went further afield than this. He had not seen them in Turkana, for example, and had only encountered middle-men there.

Most of the livestock received on these expeditions was sold in the course of his excursions to Acholi. A group of them seem to have gone on these trips, and they included a Karimojong’

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4 Okidi seems subsequently to have told Lamphear and Herring that his clan, Jo Apwor, was originally from Lotuko. This was not mentioned in the material which I collected from him, though admittedly I did not raise the issue with him. It is possible that the statement is a post-hoc reconstruction of his visit to the Lotuko area, and as such a piece of "oral" rather than "traditional" history, but I am uncertain of this. Cf. Lamphear (loc. cit) and Herring (nd, p.9).
diviner. Okidi claimed that when they traded iron goods they tried to select goats with an unusual skin colouring, and they also sometimes took very young lambs. The aim was to take animals which would be useful for sacrifice in Acholi and elsewhere. If they heard that someone in the area where they were selling goats had died, they went to the place because they knew the people would need goats urgently for ritual and would be willing to pay highly for them. The diviner seems to have done a lot of business on these trips. Diviners from the Karamoja area are said to have a high reputation in Acholi. The man concerned would often recommend the slaughter of a type of animal he knew to be in his companions’ herds, and this too helped trade. Sometimes others would join in a trip. For instance, one man I knew had gone as a boy with five goats which his father told him to sell in order to get money for his school fees. This was clearly quite an adventure for the man, who remembered his surprise at the nakedness of Acholi women and told too of their being questioned by the police in Gulu and of the arrest of some of the Karimojong in the group for stealing cassava.

Okidi did quite well from his trading activities, and he was able to pay bridewealth with the proceeds. His father was poor, and Okidi had begun a marriage with a woman but had not been able to pay for her before getting into trading. His trading is mainly interesting as a development which flourished for a time and died away. This as partly because of the way in which it fitted into his domestic cycle needs, but it was also the result of particular developments in the wider polity and economy. The main factors here were the expansion of the cash economy and the establishment of a period of peace during the colonial regime. His trading marks an interesting entrepreneurial combination of barter and monetary exchange, and it takes place in a period of expanding spatial horizons as Labwor becomes more and more clearly part of a wider Uganda. The beginning of troubles in southern Sudan coincided with his own wish to give up his trading, and potential successors to his activities have doubtless been deterred by increasing levels of political turmoil both in Sudan and in Uganda itself.

Julius Brush

Brush (sometimes spelled Brashi or Bulashi) was born about 1915 in Kange, Tanga District, where his mother was a sisal worker. She was working on the preparation of sisal fibres, or “brushes” as they are known, and he believes that this is the origin of his name. His mother was a Sukuma from Busumao in Kwimba District. She had apparently quarrelled with and separated from her husband, a Sukuma from Ng’hwagi, and was expecting Brush at the time. Brush only heard his father’s name, Mateo, and never met him or had anything to do with his paternal relatives. No bridewealth had been paid for his mother, and no attempt was ever made to redeem him.

His mother stayed in the sisal area, and Brush lived with her till her death at a village called Jaje when he was about 10 years old. By this time his mother had a second son by another man. A full mother’s brother had been in the area but had left by the time the mother died, and the orphaned Brush was first looked after by a classificatory mother’s brother for a couple of

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5 For the general background to Nyamwezi and Sukuma social structure see Abrahams (1967, passim, and 1981, Chapter 4).
years. He was then sent back to Kwimba in about 1929, and he stayed there with his full mother’s brother. He went to school for about three years altogether.

Brush’s uncle paid bridewealth for him to marry, and he went to live with his wife’s people for a time as is traditional in the area. He stayed about a year but found life hard. His wife did not have decent clothes and he was ashamed to ask his mother’s brother for more help. He eventually went off on foot to Mwanza, about 60 miles away, to look for work, leaving his wife behind. He found a job as a “taniboi” on a lorry. His job was to help the driver with loading and unloading, cleaning the vehicle, and taking off the wheels if there was a puncture (the name taniboi may derive from turning the wheel bolts or possibly the starting handle). This was in 1934. The lorry belonged to an Indian trader in the town called Harabai Patel. He was paid very poorly, fifty cents per month plus 10 cents daily for subsistence, but he had no choice. He took his first shilling to an elder sister of his mother and she took it to his wife, adding a little so she could buy some clothing. He did not see his wife himself. He continued with his job until he learned that there were Indian-owned lorries from Uganda which came to Mwanza to transport cotton to the ginneries. The lorries had Ugandan African drivers and he got a better paid job with one as a taniboi. He was now paid 6 shillings per month plus subsistence which was paid in kind. They went up to Ukerewe to a ginnery owned by a Mission but rented to an Indian.

Brush had been keen to learn to drive and some of the Uganda drivers taught him over a period of about 6 months. He learned in a Chevrolet 1.5 ton lorry which, along with Fords, was the most popular make. He had been earlier told by a District Officer in Mwanza that he was too young to be a driver. When he found this man had been transferred to Ukerewe, he decided to go to Mwanza and attempt to get a driving licence. He went to the Schumann Garage there who were allowed to test people, and he passed the test in a Chevrolet 1.5 tonner which they lent him. Armed with his certificate he went to the District HQ and obtained a licence.

He returned to Ukerewe, where his employers told him that he should stay on as a taniboi for the season, and on the same wage, before they found him a lorry to drive. Dissatisfied with this, he returned to Mwanza where he got a job as a driver with a local Indian, known as Mwana Ndila, and he agreed a salary of 60 shillings per month. He worked very hard and became well known as a driver, and some Indians from Nyambiti near his home in Kwimba asked him to drive for them, taking cotton to their ginnery.

He returned to Kwimba in 1937 and worked for a year for Alibai Ralij and Sons for 150 shillings per month. By this time his first marriage had collapsed. He had never returned to his wife, who had been pregnant when he left but had miscarried, and his mother’s brother married him a second wife with the returned bridewealth.

Another Indian, Prem Singh ran a transport business at that time. He was impressed with Brush’s capacity for hard work and offered him a job which he accepted driving cotton to a ginnery in Nassa. Brush worked for him till 1941, by which time was was earning 250 shillings per month. At the end of that season, Singh suggested they go up together to Uganda to work there but Brush refused. At that time another Indian, Abdalla Premp, came down from Musoma with a 1.5 ton Bedford, and Brush said jokingly to Prem Singh that he would buy it.6

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6 As I discussed later, Brush was slightly lame and this may have left him free to continue with his activities during the war. He seems to have been one of the earliest African lorry owner-drivers in Sukumaland, but there
Prem Singh asked him if he really thought that he could manage his own lorry, and when Brush said "yes" he helped him to negotiate the purchase. He bought the lorry for 700 shillings, paying half in cash and the rest in instalments. He used the lorry to take processed cotton from the ginnery to Lake Victoria where a boat picked it up to take it to Kisumu and on to the coast. Meanwhile he had built a house for his wife at Sima Salis near Mwanza, and he stayed there after this work came to an end. In 1942, petrol and tyres were very hard to come by because of the war, and he put the lorry up on petrol drums till things improved. By good fortune, some Indians from the Bukumbi area came to see him. Their lorry had been commandeered for the war effort, and they arranged to buy his for 3000 shillings. They also paid him to drive their own vehicle to Moshi where it was to be sent for the war.

Brush went back to Sima Salis after this trip and began a new line of activity. With his younger brother, who had come to join him, he began fishing in a canoe which he bought for 600 shillings. He continued with this until Prem Singh came back from Uganda. Singh asked him where his lorry was, and also persuaded him to begin driving again. At the end of the war Singh advised him to buy another lorry. Brush was reluctant to try when things were still scarce, but Singh told him to go to buy an ex-war vehicle from Kisumu. He bought a 3 ton Chevrolet for 3000 shillings but it had no log book. He was told to buy any old "dead" Chevrolet as long as it had a log book, and he found one - a mere chassis - which he bought for 200 shillings. He managed to transfer the old chassis number to his own vehicle and got a licence from the police.

Brush used the lorry to transport cotton in the Musoma area until the end of the 1946 season. At that time Tanganyika Buses, which were owned by Prem Singh, got two ex-military 3 ton Dodges from Kenya and used them as buses between Mwanza and Musoma. They put bodies on them there in Kenya. In 1947 he took his own lorry to Kenya for a body. He noticed on this trip that there were lots of buses operating under the name of "Kikuyu Bus", so he decided to use the title "Sukuma Bus". This is still the heading which he uses in the phone book even though he has long since given up the buses. He went back to Mwanza, because Prem Singh was already operating the Musoma route, and tried to find a new route for himself. Prem Singh said he should start a service to Shinyanga from Mwanza since there were not yet any buses on that run, and he agreed. He used to go to Shinyanga and stay over night, and people began to say that he could even reach Kahama. He decided to try this because there were few passengers between Shinyanga and Mwanza, and he used to have to buy fish en route and sell it in Shinyanga and at various stops along the way to cover his fuel costs.

He also carried fresh fish on the Kahama run, and one of his customers there was the District Commissioner who became friendly through this contact. Previously fresh fish had been very scarce there. There was also a general shortage of transport in Kahama. The only lorry was Daudi Hassan's which went regularly to carry passengers and post to and from the trains at Isaka, about 25 miles along the Shinyanga road.

One day a local trader, Sharma, gave him a sack of rice to carry to Shinyanga. He also picked up the European who was running the Sisal Labour Bureau (Silabu) at Nyasubi near

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were rather earlier owners in other Lake Province areas such as Bukoba and Ukerewe. Cf. Iliffe (1979:287-8 and 294).
Kahama. A few miles down the road, near Mbulu mission, they were stopped by police. Daudi Hassan was annoyed that he was taking his passenger trade from him, and he had informed him that he was carrying the rice without a proper permit. When they were stopped they had to turn the lorry round and it got stuck for much of the day. The European from the Silabu remained with him. Meanwhile both the taniboi and the sack of rice, which had been confiscated, disappeared. They went to check in the evening with the DC, but the sack was not to be found. The DC decided to let them go and they set off that night. He dropped the Silabu man off at Shinyanga, but they met next day in Mwanza.

The man asked Brush if he would work between Kahama and Isaka in place of Daudi Hassan who had till then also been taking sisal workers to and from the trains. Brush said he would try for a month to see if it was worth his while. The workers came by the Silabu’s own transport from Kibondo to Nyasubi. Brush was then to take them to the station. Again he took returning workers from the station to Nyasubi and the Silabu transport took them on home to Kibondo. Only a few Nyamwezi were going in those days, and they used to make their own way there. Those going were Waha and Warundi. The work turned out to be profitable and he stayed on in Kahama, having signed a contract with the Silabu to continue the work. One month he even got as much as 3000 shillings. When the Silabu people saw he was efficient and reliable, they offered to transfer their own Silabu vehicle to him and he bought it for 6000 shillings with a loan. He now contracted to carry workers between Kibondo (Mabamba) and Kahama (Nyasubi) as well as to and from Isaka and back.

He now had two buses and he began to expand his activities. He himself drove one and he had a driver for the other. He began to try new routes, and he opened up the route to Geita from Kahama. He had to find a way up to Bukoli from where there was a road to Geita. It took three days to find a passable route. He then got a third vehicle, a lorry, which he bought in 1952 from a Tabora Indian called Daru, and he began to use this to transport passengers and goods to Geita. It went one day and came back the next. He used one of his two buses also to take passengers to Tabora via Nzega. There was no line there before this. The only other bus on the route ran between Puge (about 40 miles south of Nzega) and Tabora, but that had gone by the time his bus reached Puge. He was also taking sisal workers and other passengers between Kibondo and Isaka, but he shut down the Mwanza service. He began to be a Kahama man and built his present house in 1952. His second wife, whom he still has, was already with him by that time.

He ran bus services from 1947 until 1962, when he had become less happy with that business. The Silabu was running down its activities, his lorry had worn out, and his buses were getting old. He did not have the funds, or credit possibilities with government or bank, to cope with this. He was also doing a lot of driving himself and he was his own mechanic, and he found this tiring. If he entrusted vehicles to other drivers there were problems, and if he drove himself he never got a time to relax. He decided to sell the buses and buy himself a tractor, which he still had in 1975.

He found at first that it was most profitable to take the tractor elsewhere, for example to the cotton growing area around Mwambiti near Igunga, and hire out his services there. Meanwhile he also opened up his lodging house and bar. He continued with these activities of cultivation and hotel keeping. He opened up two large farms of his own at Ntobo, on the Geita road, and
at Mwendakulima on the way to Isaka. By 1975 he had acquired a second tractor, and he also had a vehicle which was off the road owing to lack of spare parts. It had been the Kahama District Council ambulance which he bought in 1972. By the mid 1970s he also had a second lodging house in the town, and he was building a new house to live in. After what seems to have been a slightly leaner period in the late seventies, he is now flourishing once again. He still has his two farms, of 6 and 100 acres respectively, and when I saw him in 1986, he had further expanded his activities by becoming the Kahama main agent for beer supplies. He has two large Scania lorries, one brand new, three large and one small tractor, and a mobile maize mill. He has become one of the richest men in the area. As he commented himself, if people had told him in the past that one day he would command well over a million shillings he would have thought that they were simply talking rubbish.

Sketch Map of Northwestern Tanzania showing routes opened and/or worked by Brush
He is a Christian, having been baptised as a young man in Mwanza in 1936. The Protestant missionary involved was a Mr Shaw of the African Inland Mission. Many people joined the church at that time, and his own grandfather was a Protestant mwatinu (teacher). He says that he was convinced of the truth of the evangelists, and he came to feel that ancestral cult and witchcraft beliefs were untrue. As far as I can tell, there was no special event or personal experience leading to his conversion. He is not a very regular churchgoer but he says grace before meals.

Over the years, Brush has become well connected socially. He is a naturally sociable man and this has stood him in good stead. I suspect that there is very little, which good relations can facilitate, which he cannot do these days. He is involved in the local branch of the Lions Club in Kahama and this, and other contexts, brings him into friendly contact with local dignitaries and officials such as the Manager of the local Bank of Tanzania. He is also well acquainted with a wide range of people in Shinyanga and beyond, even as far as Dar es Salaam. He knows all the local politicians, and at least one – Mr Sazia, the former Member of Parliament for Kahama – is his friend. He has not been actively engaged in politics, however, for many years. He is best known in this context for the work he did taking Tanu cards to Geita before Independence. When Tanu started, cards were not available in Geita because the Party became banned there. Brush took the cards there secretly by bus and gave them to a man who later became an MP, Wilson Bunuma, from Kasamwa. Bunuma used to distribute them secretly at night. Brush also took the newspaper Mwafrika which was banned in Geita.8

Brush has clearly had a quite successful life despite its unpropitious beginnings and later problems. One of these was an attack of illness (possibly polio) in late 1938 which left him temporarily paralysed in one leg. This threatened his driving career at that time but the leg responded to hospital treatment, including an operation, and he was left simply with a limp which he still has. He has apparently had only one bad accident while driving. This was in Kahama in 1962, when a young son of Sadru, one of the local Asian traders, suddenly ran into the road when he was driving his bus off to Geita. The child caught against the rear “bonneti” of the bus, and died on the spot. There was a case, but he was acquitted.

As he gets older and begins to have health problems, he appears to be thinking seriously about retirement. He has his eye on a successor, whom he talks of as his “grandson”, but who is actually the grandson of his sister. He has sent him to marry, and he has also given him a house in Mwendakulima. He has had no children by his wife in Kahama, but I have recently heard that he has had a second household near his farm at Ntobo on the Geita road, and that he may have children there. He himself, however, has never spoken of these to me.

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7 Cf. Iliffe (1979:290, 292 and 456–7) where the high incidence of Christianity among Tanzanian entrepreneurs is discussed more generally. The nexus in Brush’s case is by no means wholly clear, however, and Christianity seems at most to form part of a complex package in his case rather than a main causative or facilitating factor.
8 For further discussion of the problems in Geita and Sukumaland more generally see Iliffe (1979:513–4, 523–4, 559–9) and also Migue (1969:182, 223–4, 293–4 and passim). Party branches were banned but individual membership appears to have been legal.
Discussion

I have presented the above material mainly as "ethnographic data". As I have noted, its value is to some degree limited by the fact that much of the information comes from "autobiographical" texts which I have not been able to check thoroughly. I have, however, discussed Okidi's story of his travels with other Labwor, and it seems clear that the basic elements are true, though the possibility of some imaginative embellishment of detail remains. In Brush's case, an important point is that he gave me his main text in the presence of another old friend who has helped me with my work over many years. This provided some check on the account which he presented.

Entrepreneurs and their activities present problems for the anthropologist, as they have also done for economists and other social scientists.9 A main issue has been that of making general sense of innovation in a framework of structural and institutional analysis. In this context, a variety of questions have been asked by analysts. Are there special endogenous and/or exogenous factors which promote or hinder the emergence of entrepreneurs in a particular area and period, and what is the relationship between such factors? What role have such individuals played in wider processes of social and economic change and development?

Such questions are more easily asked than answered in most cases. It clearly helps if an anthropologist's attention has been focussed on a situation in which such activities are especially widespread as compared with other times and places. In the material I have examined, however, the facts are less clear cut, though there are interesting differences between the cases.

Labwor society, out of which Okidi operated, is difficult to characterise as a potential entrepreneurial seed-bed. There is within it a high level of ascriptive status, stemming from the well-developed nature of its descent and age-group systems, though this is partly counter-balanced by some opportunity for achievement in the ritual and technical spheres. On the other hand, for as long as we know anything about the history of Labwor, it is clear that there have been vitally important political and economic links between the people and their neighbours and others outside the narrow confines of their society. It is also clear that iron-work, which is a major and a relatively open occupation there, has provided opportunities and stimulus for the establishment of such links, as well as being a field of activity in which considerable technical and other innovation has occurred. In short, the area appears as one in which the emergence of a trader like Okidi is not particularly surprising, at least in so much as trade in iron goods with other peoples, and commonly in return for livestock, already existed there.

In addition, other and newer contextual factors need to be acknowledged, the most important of these being "Pax Britannica". It seems quite plain that the expansion of Okidi's horizons through his enrolment in the police and army, and the possibility of fairly secure movement throughout Karamoja and other parts of Uganda were vitally important elements in the situation. So too was the emergence of cash as a medium of exchange. It is also arguable, however, that the development of his activities at that point in time also interestingly depended upon social and cultural continuities in the new environment. His need for bridewealth, albeit

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9 Cf. the discussion in Barth (1963), Finney (1973:xii, and passim), and the entry on "Entrepreneurship" in the Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences.
as a member of a relatively poor family at a time when payments in scarce livestock had become predominant, was in his own view an important stimulus to his activities. And one may also recall here the way in which the second phase of the trading process—the exchange of goats for cash in Acholi and elsewhere—was apparently enhanced by the traditional ritual needs of their customers and the reputation which Karamojans enjoyed among these as exotic and in some sense "primitive" diviners. In this light, Okidi and his friends emerge as forgers of new links not only between spatially distinct ecological zones, but also between older and more modern needs and interests.

Internal and external factors also pulled and pushed to bring Okidi's trading to an end. His use of it to take him into the next stage of his life cycle as a married farmer in Labwor suggests his ultimate commitment to some of the main values and imperatives of the local rural social system. At the same time, the disturbances which he encountered in Sudan helped to convince him that the time had come to stop. These and later comparable political troubles in Uganda itself also helped to make sure that such enterprises by Okidi and his colleagues were a temporary phenomenon which did not have time to make a lasting mark upon the region. By the 1960s Karamoja had become a dangerous scene of inter-tribal raiding and rustling, and this was followed by the wider violent conflicts of the Obote and Amin regimes whose roots sadly lay in the same colonial system which had helped to make Okidi's career possible. Labwor suffered badly during these and subsequent disturbances, and many are reported to have died there in recent years. No doubt Okidi's and similar trading expeditions will be remembered, but it may be some time before conditions are ripe for other Okidis to venture forth.

Turning now to Brush's case, we find both similarities and contrasts. Like Labwor, but on a larger scale, the Nyamwezi-Sukuma area has a long history of external economic contacts. Indeed, pre-colonial commercial activity was more highly developed there than in most other areas of East Africa. Nyamwezi traders had been going to the coast, and also into different parts of the interior, since at least the early years of the nineteenth century dealing in tobacco, cattle, ivory and, at times, slaves. Political entrepreneurs also abounded, the most notable being Mirambo whom Stanley described as "the Napoleon of central Africa". With this background of commercial history in Unyamwezi, and the subsequent more formal inclusion of the area into Tanganyika and, subsequently Tanzania, Brush's rise to economic prosperity might not seem specially surprising.\(^{10}\) In this case, however, the colonial setting reaffirmed rather than created the sense of involvement in a wider world, and while it established a framework of opportunity for entrepreneurial activity, it also helped to erect hurdles which Brush was very fortunate to overcome when he did.

I am thinking here especially of the tendency for commerce to be in the hands of Asian businessmen at the time when Brush began his career.\(^{11}\) His first major hurdle was to move from the lowly status of taniboi to the more elevated one of driver as a young man in the 1930s. Here he was probably lucky that African drivers from the more developed areas of south Uganda were around to teach him. The European administrator in Mwanza appears to have

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\(^{10}\) For the background to early Nyamwezi commercial activities cf. Abrahams (1981:10–11) and Roberts (1970).

\(^{11}\) Cf. Iliffe (1979:448–50, 464). The first main inroads into Asian dominated areas appear to have been made in the Kilimanjaro and Same areas of northern Tanzania (Iliffe, 1979:453).
been quite discouraging on the issue, and it may be that Asian drivers would have been reluctant to help. At the same time, however, one must acknowledge the immense support which he attracted from his employer Prem, Singh, whose world of commerce he was keen to enter, and also from the District Commissioner and Silabu Manager in Kahama. There is a possibly important element of patronage involved here, but in the last resort I suspect that one is reduced to talking of the personal equation also. Brush is a remarkable individual. He is not at all flamboyant, but he is a man of immense charm and great physical and mental energy, a man of his word, and one who seems to have few enemies for someone who had done so well. He has a knack of mixing well with all shades of the social spectrum while remaining his own man. He can be at ease with high officials, and he gets on well with his employees whom he is willing to help in case of special need. Nor has he been averse to dirtying his own hands, for example when his skills as a mechanic are needed. In this context of his personality, I have been tempted to think that the unpromising start he had in life has been a spur to him to do well in the wider world. His early childhood among migrant sisal workers, and his lack of a full set of kinship ties back in Sukumaland, may well have helped to push him towards the largely urban career he has enjoyed. I need scarcely say, however, that very many of his contemporaries were comparably unfortunate without much later economic success, and there are also cases of big Sukuma businessmen in Shinyanga and elsewhere who have built very powerful commercial enterprises from a firm rural base and supported by large patrimonies in cattle.12

By the time of Independence Brush was already quite well established. The shift to self-government, and the accompanying ideals of africanisation, no doubt had advantages for him but it must also have posed problems. Tanzania’s economic policy, officially at least, has not generally favoured “merchant adventure”, and he was fortunate to have had a firm social and economic base by that time. The good relations he had cultivated with politicians and with other businessmen over a wide area stood him in good stead, as did the work he did and risks he took for Tanu in the 1950s in the Geita troubles.

Although there are other successful local businessmen in the Nyamwezi and Sukuma area, Brush is one of the earliest to have done well in a modern setting. He is essentially an urban man, and he became one early on in his career. Perhaps to a greater extent than Okidi and his comrades, who forged new links between separate economic zones, he has largely worked within existing frameworks. His main claims to innovation lie in the fact that he was a Sukuma rather than an Asian, and also in the way in which he extended his activities into new areas. His move into agriculture via transport was, I believe, unusual at least for the area. At the same time one can fairly say that, unlike Okidi, he has made a personal impact on the economic development of the districts in which he has operated. His opening of new bus routes was clearly of a palpable importance here, as too, to some extent, was his provision of guest house accommodation in Kahama. It is also possible that the example of large scale commercial tractor cultivation, which he brought to the Kahama area, has left a mark, though there have been many other examples of this known to people for some time.

12 Cf. Lifsw (1979:456-7) for discussion of cattle ownership and other capital bases for early modern Tanganyikan entrepreneurial activity.
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