

The Changing Nature of Cattle Rustling and Banditry from the 1970s: A Case of Pastoral Communities of Baringo Lowland, Kenya

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ABSTRACT: *Cattle rustling and banditry among the pastoral communities of Baringo, Kenya has been a problem since the pre-colonial period with an upsurge witnessed from the 1970s. There has been transformation in the type of weapons and tactics employed by the cattle raiders and bandits in the Baringo Lowland. The use of traditional rudimentary weapons has been replaced with modern weapons, which come with precision in taking out their neighbours. The study thus examines the evolution of the weapons used in the Lowland and how the tactics have affected the peaceful residents and made their daily living a nightmare. The study employed in-depth interviews and three Focus Group Discussions in Mukutani, Loruk and Kinyach areas of the Lowland as well as accessing archival information from the Kenya National Archives and Documentation Center in Nairobi and the Kenya National Library Services in Kabarnet to gather data that was later qualitatively analysed. The study adopted exploratory research design. Being a historical study, the design brings out all the internal and external factors that contribute to the advancement of tactics and weapons utilized in the Lowland. The study reveals that; there has been a significant advancement in the weapons used in the Lowland, the existence of solo raids that are accompanied by devastating consequences of death and loss of property by the communities of the Lowland and finally the waning authority of the elders. These were noted as some of the main factors. Thereafter, the study recommends to the need for the Kenya government to check into the porous borders and its contribution to easy availability of guns and ammunitions and to effectively tackle these issues for the betterment of livelihoods of the inhabitants of the Lowland.*

KEYWORDS: *Weapons, Solo raids, Ammunitions, Lowland, Banditry*

I. INTRODUCTION

Cattle rustling and raids among the pastoral communities of the North Rift Region have existed for a long time, Osamba (2001). Baringo Lowland falls in this region and as the Pokot and Tugen communities settled in the area and lived side by side with the Il Chamus who had settled there earlier than them, cattle raids were also witnessed. The communities raided amongst themselves most of the times for replenishing purposes, Oguda (2012). The raids involved meticulous planning; and it was a community initiative. Osamba (2001), concurs with Oguda in that, the elders were consulted and whatever counsel they gave was final. The elders were highly respected and they made the decisions on behalf of the community. It was the role of the elders to guide the youth on how to minimize casualties from their own side in case of retaliation from the community they were raiding. These observations clearly point out to how the pastoralist communities carried out their activities and lived with each other. The researchers did not, however, shed light on how the Pokot, Tugen and Il Chamus elders guided their youth as they planned on raids to replenish their stocks.

Mkutu (2001) avers that from the pre-colonial period to early 1960s, elders had a big say in the community. They commanded great respect and in many instances conducted themselves in a dignified manner expected by the society of elders. Kimaiyo (2016) observes that the elders performed all tasks with the community's interest in mind and heart. Kiptui (2021) also contends that among the Pokot community of Baringo Lowland, *Werkoyoon* was always consulted by the elders before any raid as earlier stated. He was the best advisor to the elders and guider and the elders would pass the information to the chosen warriors to undertake the raids. The selected warriors were blessed by the elders and as Kandagor (2010) notes, they were supposed to be warriors with experience and some very few who were being inducted into the raiding act. The young entrants were important for continuity of the culture as the other experienced warriors exited warrior hood for elders' role but the number was supposed to be regulated to minimize mistakes in raids. New entrants were prone to mistakes thus the numbers were always regulated as Erick Chebet (OI., 14.09.2023) observed.

Admittedly, it was noted that in the periods prior to the 1970s, the communities took part in cattle raids in a very carefully planned manner or systematically as the society was still closely knit together. Oral interviews of a number of participants in the FGDs carried out in Loruk, Kinyach and Makutani point out actually to the communities listening to advice then acting as guided. The raids were far in between and were conducted only when it was so necessary and mattered. The nature of raids changed towards the 1970s and became frequent, unregulated and unguided by the elders. Lomoywara (2018) points out that the 1970s marked a significant change in the nature of organizational skills, weapons used and the drastic change from cattle rustling to banditry in the pastoral communities. His work, however, was on all the communities of North Rift region. The issues he points out were also affecting the Pokot and Tugen communities of the Baringo Lowland as oral interviews of some participants have pointed out in this study. These among others, as indicated by earlier scholars, are the changes that have taken place from the 1970s and have revolutionized the art of cattle rustling to banditry among the communities living in the lowlands of Baringo County.

To sum it up, there have been several studies and literature on the pastoral communities and the nature of cattle rustling and banditry but there is still need to sufficiently address the issue of changing ferocious means of cattle rustling and banditry in depth. These among other emerging issues from the 1970s are what this study embarked on investigating.

II. METHODOLOGY

Being qualitative in nature, this study adopted exploratory research design. This design is relevant to the study because it is able to establish, elaborate and extensively explain the many factors that changed in the styles, tactics and modes of cattle rustling and banditry attacks in the Baringo Lowland from the 1970s onwards. This study was carried out in the area along the shared border of Baringo North, Baringo South and Tiaty sub-counties of Baringo County. This area is primarily occupied by the three pastoral communities of Pokot, Tugen and Il Chamus. This is the area that has been experiencing numerous raids and conflicts from the pre-colonial period with an intensification in the 1970s coming forward and the tactics and weapons used witnessed to advance overtime.

The study employed, in-depth interviews, use of relevant and available literature, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) as data collection methods. The researcher perused relevant archival sources with information on the changing nature of cattle rustling and banditry at the Kenya National Archives and Documentation Center in Nairobi, carried in-depth interviews with some key informants along the border, held FGDs in Kinyach, Mukutani and Loruk areas in the Lowland to cover a representative area of each of the sub-counties occupied by the three pastoral communities and later on checked on written literature from the Kabarnet branch of the Kenya National Library Services for information to corroborate what had been gathered in the field. The field study was carried out between July and September 2023. Each FGD had ten to eleven participants of both gender who were above 18 years of age. There was a proper gender consideration so as to achieve a well-represented population. The age consideration was important so as to achieve a well-informed

group of people who had either witnessed cattle rustling and banditry or even partaken in the raids or at some point have been affected by the raids so as to get a factual representation of the changing nature of the tactics and weapons used in the conflicts. This is all in quest to get real and factual insider information on the intricacies of the weapons and tactics used in the lowland from the pre-colonial period to the contemporary times.

A research assistant with a historical bias was used to gather notes and recordings as the researcher moderated the sessions. In-depth interviews and FGDs were tape recorded with the verbal consent of the participants. At the end, the data collected from both the primary and secondary sources were qualitatively analysed. This is simply because the inquiry was historical in nature and yielded most of the data in qualitative nature. All the recorded interviews were transcribed immediately after the field interviews.

Data was organized based on each question in the case of in-depth interviews. The analysis was conducted by organizing data in common sub-themes and sub-categories. This enabled the researcher to focus on one issue at a time and then proceed to the next sub-theme systematically. After the data analysis, results and discussions were arranged in accordance with the research themes and then a conclusion and recommendations made based on the analysed data on the changing nature of cattle rustling and banditry in the Lowland.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Advancing Weapons

Spencer (1998) postulates that before colonialism, the pastoral communities in the North Rift of Kenya just like all the other communities in Africa, were armed with traditional rudimentary weapons. Among the Kalenjin and Pokot, these weapons were a necessity as they protected them and their livestock against external aggression from their neighbours and maybe wandering herders and wild animals. In the Lowland, these rudimentary weapons included; (*Kotiek*) arrows, (*Kuyangwek*) bows, (*Ng'otwek*) spears, (*Kanyasang*) clubs and (*Long'e*) shield (Kipkulei, 1972). There were specific places to acquire these weapons and at a good fee for the warriors to be armed all along.

The rudimentary weapons were made from iron. The shafts of the weapons were made from iron while the handles were made of wood. These were made by some few individuals with wood making skills in the communities (Kandagor, 2010). According to informants in an FGD conducted at Loruk, iron smelting in the lowland among the Tugen community was practised by a specific clan based in Marigat. The *Mooi* clan was known to have the best blacksmiths. These individuals were skilled in both iron-making and iron-working. The clansmen would work on the iron-ore (*Ngoriemik*) and do intensive work on it and at the end come up with workable iron that could now be converted into weapon shafts for the Tugen (RutoHaron, OI., 07.09.2023). To the community, this was a special responsibility placed upon the clan and they satisfied their need; and to a large extent the other neighbouring communities who would frequent the area to purchase iron implements from the clan. This is corroborated by archival information from an annual report of 1959 on trade in the Tugen community:

Blacksmiths (*Kitong'ik*) from the *Mooi*clan among the Kamasia (Tugen) community sell their iron wares in markets that are once in a while. These markets are in Koriema, Maoi, Lobo and Marigat. They pay cess to the government. But one can access the iron implements from their homes around Arabal if needed in a short notice...KNA/DC/BAR/59/1/3.

This information is proof on how the communities in the lowland valued their weapons and would go a long way to acquire the main component of the weapon; iron. Samuel Kamuren (OI., 10.09.2023) who is the assistant chief of Loruk confirms that the people of his area, as he grew up, used to converse about taking long journeys to Maoi and Koriema to purchase the iron they would use to make arrows. He further elaborates that owning the traditional weapons was not illegal and up until the time of the interview, he points out that many of

his subjects own several bows and arrows. To the community, a man is considered useless if he does not know how to use a bow and arrows or do not own any in the family (Chesikaw, 2019).

It is however, noted from a number of informants that with time, these traditional weapons have been phased out and advanced weapons introduced in the community. The spear, shields and bows are no longer regarded as a necessity in the Pokot and Tugen community as it was in the past, as Simeon Chumar (OI., 20.08.2023) attested. He further clarifies that these weapons have been turned into ceremonial regalia which are only displayed in traditional and cultural ceremonies. They have been converted into tools of showcasing the traditions of the Pokot and Tugen in the past. According to an FGD in Kinyach, one will rarely see a shield and very few individuals among the community own these shields. They are of no much value in the community as interests have shifted to new and powerful weapons. The accuracy and dependability of the traditional rudimentary weapons is low; and the pastoral communities in the valley have not been left behind in their quest to acquire modern weapons. This is according to an FGD conducted in Mukutani. They have upgraded to small and portable guns which are now available in the valley in large numbers. AK 47 and G3 rifles were introduced to the Pokot and this has revolutionized the idea of cultural cattle raiding to cattle banditry with deaths reported in high numbers than was the case in the past (Lomoywara, 2018).

In addition, Mkutu (2001) notes that the war in Sudan has mainly been waged by use of small arms, although the government of Sudan sometimes used more powerful and conventional weapons. This is a clear indicator to the proliferation of the light weapons used in the Baringo Lowland by the Pokot against their neighbours; the Tugen and sometimes the Il Chamus. He also asserts that the civil war in Sudan involved the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) that fought against the government of Sudan for over twenty years. This war for independence of South Sudan from the main Sudan country ended on 19th July 2011 when South Sudanese voted in a referendum to secede from Sudan. The SPLA fighters received arms, both from internal sources (by capturing government weapons) and externally (from Ethiopia during Haile Mengistu's regime and from Uganda) (Mkutu, 2003). With such dependable sources of weapons and ammunitions, the Sudan war continued for many years and the populace suffered. Mkutu (2003) further notes that the Sudan war worsened and went on for two continuous decades displacing more than four (4) million people. These displaced Sudanese have found refuge in the neighbouring countries, including Kenya. This resulted to infiltration of guns and other small arms to the pastoralist communities; sparking banditry.

In another twist, Mkutu (2001) notes that it is women who are involved in the trading of guns; and especially ammunitions, which are carried out independently of the guns. The sale of guns is different from that of ammunitions as there is constant need for ammunitions after the guns have been acquired. Moreover, specific types of guns require a specific variety of ammunitions. It was observed in FGD in Loruk that the bullets that are in high demand are those for AK 47 and G3 and not all factories produce these bullets in Kenya. Robert Kakuko (OI., 14.09.2023) asserts that acquiring the bullets is far much easier than getting the gun as the sellers are more discreet and fear being apprehended. He further observes that not all those who seek to own guns are successful. The local owners do not disclose where they got the guns and how one can acquire them. They take time studying the intentions of the supposed buyer before revealing where to acquire the most sought after commodity.

Furthermore, Mkutu asserts that guns like AK 47 and G3 can be easily disassembled and camouflaged in donkeys and camels then transported for long distances. It was also noted from FGDs conducted in Kinyach, Makutani and Loruk that arms can be stitched into goat carcasses and transported to far-flung areas like Marigat in Baringo Lowland from the borders of Pokot and Turkana. There is also evidence that the arms trade can be done across the border without discrimination of which community one came from. For instance, a Pokot illicit trader would sell guns and ammunitions to a Tugen as long as they get their pay for the goods delivered and vice versa. The transportation of guns and ammunitions via goat carcasses was so common in the 1970s through to the 1980s before the security forces discovered and thwarted it (Kandagor, 2010).

Kimaiyo (2016) affirms that in the Marakwet community, women were involved in the transportation of arms and they also acted as secret spies. His argument is corroborated by Wilson Lokobwa (OI., 25.08.2023) the Chief of Kinyach location who pointed out that:

It is easy to carry bullets in food gunny bags, milk gourds and jerricans (chemurot) or water jugs which the women in Pokot land use. They at times supply these ammunitions across the border and the anti-stock theft officers do not suspect them of carrying anything illegal. Men can be frisked any moment but women always leave undetected. There are several road blocks mounted along the main roads but these women mostly use shortcuts and pretend to be looking for food for their starving children back home.

Although women were not involved in the blessing ceremonies conducted by the elders before a raid, they understood their role very well; transporting ammunitions and spying for their warriors so that they not only actualize their raids but also do so with precision.

In most of the FGDs conducted in Loruk and Kinyach, the main cause of banditry in the Baringo Lowland and which came up so fast in the 1970s is the proliferation of small arms from the neighbouring countries and which were sold in large numbers. RiboRikosi (OI., 23.09.23) attests to the fact that the substitution of advanced weapons for the rudimentary ones has resulted in the youth becoming more lethal, hence the frequent killings than in the past. It is also worth noting that the pocket friendly price of the small arms is the precursor to their proliferation and availability. For instance, Mkutu (2001) affirms that an AK 47 gun is so popular in Pokot area as a bottle of soda-coca cola, so to speak. Samson Krop (OI., 23.08.2023) further indicates that an AK 47 gun is always available at between fifteen thousand (15,000) and twenty thousand (20,000/=) Kenya shillings while the G3 gun is more priced at between forty thousand (40,000/=) and sixty thousand (60,000/=) Kenya shillings. The prices vary as per the demand and supply but its evolution was witnessed to a great way in the 1970s coming forward. This means that it is always available and seen around the centres where warriors meet. They no longer hide the guns as owning them seems to be the norm.

The instability which occasioned the 1970s led to the commercialization of small arms among the pastoralist communities. Initially, these guns were acquired for personal protection and protection of their animals as pointed out in the oral interviews conducted in this study. However, these weapons have been transformed to tools for cattle raids and banditry. Mkutu avers that:

In the 1970s at some point across the border in Karamoja, guns were sold in open markets and exchanged with foodstuffs. The guns and ammunitions were a common commodity in the market just like maize and millet.

The commercialization of these small arms increased the number of illicit weapons in civilian hands; and the Pokot of Baringo who is kith and kin with the Karamoja of Uganda acquired the precious commodity in large quantities during that time.

Moreover, the increased supply of the guns in the country led to the reduction in price of the precious commodity (Kimaiyo, 2016). Kasatem Benjamin (OI., 13.09.2023) observes that before 1979 for example, the price of a G3 gun through barter trade was up to between seventy (70) to one hundred and fifty (150) cows. Cash money was prohibited to the common herder and only the rich among them could afford. The youthful population was left out since they did not own large herds of cattle and hence could not afford the guns. The 1979 Moroto Barracks attack in Uganda in which guns were stolen en masse, led to a drastic reduction in price of guns (Mkutu, 2001). He further observes that the availability of the stolen guns made its acquisition a bit relaxed and cheaper for the common, local herder. He claims that the price dropped to twenty (20) or thirty (30) cows and at some point ten (10) cows for a good AK 47. By 2001, the price had drastically reduced to between five (5) to ten (10) cows. It is also noted that the shift from barter trade to cash transactions for guns also

reduced the price to a manageable price for the pastoralists. In the past, before the 1970s, guns were valued in terms of cattle but this has since changed and its price based on cash hence the ease in transaction and value addition.

The influx of guns and ammunitions into the Baringo Lowland (which is part of the North Rift Region) and which has many cases of deadly cattle raids has been noted by Mkutu (2001). It is summarized in a flow route as follows:

Somalia—>Dadaab—>Garissa—> Nairobi.

Somalia—>Mandera—>Wajir—>Isiolo—> Nairobi.

Somalia—> El Wak—>Wajir—>Isiolo.

Sudan—>Lokichogio—>Kakuma—>Lorengipi or Loya in Turkana.

Uganda (Upe)—> West Pokot—> Eldoret.

Ethiopia—>Moyale—>Marsabit—> Samburu.

This has been corroborated by information obtained from the FGDs, as some of the well documented routes that flourished in the 1970s coming forward. These illicit weapons enter the country through the porous borders and make their way to the Baringo Lowlands among other conflict prone zones. It is also observed that once these weapons enter the country, it is far much easier to conceal and transport them to the bandits who use them for raids.

KHRC Report (2010) indicates that in the 1970s, the Kenyan state recruited and armed Kenya Police Reservists (KPR) at all the border districts to protect communities against constant raids. The Pokot community at that time also amassed guns as their youth were also recruited into the KPR and supplied them with ammunitions from the government. The KPR from Pokot took advantage of the immunity offered to the KPR youth and instructed them to stockpile arms for them from the government. This went on for some years and the government did not act fast enough according to Chepsongol Reuben (OI., 13.09.2023) and by the time they abolished KPR, the Pokot were well armed and ready to even attempt to take on the government security officers. Lomoywara (2016) observes that the KPR were put in place by President Jomo Kenyatta to act as possible reserve force for Kenya against Uganda. The then Ugandan President Idi Amin had established a military base in Soroti area of Uganda border and this worried President Kenyatta that Uganda would be planning to use it to attack Kenya. President Jomo Kenyatta ensured that KPR were armed and ready to combat the Amin's army anytime they tried mischief. These arms infiltrated to the pastoralist communities who used it to attack their neighbours; after the ouster of Idi Amin.

Mkutu (2010) notes that after the ouster of Idi Amin in 1979, Soroti Barracks which was the mainstay of his guns and ammunitions was also run down. The barracks was left unattended due to lack of proper command after the ouster of Amin. The Pokot of Uganda were among the first people to ransack it and took off with as much arms they could carry. It is estimated that the Soroti Barracks in Moroto stored approximately fifteen thousand (15,000) guns and two million (2,000,000) rounds of ammunition at any time when fully equipped (Mkutu, 2010). Many scholars concur with Mkutu that this was the main reason for the proliferation of small arms in the North Rift. He further asserts that the Soroti Barracks was a gold mine for the herders and a blessing in disguise for them as President Amin was a disaster in waiting to just end any time and his ouster came as the herders had predicted in their calculations. The mistake of Uganda having such a large consignment unmanned for some time made it possible for the Pokot to acquire the precious tool which complemented their raids. This was the main cause of the heightened raids in the 1970s onwards.

Furthermore, RiboRikosi (OI., 23.09.2023) indicates that the Pokot usually attacked the Tugen, the Marakwet and to a great extent the Turkana since they had large herds of cattle and chances of coming back

successful from raiding them were high. He observes that with a guaranteed availability of ammunitions after the Soroti attack, the attacks now focused even on the smaller ethnic communities like the Il Chamus. The Pokot were now emboldened and could use bullets without care as was the case in the past when the resource was scarce. This time, they were assured of availability of the bullets in large quantities. He asserts that:

Immediately after a successful raid, the youth who had rented guns for the raids are now able to use the raided cattle to purchase their own guns. Guns (*Kitioli*) is a symbol of wealth in the society and every family own one or two bought by their sons and come in handy when they want to conduct a raid. Having about five (5) guns in a small group of warriors will be enough to get a substantial amount of cattle from the Tugen or Il Chamus across the border.

The five gun holders attack a group of herders from different directions on an ambush, they shoot indiscriminately and the surprised herders will be confused thinking the raiders are so many. The other warriors from Pokot now armed with bows, arrows and walking sticks drive the cattle. They move towards the Pokot land while the other gun holder group retreat after shooting several times. This attack takes some few minutes but at times can take longer based on the resistance of the raided community.

The given narration by an oral informant is how the Pokot usually attack their neighbours. In most cases, the raided communities are left with a trail of livestock losses and maybe loss of lives of the herders. Since the 1970s, the neighbours have been engaged in counter attacks in retaliation to these raids. They find themselves fighting back after raids since they stare at artificial poverty after being raided. It is noted that the raided cattle, which are mostly taken to the interior parts of Tiaty (an area inhabited by the Pokot) are then divided among the warriors. Some of the warriors sell the cattle to business people to enable them buy guns while some who had not paid bride price take the opportunity to marry using the raided cattle. The availability of guns in large numbers from the 1970s onwards sparked an element of aggression among the youth and drove them in full attack mode for them to acquire the new status of being gun holders and be valued members in the community.

Solo Raids

Livestock raids among the pastoral communities in the past were planned, directed and executed by the warriors only after the community elders had assented to it (Osamba, 2001). Among the Pokot, the warriors who were known as *Ngorokowere* taken to seclusion before a raid was undertaken (Kiptui, 2021). This means the execution of a raid against a neighbouring community was not an impulsive activity but took some time before it was executed. Raids were far apart because of the details that were involved before the actual activity took place. Kiptui (2021) further notes that among the Pokot community, before a raid, they consulted a *Workoyoon* (Seer), while the Il Chamus took time to visit their *Oloibon* (leader) and the Tugen had a council of elders whom they also sought guidance from before a raid. The Tugen as observed by Kandagor (2010) did not have a central leader but depended on elders from some areas to control the youth and the elders were respected as leaders of the age sets.

Solo raids are those attacks which are undertaken by one or two warriors in a random way without consulting the elders. Kipkoech Yusuf (OI., 20.09. 2023) makes an observation that since the 1980s, some of the youth acquired guns and took it upon themselves to organize and execute raids. They bypassed the elders and used the gun power to launch attacks on neighbouring communities. Furthermore, LengiyaKirimaticho (OI., 20.09.2023) concurs with Yusuf and adds that the youth view the elders as out dated and undertake their solo raids unabated. Pkalya Dominic (OI., 23.09.2023) avers that from the 1970s, the rustlers no longer seek the blessings of their elders before raiding a neighbouring ethnic group or community. These modern-day militia and bandits have completely abandoned the established traditional command and control hierarchies.

Kimaiyo (2016) discloses that the Marakwet elders from the 1970s were coerced by the government to change their way of doing things. The elders were besieged to shun away from blessing the youth so as to participate in cattle raids. This was one of the main reasons why the youth decided to undertake the raids alone without consulting the elders. According to Kipkorir (2009), the youth were emboldened in their resolve to raid without any blessings. Gideon Lenyanet (OI., 23.08.2023), a reformed warrior from Tirioko in Tiaty concurs with both Kimaiyo and Kipkorir on the elders being coerced to avoid blessing the youth. He contends that he decided to use his gun and recruited four (4) other youths to help him in his cattle raids. The warriors of his age group had been dissociated from engaging in the raids by the elders and authorities; so he decided to form a small team for his escapades.

Moreover, Lenyanet confesses that the resolve by his elders to heed the government's call of not blessing the youth before a raid made some of the warriors to seek the blessings in secret. He claims that from the 1970s, it became a difficult task getting the guidance of elders on how to attack and get away with it successfully. He further states that he spied on his neighbours alone, gathering intelligence on when they were not so many herders with the cattle and that is the time he would attack with his team of four and drive the cattle deep into Pokotland. He affirms that he would take some months studying their movements and strike when least expected. The informant confesses to having undertaken more than five solo raids with his small team without involvement of the elders and community as was in the past. The last raid he undertook was disastrous and made him abandon raiding completely. He lost three (3) of his team and remained with only one during that botched raid.

The reformed *Ngorokonotes* that he was ambushed by Anti Stock Theft Unit officers in Rugus area in Pokot. He still has a bullet lodged in his spine from the ambush. He avers that it was only by the grace of God that the two survived the ambush as they were overpowered by the well trained officers. He lost all the cattle that he had raided, as well as his team members and all the three (3) guns they had which were loaded. Lenyanet further points out that almost all his age mates who participated in solo raids have lost their lives in the field. Nevertheless, to the community, they are considered as heroes who died in the battle field trying to make a living and bringing honour to their community. Henry Bartoo (OI., 10.09.2023), a banker from Koroto agrees with Lenyanet in that many of the Pokot warriors believe that if one dies in the raids, they are blessed and will never be forgotten by their kin and neighbours.

Admittedly, it was rare to kill women and children but they would maybe kill those warriors who resisted the raiders. Most of the times, the warriors would not kill unless provoked. KipronoChebon (OI, 26.08.2023) who is the Chief of Mukutani recalls the times when one was spared by raiders:

Among the Pokot and Tugen, wherever there was a raid in the area, either the attack came from the Pokot or Tugen. There were circumstances when the men were not killed. It was always the norm not to kill women and children since they were harmless. As for the men, there were cases when the warriors would just leave them alone or capture them as prisoners of raid. If a man ran so fast, dropped his weapons and climbed a tree, it was considered a surrender and the warriors pursuing him/them would not shoot or kill him/them but capture him/them. It was considered a total surrender just like when one puts down all weapons they had and raises his hands up.

The chief explains that this was the norm and it was observed by all the communities in the Lowland. However, this changed in the 1970s because of the proliferation of small arms. With the availability of guns, warriors began their solo raids and it became hard to differentiate between a genuine surrendering warrior and one who has some small company; luring the defending community into an ambush. The security officers involved in operations against banditry also began killing all the suspected raiders since it became hard to distinguish a surrendering one and one who was still in battle.

The cases of warriors taking action in their own hands without the blessings of the elders increased further after the 1970s. Solomon Kimengich (OI., 12.09.2023) points out that after his brother was killed by bandits from Pokot while herding his cattle, he became so enraged that he decided to take matters into his own hands. He began to engage in solo combat so as to avenge the death of his brother as he states:

The brother I depended on was killed. I was so bitter. My two remaining elder brothers taught me how to shoot and service a gun. We would practise how to shoot at night. I went to the bush and stayed for two days. My mum went to tell people I had gotten lost. My dad had died before I was mature enough. Also, killed by the raiders from Pokot. I had a gun and would tell all those who came to me not to dare.

This is one of the cases which points out to the environmental drivers which push warriors into raiding- those which push one to pick a matter and decide to take the enemies head on without the assistance of their neighbours or even relatives. The mother of Solomon as observed; was not even aware of the whereabouts of the youth and his intentions. Despite being the youngest, he had the resolve to avenge the death of his brother. To the warrior, it was easy and fast to execute a solo raid than acting as a whole community.

It is thus noted that some of the solo raids were motivated by revenge after one lost their kin to the neighbouring community warriors and would not wait for the whole community to plan and raid the aggressors. The reformed warriors paint a picture of bitterness and instant revenge to payback what they deemed to have lost to their competitors. The solo raids were spontaneous and with varying objectives unlike in the past (before the 1970s) when replenishing was the main reason for the raids.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Cattle rustling was practised in the past among the communities of the Lowland of Baringo. The cattle raids were aimed at only replenishing their diminishing stocks after a natural calamity or in some cases getting livestock for dowry payment. The cattle rustling advanced to be banditry. Banditry is the act of forcefully taking livestock from communities and it involves meticulous planning and use of lethal weapons. In the past, the communities in Baringo Lowland would use rudimentary weapons in their cattle raids episodes. The advancement to banditry also came with advancement in weapons used. The Soroti Barracks episode in 1979 opened room for the advancement of weapons in the hands of pastoral warriors.

The changing tactics and advancing weapons in the pastoral communities is thus dealt with in this study and explanations on how the weapons changed overtime. There was also introduction of solo raids in the business as from the 1980s as cattle rustling changed to banditry in the area. The easy access to guns and ammunitions led to solo raids by individuals who also began disregarding the advice and counsel of the community elders hence the waning authority of the elders in the community. The study thus sought to study the advancing weapons, the solo raids occasioned and the loss of authority of the elders in the Baringo Lowland.

Therefore, there is need for the government of Kenya to look into the issue of Kenya's porous borders and the contribution it has on advancing the banditry issues in the Lowland. Policies should be put in place to ensure that elders' advices are heeded and the banditry menace in the Lowland is checked.

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