In the early morning Yohana walks down the difficult path toward the open plain, herding his father's cattle before him. He is tired from his poor night of sleep on the hard ground. However, the boy sings a song to himself about his father's finest steer. Cattle are the most important things in the herdsman's life and the Pokot people have great respect and affection for them. Yohana's stomach growls, and he knows he will be hungry in a while, but he is used to it. No one takes a second helping of the breakfast of porridge and milk. Even at feasts his people never over-eat. Anyone who does is ridiculed and looked down upon. Even when the harvest of corn is good and the cattle are healthy, nobody becomes fat. The herdsman's main source of protein is a mixture of cattle blood and milk. Meat is a special treat, eaten only during community feasts, which often accompany special rites and rituals.

Africa's Pokot people live in Western Kenya and Eastern Uganda. They are made up of two main groups: the "cattle people," who are herdsmen who live on the plains, and the "grain people," farmers who live on the mountainsides. The lives of the herdsmen are harsher than those of their farming neighbors, but they have more wealth, because cattle are considered to be valuable by both groups. In addition to cattle, both groups have some goats, sheep and a few donkeys or camels. Yohana is glad to be a herder even though he often has to sleep in the open, and he and his family sometimes have to travel to new areas to avoid having their cattle raided by others.

The Pokot are proud of their culture. They are one of the last groups in Africa that have refused to be influenced by European or American ways. Yohana remembers his grandfather's stories of the attempts to convert them away from their religion and to show them how to farm and raise cattle "properly," and how the Pokot resisted. His grandfather taught him to believe in the ways of the Pokot people. Although American and European ways have become common throughout Africa, it may be a long time before they get to the Pokot people.

*Answer the following questions in complete sentences.*

1. Describe two of the Pokot people's cultural beliefs about food.

   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

2. How does Yohana's job of raising cattle affect his lifestyle?

   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
3. Why would American or European cultures try to change the Pokot people?

4. How did the Pokot people respond to the attempt to change their ways?

5. List two different cultural aspects or traits that are mentioned in this article.

6. In what two political regions do the Pokot people live?

7. In what two landform regions do they live?

8. Who has been responsible for passing on the traditional Pokot culture?