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Ethnic conflicts in North-West Kenya

Pokot-Turkana Raiding 1969–1984*

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Abstract. Interethnic conflicts abound in the dryland areas of Eastern Africa. Violence between different pastoral groups causes widespread economic disruption. The conflict between the pastoral Pokot and Turkana of North-West Kenya, lasting from 1969 to 1984, is described. The focus of the paper is to look for causes of violence: the competition for scarce resources, the organisation of men in age-sets and the norms and values of warriorhood are discussed. The militarization of East Africa and the easy access to modern weapons due to widespread illegal trade with guns is singled out as an important factor for the escalation of interethnic conflict. A view from the actor's perspective then opens up new prospects for analysis: Pokot men invest time and capital in raiding, because they want to achieve certain goals in life.

Introduction

Watching the news from Eastern Africa one easily gets the impression that countries like Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia are about to fall apart. Government authority is decreasing all over the Horn of Africa due to internal instability. The widespread insecurity causes large-scale migration of citizens away from the war-torn homelands resulting in economic stagnation and decline. Not only rebel armies are shaking government authority, but also messianic movements, organized groups of bandits and traditional warriors fighting with modern weapons.

For several years the semi-arid northern parts of Kenya were torn by secessionist movements (the Pan-Somali shifita movement) and intertribal warfare. All ethnic groups in the north had access to modern weapons from the early 70's onwards, the guns mainly coming from Somalia, Sudan or Uganda. A closer look at the guns used by tribal warriors gives insight into 50 years of European and American weapons' production. From First World War guns with bayonets up to the most modern automatic guns (Kalashnikov, G3) – anything may be found. Ethnic groups living next to war-torn areas like Southern Sudan or Eastern Uganda have better access to modern weapons than those groups living further inland. Relations between the central government and the pastoral nomadic groups of the north have been strained for years (Schlee 1984). Decisions on world system level influence the flow of weapons through East Africa considerably. The pastoral Pokot of Baringo District were engaged in inter-tribal

* The paper is based in two years fieldwork in Northwestern Kenya. The research was part of a larger DFG sponsored project on 'Militant conflicts in the Third World'.

bal warfare with their northern neighbours between the late 1960's and 1984. It is the dynamic behind this conflict I want to elucidate here.

1 The Pokot-Turkana conflict

In precolonial and early colonial times Turkana and Pokot raided each other, but periods of open warfare changed with times of peace. Between 1910 and 1918 the Turkana attained superiority due to guns they had obtained from Ethiopia (Bollig 1987). British disarming patrols and later on an administration looking especially into inter-ethnic conflict resolution brought an end to raiding. After about fifty years of peace resulting in numerous inter-ethnic marriages and stock friendships cutting across ethnic borders warfare resumed again. The state of war between the two pastoral nomadic groups is characterized by mutual raiding. Raiding parties consist of several hundred men setting out after some weeks of careful preparation. They wage far into enemy territory and try to capture as much livestock as possible. Though killing enemies is not a primary aim, frequently raids result in a number of deaths. Additionally small parties of thieves consisting of two to ten men venture into enemy territory to attack one or two households during nighttime and then make away with the loot as quickly as possible. Before looking at the causes for large scale raiding I will shortly depict the chronology of the conflict and show the cultural significance of raiding.

A chronology of the conflict

Several times well armed Turkana raided Pokot homesteads near the boundary to Turkana District in the late 60's. Each time they killed several Pokot and made away with considerable herds. Pokot reported the raids to the District Commissioner in Kabarnet. But while British administrative police had been on the scene only a day or two after the first incident, Kenyan police would act only a few weeks later. Pokot living in areas bordering Turkana District fled south. Only after the Pokot MP brought the matter to parliament action was taken. An army unit was installed at Kapedo on the border between Pokot and Turkana. This brought peace for a short time as warriors from both sides feared army reprisals.

In 1974 Turkana resumed raiding. Their raids reached deep (30 to 50 km) into Pokot territory. All raids now resulted in many deaths and the loss of considerable numbers of livestock. For five years raid followed raid and large areas were evacuated by the Pokot (up to one third of their territory). Many raiders had acquired automatic guns and did not shy away from administrative police. Nginyang, the main center of the area, was attacked thrice in 1977 and about 40 people were killed. At the same time Turkana tribal warriors and a very well organized group of Turkana bandits (Ngoroko) raided Pokot homesteads. From at least 1976 onwards Pokot had attained

enough guns to stage successful counter-attacks. Between 1976 and 1979 they organized 11 large raids of several hundred men each.

Several times government officials tried to make peace between Turkana and Pokot. Big meetings with all the important elders from both sides were held at the boundary village of Kapedo. The elders were held to sanction the peace agreements with their most effective blessings and oaths (*muma*). This was a strategy the British had applied successfully to settle interethnic conflicts. However, even the swearing of oaths, in other circumstances the ultimate means to ensure the success of an agreement (as anybody acting against it will die), was to no avail. In 1979 the Kenyan army reinforced by the specialized Anti Stock Theft Unit staged a disarming operation. Though they did not succeed in seizing many weapons from either side their presence obviously intimidated both groups to such an extent that an insecure peace resulted.

In 1982 interethnic conflicts flared up again. Obviously both sides rarely risked large-scale raids because they feared army reprisals. In the previous years the road network had been extended considerably so that army units could be moved quickly. Thieving in small parties became the more popular form of interethnic aggression. Another even more energetic disarming operation was launched during the drought of 1984. Many more guns than in 1979 were seized. Since 1984 no new aggressions have taken place.

The organization of Pokot raids

In a time of open warfare, talks about when and where to attack are frequent and by far not all talks result in a raid. Often such talks start off at meat feasts, when an acknowledged man allows men to slaughter one of his oxen, or at dances. Such talks are connected to certain characters, men who are known for their ferocity and courage (*nyakan*) and to a certain emotional state (*sirumoi*). Neither will a man who is not *nyakan* nor a man who is not in the state of *sirumoi* propose a raid.

The next step is to bring the matter before the prophet. He is asked what he can foretell for the planned raid from looking at his dreams. The prophet is the only institution which can stop a raid. If prospects for the planned raid look too miserable the men will discard their plans. As there are only two prophets in a population of about 36 000 Pokot, these two specialists are consulted frequently and in times of external conflict they become the central point of a widespread network through which information about planned raids runs.¹ Then a spying expedition (*ghot*) is planned. Before they set off they visit a *kapolokyon* (ritual elder) to get blessings. They travel up to two weeks through enemy territory looking for areas where many herds are concentrated.

¹ A development worker living in northern Turkana reported that through the collaboration of three prophets the northern Turkana succeeded in lining up an army of 4000 men for a raid on Karimojong within only a short time of preparation in the early 1980's.

When the *ghot* returns the news spread quickly through Pokot land. The spies themselves will visit known *nyakan* to convince them to participate in the raid. These weeks are used to buy more bullets. After two to three weeks the *kokwö luk* (the final meeting of men preparing them spiritually and technically for the raid) takes place. The *kokwö luk* is as much a social event as it is an army camp. At the time of the meeting men adhere to several taboos. None should have intercourse with a woman and no open quarrelling should occur. Men who violate against these taboos are excluded.

After the final blessing of the *kokwö luk* the raiding group sets off soon. The *luk* marches without taking many precautions. Their attack is an outright invasion. If they fear that the enemy has been warned they march day and night, to not allow him to prepare his defense carefully (i.e. driving away livestock, informing more men from other areas, obtaining bullets in large quantities). Usually the *luk* will attack shortly before dawn. If there is a police post near by they abscond some 20 men with guns and plenty of ammunition to encircle the police station and prevent police officers from getting out. The raiding group divides into smaller groups of 10 to 20 men. They plunder the homesteads and drive away livestock. Obviously not every raid results in many people killed – actually only in two raids out of eleven the number of people killed exceeded 50. After some three or four hours of raiding the *luk* assembles again and retreats. For those men who have killed small ceremonies have to be performed to ensure that the blood spilled will not have bad effect on them while retreating. (This is only the start of a whole series of ceremonies somebody who has killed has to go through.)

As soon as they arrive in Pokot territory and feel safe of pursuers they start sharing the loot. There are no strict rules governing the separation of the booty, nor will any person act as mediator. It is understood that those who went for the first spying expedition should get a large share, so they are allowed to select first. Then those who own guns are allowed to take out quite a bit more than those who are armed with a spear only. The men who have invested heavily in obtaining a gun (a gun may cost up to 60 heads of cattle) and ammunition ensured the success of the raid, so they should be payed off accordingly. Frequently quarreling arises over the destination of animals. Usually everybody tries to grab as many animals as he thinks are appropriate and tries to get away as soon as possible. Some few animals will go to the prophet and the ritual elders who ensured success with their blessings.

2 Explanations for warfare: the societal level

In the following chapter I try to pinpoint some organizational features of the economic, social and cognitive systems which facilitate or exacerbate interethnic conflicts.

Competition over scarce resources, the age-set system as a quasi-military interest group and the ideals of warriorhood are cited in literature as explanations for warfare amongst East African herders. The last chapter will then switch to another level of

analysis and focus on how the individual actor operates within this frame and tries to use interethnic conflict to improve his economic position and to enhance his social prestige.

2.1 Conflict over scarce resources

The argument that warfare is likely to result from or is intensified by competition over scarce resources is frequently voiced in reports on aggressions between East African herders. Dietz (1987: 187) says that Pokot-Karimojong, Pokot-Sebei and Pokot-Turkana raiding in the last century always intensified after droughts and livestock epidemics. Fukui and Turton (1979: 2) in their volume on warfare amongst East African herders state “... during the late ‘sixties and early’ seventies... intertribal fighting, exacerbated by some of the worst drought and famine conditions in living memory, was at a high level.”

Critical resources within the Pokot pastoralist system are grazing and herds.

Grazing

Grazing becomes a scarce resource when the number of livestock exceeds the carrying capacity of a given area. This may be due to an increase in herds or a decline of biomass production because of drought or overgrazing. It is mainly during the dry season or during droughts that grazing gets scarce². Rough figures (Stolz 1989) indicate that limits of carrying capacity are not reached in a standard year with rains between 600 and 800 mm; but in a year of drought livestock numbers may be very well above carrying capacity.

However, warfare the way Pokot practice it does not bring relief to the scarce resource grazing as it is not aimed at territorial gains³. It rather brings further stress as raids eventually result in counter-raids of the enemy group. During the course of fighting Pokot had to evacuate about a third of their territory. Important dry season grazing areas were not used anymore by Pokot herders because they feared Turkana attacks. A zone of about 15 to 30 km on both sides of the district boundary became virtual no-man’s land. Within only five years the plant cover within those broad stretches of no-man’s land changed considerably. Data from LandsAT photographs show that acacia thornbush communities increased by ca. 30% and grassland communities de-

² In order to consider all important factors for biomass production we would need an analysis of satellite photographs, aerial photographs (both over a period of several years) and botanical on-ground studies. Such a study is under way at the moment. Of importance are further data on herd structure (males have higher metabolic rates than females) and herd diversification (rate of cattle against camels, goats and sheep).

³ Precolonial warfare aimed at territorial gains. Between 1820 and 1870 Pokot conquered about 5000 sq.km of Laikipia Maasai land by means of aggressive expansionist warfare.

creased by the same percentage (Conant 1982). The resource grazing is becoming scarce as a result of protracted warfare.

The only factor which brought some relief to overused grazing lands was the reduction of the number of cattle due to the buying of modern guns between 1976 and 1979. A gun would cost between 20 and 60 head of cattle. If of the 4211 households in Nginyang Division (Kenya Survey 1979) only 10% purchased a gun at 30 TLU (Tropical Livestock Units, 1 TLU = 1 cattle, 1.2 TLU = 1 camel, 0.2 TLU = 1 goat) on average about 12 000 TLU left the Division. In 1988 about 100 000 TLU were counted in the division (Stolz 1989). Even if we consider that livestock-numbers were probably higher in 1979, the decline of livestock numbers by 12 000 TLU is considerable.

Vayda's hypothesis (1967: 4) that warfare has an important positive function in the maintenance of man/resource balances is contradicted by the case study. The man/resource balance deteriorated considerably from about 1974 onwards as a consequence of warfare. The fact that total livestock numbers decreased and the man/resource balance was, perhaps, influenced positively in the long run is not intrinsic to Pokot/Turkana warfare but attributable to the standards of international weapons' trade.

Herds

Another resource which might become scarce are the herds themselves. Only by means of herds are human beings able to use the semi-arid savanna environment. Scarcity is felt on the household level and not communally (like scarcity of grazing). There are big differences in wealth in livestock and there are some households around the few centers who are dependent on salaries and wages (Young 1989: 27).

It is necessary to differentiate between an objective and a perceived scarcity of cattle. Objective scarcity would entail that a household herd is too small to meet large parts of subsistence (milk, meat, selling animals for maize flour). It is possible to give an absolute livestock number which indicates the limits of scarcity: i.e. a household needs 4–7 TLU per person to meet subsistence needs. There are not many households in Pokot which fall under this limit. On the other hand perceived scarcity may be felt at any time and is not attributable to absolute livestock numbers but more to the fact that any goal in life can only be achieved by spending livestock. Livestock is in this case only scarce in relation to the high consumption of livestock in prestigious social transactions like brideprices, initiation and promotion ceremonies. Especially younger sons are hard hit. There is a law that the second son must not marry before the first and the third not before the second. If the father is still eager to marry more wives or the first-born takes long to marry, second and third borns may see their marriage postponed ad infinitum due to lack of livestock. It is especially these young men one hears complaining that livestock is scarce. And it is this group which seems to be very active in raiding.

Drought, epidemics and even more so Turkana raiding and the purchase of expen-

sive guns may cut back household herds to such an extent that many men are not able to enter into further transactions involving cattle.

To summarize the argument: competition for the scarce resource grazing does not explain Pokot/Turkana warfare. It is rather mutual raiding which causes the existence of large stretches of no-man's land and in these unused areas a deterioration of grazing quality. Hence the resource grazing gets even more scarce through warfare. This makes the pastoral economy more prone to drought.

It is especially the purchase of guns which leads to scarcity of livestock. Epidemics, droughts and Turkana raiders contribute further to a decline in herds. However, rarely did households fall under the critical level of 4–7 TLU per person. It is rather the high consumption of livestock in social transactions which makes young men feel that the number of livestock they own is not sufficient. The quest for guns contributes to the scarcity of a central resource. The more guns are bought the more men feel that they cannot meet their obligations in livestock transactions anymore.

2.2 Age-sets as aggressive interest groups

Colonial accounts on age-set organizations stress the aggressive character of corporate age-based groups. Literature on East African herders abounds with simplified connections between age-set organizations and raiding (Low 1963). Age-set organization is equalled with a military organization. Recent anthropological literature has rather concentrated on describing age-groups as a way of organizing social relations and as a cognitive frame to structure time (Almagor & Baxter 1977). Military aspects have been actually deemphasized over the last years. I went into the field with the question "What impact does age-set organization have on inter-ethnic or intra-ethnic conflict?"

Pokot have adopted a complicated blend of the Kalenjin generation-set and Kari-mojong age-set system. There are six generation-sets (*pīn*) which cycle in time. At any time three generation-sets are acting. At the time of my stay the Chumwö were ritual elders, Koronkoro were political elders and Kaplelach, who were circumcised in 1988 were warriors. Circumcision of men only takes place every 25 to 30 years. It is the circumcision which "ties together the generation-set". At the same time every man who went through his initiation ceremony (*sapana*) belongs to an initiation-set. Three initiation sets integrate into an age-set (Bollig 1990).

Though there is a group of young men set apart who are referred to as warriors (*mī-rön*) there is no law which would prohibit older men to participate in raiding. Unlike Maasai warriors (cf. Jacobs 1979) Pokot age-sets do not build corporate interest groups in the sense that they have a formal internal organization or a shared residential unit. Decision-making within an age-set is highly informal. Only during the large age-set ceremonies are decision-making and leadership more formalized. There are men who are seen as leaders within their age-sets but their authority may be questioned at

any time. They are leaders on account of their rhetoric skills and their deeds. When raiding there is no fixed strategy which would assign age-sets certain positions in battle. Maasai (Jacobs 1968) and Boran (Baxter 1979) assign a man's position in fighting according to his age-set.

It is more the ideology of age and generation-sets than their actual socio-political organization which relates to warfare. Hearing the speeches at celebrations may easily convey the impression that generation and age-sets line up together to thwart off Turkana attacks or decide together when to raid their enemies. When Kaplelach asked Koronkoro and Chumwö in November 1988 for their circumcision they were eager to point out their exploits in warfare. It was they who went to Turkana, raided cattle and killed enemies. Though every participant in a raid has very individual interests in the loot on such occasions communal interest and communal success is stressed. The Kaplelach argued that in spite of their exploits the socio-political position of their set was still inferior. In all promotion ceremonies speakers will make allusions to their sets' success in raiding and blame other sets for staying at home cowardly. Speakers evoke the image of their age-set acting as a corporate group when raiding Turkana.

Age and generation-sets may be utilised for the mobilisation of personnel for raiding. The networks of age-set comrades are widespread and may be used to transmit news about the impending raid. The rhetoric of the age-set system is used to motivate men. The system further provides convenient categories to describe warfare. The absence of leadership and internal organization makes it useless for organizing inter-ethnic warfare. Only in internal conflicts do age and generation-sets act as corporate groups.

2.3 Cognitive organization: anger

Literature on East African pastoralists has frequently discussed the belligerent orientation of the pastoralist's cognitive systems (Jacobs 1979). Older literature (e.g. Thomas 1965) has depicted the martial orientation as a prime motif for interethnic conflict. Unfortunately there has been little anthropological fieldwork done on the cognitive-emotive organization of East African herders. The stereotype of the belligerent herdsman is rather tied to the concept of the cattle-complex cultures than that is based on research.

In Pokot the concept *sirumoi* is of importance in understanding emic explanations on emotional states in connection with conflict behaviour. *sirumoi* conveys connotations of anger and rage but goes beyond that. *sirumoi* should be felt before starting a raid, before entering the circumcision hut, before spearing the oxen at the initiation ceremony and when killing an enemy. Not all humans are able to enter into the emotional state of *sirumoi* – or the right form of *sirumoi*. Individuals who are able to do so are highly esteemed. Men and women express *sirumoi* in different ways. Pokot claim that this emotional state expresses itself in facial and body expressions and a certain way of

speaking. A man in this emotional state has staring eyes. He takes on a gait which is easy to differentiate from the normal way of walking. When talking he utters short sentences; every now and then he will shout the name of his favourite oxen and those of his ancestors. If he has been a successful raider he will make allusions to his deeds. These *ngal nyo pö sirumoi* (the words of rage) chill the audience and eventually bring other men into the state of *sirumoi* and prepare them emotionally for the raid. In its extreme forms *sirumoi* causes shaking (*potenö*) with men and unconsciousness (*longunogh*) in women.

Case 1: Z.'s *sirumoi*

Z. was known as a courageous young man in the community. One of the days a Harambee tax collection was taking place in the area. Pokot were to bring the tax, one ox per household to the center. As they resented this tax and refused to comply the local government had decided to send out armed administrative police to collect the tax by force. Emotions ran high about the local chief's decision. People felt mistreated and exploited. One morning policemen and the chief approached Z.'s father's homestead. One of the women coming back from a waterpool reported the news. Z. went up and down talking angrily about chiefs and policemen. Suddenly he ran into his hut and came out with his spear. He took off the sheath, ran into the kraal and drove his name-oxen out. Then he ran around the kraal chasing his name-oxen in front of him waving his spear over his head. He threatened to kill anybody who would dare to take a single cow out of the kraal and shouted that he would not hesitate to risk his life if only his cattle would be spared. His body was shaking and his eyes looked stern. Everybody was convinced that he would try to kill one of the policemen if they came near. Fortunately two of his brothers acted quickly. They went to meet the policemen before they came near the homestead and convinced them that their father was not around at the moment and that it would be better for them to come later the same morning.

Pokot distinguish two types of *sirumoi*: (1) one type is the *sirumoi* which enters into *woyogh*, a sort of rage in which one acts in an uncontrolled way. Someone in the state of *woyogh* may easily kill a person he is close to. *woyogh* makes one forget standards of social behaviour. A young man whose *sirumoi* easily turns into *woyogh* will fall prey to the enemy on a raid he does not act responsibly. (2) In contrast to this way of *sirumoi* there is the rage which remains calm and enables the ego to carry out actions carefully. This type of *sirumoi* is typical for the *nyakan* and is deemed to be indispensable in carrying out a raid successfully. Men, able to enter this emotional state, are needed to chill other men with their speeches at the *kokwö luk* so that they set off without fear and carry out the raid properly. It is his *sirumoi* which enables a man to walk over long distances without drinking and eating, which makes him wide awake though he has not found sleep for days. Frequently this way of *sirumoi* is referred to as *sirumoi nyo pö akili*⁴, the "intelligent rage". Informants stated that it is especially Pokot and

⁴ *akili* is Swahili and means reason, intelligence, wisdom.

perhaps to a lesser extent Turkana who feel this way of *sirumoi* while Maasai and Samburu fall from *sirumoi* into *woyogh* easily.

There are several emic theories about *sirumoi*. Generally it is believed that if somebody falls into a state of *woyogh* or if one's rage becomes *sirumoi nyo pö akili* is passed on from father to child. Parents claim that it is easy to distinguish a boy or a girl who has *sirumoi* from others. In children *sirumoi* may show itself as truculence against parents' orders and a strong will to press own plans onto peers. Parents will be careful with their sanctions against disobedience if they are convinced that *sirumoi* is the cause.

The conceptualization of *sirumoi* is used to describe motivation for aggressive conflict behaviour. It is employed again and again when talking about critical moments of the raid (i.e. when the idea of a raid comes up, when going on a spying expedition, when killing an enemy) in order to explain why somebody acted correctly. To show *sirumoi* conveys prestige. Hence it may make men enter situations deliberately in which they can prove that they have the right *sirumoi*.

3 Actor-oriented explanations

The anthropology of war has been concerned mainly with looking at systemic causes for the beginning or escalation of warfare. The individual actor is rarely considered. In Pokot society there is no central institution which forces men to take up arms. Everybody may decide on his own whether he wants to participate in a raid or not. Therefore it is necessary to look at the individual motives in taking part in warfare.

3.1 The economy of raiding

Raiding may be seen entirely from the economic perspective of a household. Men have to invest heavily (buying a gun and ammunition) before they start careers as successful raiders. Guns and ammunition, of course, ensure the success of the entire raiding group and not only the individual. As a return for their investment in group success they hope for larger shares from the loot. The following sections deal with the economics of buying a gun and sharing the loot after a raid. They will show that even when economic conditions have generally ameliorated or when harsh measures are taken by the government against interethnic raiding there are still strong incentives for many individuals to accept the risks and carry on with raiding.

The economics of obtaining a gun

Pokot bought guns from 1974 onwards mainly from itinerant traders. These traders used their widespread kinship networks to obtain guns from anywhere in Eastern Af-

rica and then to transport them to where there was a market for guns. In northern Kenya they adopted the strategy of exchanging guns for livestock (mainly oxen) and then driving the oxen to the nearest livestock market⁵ and cashing them in. They returned with the money to their home area and eventually bought new guns. In Pokot area there are many traders living as small wholesale or livestock traders. They usually made the first contracts between Pokot who wanted to buy weapons and itinerant traders. The price for guns changed considerably over the years. Around 1975 one had to pay about 20 to 30 head of cattle for a gun. These early guns came from Somalia or were trafficked south from Southern Sudan. Only two years later at the climax of warfare prices went up. The same gun costed between 40 and 60 heads of cattle. By 1979/80 prices were back to the 1975 level probably due to the mass of guns which became available after the breakdown of Idi Amin's regime. Nowadays prices are lower than they have ever been during the last two decades. The highly esteemed German G 3 gun, is obtainable for 8 oxen only. In northern Turkana prices never reached the high level Baringo Pokot had to pay – definitely a strategic advantage for Turkana raiders. Turkana were not dependent on traders only; they got a lot of weapons from the Sudan and Uganda directly. Nowadays prices have declined in northern Turkana even further – the Kalashnikov costs only 7 to 10 goats. The Sudanese Peoples' Liberation Army which has some army camps near the border or on Kenyan territory sells their guns cheaply in order to obtain food.

The following table summarizes the expenses of several informants.

Table 1. Expenses for Guns

Household	Price			
	Oxen	Cows	Goats	Camels
1	15	36	–	1
2	20	5	–	–
3a	24	1	–	–
3b	2	10	30	1
4	25	12	–	1
5	18	22	–	2
6	9	11	–	–

Several facts are elucidated by a collection of case studies and Table 1: (1) Though there is, of course, the trend to pay as much as possible in male stock, all households had to include females in their payments. About 46% of all animals in the small survey were females. This will inevitably bring about a serious cut-back in household herd growth. (2) If the household head feels too old to participate in raiding he will give the gun to one of his sons; preferably a son who has not yet set up a separate household but is old

⁵ The traders drove the cattle mainly to Maralal or Rumuruti markets. To do so they probably had to bribe government officials as they needed documents allowing them to pass district boundaries with large herds of cattle.

enough to endure the hardships of a raid. As he anticipates that his son will wish to give most of the loot to his mother's part of the household herd he will take most of the animals for the payment from this house; other wives will contribute only few cattle from their shares in the household herd. This is very similar to the payment of bride-prices. Most of the brideprice generally comes from the bridegroom's mother's share in the herd. Frequently young men said their gun was like their first wife – as they had payed more stock for it than they would ever give out for a woman. (3) Nowadays middle class to rich herdowners possess from about 70 to 120 head of cattle. Many informants stated the size of their herds was somewhat bigger in the seventies before all the disasters (raiding, 1979 drought, 1984 drought and last but not least buying guns at inflated prices) came over them. But even then household herds rarely exceeded 150 cattle. To pay 20 to 60 heads of cattle for a single gun drastically affected the welfare of the household. Marriages had to be postponed because of the lack of bride-price cattle. Especially the sons of the house from which the cattle were taken, were affected. Household heads became reluctant to offer animals for social occasions like initiation or age-set promotion ceremonies.

Though guns were extraordinarily expensive many household heads decided to buy one. A good gun in the homestead brought about some security, not neccesarrily against large-scale raids but definitely against thieves. Furthermore a gun could, once it was bought, earn handsome profits. Additionally there were considerations about having or not having a gun completely outside the economic sphere. To own a good gun brings prestige. The *nyakan*, the courageous and ferocious ideal warrior, can hardly be imagined without a good gun. Pokot ceremonial songs give a vivid idea of how much guns are cherished.

Sharing the loot

The primary aim of any raid or theft is to bring home a good number of animals. The crucial point in a raid is the sharing of the loot. The process of sharing is structured only minimally. The spies should select first. Then the group of men owning guns will choose. Finally those who went for the raid with a spear only will share the rest. As there are many men with guns entitled to choose at the same time men start to earmark animals on their way back from enemy territory. Quarrels over certain animals seem to be frequent. When it comes to sharing it is not only important to apply all one's rhetoric skills to safeguard a number of animals but also to have a group of good friends behind one's claims.⁶

⁶ Nos. 6, 7, and 8 (see Table 2) did not own guns. They took part in only few raids. No. 6 joined in four raids and No. 7 and 8 in only two raids.

Table 2. Livestock Obtained in Raids⁶

Informant	Animals Obtained				Fate of Animal in TLU		
	Cattle male	Cattle fem.	Goats	Camels	Father	Mother own	Other
1	1	7	3	3	0.2	4.0	3.0
2	30	12	31	0	0.0	32.8	3.0
3	11	6	41	2	10.8	8.0	2.0
4	7	14	30	2	7.6	12.2	8.6
5	8	15	8	1	10.6	7.2	2.0
6		1	4			1.4	0.2
7			2	1	1.2	0.4	
8			2			0.4	

Several conclusions may be drawn from case studies and Table 2. (1) The share of the loot gun-owners are able to obtain is considerably higher than the share men without a gun are able to secure. (2) If the man has not yet separated from his father it is likely that the father bought the gun. Then large shares of the loot will go into the parental homestead herd. While animals handed over to his father are at the father's free disposal and may be given to any of his wives those which go to his mother are definitely his own property. (3) On average about 50% actually go to the benefit of the raider, a further 26% he gives to his father. On those animals he has at least a vague claim. Only 17% are given to people outside the family. While incoming bride-prices are shared widely through patri- and matrilineal kinship the loot from a raid actually benefits the raider most. Raiding is definitely a way to enrich oneself. From the little data I have, I got the impression that this holds even more true for stealing.

An actor-oriented cost/benefit model

The foregoing sections have shown that it has become expensive to participate in raids successfully since the acquisition of guns is the decisive factor to what degree someone participates in sharing the loot.

⁷ Informants 1, 2, and 5 participated very actively in stealing parties. While Inf. No. 1 obtained only 13.4 TLU in raids he got 34.8 from stealing expeditions, adding up to 48.2 TLU total. For informants 2 and 5, I was not able to obtain figures for stealing expeditions. If both were at least as successful as A. who obtained 74% of his winnings in stealing they might have ended up with a total of 115 TLU and 99 TLU respectively. This estimate may still be conservative as both were regarded as *nyakan* per se and both are senior to A.

Table 3. Input/Output Analysis of Raiding⁷

Informant	Spent in TLU	Received in TLU		Total Gain/Loss
		Total	per Raid	
1	50	13.4	1.6	– 1.8
2	25	30.0	3.3	+ 5.0
3	44.2	32.4	4.0	– 11.8
4	30	19.4	3.2	– 10.6
5	42.4	25.8	3.7	– 16.6
6	20	15.4	2.2	– 4.6
7	0	1.8	0.6	+ 1.8
8	0	2.2	1.1	+ 2.2
9	0	0.4	0.2	+ 0.4

At a first glance only those three who did not buy guns made profits. This result may be misleading as the figures do not include accounts of animals gained through theft. However, buying a gun is a longterm investment. It has taken more than five years that Nos. 1, 2 and 6 had ‘earned’ enough so that their guns had almost payed off. Additionally gunowners claim that they lost less cattle than others. I do not have quantitative proof for this assumption. It has to be added that all 9 lost livestock to Turkana raiders. This further diminishes the profits gained in warfare. Obviously Pokot are caught up in a vicious circle. As long as their neighbours possess guns they have to buy arms, too. Arms are so expensive that gunowners feel forced to compensate for their losses in raiding.

Large parts of the loot go into the own herd either directly (No. 2) or indirectly via one’s mother (Nos. 1, 3, 5). They will stay and multiply in the mother’s part of the herd until the day the raider wants to use them. As especially younger men do not get large shares of the bride-price which comes in through the marriage of their sisters raiding is the only way to enlarge their herd. It facilitates early marriages and allows even second and third borns to become independent from their fathers earlier. Once a gun is bought capital input into raiding is low. Per raid two to three goats (i.e. 0.6–0.9 TLU) had to be sold to obtain ammunition. The net win for the six gun-owners per raid ranged from 1.6–4 TLU, averaging 3 TLU. On average the gun-owners participated in three to four raids per year resulting in a net win of 6 to 8 TLU per year. Some men went to other Pokot locations to take part in raids organized there and were able to increase their profits. No. 2 went as far as Uganda and raided Karimojong. An active raider may gain 24 TLU in three years which would enable him to pay the first rate of a bride-price even if he presents some loot to his brothers or to friends.

3.2 The career of a successful raider

Killing an enemy adds to the personal prestige of a warrior. Additionally successful raiders adopt a new role in their society. After a chain of purification ceremonies they

act as ritual healers, *kolin*, for pregnant women and small children and there seem to be few pregnancies where no *kolin* is consulted. The *kolin* will be consulted whenever a bad shadow, *rurwö*, has been analysed to be the cause of the disease.

After coming home the slayer is not allowed to enter his homestead. Any contact with his women or his cattle will affect their fertility. Other men, small girls or women beyond the menopause bring food to them – water, meat and porridge. Young women should not even see the slayer as his dangerous shadow, *rurwö*, may affect their fertility. The *kimokat* purification ceremony begins with slaughtering a black goat. Black symbolizes death, mourning and departure. The initiate is smeared all over with the chyme of the goat by a *kolin*. The meat is roasted and only men are entitled to eat of it. The slayer has to stay in hiding until the waxing moon. Then he slaughters a white goat in the *kokwö*. Again he is smeared with the chyme of the goat and frequently his gun is purified the same way. Then the goat's skin is cut into long stripes, *maasa*. By another *kolin* the initiate is washed with different liquids (water, honeybeer, milk, pure honey). The public washing symbolizes stages of purification. Then the *kolin* ties the *maasa* stripes around the initiate's feet, arms and body. The white colour symbolizes peace and reconciliation. The slayer wears the *maasa* stripes for some time to signal his status and later on he wears stripes when going to dances and public celebrations. After the *kimokat* the slayer is allowed to go back to his homestead, to eat everything and to communicate with his women. Still some taboos remain until he has done the *dia* ceremony: (1) He is not allowed to slaughter an animal in a public ceremony; (2) he is not allowed to go for the final marriage ceremony for one of his wives.

Usually the slayer performs his final initiation ceremony some two or three years after he has done *kimokat*. In many respects the initiation of a *kolin* is similar to that of a boy to manhood, *sapana*. Usually two to five men will perform the ceremony together. The evening before the celebration guests, the initiates and the two *kolin* who will guide the initiation meet. Early the next morning the *kolin* smears the initiate with reddish earth and then ties the *maasa* around the initiate's feet, arms and body. Later every initiate kills an ox, a camel or a male goat. Later they are washed again with water, honeybeer, milk and finally smeared with honey. Eventually the master of the ceremony starts exclaiming new names for the initiate. Every clan has a number of honourful names (*kainata punyon*) for men who have killed. The initiate discards his old name and adopts a new identity. He has become *kolin* himself. His new name clearly indicates his new status. The suffixes *-le*, if he has killed a man, or *-moi*, if he has killed a woman, signal the difference with a normal personal name.

It is not only that he enhances his social prestige by becoming a much consulted ritual specialist. He will wear the symbols of his new status in public meetings and dances, scarifications on his shoulders, a reddish ostrich feather in his head-dress and so attract the attention of the public. He will include allusions to his deed in his oxen-songs – and it is frequently the songs of *kolin* which chill the audience. Pokot men agree that *kolin* are cherished by ladies. In many respects men who have killed are ren-

dered prominent in society. Within only two months I counted 31 purification ceremonies around Nginyang and Loruk.⁸

4 Conclusion

For almost two decades the savanna plains of Baringo and Turkana district have been the battle field for Turkana and Pokot raiders. Only since 1984 have government forces been able to ensure peace.

The first section gives a chronology of the conflict and then portrays the structure of Pokot raids. Raids are multifaceted social (almost ceremonial) events. Attacks are well planned. Several weeks in advance a spying expedition will travel far into enemy territory to look for promising targets, i.e. areas where livestock are concentrated. After the spying expedition comes back two or three busy weeks are spent acquiring ammunition and enlisting as many men as possible (especially those who own guns) for the raid. Before the raiding group sets off, all men gather for a week at a campsite. Elders give blessings to ensure the success of the raid. Singing, dancing and speaking "words of *sirumoi*" (rage/ferocity) bring men into an emotional state which is deemed to be indispensable for carrying out a raid successfully.

Soon after the raid the loot is shared. There are no clearcut rules for sharing the booty, besides that men who own guns are allowed to take much more of the booty than those who do not own a gun. Frequently quarrels arise over who is entitled to take which animal.

The next section tries to apply theory on the Pokot/Turkana conflict. Competition for the scarce resource grazing does not explain raiding activities. Raiders do not aim at gaining new territory but only at increasing their livestock. Grazing gets even more scarce through warfare. Large areas have to be evacuated and central areas are badly overgrazed. The resource herd becomes scarce through droughts, livestock epidemics and even more so through the purchase of expensive guns. Though there are few families who own less than the minimal herd unit, the decrease of herdsizes is a hardship because of the high consumption of livestock in social transactions (bride-price, initiation and promotion ceremonies). It is especially young men who think that they are not able to pay bride-prices because too many heads of cattle have been spent on guns. It is them who initiate and carry out raids.

Age-sets are not organised as a military organisation. They lack internal leadership and formal group organisation. Unlike the Maasai, Pokot warriors do not unite in residential units. Only in internal age-group quarreling do age-sets act as corporate groups. The widespread social networks created by age-set organisation are used to mobilise men to participate in raids.

⁸ *dia* ceremonies were frequent in this time period because every man who had killed has to go through his *dia* before he is circumcised. The circumcision was scheduled at the end of November. So many felt pressurized to do this final ritual of purification in September/October.

When describing interethnic conflicts Pokot will frequently refer to the emotional state *sirumoi* (rage/ferocity) to explain their aggressiveness. Not all men are able to enter this emotional state. The ability to do so distinguishes the courageous man from a coward. To show *sirumoi* openly conveys prestige. Men frequently look deliberately for situations where they can show this emotional state – warfare is one such situation.

No single hypothesis can actually explain Turkana/Pokot warfare. Only a model which takes into account variables from the economic, socio-political and cognitive-emotional spheres may come near a causal model. But even when taking variables from different fields there are still gaps in the model. Only a look at the motivation of the individual actor explains the forces exacerbating warfare (cf. Orlove 1980: 246).

Pokot had to pay up to 60 cattle for a gun. Loosing such a large number of livestock means a serious cutback in the household herd. Men are not able to marry as they lack the cattle for bride-prices and other transactions. It is only through raiding and stealing one can gain livestock quickly. The individual actor regards warfare as a way to enrich himself and to compensate for the acquisition of an overprized gun. But the figures on the economics of raiding show that, if at all, only after several years gun owners may make net profits with their gun. Furthermore success in raiding brings prestige to a young man. Especially if he has killed an enemy his status is enhanced. After several purification rituals he is consulted as a healer for small children and pregnant women. In public dances he will thrill the audience when singing about his deeds. Unanimously informants stated that men who killed enemies are favoured by women. Proudly he wears the emblems of his new status: scarifications on his shoulders and red feathers in his headdress.

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