
Conflicts in the Horn of Africa: human and ecological consequences of warfare

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More chances on the fringe of the state? The growing power of the Nyangatom; a border people of the Lower Omo Valley, Ethiopia (1970-1992)

Serge A. Tornay

The Lower Omo Valley is situated on the margins of three states: Ethiopia, Sudan, and Kenya. The various peoples inhabiting this area have neither rulers nor indigenous state structures; their integration into the Ethiopian and neighbouring states has remained extremely limited up to the present day. The Lower Omo Valley is a region with a rich variety of peoples, living in complex and far from resourceless ecosystems.

The Nyangatom of the Lower Omo Valley constitute one of many examples of a people whose traditional territory has been cut in two by an international border (see also the Anyuak case described by C. Perner in the present volume). The River Nakua, which has marked the frontier between Ethiopia and the Sudan since 1908, is in fact the core of the Nyangatom pastoral ecosystem. The political situation is further complicated by the question of the Ilemi Triangle, which I shall outline below.

Since 1970 my ethnographic experience has been of geographically, economically and politically marginal peoples.¹ I have learnt from this experience to look at major "geo-political" events from the point of view of members of stateless societies. In this paper I will focus on the Nyangatom. After giving a brief account of intertribal conflict during the early seventies, I will summarize what I was able to learn from correspondence about the period 1976 to 1991, during which time I was not able to visit the area. I shall then describe the situation found in the Lower Omo Valley during a recent visit from November 1991 to January 1992.

Armed conflict during the seventies

From 1970 to 1976, the Nyangatom were more or less continuously at war with almost all their neighbours. Events in the Lower Omo during this period have been studied cross-culturally by several anthropologists who carried out intensive field studies in the area.² From this work, it has been possible to describe conflict and other relationships in the Lower Omo in terms of a "chain

reaction" linking, from south to north, the Dassanetch of the Omo Delta, the Nyangatom in the centre of the Lower Valley, the Mursi to the north of the "big bend" of the river, and the Bodi to the north of them.

During the years between 1970 and 1976, the Nyangatom were in a weak position. They were continually defeated in conflict, even by smaller groups like the Kara, who formed an alliance against them with the Hamar in 1973. The Nyangatom also lost, through warfare and other killings, almost ten per cent of their population (about 400 to 500 out of 5000). The people who appeared in the strongest position, at least in the Lower part of the Valley, were their southern neighbours, the Dassanetch, whom the Nyangatom call *Marile*. There were a series of minor clashes between the Dassanetch and the Nyangatom in 1971 and early 1972. In June 1972 these escalated into a massacre by the Dassanetch of at least two hundred Nyangatom from several Kibish settlements in a single attack. This attack had such an appalling effect on the Nyangatom that they did not respond until August 1973, when they raided an important Dassanetch camp killing "only" five people, but returning home with huge herd of Dassanetch cattle and small stock.

Meanwhile, the Nyangatom had serious conflicts with the Kara, their neighbours on the east bank of the Omo who are related to, and usually supported by, the more numerous Hamar. In January 1973, the Kara attacked the Nyangatom who responded quickly by killing one hundred Kara a month later. The Kara then counterattacked with the help of the Hamar. A joint expedition inflicted serious losses on the population of two villages of the Ngaric, or *Omo Murle*, a Nyangatom section living in Aepa on the west bank of the Omo. In May the same year, the Mursi killed eight Nyangatom women who were gathering greens away from the settlements. They apparently did so in retaliation for the murder of one of their influential men, which they attributed to the Nyangatom. Further clashes occurred between 1974 and 1976, with the Dassanetch seemingly dominating their neighbours. During the 1980's, as described below, the focus of hostilities shifted to the north, involving mainly the Nyangatom, this time in an increasingly dominant position, against their northern neighbours, the Chai and the Mursi.

The role of ecology

A disaster such as the drought of 1971 was bound to exacerbate potential tensions between rival groups over water and grazing resources. However if drought or other natural calamity can trigger an outbreak of violence, it is never the only cause of war. Those of us anthropologists studying both the Omo and the wider region have concluded that ecological or biological crises reveal, rather than generate, tensions which are inherent in social systems. Looking at conflict from a regional perspective, we noticed an interesting phenomenon, namely, a "territorial drift to the north", which we saw as combining ecological and sociological factors:

Thus the apparent absence of general strategy in the conduct of war is probably connected, not only with problems of social control, but also with mechanisms of adaptation. Although there is no conscious, explicit territorial strategy, we may discern, I believe, a slow but certain territorial drift. (It was

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then recalled that in the course of the last fifty years the "tribal centre" of the Nyangatom had shifted about 40 km to the north). Now, the main spatial characteristic of the present war has been the northward push of the Dassanetch. We may conclude that external political events, by excluding the Dassanetch from their western pastureland (cf. U. Almagor, "The War of the Ilemi Appendix"), and ecological changes, accelerated this northward push. But we may also see it as part of a general territorial drift, the Dassanetch simply filling the space left vacant by the northward progression of the Nyangatom. The time dimension thus overtly plays an important role in understanding contemporary conflict in the Lower Omo (Tornay, 1979:115-116).

As will be seen, various events in the 1980s seem to confirm the notion of territorial drift to the north, towards higher, better watered country, and hence towards a more agricultural mode of subsistence (cf. Turton, 1991).

Warfare and political identity

There is very little evidence in the essays of wars being fought for the express purpose of acquiring new territorial resources. Instead the most frequently mentioned group aim is the wholly unrealistic one of "annihilating" or "exterminating" the "enemy" (Fukui and Turton, 1979:10). This raises the question of identity, particularly of political identity, which is rightly stressed by Turton (1991) as well as in the present volume. Hence I shall not insist on this point here, but only confirm that I agree with Turton's interpretation of the meaning of war and peace in the minds of the actors themselves. It is not a matter of killing others for the sake of killing, but of proving to oneself, especially after a defeat, that one still exists, socially and politically. In other words, To be (Mursi, Nyangatom...) or not to be, that is the question!

The growing power of the Nyangatom in the eighties

To the Nyangatom, "events" and "questions" (*ngakiro*) are one and the same thing. If something is not worth talking about, it strictly does not (publicly) exist. Thus the Nyangatom and their neighbours both experience and *construct* their events. The aim of an anthropological historiography is to combine information from various sources using as much understanding as possible from the actors themselves.³

1979: This chronicle can appropriately begin with a quotation from Turton:

*In 1979, a group of Mara (a Mursi section) people, looking for an area of better rainfall after a decade of drought and famine, occupied a new, unhabited, area fifty miles (east) of the Omo in the Mago valley. This migration resulted in the formation of a new section, now about 1,000 strong, called Mako... the Mago valley is particularly dangerous to cattle, probably because of the presence of *Glossina morsitans*...As a result, it seems unlikely that the members of the new Mako section will be able to keep an effective foothold in the pastoral economy. (ibid.:157).*

1980-81: Swedish Philadelphia Church Mission (SPCM) workers returned to Kibish and Kangaten in November 1980, after an absence of about two years, due to unreliable airtransport and hence a lack of safety for the staff. The Kenyans had "closed" the Sudanese border at Kibish, "because of epidemics". The year was very dry. In February 1981, the water level in Kibish wells was about 10 to 12 m in depth; that is, deeper than during the drought of 1971. The Omo river was also very low; 20 m below the bank at Koasa, opposite Pongoso. The Nyangatom were at peace with the Mursi, although they posted guards to watch over their women as they worked. People were cultivating even south of Cungura, on the west bank, saying they were at peace with the Dassanetch, although they did not stay there overnight.

It is worth recalling here Turton's "Report on a visit to the Mursi" in April 1981. He addresses the problems raised by "the only form of economic development which appears at present to be envisaged for the Lower Omo Valley, namely tourism, based upon an expanded Omo National Park". He recalls the drought and hard conditions of the early seventies:

...since 1977, they had experienced four consecutive years of poor rains and low flood levels. The 1980 rains had been particularly poor and it was clear...that the immediately preceding Omo flood had been particularly low...there were clear indications that the last few years...had been a time of very severe hunger for the Mursi and their neighbours, due mainly to a succession of poor harvests...they had not been as severely affected as their western neighbours the Chai (or Surma) who live over towards the Sudan border and who do not have as diversified a subsistence base as the Mursi. (Turton, 1981: 5-7).

He mentions the skeletal remains of Chai who had died on the way to the Omo river, and the movement of hundreds of Mursi to the Mago valley, below the highland town of Berka. This northward movement of the Mursi, which began in 1979, has most probably been a continuous trend throughout the present century.

In September 1981, a Nyangatom stole 41 donkeys from the Dassanetch and went into hiding among the Turkana. The Dassanetch managed to get their donkeys back. When he came back to Kibish, the *shifra* was fired on, according to Nyangatom, by Dassanetch (but some doubt is admitted about this). The man survived, thanks to treatment given to him at the Kibish SPCM clinic, but he was socially rejected.

1982-1983: Although the rain-fed crops and river bank cultivation had been reasonably good in 1981, the general food situation was poor during these years. Some supplies were brought in by the Ethiopian Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC), by World Vision and also SPCM, but all relief, according to the agents concerned, was "slow". The Nyangatom in Kopirye were working hard on their river bank cultivation, and they did not go to Kibish for food relief, but in Cungura, the people, especially children, were starving. Kangaten seemed to be a good place to start an agricultural development project.

In June 1982, the Dassanetch stole Nyangatom cattle (960 according to the police, 2000 according to the victims). A counterattack was prohibited by the local "Chairmen" (*lokamember*), appointed by the government, but early in December Nyangatom elders "blessed" a retaliatory expedition. This failed as the Dassanetch, possibly informed by the Ethiopian Kibish police station, had

fled to the east bank and attacked settlements in Nyangatom, although Toposa), lost six men west side of the river, fear of more Dassanetch at Napokotoit on the Omo than Kara, since their the Omo, only the people hid in the bush at night abandoned. On the Nyangatom and Dassanetch spread that some Dassanetch Triangle. There was a Nyangatom beyond Kibish the "Elephants", or Nyangatom said they would not be ready to make peace with the Dassanetch. They had made a good start with irrigation of some 15 ha in food for work program.

On March 30, 1983, a traditional peace ceremony was held at Dongiro (Nyangatom territory) in Dassanetch territory along that border.

This was a clear allusion to the Triangle. According to the peace ceremonies never held.

In 1983, the Nyangatom agriculture, but Mursi died from hunger. The Mursi and Nyangatom were at peace at Kibish. The Muguji—a village of the Mago river—was dropped from 500 to 200.

The SPCM Kangaten irrigated. This arable land for communities (or *kebele*) to exist in and between the attending literacy classes on the east bank of the Omo. Food for work program.

1984: This was a difficult year due to epidemics and famine. The Chai or Surma. Up to 1000 Nyangatom, who had been at peace with the Surma. The Surma were in a difficult position as they depended heavily on the Nyangatom for food.

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fled to the east bank of the Omo. On December 6th-7th, Dassanetch warriors attacked settlements in the vicinity of the Kibish Ethiopian Police Post. The Nyangatom, although supported by "the Sudanese part of their tribe" (i.e. the Toposa), lost six men. All the Nyangatom at Kibish moved their camps to the west side of the river, which forms the Ethio-Sudanese border at this point, in fear of more Dassanetch attacks. At the end of December, three men were killed at Napokotoit on the Omo. The killers were presumed to be Dassanetch rather than Kara, since their tracks could be traced to the south, as far as Cungura. At the Omo, only the people of Aepa possessed some guns. The rest of the people hid in the bush at night. Around Cungura, all the growing sorghum was abandoned. On the first of January 1983, there was a skirmish between Nyangatom and Dassanetch around Cungura. On January 12th., the news spread that some Dassanetch had attacked the Turkana to the West, in the Ilemi Triangle. There was a report that, on the way, they skirmished with the Nyangatom beyond Kuras mountain, but this was not confirmed. At Kibish, the "Elephants", or Nyangatom "fathers of the country", were "sitting": they said they would not claim more cattle from the Dassanetch and that they were ready to make peace with them. The SPCM agricultural project at Kangaten had made a good start. Two solar plus some diesel pumps allowed the irrigation of some 15 ha of sorghum. Many Nyangatom were eager to take part in food for work programmes.

On March 30, 1983 the *Daily Nation* in Nairobi noted:

Traditional peace ceremonies will be held on April 9 between the Turkana, the Dongiro (Nyangatom) and the Dassanetch. The meeting should take place at Kalem (in Dassanetch territory). Kenya and Ethiopia will unite in an effort for development along that border.

This was a clear allusion to the Kenyan development projects in the Ilemi Triangle. According to the Nyangatom, such externally arranged, "white" peace ceremonies never solve real problems.

In 1983, the Nyangatom and Kara were successful in their river bank agriculture, but Mursi crops were destroyed by army worm, and many children died from hunger. The SPCM distributed food relief. Relations between Mursi and Nyangatom were good, and the Mursi often visited the SPCM clinic at Kibish. The Muguji—a minority group living along the Omo around the mouth of the Mago river—were also starving. Their population was reported to have dropped from 500 to 250.

The SPCM Kangaten project was progressing: 25 ha had been cleared and irrigated. This arable land was divided among the people of six local communities (or *kebele* in the revolutionary jargon). Good cooperation was said to exist in and between these units. About 190 Nyangatom children were attending literacy classes in seven locations. A motorable track from Kangaten, on the east bank of the Omo, to Turmi (63 km) had been cleared by means of a food for work programme.

1984: This was a difficult period, especially for the Mursi, who suffered epidemics and famine. The Nyangatom engaged in a large-scale war with the Chai or Surma. Up to March 1984, the Surma had lost 191 people, and the Nyangatom, who had acquired automatic weapons from the Sudan, only eight. The Surma were in a desperate situation. Having little agricultural potential, they depended heavily on hunting, gathering and cattle raising. In February,

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and the Mursi had led 1987 and reported that on February 21st, 1987.

According to the Mursi, the massacre was the outcome of two previous incidents. The first occurred in 1985, when two of three Mursi boys, who had crossed the Omo in a dug-out canoe to meet a food relief team on the western bank, had been fired on and killed by some Nyangatom hidden in the bush. The second accident "occurred just before the massacre and was its proximate cause" (Turton, 1988:4). Six of eight Nyangatom men, who had come to Mursi peacefully to bargain sorghum, had been hacked to death with bush knives by Mursi youngsters. The retaliatory raid was not long in coming. Instead of attacking northern locations, as the Nyangatom had warned the southern Mursi, as the target of their raid they took a large Mursi settlement in which most of the southerners had taken refuge. It was a real massacre with automatic and other weapons, affecting women and children more heavily than men, the fittest of whom managed to escape. "The total number of victims may well lie between 500 and 1000, or between 10 and 20% of the entire Mursi population" (ibid.:6).

Concerning the prospects for peace, two different opinions can be given:

-Turton argues that the Mursi "were adamant that there was no prospect of making peace with the Nyangatom for at least another five years" (ibid.:9).

-Alvarsson, on the other hand states that while the discussions with the Dassanetch were progressing, new contacts from both sides were taken in the Nyangatom-Mursi conflict. In late 1988, several signs pointed towards a prolonged detente, and, in the end, a possible peace treaty (1989:59).

During my last trip to the Lower Omo, from November 1991 to January 1992, no incidents were reported between the Nyangatom and the Mursi, and the SPCM project leaders were planning an agricultural development scheme for the Mursi as the next important step in regional development.

1988: This year brought confirmation of Nyangatom pressure on the Surma. The Surma of the upper Kibish (or Chai) continued to suffer from attacks by the Nyangatom, who gained total superiority through the acquisition of Kalashnikovs from Southern Sudan. The Surma themselves were unable to acquire these modern weapons. The Nyangatom used their contacts in the Sudan and also, most probably, with the SPLA.

News came from Kenya of problems in the Ilemi Triangle.

Heavy fighting erupted at Kibish at the end of July and it went on for about a month. People say that it started when the Toposa went to raid animals from Ethiopia. On their way home they found the Nakua river flooded and they decided to drive the animals along the Kenyan side of the river. Kenyan soldiers began shooting at them and fighting ensued. Fifteen Kenyan soldiers were killed in one attack. We heard of many soldiers who had been killed, including four administration policemen, whom we knew by name. The fighting eventually came to an end with the assistance of the Kenyan Army (Correspondence to S. Tornay).

The same events were described by a social worker based in Lokitaung, Northern Kenya, as follows.

A party of Nyangatom and Toposa raided the Dassanetch and were cut off by the Kibish river on their way home. This gave the Kenyan Army time to bring in troops, jets and helicopter gun ships. There was a pitched battle in the Ilemi Triangle for four days during which an unknown number of Toposa-Nyangatom and several soldiers and policemen were killed. In the course of the action, the Kenyans raided Nyangatom villages on the Ethiopian side of the border, burning villages etc. There

are now no Nyangatom at Kibish. The social worker saw the problem as one of potential genocide for the Nyangatom. It seems to me that they might be forced to take over the territory the Mursi have evacuated, following the Nyangatom attack of February 1987. The situation down there could hardly be more disturbed and one can imagine that the administrator in Arba Minch will be totally preoccupied, especially since he has now both the SPLA and the Kenyan government involvement to cope with (Correspondence to S. Tornay).

1989: At the beginning of this year, things seemed to return to normal. In brief, the Toposa came to sell weapons to the Nyangatom, who took the opportunity to plan retaliation for the death of one of their elders killed by a Dassanetch during a peace meeting in Dassanetch country. A party of Nyangatom and Toposa set out together. Passing a Turkana village, the Toposa wanted to raid it, but the Nyangatom said no. After having killed about 60 Dassanetch (Alvarsson, 1989:58) and stolen their cattle, they returned the way they had come. The Kenyan police were alerted by the Turkana. The Toposa went straight home, but the Nyangatom lost their cattle and some men. Even the Kenyan army lost soldiers. Later the Nyangatom attacked the Kenyan police station at Kibish. The Kenyans brought in aircraft and helicopter gun ships, and pursued the Nyangatom from the west, ignoring the international border, and burning their villages as far as where the road turns down towards Pongoso. They also attacked the SPCM Mission station at Naoyapye (on Ethiopian territory), burning one of the houses.

The last Omo flood was excellent and so were the spring rains. The people had plenty of food. The elders did not want to come close to Kibish, since they were still afraid of the Kenyans, who were building, next to their existing police station of Kibish (on Sudanese ground, in the Ilemi Triangle), sixty houses for the staff of an increased garrison. Kara-Muguji relations were deteriorating and the Muguji were seeking assistance from the Nyangatom. In the previous year the Kara had tried to take over land at Dipa from the Muguji. Only one man, who gave a Kara friend four sheep, had been given permission to stay. However the Nyangatom intervened on their behalf. The people of Gomba took the part of the Kara, but, knowing that the Nyangatom would attack them if they fought with the Kara, they promised to remain neutral in this conflict. The Kara moved out from Labok, leaving only the Gomba there. Some Nyangatom, with rifles, were at the Muguji village of Kutchuru. The Mursi tried to attack the Muguji one night in February, but they were chased away, thanks to the Nyangatom rifles.

1990: The Surma, after their war with the Nyangatom in 1988-89, now had problems with the Anyuak, who were moving along the Akobo river in search of gold. They tried to chase the Surma south, an interesting, but dangerous situation. The Anyuak had lots of Kalashnikovs, while the Ethiopian authorities had little influence in the area.

To conclude this section, it is worth quoting Turton again. He suggests, I believe, an important answer to a major question: how should we understand the nature of violence and conflict within states which do not conform to the Weberian definition, in that they do not have the exclusive command of legitimate force in a defined territory? On the historical and political nature of "ethnic" identities, he writes,

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If, as I presume, the distinctive identities of the Dassanetch, Nyangatom, and Mursi are the products rather than the causes of the movements described in their oral traditions, then these traditions are as much attempts to account for present political identities as they are about past events. Much remains of the important task, so ably begun by Sobania, Tornay, Ehret and others, of reconstructing past populations' movements in this area, but historical reconstruction can only go so far in helping us to understand processes of ethnic group formation (1991:160).

And on expansion, war and peace, Turton writes:

Mursi pressure on Bodi resources is explained by the inflow of people to the three northern Mursi sections (Dola) which must therefore expand to exist; that is, they do not first exist and then expand; they are expansion. The role of warfare in this process is best revealed, I think, by concentrating not on the hostilities themselves but on the way they are brought to an end. It is especially important to pay attention to where the ceremonies are held. Holding a peace ceremony at a certain place is therefore a way of making...a claim to de jure ownership of territory which was formerly owned only in a de facto sense...Warfare is not a means of Mursi territorial advance, but part of the retrospective ritual legitimization of it...The direction of this movement is towards higher, better watered land with greater agricultural potential and its underlying causes are therefore ecological...We should see all these movements as part of a single process of which the separate identities of the groups involved are by-products...Ethnic identity ("essence") is a product of population movement ("existence") (1991:164-165).

The present situation

Compared with the often desperate conditions of millions of Africans, I can at least bring a note of hope and optimism from my recent trip to the Lower Omo. During the 1991-92 dry season, the Nyangatom were at peace with all their neighbours, and in December and January they were harvesting bumper crops of sorghum, both from river banks and irrigated fields. The political atmosphere was nothing less than euphoric. An Ethiopian government had at last conceded them a large degree of autonomy. In October, 1991, twenty-five young Nyangatom had been trained in an EPRDF camp in Awasa and they had been sent back to their country with Kalashnikovs, as a purely tribal militia, committed to maintain local order under the guidance of their elders. It was said that no taxes would be levied and that political and economic autonomy would no longer be questioned. Being heavily armed—the twenty-five "official" Kalashnikovs were just the tip of an iceberg—safe from starvation, and with a rapidly growing population, they had many reasons to feel confident about the future. Their optimism, which I shared, since I had seen them for many years in a worse condition, might have been exaggerated. Sooner or later hunger would return; they would have to fight again with their neighbours; relations with Ethiopia or Kenya would bring new problems; droughts would come again and crops would fail; the army worm would destroy the sorghum; diseases would kill cattle and small stock or people. The Nyangatom knew all this, but they were able to feel confident, provided these misfortunes, which are their common lot, do not affect them all at once.

If the Nyangatom believe that their living conditions have improved during the last fifteen years, it is because, as Perner has reported about the Anyuak, they know that their country is no Land of Goshen, and that they do not live in an Earthly Paradise. When I first met them in 1970, they were proud of not having been colonised, whether by the Amhara (the local name of the Ethiopian Highlanders) or by white men, but they also knew that, unlike some more fortunate populations, they had been denied basic medical and veterinary assistance, and technological improvements in their traditional methods of food production. When I first arrived in their country, they mistook me for a doctor, and it was a great relief to me when the SPCM managers decided to open a dispensary at Kibish. No anthropologist, of course, would devalue any form of traditional medicine, technical skill or general knowledge, but I believe that what we call "civilisation" is a permanent process of cross-fertilization of highly diverse traditions. A fundamental quality of the people I met is curiosity, openness of mind and the ability quickly to adopt new skills and knowledge. For example, I was greatly impressed to see young men, who had been born in the bush during the wars of the early seventies, speaking with great accuracy languages of three different families: their mother tongue (Nilotic), Amharic (Semitic) and English (Indo-European).

Although I am not qualified to evaluate the last twenty years of almost continuous development work by the SPCM in the Lower Omo Valley, I have no doubt that this work has been a key factor in improving the living conditions in the whole area. Of course, the Nyangatom have been the main beneficiaries and special attention should be given to maintaining a certain balance between groups through the management of markets and inter-ethnic agricultural projects. Besides food relief, the main achievements have been in health care, schooling, and the improvement of traditional agriculture through irrigation by solar and diesel pumps. Except in time of famine, food relief has not been a priority. "Development" is first and foremost helping the people to help themselves. The Nyangatom and their neighbours have centuries of training in this. The point has been made many times that people in general hate dependency, and do all they can to avoid it. For the last twelve years, relief food inputs in Nyangatom country have varied according to local conditions. But even in years when famine was not officially recognized, inputs in terms of food for work programmes have been of a yearly average of one thousand quintals. In 1989, an "official" famine year, food assistance amounted to 2500 quintals.

Now I shall address the central question of what has changed.

1. The first, most striking, change, is demographic. The population, which I estimated to be around 5,000 in the early seventies, had reached no less than 13,000 in 1990, according to an SPCM census. Even if my 1973 survey figure which was limited to the Kibish area, was an underestimate, the demographic progression during the last fifteen years seems to have been extremely high. According to SPCM staff, the population has been growing continuously since 1976.⁴ In 1984, a vaccination programme reached 3,000 children under fourteen years. If the population changed quantitatively, it also changed qualitatively. Thanks to schooling and other cultural training, a new generation of literate young men have emerged, although, as in most other developing regions, girls are not educated beyond the primary stage.

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Most of those who attended secondary school or higher education in Jinka, Awasa, Addis Ababa or elsewhere have returned home. They work today as builders, health assistants, drivers, mechanics, teachers and agricultural project leaders. In short they provide the new, local cadres for carrying on development work among their own people.

2. Health conditions have also improved. Malaria, trachoma, infected wounds, various forms of TB, hydatid cysts and billharzia are endemic. There were, and still are, a few skin diseases. The missionaries were wise not to impose on either sex imported clothing which, with insufficient hygiene, can cause skin problems. Today, endemic diseases have not been eradicated, but the sick are given free treatment from local dispensaries or mobile clinics. In cases of emergency, they are taken to Arba Minch, by road, for operations or other more elaborate treatment. Special care is given to mothers and young children. Measles was formerly a frequent cause of death. In 1984, however, 3,000 children were vaccinated in a single campaign, which must have had a positive demographic impact. Unfortunately, venereal diseases are spreading as contact opportunities increase—for girls with soldiers in local garrisons and for boys as they travel to highland towns. AIDS is believed not to be present, but it has not yet been investigated. On the whole, the visitor is favourably impressed by local health conditions.

3. Life has improved in other ways. I heard Nyangatom boasting of being the "king of the tribes" of the Lower Omo Valley. Boasting is not the same as proving, but they attribute their success to their progressive attitudes, and to their real interest in the agricultural projects of the SPCM in Kangaten.

Food production has progressively increased during the last ten years. With the good harvest of December–January 1992, they are thought to be almost self-sufficient for the coming four months. More food-for-work programmes will then be offered to them, this time for clearing new fields on the east side of the Omo for cash cropping. With their growing numbers they can do it, but they also have to do it. There are still huge acreages of cultivable land on both sides of the Omo river. The east bank, opposite Aepa, Kangaten, Napokotoit and Cungura has long been unoccupied. They can therefore clear and plant there without impinging on the rights of others. They could even invite their eastern neighbours, such as the Kara and Hamar, to participate in joint projects.

This is the background against which the main political and military problems in the area must be understood. Agriculture, even though it has become more important due to the SPCM Kangaten project (which is, of course, especially attractive in time of food shortage), remains one of two main subsistence resources. The other important resource is cattle and small stock raising. As the above historical account has shown, epidemics destroyed the herds in 1979–80, but since then livestock figures have been constantly growing. The "People of the West" (that is the few hundred Nyangatom who had more or less permanently settled among the Toposa around 1976) moved back in the course of the 1980s, and took the grazing area of Naita, in Ethiopia, north of the Ilemi Triangle, from the Chai. In 1984, almost two hundred Chai were killed by the Nyangatom, who lost only a few lives in the conflict. The obvious reason for this imbalance was the acquisition of automatic weapons by the Nyangatom. Also, the Nyangatom attack on the Mursi in 1987 would not have had such a

devastating effect if the attackers had not been armed with automatic weapons.⁵

Now I will discuss briefly the question of the Ilemi Triangle. In my historical account, I have already mentioned various clashes in connexion with the growing presence of Kenyan civilians and the growing pressure of the Kenyan army in the Kibish area, one or two miles away from the Ethio-Sudanese border (see Appendix). It is clear that since 1987, the Kenyan government has been engaged in annexing the Ilemi Triangle. The clashes of 1988 need not be recalled here. Today, a town is being built at Kibish, and Kenyan military as well as civilian officials are confident of the success of the operation. The town should soon house 3,000 civilians (the projected number of troops, for whom a large residential complex is also under construction, is kept secret). Unless the Triangle contains some unknown resources, this project, which is officially a part of a Turkana Rehabilitation Programme, does not seem logical, for two simple reasons. First, there is no evidence that the underground waters of the Kibish river bed will be sufficient for future human and animal needs in the area. One day, the expanding complex will logically extend up to the Omo river, pushing farther east the Ethio-Sudanese border. Secondly, there is no agricultural potential in the Ilemi Triangle: the land occasionally flooded by the Kibish river is on Ethiopian territory.

Even apart from considerations of international law, one can only conclude that this project will raise serious problems in the future. Builders, merchants, dealers, transporters, missionaries and other settlers are coming to Kibish in growing numbers. Turkana nomads are also being encouraged to graze along the Kibish river, but peace is difficult to maintain between Turkana and Nyangatom. One episode which I observed, in December 1991, illustrates this. A party of Toposa raided a Turkana camp next to "Kibish City", killing four men and stealing two hundred cattle. A unit of the Kenyan army followed the party. The footprints went to the north, crossing into Ethiopia at the Nyangatom village of Kakuta. The Kenyans stopped there, but killed one young Nyangatom on the Ethiopian side of the river. This was taken very badly by the Nyangatom, who had warned the Kenyans in advance of a imminent Toposa raid. The district officer then closed the border to the Nyangatom, who had always enjoyed (by an international convention between the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and Kenya Colony after the Second World War) free access and grazing rights throughout the whole Ilemi Triangle. The tension between the Kenyan forces and the Nyangatom was still high when I left at the end of January, 1992.

Concluding remarks on borders and strategies for local development

It is obvious that many colonial borders, particularly in East Africa and the Horn, have had deleterious effects on the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. However two points should be remembered.

Firstly, the idea of a "natural" border has little to recommend it, whether on environmental, anthropological or political grounds. Supposedly "natural"

borders, like rivers or mountains, are not natural boundaries between people.

Secondly, the idea of "natural" borders is questionable in the field. In many parts of the world, the boundaries are where people with diverse cultures meet, where people with diverse goods, and become competitors for words, pluri-ethnic or pluricultural exchange of all kinds of goods, utensils, tools and other objects, ornaments, songs, dances, etc. To deny that exchange is a denial of reality.

Hence, political projects based on "ethnic" grounds seem to be unlikely to do anything. The idea has been deplored—since the advent of nationalism and the anti-colonialism and the anti-decolonization. This is a discipline, why anthropology in Africa during the last decades has been enhancing cultural particularism from modern states.

I believe that redesigning borders, at the end, in many instances, is a denial of the so called "Karimojong" borders from common ancestors, which are readily under expansionary dynamics at political autonomy—rather than territory over which the borders which have, Karimojong, Jie and Dinka, and Jiye in Sudan, the Nile, is nothing but a problem of the expense of the four states. It is a fiction, but I doubt that it is a fiction.

Let me make two comments on the relative utility of an international border in Ethiopia, the bed of the Kibish river, Nyangatom, an absurd border, a pastoral ecosystem, water, and the bed of the river bed. Since long ago, the area of the Lower Omo has been migrating with the river, maintaining close contact with the absurd border, yes, but a border, while staying among the authorities, they would be returning to Ethiopians and return to state authorities, the arm

borders, like rivers or mountain ranges, provide links more often than barriers between people.

Secondly, the idea of a "cultural" border may make linguistic sense, but it is questionable in the fields of economy and politics. In Africa, as in most other parts of the world, the economically and politically vibrant regions are those where people with diverse ethnic and socio-cultural identities meet, exchange their goods, and become partners in the many fields of social life. In other words, pluri-ethnic or pluri-cultural regions offer the best opportunities for the exchange of all kinds of things, ranging from animals, fish, vegetable food, utensils, tools and other material commodities, to more "spiritual" realities like ornaments, songs, dances, stories, ceremonies, ideas and values. No one would deny that exchange is an essential condition for any positive development.

Hence, political projects which aim at redividing countries on purely "ethnic" grounds seem to me highly questionable. One could argue that they are likely to do nothing more than encourage tribalism, a phenomenon which has been deplored—sometimes hypocritically or in order to reinforce nationalism and the authority of the state—by many African leaders since decolonization. This is also one reason, apart from the colonial origins of the discipline, why anthropological research has been regarded with suspicion in Africa during the last thirty years. Anthropologists have been accused of enhancing cultural particularism in the face of the integrative forces emanating from modern states.

I believe that redesigning new regions on a purely "ethnic" basis is likely to end, in many instances, in historical nonsense. To take an example: the peoples of the so called "Karimojong cluster" are conscious that they are all descended from common ancestors in the relatively recent past. They still speak dialects which are readily understandable by almost all members of the cluster, but the expansionary dynamics of those peoples has been one of secession—of aiming at political autonomy—rather than one of fusion of previous separate units. The territory over which they have expanded was divided in colonial times by borders which have, of course, survived up to the present time. The Karimojong, Jie and Dodos are in Uganda, the Turkana in Kenya, the Toposa and Jiye in Sudan, the Nyangatom in Ethiopia. Are these boundaries in all cases nothing but a problem? Should a "Karimojong republic" be created at the expense of the four states concerned? This may be an exercise in political fiction, but I doubt that it would be a good solution for the people concerned.

Let me make two comments, one on the absurdity and the other on the relative utility of an international border. In the south-western corner of Ethiopia, the bed of the Kibish river is, at least to the local inhabitants, the Nyangatom, an absurd border, since it contains the key-resource of their pastoral ecosystem, water, with pastureland expanding naturally on both sides of the river bed. Since long before the Ethiopian troops of Menilek annexed the area of the Lower Omo Valley, at the turn of century, the Nyangatom have been migrating with their herds to and from the western marches, thus maintaining close contact with their Sudanese "cousins", the Toposa. An absurd border, yes, but also useful. If for example, some groups of Nyangatom, while staying among the Toposa, were required to pay taxes by Sudanese authorities, they would and did in the past argue that they were in fact Ethiopians and return to their home country to escape coercion, either from state authorities, the army or more traditional "enemies". On the other hand,

the north-western border of Kenya, which divides the territory of the Toposa from that of the Turkana, can be regarded as reflecting an indigenous political reality, since the two peoples consider themselves as potentially permanent enemies. Whatever else can be said on this subject, most people at the margins of larger states have developed their own strategies for coping with such political realities which are foreign to their cultural world. Their attitude is, not surprisingly, a pragmatic one: if the border offers, in any particular situation, a positive opportunity, they simply take advantage of it and ignore it otherwise. In my experience of one such marginal area, administrative and military control has been, up to now, relatively weak, and the national governments have conceded to the local people a reasonable degree of freedom of movement across official boundaries.⁶

What should be the development "philosophy" for this area? My answer would be: *small is beautiful*. I share the belief that the only successful projects are small-scale ones, aiming at the self-reliance of local people, in a regional and, if possible, pluri-ethnic, setting. The Lower Omo Valley seems to offer ideal conditions for such an approach, for at least three reasons.

First, it is a pluri-ethnic region, and the various groups share a common agro-pastoral economic system, as well as much in the way of cultural values and ideas about social life and social control.

Second, it is a region which, except for the last 20 years, has received very little from outside, whether from missionaries or the Ethiopian or other states. People have been forced to rely on themselves for their subsistence and general welfare and are still very independent.

Third, any wisely selected and appropriately applied technological and medical assistance proves to be very effective among them because they are open minded and progressive. Schooling is welcomed and has already given astonishing results.

The courageous efforts of the SPCM staff over the last twenty years have had remarkable results. This work should now be extended to include projects linking members of the various groups which, although they consider themselves to be politically autonomous, are in reality members of the same regional, economic, and political system. Special attention should be given to bringing together local representatives, since the most certain obstacle to long-lasting peace seems to be a lack of adhesion to common, pragmatic objectives. The existence of widespread ties of personal, contractual and intertribal friendship is a very positive asset for all these groups, and should be encouraged and used for triggering more constructive communication. People often live at great distances from each other, and they come together on too few, and unfortunately often violent, occasions. Although, in normal times, people from different areas do exchange goods and information, there are, to my knowledge, no proper markets in the Lower Omo area. One important step towards development, therefore, would be the creation of local shops and regional markets. The tentative cooperatives set up under Mengistu were a failure, probably because they were too heavily dependent on motor transport and because trade was oriented to highland towns rather than to improving local exchange and business. At present, the only shops in the area are those of the new Kenyan "Kibish City", but here the Nyangatom, even those who are earning salaries (for example as SPCM workers) have little purchasing power. Ethiopian money is either refused or changed at highly disadvantageous rates.

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The shops in Turmi, in the east, are no doubt useful to the Hamar, but they are hardly accessible to other people. To make use of them, the Nyangatom would have to make a round trip of 130 km from Kangaten.

Suggesting the establishment of more markets and shops for the Nyangatom and their neighbours might sound odd to those disenchanted with "consumer society", but such people never go for two days without visiting their local supermarket to buy not only their daily bread, wine, beer, whiskies and mineral waters, but also meat, fish, oil, flour, butter, milk, cheese, eggs, honey, jam, fruit and vegetables from all over the world. They have come to regard these, and numerous other items, consumable or not, as basic commodities. If they were deprived of these daily luxuries, they would no doubt consider it a violation of their human rights.

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Appendix

The question of the Ilemi Triangle: some historical landmarks

- 1888: The discovery of Lake Rudolf by Count Teleki and Von Hohnel; the start of intense exploration in the region by Italian, English, French, Russian and Ethiopian travellers, most of whom had hidden imperialist motives.
- 1898-99: Conquest and annexation of the Lower Omo Valley by Ras Wolde Giorgis, for Negus Menelik, with the help of the Russian Bulatovitch and Leontieff. Russia, France and England entered into a competition from which the alliances with Ethiopia went, for the most part, unheeded. Italy, vanquished at Adowa, was out of the play; in accordance with the Treaty of Addis Abeba, 26 October 1896, she abandoned the idea of an Ethiopian protectorate but kept Eritrea.(...)The French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hanotaux, in agreement with

Mr. Lagarde, governor of the French Coast of Somalia and plenipotentiary Minister in Ethiopia, believed in the possibility of an Ethiopian policy founded on the double alliance with Menelik and Russia, in order to oppose English designs on the Nile (Bureau, 1975:605).

1907-08: The south-western boundary between Ethiopia and the Sudanese territories under British control, demarcated by Major Gwynn, formed the subject of an agreement between the two powers, an agreement which has not been broken up to the present day, despite the initial Ethiopian reservations. To the south-west of Ethiopia, this boundary follows the Kibish river, but only in its lower course. (At the point where the river turns to the north, in the direction of Maji, the boundary cuts across towards the west—indeed to the south-west, as if to encompass Mt Naita—a detail which, so it would seem, the Kenyans at Kibish now want to ignore).

1918: A punitive British expedition (the Labur Patrol) directed against the Turkana, the Dassanetch and the Nyangatom, with an eye to ending their guerilla activities. No installation of any garrison post. Fearing reprisals, the English and Ethiopians withdraw from that region, which was theoretically Sudanese, situated to the north-west of Lake Rudolf. Later they tried, without success, to disarm the local tribes. This region, which was then named Ilemi Appendix, was an area of pasture in the dry season for the Dassanetch and the Nyangatom but also the Turkana. According to Alamagor (ms. 1974), for some twenty years the Dassanetch and the Nyangatom joined forces against the Turkana.

1924: The two allied tribes inflicted a severe defeat upon the Turkana, who were thus compelled to fall back towards the south and look again to the English for protection.

1924: In April 1924 a conference was convened at Kitgum in Uganda on the initiative of Kenyan officials. Attended by representatives from Kenya, Uganda and the Sudan, it was here that the Ilemi Triangle became a reality.⁷ The Ilemi Triangle was an artificial creation to demarcate that area in the Sudan between the Toposa heartland in the west (34°30'E.) to the undermarked Abyssinian boundary in the east and the Sudan-Kenyan boundary in the South (4°37'). The triangle was no-man's-land in which Toposa, Turkana, and the tribes of Abyssinia—the Marille, Nyangatom and the Tirma—competed for water and grass while the poachers roamed freely to trade, raid, and play off one tribe against the other. If the Sudanese government did not possess the means to administer the Toposa, it could hardly assume control over the remote wilderness of the Ilemi Triangle populated by hostile and well-armed tribes and poachers. Kenyan officials were not sympathetic to the Sudanese government's problem. The problem was the safety of North Turkana; its solution, the Ilemi Triangle. The Kenyan representative to the conference had the obvious solution—cede the Triangle to Kenya. Since Brock was instructed only to secure military cooperation against raiders, he could hardly object to this crucial solution. In fact, all the subsequent resolutions followed from the first: a settlement of the Abyssinian-Sudan boundary which formed the eastern leg of the Triangle; the Sudan should contribute to the expenses of the Kenya occupation; the Turkana to be administered up to the boundary by Kenya; and the occupation and administration by the Sudan of the Toposa west of the Triangle. Although these resolutions provided a clear, logical and obvious answer to the Toposa question at Kitgum, they were strictly an African solution to a problem that had now spread from eastern Mongalla to Khartoum, Cairo and London and southward to Entebbe and Nairobi. The

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Sudanese government was in no financial condition to occupy the Toposa, let alone to contribute to Kenya's occupation of the Ilemi Triangle. However poverty was not the best excuse to remain inactive. The Sudanese officials certainly did not want the Triangle, but if it were ceded to Kenya, they would be obliged to move into Toposaland. To scuttle this resolution they played their trump card—Egypt. As a partner in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, Egypt had a proper claim to be directly involved in any negotiations and decisions to cede any part of Sudanese territory particularly to a British colony (but the very fraught circumstances rendered this hope illusionary). Under these circumstances neither the High Commissioner nor the Foreign Office was prepared to interject the wastelands of the Ilemi Triangle into Anglo-Egyptian negotiations; to unilaterally cede Ilemi to the Empire was as indefensible as it was unthinkable (...) officials of the Colonial Office were not prepared to absolve the Sudanese government's responsibilities at their expense. The Kitgum resolutions were dead (Collins, N.D.:15-17).

Collins' article explains the reasons for the hesitation and weakness of the Sudanese government when faced with the Toposa resistance. It also provides some interesting reflections on the nature of that resistance: not a "modern African nationalism", but instead an altogether traditional response to invaders, whether Africans or Whites. After various episodes, mostly inglorious for the English, the Toposa submitted in May 1927, and paid heavy tributes in cattle. But peace had come to the Toposa region and it was lasting. There was almost no major problem with the British administration up to the independence of Sudan in 1956.

1926: "Turkana country", an immense region to the west of Lake Rudolf and which up to then had been the concern of the protectorate of Uganda, is "transferred" to Kenya Colony, but the area called the Ilemi Appendix, into which the Turkana traditionally drove their herds, belonged to the Sudan. Thus, there came about an agreement between the Sudan and Kenya which defined the region situated between the Sudan-Kenya boundary and a certain Red line, inside the Ilemi Triangle (see map), as a territory reserved for the Turkana.

1926: A new punitive British expedition, the Merile Patrol (Merile or Marile is the Turkana or Nyangatom name for the Dassanetch). Little positive came out of it; the Turkana lost 64 men in 1927, 215 in 1928, and 135 in 1929.

1931: The Sudanese government acknowledges that it is unable to control the Triangle and authorises Kenya to establish some garrison posts in it, (which is only done in 1942).

1937: Kenya imposes an extension to the grazing land reserved to the Turkana: this is the Blue line (see map). The same year the Italians occupy the Lower Omo Valley. The local tribes immediately take the part of the occupiers. One thousand rifles are distributed among the people in order to help the Italians prevent an Ethio-British counterattack from Kenya.

1939: The Turkana lose 300 men in an attack by the Dassanetch and the Nyangatom. In response, a column of the King's African Rifles kills 24 Dassanetch and seizes some livestock.

1940-41: Repeated British offensives, supported by 5000 Turkana, against the Italians, Dassanetch and Nyangatom. Finally the English are victorious and they occupy, for a time, the Lower Omo Valley, driving away the Italians.

1942: The British, represented by Richard G. Turnbull, then Turkana District Officer, establish garrison posts in the Ilemi Triangle, from the south to the

north: Kokuro, Lewan, Lokamarinyang and Kibish, the latter in January 1943. From that time forward they patrolled this region more or less regularly.

1943: The Ethiopian army returns to the Lower Omo Valley. The Ethiopian authorities protest over the British military installations in the Triangle and maintain that, with respect to the local Ethiopians, these installations are a violation of the 1908 treaty which guaranteed to the frontier tribes freedom of movement across the Ethio-Sudanese border. The authorities of Kenya Colony argued on the basis that Ethiopia did not have total control over her heavily armed citizens, and that "their" Turkana, who found themselves in the opposite situation, were in need of protection. From this argument came the decision to keep the Dassanetch permanently out of the Ilemi Triangle.

For the Nyangatom, there was more tolerance, as is shown by this passage from a Memorandum, signed Richard Turnbull; June 27, 1944:

The Dongiro, who had proved considerably more cooperative than had the Marile during the period in which the Occupied Territory Administration had been functioning at Kalam, who would probably had complied with all our demands had we pressed them, were regarded as not for the moment likely to initiate raids on the Turkana and no attempt was therefore made to expell from British territory that part of the tribe normally found to the west of Kibish. They were permitted to continue to use the Tapeisi Hills and West Kibish area as far south as the lower reaches of the Natodomeri river [the Blue line of 1937], but were not allowed south of that line and were therefore excluded from the Lorienetom and Kasiren waters. The continuance of this policy was however contingent on their not trespassing outside the area referred to and on their holding aloof from the Marile" (Memorandum, p.34). "In regard to the Dongiro, "Bume", also mentioned in the ViceMinister's note, you will be aware that this tribe is permitted by the Sudan authorities to graze and water within a prescribed area of Sudan territory. A copy of this dispatch is being sent to the Secretary of State for the Colonies (ibid. p.38).

From that time forward, the English and their Kenyan successors, instead of redefining particular areas reserved to the Turkana nomads, tended to transform either the Appendix or at times the entire Triangle into a no-man's-land. That is why they are "closing the border" and taking repressive measures against the Dassanetch and/or the Nyangatom each time a clash occurs between their troops and either tribal faction. Such clashes generally follow skirmishes between the Turkana and either the so-called "Ethiopian" tribes, such as the Dassanetch or the Nyangatom, or the "Sudanese" tribes, such as the Toposa. It is this last scenario that we see repeating itself in December 1991-January 1992, while Kenya now seems to be moving from the administration of the Triangle on behalf of a neighbouring country to straight-forward annexation.

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⁴ A demographer should be
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Totals Males and Females
Nyangatom proper:
5,566 including 1,651 family h
6,914 including 132 family h

Muguji:
229 including 74 family head
264 including 32 family head
12,973 people distributed in

- Gebre, Sellassie, 1930-31, *Chronique du règne de Ménélik II*, édité par M. de Coppet. Paris.
Tornay, S. 1978, "L'Enigme des Murle de l'Omo", *L'Ethnographie*, No. 76-1:55-75.
Turnbull, R.G. 1944, (ms), *Memorandum, Turkana Frontier Affairs*. Communicated to S. Tornay by courtesy of L.E. Whitehouse, personal archives, Kitale.

Notes

- ¹ My knowledge of the area is based not only on my own fieldwork, but also on the exchange of data and ideas with David Turton (Mursi), Uri Almagor (Dassanetch), Ivo Strecker and Jean Lydall (Hamar), Katsuyoshi Fukui (Bodi), and Dave Todd (Dime). Most of these started their anthropological research in the late sixties or early seventies. Quite recently, a Japanese anthropologist, Mr. Matsuda, undertook a study of a local minority group, the Muguji, also known as the Kwegu, who were the subject of one of Turton's ethnographic films (*The Kwegu*, 1982). Further, my correspondence with members of the Swedish Philadelphia Church Mission, (SPCM), a nongovernmental organization, has allowed me to keep in touch with the Nyangatom and to be informed of local events during the long period (1976 to 1991) during which, for various reasons, I was not able to revisit the Nyangatom in Ethiopia. SPCM workers, both Swedish and Ethiopian, have been engaged in development programmes in the Lower Omo since about 1971. The main beneficiaries of this help have been the Nyangatom, a fact which is not unconnected with the growing demography and power of this group in the area. In 1987, a Swedish anthropologist, J.A. Alvarsson, was asked by the SPCM to evaluate their project in the Lower Omo. He published two reports in 1989, both of them basic for our understanding of local development issues. My contacts with other German, Dutch and Kenyan professionals have also been very informative. It is again the SPCM which made my recent trip to the Lower Omo not only possible but also extremely interesting and enjoyable. *Last but not least*, special acknowledgement is due to David Turton: not only does my more descriptive contribution draw on his work for certain theoretical points, but he also agreed to anglicize my text! To all these colleagues, friends and institutions I hereby express my warmest thanks.
- ² At a conference held in Osaka in 1977, we compared the results of our research, and discussed the intriguing questions raised by the often costly hostilities which had suddenly arisen between peoples who share the same interests in peace, and the same ideas about the purpose and value of human life and social existence. The proceedings of this conference (Fukui and Turton, 1979) provide, besides several case studies from outside the Lower Omo, a good frame of reference for a *regional*, trans-ethnic understanding of traditional warfare among agro-pastoralists.
- ³ Of the published historiography of the Lower Omo during the eighties, I shall refer only to Alvarsson's 1989 reports and Turton's 1991 paper (I quote from Turton's unpublished reports with his permission). Concerning other unpublished sources (letters and personal communications) I prefer not to mention their authors' names, in order to preserve their independence. The documents in my possession can be consulted on request. During my last trip, Nyangatom friends helped me to check my information and my account may therefore contain some Nyangatom bias. Any other mistakes or misinterpretations should be considered mine.
- ⁴ A demographer should be asked to estimate the corresponding age pyramid of the whole population, and see how this fits with the general figures of the 1990 SPCM census, which I quote with permission.

Totals Males and Females

Nyangatom proper:

5,566 including 1,651 family heads

6,914 including 132 family heads

Muguji:

229 including 74 family heads

264 including 32 family heads

12,973 people distributed in 1,889 families

The average size of individual households (that is families under one head, whether mono- or polygamous) is thus around seven persons, including the family head.

For the Kibish area the figures are:

Males 3,846; Females 4,992; total 8,838; female sex ratio 1.3.

For the Anam or Omo area they are:

Males 1,949; Females 2,186; total 4,135; female sex ratio 1.12.

I have no ready explanation for the difference in sex ratio, except that the Kibish area is basically pastoral; watering cattle is more attractive for young girls and women than agricultural work on the Omo banks. However it should be noted that a good percentage of the younger population is highly mobile between the pastoral settlements at Kibish and Omo cultivation sites. According to the season, more labour power is required at one or the other location, and the different sex ratio recorded in the census might simply be a function of the time it was taken. During the dry season, more girls and women are required at Kibish for digging wells and watering animals.

The census does not include, formally, the "People of the West" who settled at the foot of Mt Naita. They are frequent visitors to Kibish, and I don't know how many of them might have been included in the SPCM census. Many Nyangatom are today pleading for a recognized *kebele* in Naita.

⁵ For the Toposa and the Nyangatom, the cost of a Kalashnikov and similar automatic weapons has been continuously going down over the last twelve years. At first, automatics sold by Idi Amin's disbanded troops to the Karimojong in Uganda could be acquired in Toposa country for ten heads of cattle. Over the years, the price came down to seven, then five cattle, until, finally, they could be obtained free, by, for example, plundering SPLA camps. During the last few months of 1991, five hundred Toposa and two hundred Nyangatom made a four month "pilgrimage" on foot where they were trained to fight against the SPLA. They returned more heavily armed than ever. At the end of November 1991, about fifty-five Nyangatom members of this expedition arrived back at Kibish and saluted their homeland with heavy firing, terrorizing the Kenyan garrison. They had lost three companions on the way back, but the general feeling was one of happiness and pride. The official purpose of the trip was to acquire the means of protecting themselves against the SPLA and any other potential enemy, Chai and other Surma, the Turkana and, last but not least, the Kenyan army. The latter takes advantage of any opportunity to close the Ethio-Sudanese border, and officers boast that they will bomb Naita (on Ethiopian territory) if the Nyangatom continue to cooperate with the Toposa in the arms traffic and cattle raiding.

⁶ This is a well known subject, most clearly addressed in Mohamed Salih's "Pastoralists, Socialism, and Democracy: The Sudanese Experience" (1991).

⁷ The Ilemi Triangle was named after Chief Ilemi (Ilembi, Melile, Chamchar) of the Anuak whose village was located on the Sudan bank of the Akobo river near the juncture of the river Ajibur and the Akobo.

Figure 1. The Ilemi Triangle
revised by S. Tornay

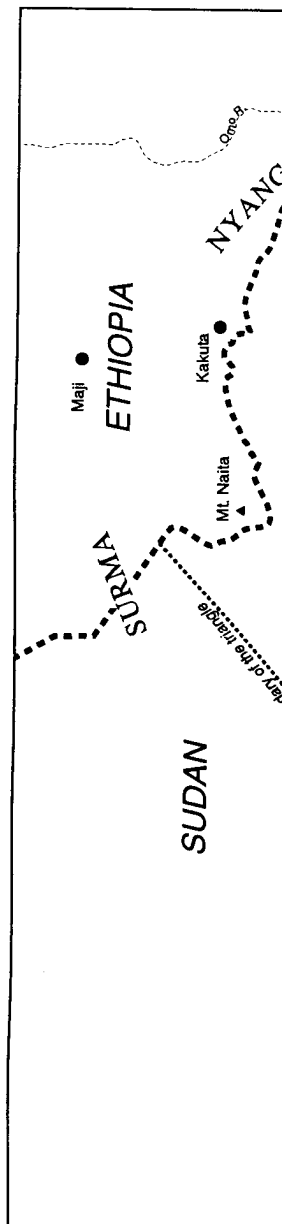
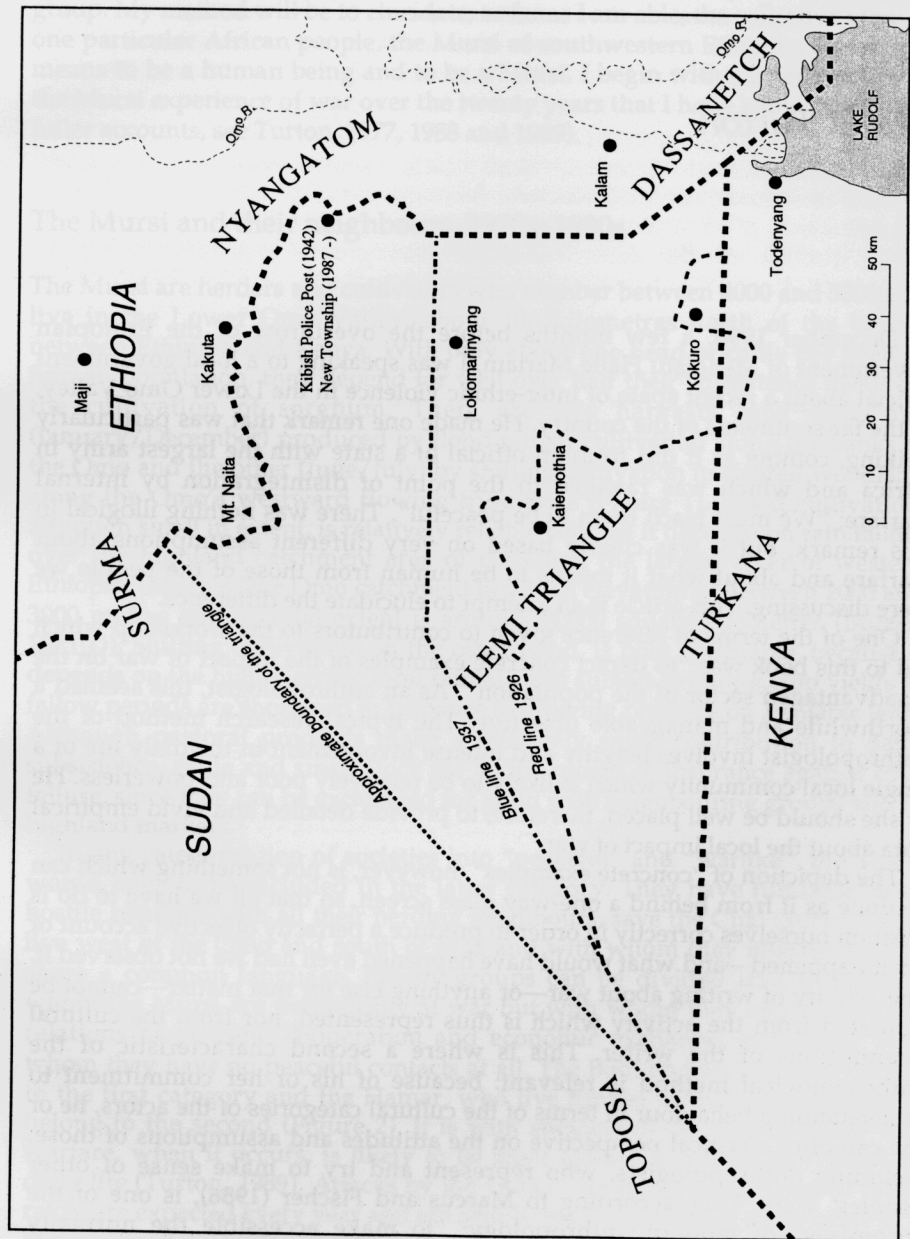


Figure 1. The Ilemi Triangle, designed by U. Almagor (1974), revised by S. Tornay (1992)



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