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Published by: White Horse Press
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/43123874
Accessed: 25-11-2016 08:47 UTC

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COMPLEXITIES OF LIVESTOCK RAIDING IN KARAMOJA

Kennedy Mkutu Agade

Abstract

Karimojong define different motives for raiding: restocking, retaliation, and theft for sale on markets. This article focuses on the third type, or akoko raiding, which operates outside of the informal governance system of the elders, and is necessitated by short-term livelihood needs for some, and driven by profiteering for others. It may be done in large groups, or small groups of youths, and may be managed by racketeers, or richer cattle owners who loan out weapons. This article looks at the relationship of akoko raiding with the markets, including international trade to Kenya and the issue of border security. It notes that there are links to powerful urban-based figures, and that the huge wealth of Karamoja is enriching only a few. It makes the point that policing of the markets should be a major focus of conflict mitigation. Instead disarmament policies continue to focus on pastoralist communities, bringing no reduction in raiding violence and adding another layer to the conflict: that of the state versus the community.

Keywords: pastoralists, small arms, protected kraals, cattle raiding, disarmament

Introduction

Livestock raids in Karamoja, Northern Uganda, are portrayed in the mass media, government literature and civil society reports as armed, inter-ethnic violence triggered by resource scarcity and tradition. This oversimplifies a complex phenomenon with a deep-rooted history of adaptation and transformation vis-à-vis absent or distant governance, proliferation of small arms, an uncontrolled, fast-growing market economy, and haphazard and unbalanced modernization.

A differentiation in the motives and functions of raiding, and the actors involved, is the focus of this paper. Such a differentiation is crucial for peace building although it is not necessarily evident to outsiders. Raiding has always had a variety of functions, including restocking after a loss, and allowing for alliances, marriages, or territorial expansion. This kind of raiding has largely been a group activity, with the whole community sharing both risks and benefits of raiding. However, in the past four decades new forms of raiding have emerged. The influx of small arms into Karamoja, following long periods of instability...
in Uganda and some of its neighbouring countries, have affected the scale and frequency of raiding (Walker 2002). Traditional governance systems, under strain for many reasons, struggle to cope with challenges from new forms of power now ‘in the barrel of a gun’ (Mkutu 2008b). There has been a trend towards ‘deregulation’, with raids now increasingly neither planned nor blessed by the elders, in which cattle are immediately sold by the individual raiders rather than being kept for pastoral production or distributed within communities.

This paper suggests that with a more sophisticated analysis of raiding, capable of grasping the motivating factors for both individuals and communities, we can also begin to see more creative solutions. In particular, the paper focuses on the least understood form of raiding – raiding for commercial gain and outside of community sanctioning. In doing so, a new form of sanctioning, by powerful figures within and outside the traditional ethnic lines, is also acknowledged. Cattle traders and other business people, local government, military personnel, and new types of kraal leaders may each play a role in a network of forces which indirectly or directly drive young men to raid. Karamoja has opened up in recent years to a market economy, and herders have made use of this new opportunity. However, this has also provided space for the commercialized raiding to grow. Many examples of the networks involved are given in this work.

Raiding for restocking and raiding for retaliation have cultural and economic roots that may be relevant to understanding the way herders resist and react to the confiscation of cattle, in a context of law enforcement incapable of discriminating between these forms of raiding and commercial raiding. This paper describes the conflict between the community and the military, and links it to the failure to acknowledge the complexity of raiding, leading to the use of a brutal and largely counter-productive approach against the very people who are supposed to be given protection.

Methodology and Background

Obtaining data on the commercialization of raids is very difficult as the work is highly sensitive. Information used here originates from over ten years of research looking at conflict and raiding in Karamoja. This includes in-depth, face-to-face interviews across a wide range of actors, from politicians and government officials, to elders, youths, women, members of civil society, and faith-based organizations. Media articles have also been used, keeping in mind that inaccessibility is a problem even for reporters, and so what is reported is sometimes hearsay. Care has been taken not to rely on these sources alone, but rather to cross-check important information against other sources, including phone interviews and e-mails with the many contacts the author has secured over a decade of work in the area.
On a plateau spread over 27,200 sq km at 1,000 m altitude, Karamoja is roughly the size of Belgium. With average precipitations of 500–700 mm a year (hence significantly better than neighbouring Turkana), Karamoja is for most of the time a land of dust, thorns, sun and wind, where mobile livestock production has so far proved to be the only sustainable form of exploitation (cf. IIED and SOS Sahel 2009 for a recent overview of this issue across East and West Africa). Demographic figures are uncertain. The most recent official estimate indicates a population of around one million (UBO 2004), but other sources cut this number in half (Knaute and Kagan 2009). The main ethnic groups in the area comprise the Upe Pokot, Pian and Chekwi in Nakapiripirit; the Tepeth (mountain people), Bokora and Matheniko in Moroto; the Jie in Kotido; and the Dodoth in Kaabong.

In a sense, pastoral economies are a success story for their countries, deriving substantial wealth from large tracts of land unsuitable for farming. These arid and semi-arid pastoral lands occupy over 70 per cent of the Horn of Africa. In Uganda, pastoralists hold 55 per cent of the national herd. Hide and skin exports reach as far as Europe and Asia, earning the country up to USD 10m in 2002 (Muhereza 2003). Overall the livestock sector contributes 7.5 per cent of Uganda’s GDP (UIA 2002).

Although there is an increased demand for meat to supply urban growth, the benefits are not felt by most pastoralists. A report by UNOCHA (2007) describes how pastoralists are often forced to sell their livestock at low prices, having travelled far to sell them and being unable to afford to trek back with them. The urban-based wholesalers are the main beneficiaries. A few rich pastoralists do benefit, and manage to accumulate large numbers of cattle, but most young men, who in the past would have had the opportunity to build up their own stocks, are now facing unemployment and poverty (Mkutu 2005). Many of these now work for elite cattle-owners and, when engaging in risky armed raiding, they do it largely on their behalf.

**Akoko raiding**

Several terms in Nga’Karamojong are translated into English as ‘raiding’. Different terms refer to different functions and, therefore, to different practices. The term areom describes ‘raiding’ for restocking, for example after a drought or an epidemic. Retaliatory ‘raiding’ is called ajore. If ‘raiding’ is the work of young men acting without community consent, for sale of cattle and commercial gain, the term used in Nga’Karamojong is akoko (cf. Gomes and Mkutu 2004). In Upe Pokot too, there is more than just ‘raiding’, with a critical distinction also hingeing on social legitimacy. Thus luk describes a party of warriors acting with the blessing of elders and seers, sent out to replenish stocks or in retaliation after a suffered attack. The setat on the other hand is, like akoko, a non-authorized ‘raid’ of a commercial nature.
Commercial raiding is not new. Anderson (1986) describes how in Kenyan western highlands, raiding could be the work of professional thieves as early as the colonial times. Organized in multi-ethnic groups, thieves were able to move cattle rapidly along a series of ‘receivers’, across national and international boundaries. These specialists could evade colonial restrictions to cattle movements and even quarantines, and were able to manipulate market prices. In a study of the Kuria of Kenya and Tanzania, Fleisher (1999) observes how, in the 1920s, ‘raiding’ had become an increasingly violent, market-oriented enterprise, which he links to the pressures exerted by the penetration of the cash economy in pastoral areas. Juma (2000) notes that ‘raiding has become an income generating activity rather than a means for augmenting social status or fulfilling cultural roles’. According to Bujra (2000) cattle stealing by one pastoral group from another is widespread, highly organised, and often led by outsiders. The growing demand for meat in urban areas has substantially increased prices on the livestock market. Flourishing export markets have opened opportunities to market raided animals well beyond the pastoral areas (Juma, 2000). Senior security officers in Tanzania linked the cattle rustling conflict in Tarime, an area on the Kenyan border, to underground dimensions of the livestock market involving cross-border criminal networks. Raided cattle fetch a higher price across the border in Kenya.

In Karamoja, akoko raiding is more frequent today than the other kinds of raiding. The very nature of these raids means that the karachunas (young men) directly involved in the theft partake in a much bigger industry. The following sections highlight some of the mechanisms of such an industry and the other players involved.

Trading Livestock

Österle (2007: 198) notes that being a livestock trader is currently ‘the epitome of wealth and prosperity’ across the entire pastoral belt in the region, and is a very attractive option for young raiders. David Moni, a cattle trader in Karamoja since 1963, explained:

Now there are two types of cattle traders: the chief cattle traders who are prominent and known, who buy their cattle from the people they know very well, and have certain markets to seek or agree with one buyer who buys in bulk; in this situation raided cattle can easily be sold. The second trader is the one who sells from his home.

Interviewed in April 2010, the LC5\textsuperscript{4} for Moroto stated that ‘the number of markets has increased, they operate once a week, but they are everywhere and they are busy. They are controlled by the business community and local government.’ Amongst the popular markets in Karamoja are Iriri, Matany,
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Kangole and Nataikwae in Moroto; Kanawat, Kachire and Kakoria in Kotido and Kaabongo districts; and Amudat town in Pokot land.5

The following figures indicate the scale of wealth moving through the markets in Karamoja. According to a 2010 survey, cattle sell for between USh 130,000 and 400,000 (USD 75–200). Market takes place once a week and it is estimated that between 700 and 1,000 cattle are sold in markets every market day in Karamoja.6 With a conservative average (850 animals sold at USh 250,000 on fifty market days a year) this amounts to a total of more than USh 1 billion (USD 450,000) per year. A cattle trader interviewed at the Kanawat market in September 2009 estimated that between 700 and 800 cattle are sold every week at Kanawat alone, such a volume of trading having remained stable for about three years (Krätli 2009). Between January and March 2003, around 7,600 cattle were sold in eight cattle markets in Karamoja, for a volume of business of about USh 1.6 billion (USD 900,000 at 2003 exchange rate). In the whole of 2003 therefore, cattle markets in the region could have represented as much as USD 3.5 million (Mkutu 2003).

A small survey of Kotido Town Council market,7 by Oxfam at the end of 2002, supports this impression (Muhereza 2003). The Uganda government imposed a ban on livestock markets in Karamoja in early November 2002. The ban was lifted after a little more than a week, as the result of widespread protest. In the period immediately after the ban was lifted, the following figures were recorded (the peak in price in the first week was likely to be due to increased demand after the ban):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date (2002)</th>
<th>No. of cattle sold</th>
<th>Amount USh</th>
<th>Amount USD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13 Nov</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>53,519,314</td>
<td>26,760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Nov</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>37,482,500</td>
<td>18,741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 Nov</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>33,080,900</td>
<td>16,540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Dec</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>30,525,000</td>
<td>15,263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>855</td>
<td>154,607,714</td>
<td>77,304</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


According to Muhereza (2003: 20), 60 per cent of the local revenue in Kotido came from the livestock subsector. Gazetted markets, however, do not account for all the livestock traded in Karamoja.

Cattle markets are run by the LC3s, local businessmen, and veterinary departments. Controls on the origin of marketed animals and identity of the sellers are relaxed and under-resourced. Assistance to recover animals identified as stolen is poor. In Namalu and Amudat in 2003, the author observed lorry-loads of cattle also being sold at informal markets. The drivers claimed that they were to be transported to Mbale.8 Prices on the black market are much lower but animals can be sold very quickly and without questions. These markets are the
first reference for stolen cattle (*namorat* cattle). If fear of detection is low, the raiders will sometimes keep a few of the cows, but they usually sell the majority to purchase alcohol, material goods, and food for their families.\(^9\)

In an interview with a local Catholic sister who had been several years in Karamoja, she noted that raids happen more often on the day before the market.\(^10\) However, this phenomenon has not been formally examined. During fieldwork in 2001 and 2004, I saw that large pieces of meat were being sold on the roadside near a locality known as Kamsaba, on the road between Nakapiripirit and Moroto.\(^11\) In fact, on one occasion one of our team members bought some. It was later suggested to me that these were likely to be stolen animals. According to informants from Kotido, interviewed in 2009,\(^12\) large pieces of meat are at times on offer at bargain prices on the outskirts of town. A quarter of a cow can be bought for as little as USh 10,000 (USD 5) when the price for a cow at the cattle market rarely dropped below USh 150,000 (USD 75). Even USh 10,000 however, remains well above the purchasing power of the poor and is therefore more likely to represent a good deal only to relatively well off urban dwellers.

Interviews with market operators hinted at the existence of ‘raiding networks’, connecting thieves to livestock and markets. For example, thieves from Bokora who have lived in Pian can lead raids to an exact location in Bokora, where cattle can be found, and use contacts in Pian for marketing the stolen animals.\(^13\) John Owalinga, a cattle trader in Nabilatuk argued that:

> The rustling is now organized, because you have people watching you. You buy cattle from them and they wait for you on the road and ambush you and take the cattle you bought from them again. The cattle stolen are reported to the LC1 or LC2 but they can do nothing. In fact some of them are kraal leaders and who knows? They may be connected with the *karachunas* selling the stolen cattle.\(^14\)

A kraal leader is supposed to be elected by the elders on the basis of his prowess as a pastoralist. That Local Council leaders, who are typically living in a settlement, today are also ‘kraal leaders’ is therefore a new phenomenon. An officer of the Ugandan Criminal Investigations Department (CID) stated that: ‘It is well established that the majority of rustled animals, which are dealt with commercially, are sold to other passive groups, i.e. animal brokers, who dispose of them in established slaughter-houses and auction centres. These places are as far as Bumala in Bungoma and the interiors of Uganda.’\(^15\) In his view, the cheap meat available in Kampala was likely to come from raided cattle, and more investigative work in this direction would be needed.

According to a former district commissioner for Pokot (Kenya), interviewed in 2003, cattle raided in Karamoja were sold as far away as Kitale in Kenya, something unlikely to be possible without some authorities turning a blind eye.\(^16\) Indeed, how can large numbers of cattle be moved across districts or international borders whilst evading the mechanisms of control? It is also notable that conflict and insecurity in Karamoja rarely disrupt the market. Even today, animals are
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driven as far as Mbale or Abim on hoof. A customs officer on the Kenya–Uganda border (933 km of bush) recalled lorries loaded with cattle, accompanied by prominent individuals, going through unchecked as the officers felt they did not have enough power to question the details of these transfers.17

A former MP from Karamoja, interviewed in 2003, made reference to issues of corruption involving local councils and UPDF officers, and explaining why more cattle are recovered than those effectively returned to the owners. Big bulls, he said, are taken from the herd and transported by night to markets outside of Karamoja.18 References to collusion between the army, local leaders and businessmen with regard to cattle raiding are common in Ugandan media. In one episode reported by the media, ten soldiers including a commanding officer were arrested in connection with theft of cattle recovered during disarmament operations. It was noted that deployment to Kapado, Kathile and Karenga (Kaabong district), where the UPDF’s 65th and 45th battalions were operating, was known to make officers rapidly wealthy.19

Through this disparate collection of information, although still scanty, a picture is emerging of a significant industry resting on commercialized cattle raiding practices and involving various ranks of non-pastoralist players. Further work is needed to establish if the same players are involved in transportation of both cattle and guns.

Bridging Raiders and Markets

In the last two and a half decades, a relatively new dynamic has been observed, consisting of rich men hijacking akoko cattle raiding for their own personal advantage. Ocan (1994), Juma (2000), Bujra (2000), Mirzeler and Young (2000) and Otim (2002) describe individuals in Karamoja, whose power came at a relatively young age through violent means, and who act outside the elders’ control. These individuals, described by some as ‘warlords’ and by others as ‘racketeers’, can manage large numbers of youths who, having little hope for a better alternative, will engage in raids and road banditry under their control. A man I interviewed in Amudat in 2004 described such an arrangement from direct experience:

I used to have six cows. One day, raiders came to my home and stole the entire lot. I did not know what to do. So, I went to one of the wealthy men, who loaned to me a gun. After several raids, using the loaned gun, I managed to get several cows while at the same time paying rent for the gun. I now have several cattle and several young men taking care of the cattle for me. I have since stopped raiding.20

A former raider interviewed in 2003 claimed that most of the ‘racketeers’ he knew about came from active raiding, cattle trading or the army.21 Indeed, interviews with some soldiers from the cross-border areas of West Pokot and
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Karamoja revealed that they had started organizing young men to go raiding following the end of the campaign in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Back home, they had found themselves jobless, only with their fighting experience, and many with their guns. This issue, mentioned several times by my informants (including senior government officers both in Kenya and Uganda), has not yet been the object of systematic research.

There is some evidence of overlap between ‘racketeers’ and traders. A former raider recalled a story of a businessman who owned a butchery in Kotido, but also hired young men to raid, and would sometimes go with them. The cows would be divided and would supply his shop. The activity was discovered when he was shot and killed by security during a raid.22

Two of the most prosperous and oldest businesses in Matany trading centre (Bokora County) are known to have been established starting from raiding profits (Akabwai and Ateyo, 2007). Allegations that commercial raiding has attracted certain powerful individuals, including local government officers and politicians, are not uncommon in the Ugandan press.23

**Commercial Raiding and Kraals**

It would be incomplete to examine the networks involved in commercial raiding without examining kraals, where cattle are taken care of, and where they are sometimes hidden on their way to the market.

A kraal is a cattle camp. It can consist of up to fifty corrals, each of which may contain fifty to one hundred head of cattle.24 Kraals are also occupied by cattle owners, karachunas, shepherds (boys aged 15 and under), and girls who milk and assist with other chores. Some cattle owners will leave their cattle in the care of others. Each kraal has a leader, a man appointed by the elders to serve the community, who may or may not be an elder himself.25 Within the ‘protected kraals’ the leadership may be placed in the hands of young men with some education, due to their ability to interact with the army commanders and the local government.26

Kraal leaders are known to oversee areom raiding (for restocking) and ajore raiding (retaliatory), but not much is known about their involvement in akoko raiding (non-authorized, for commercial gain) and the market. An elder interviewed at a kraal in Kotido in 2003 hinted at an ongoing transformation: 'I’ve notice the trends changing last year. Out of the raided animals at least one is sold to meet the raider’s basic needs. For example, early last year cows were brought here. On the very day they arrived, by 10:00 AM, there were already bargains for the cows. It wasn’t a market day.'27

This suggests that the three types of raiding distinct in Nga’Karamojong – areom, ajore and akoko – are not mutually exclusive. There also seems to be
some flexibility in determining what actions can be justified to ‘meet the raider’s basic needs’, an issue that certainly deserves further research.

**Banditry**

Closely related to *akoko* raiding is road banditry. In the course of the 2000s, banditry became so common in Karamoja that vehicles were required to travel with armed escorts. Robbers also targeted cattle traders on the road. Private trucks returning from livestock markets to neighbouring districts are often attacked and the livestock taken, and eventually re-sold elsewhere. Government, public and private vehicles are targeted, as well as vehicles belonging to development agencies such as Oxfam, Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and even MSF (Médecins sans Frontières) ambulances carrying patients to Matany (especially from Amudat). In January 2010, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) suspended work following an ambush by the Pokot, which left three employees dead and a consultant in critical condition. On 25 May 2010, Michael Owiny, a medical worker attached to Abim Hospital, was riding a motorcycle on the Abim–Kotido road when bandits shot him dead. Several interviews also linked road ambushes to the scramble for paying school fees when term was starting.

**Livestock and Livelihood**

To the majority of the people of Karamoja, livestock is life. It has been their ‘bank’ and ‘granary’ (*edula*), their survival (*ngitunga*) and their ‘everything’ (*dadang*). In order to buy whatever they need for their livelihood, people sell livestock, at least those people who still have some to sell. A group of Tepeth youth, who I met in 2007, linked raiding with the pressures on young men to protect livestock and settlements while also providing for their families:

[Raiding] is motivated by hunger. There is nothing to eat, and we are born here in this bush so we don’t know how to grow food! We grow up and find that our father has no animals … So you look for wild fruit until you are tired and then you decide, ‘Let me raid even if I die.’ Right now, even if I go to town, there is no one who will give me food [in the absence of cash or something to trade]. You just starve until you have the temptation to steal.

Similar statements were made in the course of interviews in Musasia, Namalu, Nakiplimoru, Panyangara, Losilang and Amudat. Matheniko *karachunas* interviewed in Rupa a few years earlier had also claimed that they were stealing animals (from the Bokora) because of hunger, and then selling them on the black market: ‘If you have nothing to eat, you steal and then you sell on the market and divide the money.’
A former raider I met in 2003 had been severely beaten by the elders for raiding. He justified his act by hunger and poverty, and argued that raids and road ambushes are sometimes directly linked to the livelihood needs. Sometimes, in order to avoid such punishment, they escape and join rival communities showing them the way to the kraals of their own people. This is both raiding for survival and commercialized raiding, which in the case above was considered by the elders to be theft. It begs the question as to why raiders’ needs were not being met within the accepted regulated framework for raiding, and suggests some sort of breakdown in the structure of pastoral society rendering certain parties vulnerable.

As stated by the former minister for Karamoja, Hon. Peter Lokeris, ‘Cattle have come to remain with those who have the means to keep them, that is, the guns.’ The risk of losing everything to raiders is a factor leading today to the marketing also of livestock that would normally be kept for production. Longoli, a Nabilatuk elder of Nakapiripirit District seven years ago revealed that he owned nearly six hundred head of cattle with hundreds of goats and sheep that served as his sole source of livelihood. He stated that the animals were his pride and he had no desire to sell. However, most of the cattle were raided, leaving him with only thirty head of cattle, which he also sold.

Military Intervention

State intervention in Karamoja through the UPDF followed a two-fold strategy: imposing law and order with regard to all kinds of raiding (including the recovery of raided livestock), and disarming the population in Karamoja. Whilst both parts of this strategy have involved excessive use of military force against civilians, neither has been successful, suggesting that the strategy itself needs to be reconsidered rather than intensified. For a start, the complexity of cattle raiding, and in particular the changes introduced through the spread of commercial forms of raiding, have been disregarded. The law enforcement efforts have concentrated on the youngsters directly involved with raiding but have ignored the wider and multifaceted networks that link raiding to the markets. The current indiscriminating repression, whilst not stopping violence, is triggering resistance and fuelling mistrust.

Disarmament

Disarmament by force started in early 2002, after only a few weeks of voluntary disarmament, which had given encouraging results. A new wave of disarmament operations in 2004 had a decidedly military nature, with large deployment of soldiers, armoured vehicles and even two helicopter gunships. People were apprehended and forced to lay down weapons or bring weapons in order to be released. This ‘militarization’ of disarmament increased further after
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the February 2006 Presidential elections, as the government officially sought to rid Karamoja of all illegal arms and ammunition.

In 2006, three battalions, a total of approximately forty-two thousand soldiers, were deployed to Karamoja. This had a calming effect on cattle raids and road ambushes, and people stopped carrying their weapons openly. However, by 2008, raids and thefts had resurfaced to the point of creating the phenomenon of ‘night commuters’: people sleeping outside the manyattas in the nearest urban centre, sheltering in health centres, trading centres and schools. An elder from Kotido district lamented: ‘The operations by the UPDF in the name of cordon and search are going on and cattle thefts and killings also continue. Where is the limit? When will the results of the current programme of disarmament be achieved?’

Protected Kraals

The formal military protection of kraals emerged in 2007. The protected kraal system had two purposes: i. protecting livestock from raiders; and ii. tracking of stolen animals, both through pursuit and through surveillance of the livestock kept in kraals. The assumption was that if all livestock were kept in protected kraals, the stolen animals would be easily identified and recovered. However, the strategy was decided without consultation with the pastoralists.

UPDF protection never proved as effective as when armed herders protected themselves and their livestock. In fact, the large numbers of cattle in protected kraals soon became an attractive target for raiders. In Lopei, the protected kraal started in 2006 with 13,000 cows, but had less than 1,500 remaining by May 2010, either lost to raids or removed by owners in response to insecurity. In Namalu a kraal started with 6,000 cows but animals were repeatedly raided despite the military protection.

In an interview with a civil servant who has worked in the region since 2001, the weakness of protected kraals has been lack of soldiers and lack of discipline. A former MP in Karamoja likened kraals to banks, protected kraals being ‘the poor man’s banks’. Beside these ‘banks’ for impoverished herders, there are big ‘banks’, in which important people keep their cattle. There are two such kraals, one in Moroto and one in Kotido, that are protected by private guards and that do not seem to have been vulnerable to attack. On the other hand, in many areas where there are protected kraals, guns have been collected and protection promised, but cows have been lost and this is leading the communities to rearm. Area politicians including MPs Francis Kiyonga (Pokot) and Abraham Lokii (Jie), who are both facing prosecution for allegedly ‘inciting violence’, have accused the army of failing to protect civilian communities that turned in their guns, rendering them vulnerable to other cattle raiders.

In early 2010 in Jie county, sixty people were killed during a raid on a protected kraal. The army stated that these were ‘warriors’ killing each other. It later transpired that the army had hired twenty men in this area to guard the kraal and on hearing that a raid would take place had put them up front where a
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shootout took place. Many of them were killed.\textsuperscript{48} One of the officials on KIDDP (Karamoja Integrated Disarmament and Development Programme) noted: ‘There is no documented information on the protected kraals yet, but the truth of the matter is it has absolutely failed and has created more raids, more killings, looting of property and even road ambushes.’\textsuperscript{49}

The Military Versus the Community

In October 2006 in manyattas in Lopei, Kotido, seventy-five people lost their lives in a battle between herders and the UPDF. One of the dead was a UPDF commander.\textsuperscript{50} In June 2009, in Ayanganyanga village in Kotido District, armed Matheniko raiders from Moroto raided about three hundred head of cattle. They were pursued by the UPDF and the confrontation resulted in the death of one soldier and ten raiders, with many fighters injured.\textsuperscript{51} In another confrontation in Kaabong, in April 2010, forty-one Jie men lost their lives.\textsuperscript{52} In the same month in Kotido, the UPDF admitted killing four Jie men at Kachire village but claimed the other five deaths were a result of fighting between the pastoralists themselves. However, the Kachire LC3 chairman argued that the Jie men were unarmed and moving with their cows until they were attacked by the UPDF.\textsuperscript{53} A Catholic Father in Karamoja noted that ‘Here, there have been quite some battles and skirmishes between the warriors and army ... the army has denied bombing the kraals/corrals and using poison on the bullets, however our experience on the ground indicates otherwise!’\textsuperscript{54}

According to media reports, in December 2009 in Kadam Hills, Nakapiripirit District, a battle broke out between the army and armed raiders who had stolen seventy head of cattle from the Pian. Two UPDF soldiers and seven raiders died. About a month before, a clash between the army and Matheniko raiders left two soldiers and about twenty raiders dead.\textsuperscript{55} In January 2010 another battle occurred with thirty civilians killed in an air raid. The community leaders demanded an investigation, though the army rejected this demand. News media reported Lt. Col. Kulayigye noting that the army gunship is used where warriors are in large numbers just to scare them away.

On a tour of Karamoja in May 2010, President Museveni ordered an inquiry into alleged killing of Karimojong civilians by UPDF soldiers. The President, who is the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, had previously been informed (in a dossier by the MP for Jie County, Mr Peter Lokii) that on 24 April 2010, during an operation in Lokitelangilam (Rengen sub-county) formally meant to recover animals raided in Kaabong, the soldiers had killed between twenty-eight and forty-three civilians. Talking to the \textit{Daily Monitor}, Mr Lokii raised concerns about the army reporting to have ‘recovered only two guns from the twenty-eight people killed, initially reported to be all armed. “Witnesses said the dead were mostly shot in the head and at close range.”’\textsuperscript{56} Kotido Resident District Commissioner, John Achela, chair of the district security committee that
carried out an assessment of the situation shortly after the event, said that ‘ten bodies were found still at the location, six of which were children’.\textsuperscript{57}

Uganda Human Rights Commission is now asking the Ugandan military to punish its own officers implicated in wayward conduct: ‘The Commission calls upon the leadership of the UPDF to institute thorough investigations into the allegations which the commission has drawn to their attention.’\textsuperscript{58}

A further barrier to trust is that UPDF soldiers have been reported as stealing cows from locals and selling them (Gomes and Mkutu 2004). Nabilatuk authorities claimed that during the Ngariam raid of 12 September 2001, the 502 head of cattle rounded up by the military from Pian never reached their owners. In February 2010, an eminent elder of the Pokot released an interview to a \textit{Daily Monitor} reporter, claiming that the army had become a ‘cattle-rustling tribe’:

I am Aramutori Lokodo and a chief elder of the Pokot. I have been involved in the UPDF disarmament process by mobilising the Pokot to surrender their guns. When I heard that the government wants to take away the guns, I accepted because cattle rustlers have killed many people. Five of my children have been killed by Karimojong raiders and we said the guns are bad. I met President Museveni at State House, Entebbe last year and found people here living peacefully. I took the message home, telling my people that the gun is a wrong thing to be handled by civilians. The UPDF came to my place in Katikekile in Moroto and I assisted the army men to collect 200 guns (in May 2007). Lately, when the army came to Naguliet in Loroo sub-county, they tortured people indiscriminately until some who had no guns confessed they had guns – just to end the pain. My problem began on January 14, 2010. On that day, some Pokot raided animals in our area. A military helicopter pursued the rustlers and found my animals at a water point and bombed them and I wondered why. The next morning, the army came from Anguruma détaché [detachment] and took away all my 350 cattle; I reported to UPDF commanders and local government officials at Loroo sub-county headquarters. They told me to mention the thieves. I organised a clan meeting and got names of 27 suspects, which I gave to the authorities. The army took no step and I later learned that the soldiers had eaten some of my animals and gave others away. I collapsed crying. We thought the army was to give us security; the UPDF has now become a tribe in Karamoja raiding cattle.\textsuperscript{59}

\textbf{Nayokootuk: a Community-based Security System (CBSS)}

The Karimojong now are asking for a new generation of vigilante scheme by the name of ‘community-based security system’ (CBSS). The community are greatly concerned about disarmament, and how it is affecting their security and livelihood. They do not perceive that the state security is acting in their own interests and are reported as saying that the UPDF are not protecting them. Community leaders have requested that if disarmament has to continue, a ‘human security approach’ should be taken.\textsuperscript{60} They argue that the CBSS will reduce
the raids.\textsuperscript{61} The LC5 for Moroto noted that the suggestion has come from the community out of desperation for protection of their property.\textsuperscript{62}

It is envisaged that CBSS would offer rapid response to cattle raids, provide frontline security, and protect property within kraals and villages. It would also create a ‘resident’ (hence sustainable) security system in Karamoja, with the goal being to relieve the UPDF and paramilitary groups like the Anti-Stock Theft Units (ASTUs) and Local Defence Units (LDUs) from involvement in tracking petty criminals like cattle thieves and highway bandits.\textsuperscript{63} The suggestion is not popular with the state, but may be worthy of consideration and support. However, the same concerns exist as with previous generations of vigilante (Mkutu 2008b). There do not appear to be any safeguards in place to ensure control on weapons or the welfare and professionalism of those employed.

\section*{Conclusion}

This paper has drawn attention to the complexity of violent cattle raiding in pastoralists’ own perception; namely through the distinction between raiding for restocking, raiding for retaliation, and ‘unauthorised’ (by the elders) raiding for marketing (stealing in order to sell). The analysis has focused on the third type, \textit{akoko}, which has its own internal complexity because of its private and ‘unauthorized’ nature, shady players, widespread networks, and important synergies with the market. Although the most common form of raiding today, \textit{akoko} raiding is virtually ignored by the media, government documents, and policies aimed at mitigating raiding violence. On the other hand, is seems worth considering whether there is scope to work with the community specifically against the \textit{akoko} raiding, which they themselves find largely damaging.

In Karamoja today, the market economy is a significant and necessary part of pastoralists’ life. Animal production generates substantial wealth, as demonstrated by the figures for the Karamoja livestock markets, and should therefore be able to provide for the needs of the communities of producers. That this is not happening, together with evidence of the links between raiding and markets, raises concerns.

So far, the role of the market has received little attention in research or discussion on conflict resolution in Karamoja, although in other pastoral areas such work has been done (Little 2005, 2006, 2007). Possibilities for managing the markets as a route to stability and prosperity in Karamoja have yet to be explored. One way in which this might take place is for every animal to be registered and to require a certificate in order to be sold. Although expensive, it may be easy to carry out with mobile phones. This would need to be managed by local governments.

Survival needs are a major factor in a man’s decision to risk his own life in raiding and banditry. Acknowledging this may assist in coming up with strategies to reduce raiding. Disarmament cannot succeed in a context where the gun is
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essential for survival. The current approach with its lack of understanding of the complexities of raiding and the needs of those involved has alienated the community and may have led to a missed opportunity to assist the communities in managing their own problems. The recent proposal of a community-based security system (CBSS) is an indicator of this sense of failure in the perspective of the communities.

Acknowledgements

The author would very much like to thank Dr Tessa Mkutu for editing the work, Dr Saverio Krätli for his extensive editing and helpful direction, and the two anonymous reviewers who also gave many helpful comments causing me to think about these issues from new perspectives.

Notes

1. Kotido was the largest district at the time (2004), with an estimated population of over six hundred thousand.
3. Interview with David Moni, cattle trader.
4. LC stands for Local Council. There are five levels, from village (LC1) to district (LC5).
6. Interviews with traders, names withheld, April 2010; also see Daily Monitor, 24 March 2010.
7. In the vicinity there are three markets, the Kotido Town Council market, the Kanawat market and the Kachire market.
8. A large town over an hour’s drive south.
10. Interview with Catholic Sister, Moroto, 17 October 2003.
11. An army detachment is now located at this place. It used to be among the most dangerous places en route to Moroto.
15. Interview with CID officer, name withheld, Namalu, 21 September 2003.
16. Interview with former District Commissioner (name withheld) for Pokot, Kenya, 21 July 2003.
17. Interview, name withheld, Malaba border, 2007.
18. Phone interview with former Karamoja MP, 1 May 2010.
21. Interview with former raider, name withheld, Rupa, 1 February 2003.
22. Interview with raider later became chief, Moroto, 2004 and 2005.
24. A kraal visited in Namalu had about 800 cows and 200 calves. Another visited in Amudat had about 3,000 cattle and a large number of goats, camels and sheep.
25. Interview with Lorot Koriatutinyo, kraal leader, Nikoloro, 29 January 2003; Koriatutinyo happened to also be an elder ekatukon (a term that defines those elders in a kraal who ‘solve the problems’).
27. Interview with elder, Kotido, October 2003.
28. This was noted by several traders interviewed in Namalu, Amudat and Kotido.
31. Interviews with students, one at a local High School and another at University, February 2003. Of course, this would need investigation to establish any empirical evidence.
32. Interview with Tepeth male youth, Katikekile sub-county, 13 March 2007. It should be noted that discussions of raiding were descriptive generalizations and did not imply direct involvement or culpability on the part of respondents.
33. Interview with Matheniko youths, Rupa, October 2003.
34. Interview with the victim, Kanawat, 3 February 2003.
35. Interview with LC5 Moroto, security meeting, 30 February 2003.
37. The number of guns surrendered during the ten weeks of voluntary disarmament varies according to the source. Official information from the 405 Infantry DDE headquarters (quoted in Mkutu 2008a: 131) established it at about ten thousand. KIDDP keeps this figure but attributes it to the entire 2001–2002 disarmament exercise (OPM GoU 2007: 9). In all cases, these figures indicate that the pace of disarmament has been much faster when voluntary than when forced. For a detailed account of disarmament attempts in Karamoja, see Mkutu 2008b; OPM GoU, 2007: 8–11.
39. Interviews and email communication with several members of Karamoja community including raiders, local civil servants, MPs and civil society workers 2009–2010.
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40. Interview with a member of KISP (Karamoja Initiative for Sustainable Peace), name withheld, Karamoja, 2006 (KISP was a group involving elders across clans, aiming for peaceful solutions).

41. Phone interview with former Karamoja MP, 1 May 2010; cf. also the Daily Monitor, 5 January 2010.

42. Phone interview with former Karamoja MP, 1 May 2010; concurred by KISP elders and LCs. Also see the interview by the Daily Monitor with David Pulkol, former chief of external security, at http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/-/688334/946162/-/x1g712/-/index.html

43. Phone interview with LC5, Ken Lochap, June 2010.

44. Phone interview with former Karamoja MP, 1 May 2010; concurred by KISP elders and LCs.

45. Interview with civil servant, name withheld, with eight years experience in Karamoja, and currently based in Moroto, 4 June 2010.

46. Phone interview with former Karamoja MP, 1 May 2010.


48. Phone interview with former Karamoja MP, 1 May 2010.

49. Email communication, name withheld, 3 April 2010.

50. Phone communication, Karamoja Disarmament Committee, names withheld, 8 December 2006. See for example of episodes in which several warriors have been killed fighting with the security forces http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpDocuments)/741A15A95ECFCF52C1257222D00389108/$file/Kotido+Inter-Agency+assessment+report-November06.pdf. See also Daily Monitor, 12 April 2010, http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/-/688334/897574/-/wikgxs/-/index.html


54. Email communication, name withheld, 2 March 2007.


56. See Daily Monitor, 25 May 2010 http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/-/688334/925070/-/x07e5m/-/index.html


59. See Daily Monitor, 21 February 2010, http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/-/688334/865758/-/wikyfs/-/index.html. I interviewed Aramutori Lokodo several times myself, in Amudat and also Kachiliba; he is one of the most respected pastoralist elders on the Kenya–Uganda border.

60. Phone interview with Former Karamoja MP, 1 May 2010; this was also confirmed in interview with LC5 for Moroto, Ken Lochap, who noted that the situation is out of hand.
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61. Communication with member of Disarmament Committee from Karamoja, 29 April 2010.

62. Phone interview with Ken Lochap, LC5 for Moroto, 30 April 2010; Mr Lochap was the founder of vigilante in 1992 that improved security for a time in Karamoja before they were taken over by the government.

63. Phone communication and e-mail correspondence with elders in Karamoja, April 2010.

References


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