

- 2 Recorded in an interview with Lale Aila, an elderly Kara at Dus, on 11 February 1987.
3 Recorded in an interview with Aiko, a middle-aged Koegu at Kuchur, on 4 July 1989.

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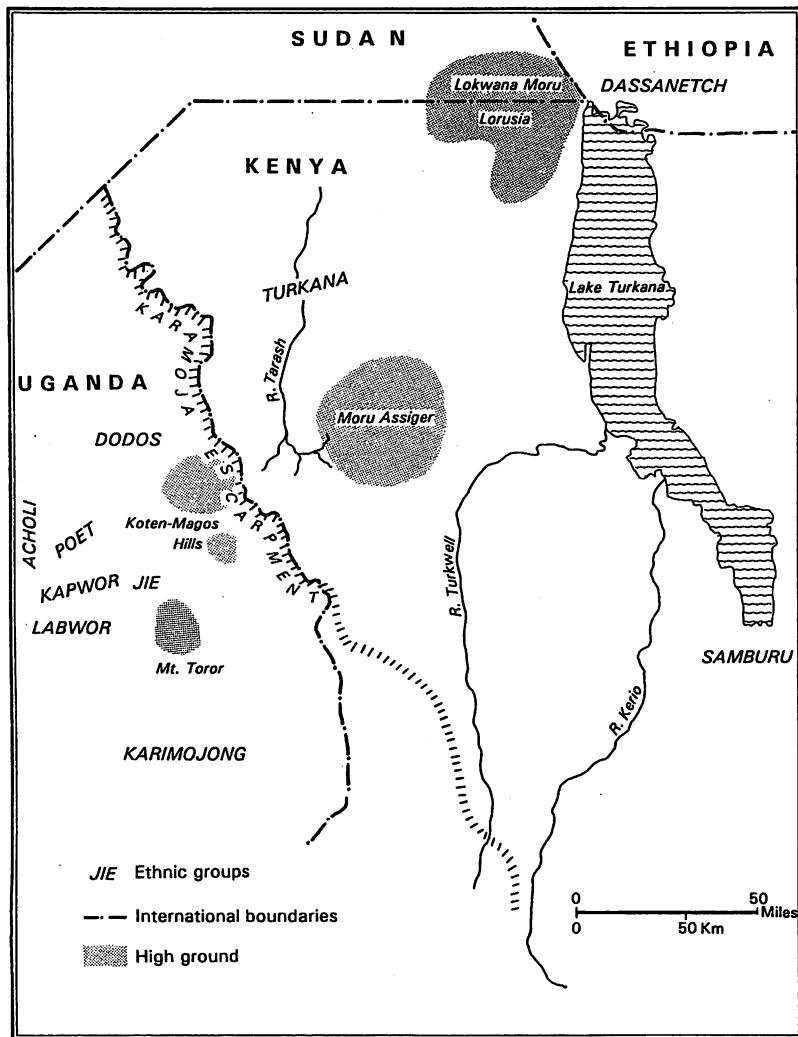
4 The Evolution of Ateker 'New Model' Armies: Jie & Turkana

JOHN LAMPHEAR

One stereotypical image of Eastern Africa is that of a stalwart herdsman leaning on his spear (never his musket or rifle!), as he gazes stoically into the distance. Indeed, a number of valuable studies have convincingly demonstrated that firearms played little if any role in the military organization or tactics of many East African pastoral and semipastoral communities (Fukui & Turton, 1979). And yet, over the past couple of decades, significant numbers of those same communities have become increasingly reliant on large stores of rifles, and those weapons have made a profound impact on social, economic and military structures. This has contributed, in turn, to a tragically endemic climate of violence which has beset many parts of the region.

This chapter suggests that in some cases the process of militarization among pastoral peoples has roots going back a century. This vital era of transition, corresponding to the period when outside intruders first appeared in this region, has received relatively little scholarly attention. Specifically, this chapter will investigate the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century experience of two closely related Ateker communities of the eastern Nilotes, the Jie and the Turkana, in order to determine why each was to develop a military structure and an attitude towards outside military technology and organizational forms sharply different from the other.¹ In the process of this analysis, it is hoped that some light may be shed on broader processes of military transition that have been going on in this region for some time, and continue today.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, many ancestral Jie were part of a rather loose 'cultural confederation' of disparate peoples living in central Karamoja of Uganda. Some, mainly



Map 4 Jie and Turkana

descended from an early Ateker group based on the Koten-Magos hill country further east, were essentially pastoralist. Others, derived from a more westerly branch of the Ateker, appropriately nicknamed *Ngikatapa*, 'bread people', subscribed to an economy featuring grain agriculture, and had experienced considerable earlier interactions with Luo-speakers. Associated with both groups, and rapidly being assimilated by them, were bands of Kuliak hunter-cultivators, remnants of several earlier non-Ateker populations. Apart from sharing a pit of sacred clay, subscribing to a common emblematic totem and engaging in various economic interactions, there was apparently little sense of community, as each group adhered to its own line of hereditary fire-makers, who served as the main source of its own separate identity (Lamphear, 1976).

Oral tradition suggests that military activity during the earlier part of the nineteenth century was limited. Only two specific clashes are recalled. In the first, a western people, the Kepwor, was decimated, partly by the raids of ancestral Jie, but even more by severe drought and famine. About a generation later, another group, the Poet, also were defeated, many being assimilated into the fledgling Jie community. Military co-operation between the disparate Jie elements, as well as ongoing internal population movements, led to closer societal integration. For the first time, a common name, 'Ngiro', which had deeply cosmological associations with 'Longiro', the legendary Ateker cradle land in Sudan, was adopted by the community as a whole. This closer association stopped short of complete political unity, however, as each Ngiro subgroup continued to maintain separate, though very similar, political, military and religious institutions (Lamphear, 1976).

In the meantime a number of other Ateker communities, including the Dodos, Karimojong, Toposa, Dongiro and Turkana, had been going through their own processes of coalescence. By the mid-nineteenth century, the Ngiro were becoming uncomfortably aware of the growing unity of the Dodos to their north and the Karimojong to the south. By then, all the Ateker groups had developed economies with important pastoral elements, and competition for resources, exacerbated by a deteriorating ecological environment and expanding population, was becoming acute, leading to steadily escalating conflicts. For a while, belts of no man's land in some areas helped to defuse tension. In the grasslands around Mt Toror in the south, treaties called for an equitable sharing of resources between Ngiro and Karimojong. Soon, however, Karimojong cattle camps began monopolizing the Toror grazing, and even thrust into some areas of permanent

Ngiro settlements. At the battle of Nangodi, remembered by tradition as the largest single engagement fought up to that time, the Ngiro managed to hurl the Karimojong back from Toror. But their victory was short-lived, and the Karimojong soon regained complete domination of the Toror area. By about 1870, they were co-ordinating further attacks with the Dodos, with the avowed intention of eliminating the Ngiro altogether. Collectively outnumbering their rivals by perhaps four to one, it might well have seemed that the Karimojong and Dodos would succeed.

But despite the grim determination of raiding parties, which swept through many parts of the Ngiro country 'like a fishing net' — giving the campaign its name, *Apetai* ('everywhere') — desperate and confused fighting ended when a Karimojong contingent fell into a trap at a river ford and was wiped out. Disheartened, Karimojong and Dodos raiders fell back on their respective territories, but they carried with them much livestock and other booty. In reflection of the annoyance they felt towards their numerically weak but tenacious neighbours, the Karimojong and Dodos began referring to the Ngiro as *Ngijie*, 'the fighting people'. Instead of resenting the nickname, intended as a scornful reference to their truculence, the Ngiro accepted the name with pride and even began calling themselves 'Jie'. Reflected in this acceptance was a stronger sense of unity and corporate identity than had ever existed before. Forced to re-adjust both settlement and grazing patterns, much of the Jie community now became much more spatially compact than before. For defensive reasons many people abandoned the old system of isolated individual homesteads, for a new one in which hundreds of homesteads banded together into giant complexes surrounded by stout defensive barricades.

From the late 1870s until the 1890s, the beleaguered Jie were given a respite from the frequent raids as a terrible series of epizootics decimated herds and seriously weakened societies throughout Karamoja. By the later 1890s, however, an economic revival prompted a renewal of the attacks and, although Jie dogged resistance had just barely preserved their community in the past, their continued survival as an independent entity now looked very precarious indeed.

As the Jie ethnogenesis thus proceeded in Karamoja, that of another Ateker society, the Turkana, was taking place to the east, presenting both similarities to and differences from that of the Jie. Tradition portray the Turkana as the eastern vanguard of the Ateker, descended from clans that broke off from the old

Koten-Magos concentration to push down the rugged escarpment which now marks the Uganda-Kenya frontier. At the headwaters of the Tarash River the emigrants formed an association with Ngikatapa 'bread people', and perhaps a few far-ranging, Bantu-speaking elements. In pushing eastward to the Tarash, the ancestral Turkana had arrived at a dramatic ecological and cultural frontier. Sprawling out before them, arid plains characterized by scant rainfall and searing heat, dropped steadily down to the shores of Lake Turkana. Except in a few favoured locales, cultivation was impossible. This hard country was inhabited by communities radically different from any the Ateker had previously encountered. The Turkana saw these strangers as 'red people', partly because of their lighter-coloured skins and partly because they liberally smeared themselves with ochre. Their languages and many aspects of their cultures and economy were utterly unfamiliar. As strange as the people themselves were some of their livestock, exotic creatures with long necks and humps on their backs — the first camels the Ateker had encountered.

Initially, the early Turkana appear to have lived as a compact group subscribing to a common generation-set system, although they also experienced close and essentially peaceful interaction with neighbouring peoples. By the end of the eighteenth century, impelled by ecological and demographic pressures, conflict developed with a group of strangers, the Siger, a loose, multicultural confederation of Cushitic-, Maa- and Southern Nilotic-speakers. These Siger represented a surviving pocket of 'old-style' pastoralist, often associated in many oral traditions with the nearly legendary 'Sirikwa', who herded a distinctive type of longhorned black cattle — probably cervicothoracic-humped Sanga cross-breeds. The Ateker and a few other East African peoples, in contrast, appear rapidly to have been developing a 'new pastoralism' based on their early possession of hardy thoracic-humped Zebus, much more resistant to heat stress, drought and disease. Even as Turkana cattle camps, coveting their highland pastures, began to encroach on the Siger, much of the Rift Valley region was seized by the terrible *Aoyate* drought, which decimated the Siger herds and led to the rapid disintegration of their community. Many of the survivors were absorbed by the Turkana (Lamphear, 1988).

At about the same time, rivalry was also developing with another foreign population, the numerous Maa-speaking 'Kor', who lived in close pastoral association with various Cushitic-speaking peoples. All of them herded a variety of livestock, but the Cushites specialized in camels and the Kor in cattle, including some of the same hardy Zebus kept by the Ateker. Like the

evolving Turkana, the Kor and their allies withstood the *Aoyate* drought better than the Siger, and also absorbed many of the latter as their community collapsed. Holding most of the arid plains beyond the Tarash, the powerful Kor alliance must have seemed a serious barrier to any further Turkana advances.

And yet Turkana rapidly began pushing out from their Tarash footholds, forcing the Kor and their allies eastward to the shores of the lake, and then moving south to gain control of the vast region between the Turkwel and Kerio valleys. Other advances drove north to occupy additional areas, including highlands stretching into southern Sudan. While some traditions give the impression that this dramatic expansion was essentially a military one, in fact it certainly derived from a complex combination of factors, including vital commercial relations which kept the Turkana supplied with a constant flow of ironware and grain. In some cases large numbers of aliens apparently opted, for various reasons, to 'become Turkana' *en masse*, making the process of expansion as much the spread of a culturo-linguistic system as a direct armed invasion (Lamphear, 1988).

Early Ateker military structures

It seems clear that a certain bellicosity accompanied the ethnogenesis of the Jie and Turkana communities, and certainly many superficial aspects of their cultures had begun to display a strong military ethos. Their tough, mobile life styles evolved rugged individuals, expert in the handling of weapons. Great social and psychological value was attached to a wide array of symbols reflecting military achievement. Men with outstanding martial skills might rapidly gain superior economic, and even limited political, status.

Just below the surface, however, was a much less martial environment, featuring military systems which were in many respects decidedly rudimentary. Overall, these systems were quite typical of those found throughout pre-colonial Africa. Divisions between the army and the general community, for example, were indistinct, and military affairs blended so thoroughly with political, economic and religious matters as to make them virtually inseparable. Fighting men were paradigmatic citizen militiamen, with every able-bodied man being mobilized for conflict on an *ad hoc* basis, and then reverting to 'civilian' roles of herdsmen at the cessation of hostilities (Welch, 1975; Uzoigwe, 1977; Tornay, 1979).

In the Ateker version, the generation-set system provided some basis for military organization, and its graded hierarchy gave a vital sense of 'rank' and *esprit de corps* to its members, while assigning to the congregation of senior elders the direction of military affairs. In some instances, specific age sets might even correspond to nascent military units. Ideally, for instance, by the time they were trying to protect their country against Karimojong and Dodos incursions, Jie armies were supposed to be arranged by age sets. 'The senior age set would be placed in the centre, with the others formed up to the right and left. The army would advance towards the enemy like the fingers of a hand, with each finger being one age set.'² In actual practice, however, ideal formations were seldom achieved and, even when they were, most raiding parties and larger forces quickly dissolved into little more than armed mobs: 'there was no special arrangement [for armies]. Everyone would go together in one big group.' Individual bravery and initiative were greatly admired and a man of outstanding courage and military skill could become a 'battle leader' to whom a small band of men — usually his age-mates — might attach themselves as a kind of 'private company'. Thus, even the largest armies were merely 'aggregations of individual heroic warriors'. Most military activity took the form of intermittent raiding rather than anything like large-scale campaigns, and typically it stemmed from a desire to capture livestock, to gain access to natural resources or, perhaps most commonly, simply to gain a military reputation and prestige (Dent, 1977; Parker, 1988).

Nor was the generation-set system a very effective mechanism for mobilizing martial activity. On the contrary, elders usually stood in opposition to the younger men's aggressive tendencies, which might lead to unwelcome expansion of conflict and even undercut the authority and pre-eminence of the older men. 'War', Paul Baxter has remarked, 'was too serious a matter to be left to the young.' The generation system, therefore, provided a vital means by which elders could exert authority over truculent juniors and impose strict limitations on warfare itself (Almagor, 1979; Baxter, 1979; Galaty, 1987). As a result, strategic and tactical goals tended to be notoriously vague. Moreover, while tradition might sometimes describe the goals of military action in terms of the 'extermination' of rival communities, it is clear that assimilation, not annihilation, was usually the rule.

Beyond this, it is apparent that many military 'victories' such as that of the Jie over the Siger were attributable at least as much to the deteriorating ecological environment as to actual force of

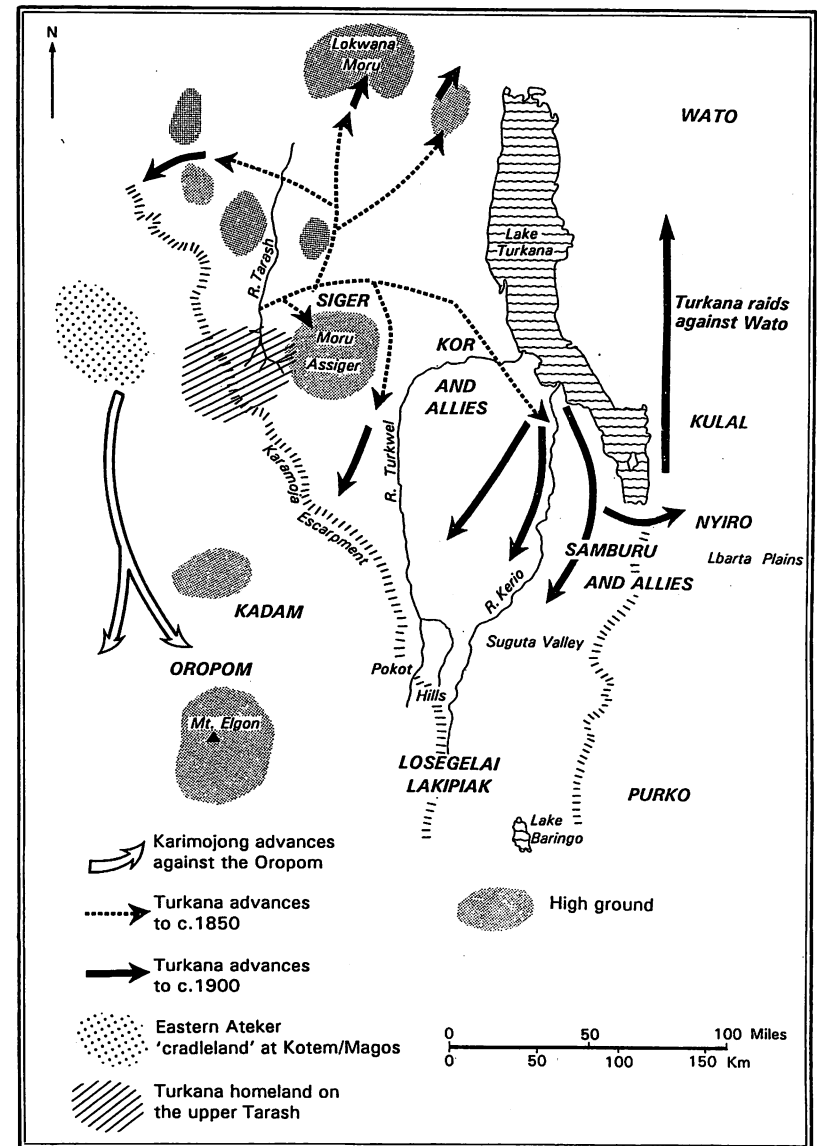
arms. With the Ateker, and for that matter apparently with virtually all other East African pastoralists and semipastoralists, an outward emphasis on martial trappings masked an elementary military system verging more on 'militarism' — the vast 'array of customs, interests, prestige, actions and thoughts associated with armies and wars and yet transcending true military purposes' — than on what Western military historians term 'the military way': an efficient 'concentration of men and materials on winning specific objectives of power' (Vagts, 1959).

Indeed, conflict was often governed by a code of military etiquette, with clashes often resembling a chivalrous tournament rather than serious warfare, as the following Turkana tradition concerning the era of their dramatic 'expansion' demonstrates:

[The Turkana age set] Tiira . . . were brave men. Wherever they went, they swept away enemies. Once, when they were at Morungole, one of them went to Moru Assiger. There he met some men of the Karimojong age set called Wapeto, who were also good fighters, and he said to them: 'You are a famous age set like Tiira. But nothing can be thrown on our shields.' The Wapeto answered: 'No, we can throw something on them.' And so 30 of the Wapeto came to fight the Tiira. They said: 'Are we enough?' The Tiira answered: 'No.' So the Wapeto returned with 70, but they were still not enough. Then they returned with 80 or 90, and they were enough. The Tiira took their army to Moruelongot and fought the Wapeto there. The mountain was named Morulongot, 'the mountain of the penis', that day, because one man was speared in that part of his body. All the Wapeto were killed, except about 12, who escaped and climbed up *Moruangikilok* ['the mountain of men', so named to honour the Wapeto survivors]. The Tiira surrounded the mountain, and then the Wapeto surrendered all their possessions. The Tiira let them go, telling them to go and greet their people, and tell them what had happened to them here in Eturkan (Turkanaland).

With the Jie, the scope of conflict certainly expanded as the pressure from their Karimojong and Dodos rivals increased in the later nineteenth century. Actions such as the battle of Nangodiiai and the *Apetai* campaign may well have involved much larger numbers of fighting men and an intensity of combat rarely, if ever, experienced by other Ateker communities up to that time. But even here the highly segmentary nature of Ateker military organization, with the fundamental reliance on personal courage and independent action, is plain, as is reflected by traditional accounts of the action at Nangodiiai:

The fighting was very confused, with everyone just fighting together. It was difficult even to be sure who was a friend and who was an enemy . . . the place where that battle was fought is still called *Nangodiiai* [from *akingodia*, 'to mix up people in one place'].



Map 5 Karimojong and Turkana expansion in the 19th century

The evolution of Jie and Turkana 'new model' armies

In the later part of the nineteenth century, however, both the Turkana and the Jie were to alter their military systems, substantially increasing their efficiency. With the Turkana, these alterations were intimately linked with the process of territorial expansion. As that expansion moved further and further afield to occupy the vast area west of Lake Turkana, their earlier sense of corporate identity had become progressively diluted. The once compact community rapidly was becoming a loose confederation of local territorial sections, distinguished by distinct differences in dialect, dress and other cultural features. This was especially true for those sections which had incorporated large numbers of Siger and other strangers. The generation-set system had provided a sense of cohesion for a while. During the earlier stages of the expansion it had been possible to convene the entire congregation of senior elders in a single location, where decisions affecting the whole community could be made. As the advances progressed, however, such concerted action became impossible and generation-set activity came to be focused on the individual local sections, leading to a progressive decline in the status of the senior elders.

Concurrently, the initial momentum of the Turkana expansion began to slow. In northern and some southern areas it had stalled along natural highland frontiers, but to the east, in the vicinity of the lake, it was caused by the more determined resistance of the Kor and their allies, who previously had been falling back before Turkana raids, incorporating Siger and other displaced people as they went. As Turkana internal integration began to decrease, that of their rivals had increased and, in the face of incessant Turkana pressure, the latter had coalesced into the Sampur (Samburu), Ariaal and Rendille communities, who now presented powerful barriers to any Turkana advances beyond the Kerio River.

This growing resistance was at least partly responsible for some fundamental changes to the generation-set system. As we have seen, the system had been a decidedly inefficient means of mobilizing young fighting men. Basic contradictions between biological and generational age caused many men to remain uninitiated until middle age or later. Because of this, the Turkana and other Ateker societies had permitted any male, regardless of initiation status, to go off on raids:

Anyone, even the uninitiated, could go and fight . . . What would uninitiated men eat if they just remained at home? Does the stomach distinguish between men?

But, although they could raid, uninitiated men did not belong to a corporate age set, whose close-knit organization, *esprit de corps* and precise rank in the generation-set hierarchy provided an important basis of Turkana military activity. As the congregation of senior elders began to lose some of its former status and generation-set activity became more locally focused, biological principles increasingly took precedence over generational ones. Even the previously fundamental alternation of 'father-son' generations was ignored, so that young men of the 'proper age' of initiation — about 20 — were initiated regardless of generational status. A more effective system for the universal mobilization of young fighting men into corporate units began to evolve. Initiation now became closely linked with raiding activity, with the inauguration of new sets tending dramatically to increase military activity, as groups of newly initiated men, anxious to prove themselves, roamed through the countryside joining raiding parties wherever they found them. The very appearance of such bands often provided, in itself, the inspiration for raids (Muller, 1989; Lamphear, 1992). These changes, however, were hardly sufficient to keep Turkana expansion from being stymied by the Sampur alliance for some time at the Kerio.

After the middle of the nineteenth century, the expansion did finally resume, but only under the leadership of a powerful diviner (*emuron*, pl. *ngimurok*) named Lokerio. Among all the other Ateker communities this office was a minor one. As an important office it was more typically found among other Nilotic-speakers, such as the Maasai and Lwo, where powerful diviners sometimes supervised age-class systems and directed raiding activity. While their offices were primarily religious, a number of East African diviners had begun to build an authority during the nineteenth century that was decidedly political, even to the extent of becoming 'emergent centralizing figures' (Munro, 1975). Some traditional accounts claim that Lokerio's line of diviners, the Meturona, had been important since the earliest settlements on the Tarash, and suggest that they had given the Turkana a sense of selfhood for some time. It is likely, though, that such tales were fostered *ex post facto* following Lokerio's rise to prominence, to claim that only he played a significant role in the process of Turkana expansion. Unquestionably, it had been the congregation of senior elders who provided the essential focus of Turkana corporate identity and leadership for the expansion.

The decline of the senior elders created something of a power vacuum in an increasingly acephalous political environment, which Lokerio sought to fill. Through various religious

ceremonies, Lokerio gradually gained great influence over the altered age system and even assumed decidedly executive functions, providing tactical direction and strategic co-ordination to raiding activity. Using an efficient system of messengers working in relays from one section to another, Lokerio now mustered larger armies than had been assembled in the past. The misgivings about the escalation of conflict which had been a powerful constraint on the congregation of senior elders did not apply to Lokerio the diviner. On the contrary, he began to reap a rich reward of captured livestock, which victorious armies paid to him as his fee for blessing and directing them. Military activity also became more sustained than before, with raids pushing ahead virtually without interruption. Relentless forays surged across the Kerio. The Sampur and their allies gave way before the Turkana, who pushed right around the southern tip of the lake and up its eastern shore, capturing great numbers of livestock, especially camels. According to a widely known tradition, Lokerio's mystical powers were the chief ingredient in the Turkana success:

Lokerio . . . commanded the lake to make a dry path through the water so the Turkana could go over and capture camels from those people on the other side of the lake. So the Turkana drove those camels back along the path, and then Lokerio commanded the water to close behind them.

On another level, this tradition can be seen to convey, via the popular motif of the magical crossing of waters, the idiom of societal transcendence, in this instance a kind of *rite de passage* by which the Turkana now assumed a new collective identity focused on Lokerio. In the process, Lokerio had transformed his office into a new form of diviner altogether, the 'Diviners of God' (*Ngimurok aaku*) or 'Great Diviners', whose authority extended throughout every Turkana section.

At this point, the same series of epizootics which had beset the Jie and the other societies of Karamoja from the late 1870s to the 1890s also decimated the communities neighbouring the Turkana, though not the Turkana themselves. In fact, of all the pastoral societies of the eastern Lake Turkana basin, only the Turkana escaped the full ravages of these disasters. Neighbouring peoples, terribly weakened, were driven back from a few more areas on the periphery of the country already controlled by the Turkana. By the late 1890s, the Turkana had gained access to virtually all the territory that would ever be regarded as *Eturkan* (Turkanaland).

In the meantime, Lokerio had died, to be succeeded by one of his sons, Merimug. Obviously impressed by the authority

Lokerio had accrued to his office of Great Diviner, several other contenders now presented themselves as rivals to Merimug. The most successful of them, Lokorijam, a man of the Katekok clan, rapidly built a reputation in parts of western Eturkan, where he took over the blessing and direction of armies. By the late 1890s, after the sudden death of Merimug, Lokorijam had gained a full ascendancy and was exerting a leadership for the Turkana almost equalling Lokerio's.

But the powerful sense of unity derived from Lokerio had been seriously eroded as Merimug and Lokorijam struggled for power, and it was even further diminished when a bitter succession dispute broke out after Lokorijam's death in about 1903. By that time, many of the frontiers of Eturkan, while still fluid and ill defined, were showing signs of a marked 'stabilization'. In some areas, close interactions between the Turkana and neighbouring peoples blurred the still rather fragile ethnic identities. Accentuating those notoriously transitory group distinctions typical of East African pastoral societies, such interactions were rapidly evolving new bicultural and bilingual communities in some areas. Even along actively contested frontiers, such as that with the Sampur to the south of the lake, conflict mainly took the form of 'reciprocal raiding', a military balance where intermarriage and other peaceful contacts were becoming common (Lamphear, 1992).

As the Turkana thus appeared rapidly to be disintegrating into a loose 'cultural confederation' or, even more likely, a whole collection of such confederations at the turn of the twentieth century, the Jie by that time were on the verge of being overwhelmed and forcibly assimilated by their powerful Karimojong and Dodos neighbours. As the terrible effects of the epizootics finally began to ebb in the late 1890s, there had been a major resurgence of hostilities. At the very end of the century, the Jie barely managed to repulse a serious Dodos incursion at the battle of Tiira.

Unlike the other Ateker societies, where tactical leadership was entirely wielded by individual battle leaders, there existed in the Jie military system an important potential refinement in command structure: the office of hereditary war leader (*ekapalon kaajore*). Theoretically regarded as overall commander of all military forces, in practice the war leader's actual authority had always been minimal. Strategic planning, such as it was, was exercised by the congregation of senior elders, religious preparations were the province of fire-makers and diviners, and tactical

leadership was monopolized by the battle leaders in command of their largely autonomous private companies. The hereditary leader, therefore, was little more than a figure-head whose overall control was distinctly minimal: '[Before about 1902] Jie armies had no special leaders, except for those brave men who encouraged others by their example [the battle leaders].'

Present at the battle of Tiira had been Loriang, the new hereditary war leader recognized by most Jie divisions, who had just succeeded to the office after the death of his half-brother. The battle had taught him a valuable lesson in military organization and tactics. He had been dismayed at how slowly fragmentary bands of reinforcements had trickled in from various parts of Najie (Jieland). Clearly the military organization based on age sets and the small 'private companies' of individual battle leaders was dangerously inadequate to effect a rapid and large-scale mobilization. Soon after the battle, therefore, Loriang began designing an entirely new organization based on most of the territorial divisions, which, since the defeats of the 1860s and 1870s, had been jammed together in a rather compact area. Intuitively understanding the importance of 'interior lines', Loriang suggested that contingents be formed from the kinsmen and neighbours of each division to ensure a much quicker mobilization of large forces to combat the attacks of the Dodos and Karimojong.

Ironically, however, the first test of Loriang's reorganization was not against either of these enemies, but against the Acholi, the agricultural western neighbours of the Jie, with whom previously good relations had deteriorated during the great disasters. By 1902, several Acholi kingdoms were acquiring muzzle-loading muskets from long-distance traders and, armed with this new technology, they launched a massive army of at least 2000 men against the Jie. The Jie of the Chaichaon area against whom the attack was focused managed to hold back the Acholi through sheer courage and bravado until, with amazing speed and efficiency, Loriang's new territorial division 'battalions' arrived, one after another, to shore up a fragile defensive line. The Acholi army, with some of their muskets malfunctioning because of wet powder, lost all semblance of order and fled. Drawing all of his battalions into a unified force, Loriang then led a methodical, well-coordinated pursuit which turned a successful defence into a stunning victory. The Jie, outnumbered at least four to one and armed entirely with traditional weapons, had utterly crushed the largest army they had ever faced (Lamphear & Webster, 1971).

With this great victory accomplished, Loriang pressed ahead

with further military reforms. He devised an offensive formation for his new territorial division 'battalions' in which each had its own place in a battle line, anchored on the flanks by the two divisions which had seen the most conflict with the Karimojong and Dodos in the past. The old organization based on the generation-set system was not entirely abandoned, however, and Loriang's plans called for each battalion to be internally arranged by age sets, at least in offensive actions. This organization, as it subsequently functioned in combat situations, was described by elders who in their youth were part of it:

The Jie army was really arranged by territorial divisions. Each division was arranged as its own small army within the big army. But age sets were also important. That is, the younger men were in the front of each battalion because they could move well and run quickly. The older men who could not run so quickly, but who had fought many times, came behind. Sometimes the plan would be for the young men to attack the enemy and then suddenly break off and rush away, as though they were beaten. The enemy would chase them. Then the older men, who had concealed themselves to the rear, would jump up from their hiding places and ambush the enemy, who would be surrounded and defeated.

Loriang also took steps to reduce the authority of the individual battle leaders and thereby centralize the command structure:

Loriang forbade small groups of warriors to go on raids of their own, as they had done in the past. He made all the warriors of every territorial division come together to one place to form one army which he himself led. Before his time, armies had been small and were never united, and they were always defeated.

Other innovations included the establishment of a system of messengers to streamline the mobilization of the battalions, and the creation of a crack bodyguard of the best fighting men. Many of these men were the same battle leaders whose independent authority Loriang had reduced, and their incorporation into the bodyguard seems to have soothed the ill-feeling some may have harboured. He also instituted a rather complex chain of command. Each battalion had its own commander, personally selected by Loriang, who was responsible both for its mobilization and for leading it in battle. Subordinate to the commanders, and chosen by them, were a number of junior officers. Loriang himself, armed only with a sacred stick, commanded operations from the rear of the battle line, surrounded by his bodyguard, which functioned as a tactical reserve. Another innovation was the creation of a 'home guard' force, recruited mainly from junior age sets, but also probably including uninitiated adult men and elders, to guard Najie and the cattle camps while the main army was on campaign. In addition, he incorporated large numbers of

teenaged boys into the army to serve as porters and drovers, and to gain valuable military experience. But perhaps Loriang's greatest contribution was to bring several western territorial divisions, known collectively as the Rengen, whose military forces had always functioned separately from the rest of the Jie, effectively under his command, thus signalling the fullest degree of Jie integration yet achieved. With the incorporation of the Renge, Loriang was able to mobilize a force of perhaps 500 fighting men, by far the largest army the Jie/'Ngiro' had ever fielded.

In addition to these tactical and organizational changes, Loriang also introduced an entirely new strategic outlook. While the battle of Chaichaon had proved that Loriang's new organization could offer effective protection to the settled parts of Najie, outlying settlements and the far-ranging cattle camps remained vulnerable to attacks and raids. To Loriang the answer to this problem was obvious: his battalions would go on the offensive and vigorously carry the war for the first time to the countries of his enemies. In this, the Jie apparently resembled other spatially restricted pastoral communities, who frequently tended to adopt offensive strategies to keep hostilities as far from their frontiers as possible (Almagor, 1979).

Employing the offensive version of the new tactical organization to perfection, Loriang's army won a rapid series of victories against the Karimojong and Dodos. All the grazing lands around Toror were regained, and the Karimojong were forced to abandon many of their northern settled areas. Vast numbers of livestock and other booty were captured, and the brilliant success of Loriang's forces, together with his outstanding diplomatic skills, rapidly began to attract allies. The Labwor, Luo-speaking neighbours and friends of the Jie, sent contingents to join Loriang, as did the very same Acholi kingdoms which had earlier attacked Chaichaon. Perhaps another 250 men were thus added to their Jie forces, many of them musketeers, with a few riflemen. Having so handily defeated the Acholi musketeers at Chaichaon with traditional weapons, the Jie themselves had been little impressed by the military potential of firearms. Although Loriang now permitted the inclusion of Acholi and Labwor musketeers in his army — more to swell his numbers than to augment his fire-power, it might be argued — he discouraged the use of firearms by his own men, and very few Jie employed them, despite the fact that ivory traders, who now roamed through Karamoja, sometimes brought such weapons as trade items. Nevertheless, the allied musketeers did play a role in battles against the Karimojong in 1909 and 1910, presenting rolling volleys to cover

the Jie attacks and retiring behind the protection of the shields of Jie spearmen to reload.

This marked the pinnacle of Loriang's military career. While the Jie community was desperately in need of an able, charismatic leader, and while the office of hereditary war leader provided the avenue for Loriang's rise, his individual military genius, as reflected by his innovations, is clear. Tradition credits him with the very survival of the Jie community as an independent entity. Other traditions — Jie, Karimojong and Dodos alike — suggest a certain deterioration of the unity of enemy societies in the face of incessant Jie offensives, and show that their own military systems remained old-style, fragmentary ones. It is also clear that Loriang's authority began to impinge somewhat on that of the hereditary fire-makers and the congregation of senior elders. The former, who were enjoined by custom not to play any important role in warfare, continued to provide foci of religious and political homogeneity for their respective major divisions, but in some ways they were now overshadowed by Loriang, whose military leadership transcended major divisions to embrace the Jie community as a whole.³ Similarly, Loriang progressively assumed the main direction of strategic policies, which formerly had been the exclusive concern of the elders.

Nevertheless, both institutions continued to be important and influential even at the height of Loriang's power. Indeed, it is important to emphasize that all of Loriang's innovations were accomplished only by first gaining the active support of the congregation of senior elders. Although under Loriang's dynamic leadership the office of hereditary war leader was accorded some real authority, it still remained distinctly subordinate to that of the elders:

After he became the war leader, Loriang would give presents of beer or even oxen to the very old men — those who walked with sticks. He did this to get their permission to do the things he wanted to do. No war leader before Loriang ever did these things, and no war leader before him ever led all the Jie in one army, as Loriang did.

It was at this dramatic point that the vanguard of the British colonial administration suddenly appeared in Karamoja. Although marked by the bullying and intimidation, and in the case of the Karimojong by a grim demonstration of 'gunpowder diplomacy', typical of the imperial advance, the British quickly began playing a role similar to that of an intermediary society in a pre-colonial setting. In the main, their early relations with the Jie were marked by peaceful diplomacy. Quite probably, the military expansion of the Jie had gone about as far as was possible, or

desirable, by the time of the British arrival, in any case, and, from a logistical perspective, Loriang's campaigns were already becoming overextended. The Jie therefore accepted the conditions of the *pax britannica*, by which they were assigned an administrative unit dubbed 'Jie County', which included all the territory — some of it never traditionally part of Najie — effectively under their control by the end of Loriang's offensives. As was so often true under the colonial order, an ever stronger sense of 'Jie-ness' was now created by the imposition of rigid boundaries and the invention of a hierarchy of government chiefs (Davidson, 1989).

With the death of Loriang shortly after, the congregation of senior leaders re-emerged as an important focus of Jie identity and unity and, in the face of strict prohibitions against raiding, the office of hereditary war leader progressively lost much of its pre-eminence. There was a strong revival of military activity in the 1950s and 1960s, however, when Atom, Loriang's grandson, used the office once again to assemble large, well-organized armies with some firearms, for huge raids on the Karimojong. Such activity was curtailed again after independence, as the vigorous presence of Ugandan army contingents precluded the marshalling of large forces. By the 1970s, a military system focused on small-scale raids undertaken by individual battle leaders and their 'private companies', and under the close direction of the senior elders, had resumed.

The experience of the Turkana in the early twentieth century was in many respects dissimilar to that of the Jie. Even as Lokorijam was usurping the office of Great Diviner, as noted above, groups of strangers — Swahili, Ethiopians and Europeans — had begun appearing tentatively in some parts of Eturkan. From the start there were a few clashes with Ethiopian and British expeditions, but most Turkana remained untouched by them. By the turn of the twentieth century, however, Lokorijam, who had built an ascendancy similar to Lokerio's, was becoming concerned by reports of British conquests in other parts of East Africa. Similar to diviners in other societies, Lokorijam sought to disguise the identity of his family and warned his sons not to engage in the direction of military action, by now the hallmark of the Great Diviners. In a dramatic ceremony just before his death, Lokorijam put forward one of his retainers, Kokoi Lolel, an aspiring minor diviner of the Pucho clan, as 'the head of the spear', a surrogate to insulate his family from the British onslaught. Presented with this opportunity to monopolize raiding

activity, Kokoi rapidly proved himself a very capable leader, and quickly built up a loyal following. One of Lokorijam's descendants, an illegitimate son named Koltieng, became so envious that he ignored his father's instructions and started organizing raids of his own. The two men now entered into a determined competition to gain universal acceptance as Diviner of God and, as each gained his own clientele, their rivalry led to further deterioration of Turkana corporate identity.

In the meantime, the military forces of the British East Africa Company had established themselves in southern sections of Eturkan. In these areas the Turkana were prohibited from raiding, and a series of harsh 'punitive expeditions' were launched to force compliance. By about 1912, the British had come to regard the competing diviners as the greatest impediments to the extension of their control, both because they continued to direct raids and because they sought to bring religious retribution against those Turkana who were assisting the colonial administration. Koltieng and another of Lokorijam's sons were relentlessly pursued and imprisoned. With the elimination of his major competitors, Kokoi, staying beyond the imperial reach, was left as the unrivalled claimant of the office of Diviner of God. As he won this ascendancy, Kokoi established great influence over the leading Turkana war leaders, who exercised actual tactical command over the fighting men. None of these men had the hereditary status or even the nominally universal authority that Loriang's family was accorded by the Jie, but several of them had built wide regional reputations, and one, a man named Ebei, was increasingly attracting recruits for his raids from virtually every part of the country.

During the early stages of the British conquest, however, the Turkana hardly displayed a very unified reaction. Some elements actively assisted the imperialists, but most sections remained defiant, relying on their mobility to stay outside the grasp of imperial authority, though seldom exhibiting any real co-ordination in their responses. In an arrangement all too typical of colonial arbitrariness, the northern sections of Eturkan had been assigned to the Uganda Protectorate, which, unlike British East Africa in the south, had been slow to establish control. As a result, the vanguard of the steadily advancing Ethiopian empire had made considerable headway there. After an initial phase of bad relations, the Ethiopians established a loose, informal presence that amounted more to an alliance than imperial domination.

Increasingly, therefore, the north provided a haven for dissident southern Turkana. Even Kokoi and Ebei took refuge there

about 1913, and a flood of embittered southerners arrived there two years later, after an especially large and brutal British expedition had ravaged the south. The Ethiopian alliance now came to dominate Turkana military affairs, as gun dealers began supplying considerable numbers of rifles, and officers promised the direct support of Ethiopian troops to contain the British advance. For a while, Kokoi's potential role was eclipsed and his office failed to provide the same source of military leadership it had done under Lokerio or Lokorijam. Although now accepted as Diviner of God by a majority of Turkana, he began to devote himself essentially to non-military activities, such as healing and employing mystical injunctions against the British and their levies.

By mid-1917, however, it had become plain that the Ethiopian alliance was not protecting the Turkana very effectively, and the defeat of an Ethiopian contingent by a much smaller British force seriously eroded Turkana confidence. Ultimately, they decided they must fall back on their own resources and, as they had done in the past, turned to the Diviner of God to assert this leadership over martial affairs. While the circumstances were extraordinary ones, and the stress of military escalation unparalleled, the time was ripe for Kokoi to perform a function for his people similar to that provided by his illustrious predecessors. Together with several of his most powerful war leaders, headed by the charismatic Ebei, who became his 'field commander', Kokoi now undertook a sweeping remodelling of the Turkana army. Kokoi's resumption of the direction of military affairs almost immediately encouraged huge numbers of fighting men to assemble. British reports and Turkana tradition alike indicate massive forces of 4000 or 5000 forming by the end of 1917.

While these armies were tremendously larger than those of the past, the methods used to raise them were essentially traditional ones. Having identified some rival community as a raiding target in a dream, Kokoi's messengers would move throughout the country spreading the word. Ebei, who was usually given overall tactical command of the armies, would then commence a formal recruiting tour to gather fighting men. Once assembled, the army would begin moving towards its goal, usually a southern enemy, to be joined by other contingents *en route*. As much as possible, commissariat matters were also handled in time-honoured ways. Wealthy elders would be asked to supply oxen for meat along the route of the army, with the understanding they would be compensated after the victorious army's return. Sometimes an army would drive a small herd of livestock with it, slaughtering the animals as needed once friendly settlements were left behind,

and individual men carried various rations with them as well.

The huge size of the Turkana armies of 1917 greatly exacerbated logistical problems. It was simply impossible for several thousand hungry men moving together as a corporate group to subsist off the limited resources of the Turkana deserts for any considerable length of time. The solution — to which armies who live off the land often have to resort — was to divide the army into smaller units and keep some distance between them, so as not to put too great a strain on any one area. Unencumbered by supply trains or extraneous equipment, and conditioned to moving long distances in the blazing heat of Eturkan, Turkana armies were astoundingly mobile. Ebei's veterans asserted that they commonly marched up to 65 miles a day, taking a short rest in the evening, and even continuing to advance throughout the night whenever there was sufficient moonlight.

There were also important changes in strategy and organization. Strategically, there was a new emphasis on far-ranging offensive actions, designed to drive crippling attacks deep into the territories of those communities allied with the British, and to lure small parties of imperial troops out from defences into the open. Organizationally, a body of men known as 'Ruru' now assumed a vital role in this new model army. Originally the name of one age set of Kokoi's forces, the name rapidly came to be applied to a significant part of the army: 'The Ruru were not just an age set; they were that large group of people from many areas who were the army.' Most of Ebei's lieutenants were said to have been Ruru, and some sections of the Ruru were known by the names of their commanders: 'Nathura was a war leader of the Ruru, and so part of them were known as *Ngikanathura* [those of Nathura, or Nathura's men] to honour him.'

The Ruru were always the quickest to respond when an army was being formed, and most Turkana who had acquired firearms — various patterns of breech-loading rifles — were in their ranks. They maintained a very close association with Ebei, who frequently brought them together for meat feasts, and would use such occasions to discuss the current military situation and to drill them in tactics and the handling of weapons, apparently in a conscious attempt to make more effective use of the new military technology being supplied by the Ethiopian traders. By 1917, therefore, the name 'Ruru' had come to designate a hard core of inveterate, well-trained and well-armed opponents to British rule, upon whom Ebei and Kokoi could always depend when forming a military expedition. Indeed, they were rapidly becoming a semipermanent military force.

In pre-colonial Turkana and Ateker societies, the generation-set apparatus worked against the formation of such a force. In times of conflict, the elders staunchly opposed any escalation of hostilities which might result in young fighting men forming themselves into something approaching a professional military class, and thereby asserting a degree of independence from gerontocratic authority. With the alteration of the age-class system and the ascendancy of the diviners, the Turkana were much less bound by such constraints, and age sets now began to take on aspects of military units. None the less, the nature of 'reciprocal raiding' which underlay traditional warfare still worked against undue escalation. But the British were not traditional enemies. Their concept of warfare and methods of fighting were much closer to 'total war' than anything the Turkana had experienced. As the escalation of hostilities against so relentless a foe continued, neither the elders nor any other element of Turkana society could effectively counter this trend. Instead, Kokoi and Ebei sought to exploit it as best they could.

Many of the Ruru, their families wiped out and livestock confiscated by British expeditions, found themselves in desperate circumstances, forcibly uprooted from the traditional Turkana mode of life. In the past, such individuals had taken refuge with Kebootok cultivators, Bochoros fishermen or some neighbouring society. Now, in the altered circumstances of the burgeoning colonial era, membership in the Ruru offered an alternative 'safety valve'; many rallied to Ebei and Koki and acquired firearms.

In the latter part of 1917 and on into 1918, the huge new model armies struck hard at the 'pacified' societies of British allies to the south and west. After one campaign, part of an army mainly composed of Ruru riflemen did not disperse and return to their homes, but remained in the field for some months methodically carrying out a series of additional forays on their own account. For armies to continue operations so long was virtually unheard of among the Turkana or other East African pastoralists, and was symptomatic of the degree to which the Ruru were becoming a professional standing force. In several clashes with colonial troops, the Ruru exhibited a discipline and persistence British officers found remarkable. 'Anyone who has come into contact with Turkana riflemen takes them very seriously indeed; they are brave men, skilled in battle and stand modern rifle fire well' (Rayne, 1918).

To meet the Turkana threat, British authorities finally assembled in mid-1918 one of the largest and best equipped expeditions

ever to be sent against an East African society. In several engagements British officers were again impressed by the disciplined tenacity of the Ruru, comparing their effectiveness to that of regular troops. In one battle, the Ruru even held an entrenched defensive line and fought an almost continuous action for nearly 24 hours against an advancing British column — hardly the traditional 'hit-and-run' tactics of East African pastoralists (Lamphear, 1992).

But, despite such heroic resistance, the Turkana suffered heavy human casualties and debilitating livestock losses during the expedition, and in other actions for several years thereafter. One after another, most northern Turkana sections were forced to surrender. A last pocket of inveterate resistance, including the Ruru, many of the war leaders and Kokoi himself, sheltered in the northern mountains for a few years. The Ruru, however, by now a bona fide military élite, increasingly began acting in a bullying, high-handed manner, challenging the authority of the elders and even of Kokoi. As British confiscations reduced the supplies of firearms and made it nearly impossible for the last pocket of Turkana resisters to secure replacement weapons and ammunition, the Dassanetch, their powerful northern neighbours across the southwestern frontier of Ethiopia, had steadily been gaining in fire-power and military strength. Friction between the two peoples escalated into war in 1924, with disastrous results for the Turkana. In a battle in which both sides used large numbers of rifles, the Ruru were nearly obliterated and most of the leading war leaders, including Ebei, were killed. In the aftermath, the few remaining Turkana dissidents were forced to accept British protection. Among them was Kokoi, whose authority had dwindled badly. He died a tragic death awaiting trial in a British prison.

Fearing a similar fate, no other claimants to the office of Great Diviner dared emerge during the colonial period, and the senior elders, while still revered, were unable to regain the authority they once had. As with the Jie, the creation of a Turkana administrative district and a system of government chiefs, reinforced by a strict 'closed district' status, helped to maintain an ongoing sense of Turkana unity, albeit very artificially.

In the absence of any countervailing traditional authority, the 'Moroko', a semipermanent force of men well armed with rifles who stayed in highland areas beyond the reach of the administration, became the ultimate heirs of the Ruru military tradition. After independence, a descendant of Lokorijam began directing some of their raids until his arrest by the government. As they acquired even larger stocks of rifles in the 1970s and later, the

Moroko began functioning as a self-appointed 'defence force' along the Ugandan and Sudanese frontiers, extracting tribute from their own people for proffered 'protection' and acting in a brutally overbearing manner, ignoring the orders of government chiefs and the traditional authority of the elders and diviners alike.

Conclusion

While the foregoing narrative shows that military activity often played an important role in the creation and maintenance of Jie and Turkana identities, their initial ethnogenesis apparently entailed little actual military conflict. It was other factors which helped foster a basic sense of political, religious and economic integrity, discernibly stronger at first for the Turkana than the 'Ngiro'. It was from such basic integrity that each group began to build a 'notion of power' it could test in relationships with other communities, and in many instances warfare progressively became the most useful formula for gauging such relationships (Blainey, 1973). As conflicts increased during the early nineteenth century, both the Jie and the Turkana found existing Ateker military structures inadequate to cope with greater demands. In particular, those structures had two major deficiencies, both related to the age-class system. In the first place, the system did not provide an effective basis for military organization or mobilization and, in the second, the congregation of senior elders tended to stand in firm opposition to military escalation, placing strict limits on the scope and conduct of warfare. Therefore, as each community steadily developed a stronger sense of unique identity, it sought to reform the earlier structures in its own distinct way.

While brilliant and far-ranging, Loriang's military changes emanated essentially from traditional structures. Possibly they were linked to broad military adaptations being made by societies in many parts of East Africa during the nineteenth century which owed little, if anything, to outside influences. Because of cosmological constraints derived in part from their perception of themselves as 'the centre' of their universe, the emerging Jie community was consistently resistant to radical changes, and tended to cling to venerable political and religious forms. Thus, fundamental perceptions concerning the status and role of the army remained basically constant despite Loriang's innovations. Except, perhaps, for the creation of his personal bodyguard,

there was little in Loriang's adaptations that fostered élitism. Fighting men continued to be thoroughly integrated into the wider society and in harmony with its interests.

Likewise, Jie conservatism at least partly underlay their reluctance to adopt firearms. As with other societies who continued to favour traditional weapons over imported Western technology, the decisive Jie victory at Chaichaon left them with a poor assessment of muzzle-loading weapons. There was simply no incentive to adapt the grimly effective system forged through Loriang's brilliant innovations to the alien weaponry. While Loriang managed to increase the authority of his office of hereditary war leader to effect a certain centralization of the Jie military system and a closer community-wide integration, the senior elders withstood the potential threat posed by his emergent authority to maintain ultimate control over the political apparatus. Vital to this process was the Jie decision to avoid armed conflict with the forces of British imperialism, and their ability to manipulate the *pax britannica* to reduce the exterior military pressures of their traditional rivals (Guy, 1971; Low, 1975; Lamphear, 1989).

Another factor at work here was the type of outside technology potentially available to the Jie during their process of military transition. While various observers have reached sharply different views concerning the impact of Western military forms on traditional African armies, it does seem clear that muzzle-loading muskets and rifles of the sort to which the Jie mainly had access were in most cases particularly ill suited to basic African concepts of war. Military historians such as Geoffrey Parker (1988) and William McNeill (1982) have wryly observed that, while violence was arguably the chief export of Europe before the surge of imperialism in the late nineteenth century, it had been impossible to export the military system which underlay that violence. African military structures, featuring individual heroism, informal tactics and militia-like organizations, were patently unable to imitate rigid European armies, which were typically composed of brutally disciplined, conscripted and mercenary musketeers. Alien technology, where it was borrowed at all, tended merely to be grafted loosely on to traditional structures, and then almost exclusively by the more centralized African states. With a few exceptions, such weaponry was simply not compatible at all with the more acephalous systems of pastoral peoples.

In contrast to the Jie, the early Turkana community was born from a process of determined expansion across dramatic ecological and cultural frontiers. As large numbers of non-Ateker

strangers were incorporated, many of their economic and political forms were adopted by the burgeoning society. It is quite likely, for instance, that the changes to the Turkana age system were inspired by Maa-speaking assimilates, resulting in a more effective mobilization of young fighting men. In addition the new age organization apparently helped break down ethnic distinctions between 'original' Turkana and those more recently absorbed, providing an internal integration rather similar to that derived by Nguni-speaking peoples from their age-regiment system. All of this combined to produce a community which regarded itself more as 'an expansion' than as 'the centre', and which was therefore freed from the same sorts of cosmological constraints that bound the Jie to traditional forms.

But the integrative aspects of the new age system were not enough to offset the simultaneous dilution of Turkana corporate unity inherent in the very process of territorial expansion itself. As local territorial units assumed a greater importance and the status of senior elders declined, the Turkana lost a vital index of their group identity. Such decentralization in turn helped pave the way for the emergence of the Diviners of God (again possibly inspired by Maa-speaking strangers), who began to perform an even stronger centralizing function.

Their emergence was intimately linked to military matters. To fill the power vacuum caused by the decline of the elders, the diviners adopted a strategy focused on gaining control over the new age system. By establishing religious authority over observances vital to the preparation of armies for conflict, they also effectively exploited the 'militarized economic acquisitiveness' basic to the process of raiding itself. As they established co-ordination over the age system, the diviners rapidly created a new military efficiency, approaching in some respects a Zulu-like model of nascent age regiments at the disposal of emergent centralizing figures. As the working alliance between diviners and age sets increased, so too did their propensity to become 'instruments of primordial nationalism'. In particular, the office of diviner now provided a familiar point of reference to assist the smooth assimilation of Maa- and Cushitic-speaking strangers. Indeed, it is clear that by the time of Lokerio, allegiance to his diviner provided the essential basis for classification as a 'Turkana'.

Ironically, this new unity and centralization proved transitory as Turkana expansion and concomitant military activity began to abate. The steady evolution of bicultural communities along many of the fluid frontiers greatly diluted the sense of community

bestowed by the ascendant Great Diviners, while the succession disputes between claimants to the office produced serious internal dissension. During the early stages of the colonial conquest, internal cohesion diminished even further. While relatively few Turkana actually allied themselves with the imperialists, the various sections developed their own uncoordinated strategies to deal with the intruders.

The latter stages of Turkana resistance, in contrast, witnessed profound changes in the military system resulting in a powerful, though temporary, revival of centralized authority and group solidarity. With the deterioration of the Ethiopian alliance, Turkana sections which previously had sought accommodation with the British now joined with those who remained defiant, and rallied to Kokoi Looel as he and the war leader Ebei began their military innovations. By 1917, Kokoi was mobilizing huge armies for his far-ranging, carefully co-ordinated attacks on 'pacified' neighbouring societies and even against British forces. A significant aspect of these new model armies was the development of the Ruru corps of riflemen, who steadily began to emulate something of Western military technology and methods.

By now, a military technology strikingly different from the earlier muzzle-loading weapons was beginning to reach even the remotest sections of East Africa. The new breech-loaders, utilizing metallic-cased smokeless powder cartridges, constituted a bona fide military revolution. Not only did they represent a tremendous technological refinement, but they were in many respects more immediately compatible, socially and culturally, with African modes of warfare. Here were weapons that no longer required the same rigidly disciplined, compactly co-ordinated masses of men to be effective. Indeed, the European forces themselves, who first employed these new weapons, in their own internal conflicts and in the late nineteenth century wars of colonial expansion, were quickly forced to make dramatic changes to their existing military structures. Especially the colonial armies, responding to tactical and logistical conditions, began to adopt smaller fighting units, a more individualized and open style of combat, and a greatly enhanced mobility. Here, then, was a technology and a system which seemed, at least on the surface, much more in line with African ways of warfare.

A second circumstance also helped pave the way for revolutionary changes in the Turkana and many other African military systems. Typically, it was only after a serious deterioration of traditional military structures, especially when confronted by aggressive imperialist pressure, that firearms became effective

additions to African armies. Likewise, expansive African raiding societies usually had to be forced to adopt an unfamiliar defensive tactical mode, before beginning to make significant use of guns. Thus, in the aftermath of the brutal British expedition of 1918, the Turkana found many of their fundamental military, social and economic institutions in shambles. Even Kokoi's massive new armies had shown themselves unable to withstand imperial fire-power, and his aggressive offensive strategy was effectively reversed. It was at this point that the role of the Ruru 'corps' took on a new urgency, and they came to bear a remarkable resemblance to strikingly new and different types of military units which appeared in many parts of Africa in similar circumstances. In almost all cases, these new units were to make a profound impact on their parent societies by facilitating dramatic escalations of hostilities, the emergence of centralizing and often monocratic authority and, in the short run, more effective opposition to imperial conquest. To an extent rarely, if ever, encountered in traditional Africa, such new forces, or at least important segments of them, also began to reflect aspects of the professional, standing armies of the West. Those men who acquired rifles rapidly came to constitute a military élite of 'professional specialists', again sharply dissimilar to traditional fighting men, as their new weaponry gave them a fire-power equal to vastly greater numbers of conventionally armed men.

In a majority of African cases, the final incentive for such changes stemmed from a sometimes quite desperate need to defend old and revered ways of life from the relentless assaults of imperialism. Ironically, however, the emergence of the new military structures usually had a different, even quite opposite, effect, of which the Turkana experience was typical. While the new armies might initially support the traditional centralizing authorities of their societies, in most instances they themselves eventually emerged as the dominant political force, especially as indigenous institutions continued to deteriorate in the face of colonial pressure. As they gained their inordinate power, these military élites increasingly violated social norms, even to the extent of extracting tribute and raiding their own people, creating a serious dissonance between themselves and their wider communities. As their social integration became increasingly fragile and tentative, they finally moved beyond the limits of the old order altogether.

Notes

- 1 'Ateker' replaces the term 'Central Paraniotes' that I used in some earlier writings. Other Ateker communities are the Karimojong, Dodos, Nyangatom, Toposa, Jiye and Iteso. The Turkana, numbering well over 200,000, are the largest Ateker group, while the Jie, for whom it is difficult to establish even an approximate population, are much smaller.
- 2 All traditional accounts cited were obtained through interview with members of the groups concerned.
- 3 It should be noted that Loriang's new 'battalion' organization based on local residential units may well have reinforced old notions of the relative autonomy of territorial divisions, and to an extent may actually have worked against the fostering of a broader 'national' identity.

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