

The Origin and Causes of Cattle Rustling and Banditry in Baringo Lowland, Kenya

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Abstract

Cattle rustling and banditry among pastoral communities in Kenya have been on the upsurge since the colonial period and there has been a significant rise in reported cases of cattle rustling and banditry attacks with devastating results among communities of Baringo Lowland of Baringo County in Kenya. Due to the loss of lives and disruption of economies of the pastoral communities in the area, the study examined the various historical socio-economic causes of the bandit economy in the zone. The study was guided by Human Needs Theory and it adopted exploratory research design. The study employed in-depth interviews with elders, youths and organized focus group discussions in Loruk, Mukutani and Kinyach areas of the lowland which is the theatre of constant attack and counter attacks by the Pokot, Tugen and Il Chamus communities. The oral evidence complements archival and documented evidence. The data was qualitatively analysed. The study reveals the socio-economic factors contributed to the cattle rustling and banditry in the lowland from 1900. They include: Kipnyigeu/ Kipnukie Era- 1904-1917; lack of proper government structures and presence; The central place of livestock in the pastoral communities and droughts, diseases and internal disagreements. These were noted as the main factors that have continued to fuel cattle rustling and banditry. The study recommends a paradigm shift in social economic culturalisation and governance which will involve County government of Baringo, National government entities, Non-Governmental Organizations and other development partners to focus on engaging the local communities and creating alternative sources of livelihoods that will combat the banditry menace.

Keywords: Cattle rustling, Kipnukie, banditry, lowland, drought

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Introduction

Baringo Lowland is found in Baringo County in Kenya. The area has been inhabited by three communities namely: Tugen, Pokot and Il Chamus since 1900 (Anderson, 2006). These communities were primarily pastoralists in nature, Kandagor (2010). The Tugen came from the Hills of Kamasia and the Pokot from the Tiati Hills and settled in the Lowland with their livestock as noted by Anderson (2006). They found the Lowland conducive for their settlement and herding of their livestock as compared to the hills which had become bare (Kipkulei, 1972).

Anderson further observes that, it is the youth that came to the lowland. They left behind the elderly and children in the hills (*Kurget*). Upon settling in the lowland, the Pokot and Tugen found the Il Chamus living around the shores of Lake Baringo. Il Chamus had already settled in the area, kept a small herd of livestock and primarily practiced small scale irrigation and fishing for subsistence (Kandagor (2010).

The Tugen youth were the livestock caretakers on behalf of their parents who apparently were aged and could not accompany them to the lowland, Kandagor (2010). The parents of these youth were of *Kipnyigeu* age set while the youth belonged to *Nyongi* age set, Anderson (2006). This is corroborated by Benjamin Chepsergon (OI, 14.09.2023) who avers that:

Nyongi age set men who were the children of Kipnyigeu were the first youth to settle in the valley/lowlands of Baringo. The area was so bushy and had tall

grass which livestock were assured of constant pasture supply. This valley now marks the border of Pokot, Tugen and Il Chamus communities. They built scattered houses (Manyatta) and settled in with their wives.

These youths established their cattle, sheep and goat bomas in the lowland although they were scattered as they curved their designated pasture area. The lowland was initially used by Maasai pastoralists who were nomadic in nature and did not settle in one place, Kiptui (2021) observes. He furthermore avers that; the Maasai utilized the lowland as their reserve pastureland and mostly grazed their cattle in the highlands. This explains why the Tugen and Pokot youth found such a favourable area for livestock keeping unoccupied when they settled.

Upon settlement in the lowland, the Tugen and Pokot youth were inducted into some cultures by the few remaining Maasai and they also influenced them, Kandagor (2010). The Il Chamus who had earlier settled in the shores of Lake Baringo were slowly inculcated into small scale cattle keeping although their primary means of subsistence was fishing and small-scale irrigation. The idea of taking milk mixed with blood according to Kipkorir (2009) was introduced to the Il Chamus by the Maasai herders. The Pokot and Tugen youth occupied the lowland in large numbers and most of the Maasai did not come back with their cattle and those few that remained were assimilated and absorbed into the Tugen and Pokot as well

as Il Chamus communities as some informants elaborated.

According to Hennings (1956), the Tugen community was so secretive when it came to matters initiation. During initiation, the youthful men were circumcised, allowed to share a secluded place for about six months and their peers who had been initiated just before them tasked with the role of taking care of them, Chesikaw (2019). Once they were well healed, the elders of the community took over the advising role and elaborating on the community expectations of the youth. Kimaiyo (2016) points out that, the elders who had only proven themselves worth in the community by advancing successful raids in their youthful years were allowed to advise the upcoming warriors, while anyone who had tried and failed in a raid was chased away from the seclusion area and scorned upon by the other elders. Among the Pokot, *Sapana* initiation was undertaken and the youth with the blessings of known elders and medicine men were advised too in the process, Kiptui (2021).

The initiated warriors were then tasked with protecting the community against external attacks by their neighbours and wild animals, Osamba (2001). Initiation marked the point of entry into warrior-hood among the pastoralists as Osamba further observes. The youth were now depended upon by the entire community for protection. Thus, tactics of war were taught in the seclusion camps, Kimaiyo (2016).

Being pastoral in nature, the communities in the lowland of Baringo valued livestock so much. Kipkulei (1972) avers that, the Pokot, Il Chamus and Tugen communities loved their animals next to nothing. The Tugen had a term "*Teno Mureen Tukwaach*" which translates to "Men are valued and equated to the number of their cattle". This means that,

the more cattle a man had, the more he was valued and loved in the community. His opinion was worth the number of livestock he owned. The vice versa is also true. This phrase also elaborates more on why the communities had a special attachment to their livestock.

It's worth noting that these communities lived side by side in the lowland and shared the pasture and water which was abundant in the area where they lived peacefully for some years, Anderson (2006). The peaceful coexistence is elaborated in the intermarriages that occurred and the trading activities that have been documented to have existed across the borders of the communities, Chesikaw (2019). There were few cases of intercommunity conflicts that happened. Cattle raids were very few and far in between, Kiptui (2021). Those that took place were exclusively for replenishing stocks after devastating droughts like *Kiplel Kowo* that afflicted the Tugen in 1920s.

As the communities increased in population in the lowland, resources were diminishing and conflicts were on the upsurge, Kiptui (2021). Elders began using indigenous methods of conflict resolution to solve the issues that arose, Osamba (2001). These methods were so effective and the youth stuck to the directions of their elders. The elders were also objective and without bias as they solved issues. At the end, both parties were issued with justice and agreed upon to stick to the instructions. In the case of Pokot community, if one Pokot killed another Pokot in a raid, the elders issued *Laapai* which is a clan punishment. The whole clan was fined heavily for the mistake of its warriors, Kipkulei (1972). Such form of collective punishment ensured that each clan member was so observant never to bring such a punishment to its members and acts of carelessness were avoided.

Admittedly in the past, raids happened and it was a taboo to kill women and children (Kandagor, 2010; Anderson, 2006). They were considered harmless and helpless. But with time the raiders were emboldened and appeared to use scorched earth tactic which involves wiping out everything. What could be the causes and reasons for the upsurge in raids and the occurring deaths? In a nutshell, there have been several literatures on the pastoral communities but there is need to sufficiently address the issue of the causes of the constant banditry attacks in depth and the economy that comes with it. These among other emerging issues are what this study aimed at investigating.

Methodology

The study adopted exploratory research design which is qualitative in nature. This exploratory design is relevant to the study because it is able to investigate, establish and explain the causes of banditry in the past and elaborate on the bandit economy in the lowland of Baringo. The unit of study was the border area of Baringo North, South and Tiaty Sub Counties which the three communities of the lowland share and have been source of constant conflicts. The study used available relevant literature, in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions as data collection methods. The study was undertaken between July and September 2023 in the lowland of Baringo. To begin with, the researcher perused through relevant resources with information on the bandit economy at the Kenya National Archives and Documentation center in Nairobi, then held FGDs in Kolowa, Mukutani and Loruk areas in the Baringo lowland to cover a representative area of each of the sub-counties occupied by the three communities. Each FGD had nine to eleven participants purposively selected by the

researcher. The members were above 18 years and both genders were considered so as to achieve a well-represented population. The age consideration was important so as to get a well-informed group of people who had either experienced banditry or had participated in the banditry in the past or have some experience on how the act of banditry is undertaken. This is in quest to get the real insider information on how the three communities were either affected by these bandits or had been affected by them in the past.

Moreover, in-depth interviews with the help of questionnaires and interview schedules with twenty purposively selected persons to crosscheck information obtained in FGDs were undertaken. The in-depth interviewees were: Chiefs (Six), Village Elders (Six), Members of County Assembly of Baringo (Two) and Reformed Youthful Warriors (Four). 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 analysed qualitatively. Being a historical inquiry, most of the data collected was qualitative in nature hence the method used. All the recorded interviews were transcribed immediately after the 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. The data then became a source of interpretation of the historical socio-economic causes of

the bandit economy in Baringo Lowland study area. 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.

Results and Discussion

Kipnyigeu/ Kipnukie Era - 1904-1917

According to Kandagor (2010), the Tugen community have a cyclic age set system which they usually name their generations after initiation. The community also identifies periods and events according to the age set that was in power at a given time. They also identify the events based on the age set that was circumcised around that time. The Tugen and Pokot communities held their circumcision ceremonies after some years (Kimaiyo, 2016). They had the habit of holding initiation ceremonies after some years so as to have sufficient numbers of youth circumcised and secluded for lessons after some years. Once they were done with the initiation ceremony and ready to be released to join the warrior groups, the numbers would be sufficient to defend the community (Chesikaw, 2019).

Kipnyigeu era is the period when the Uasin Gishu Maasai were completely assimilated or moved out of the Tugen Lowland. This claim was supported by Wilson Korombori (OI, 17.08.2023). He corroborates what Anderson (2006) had noted about the Maasai in the Lowland. Kipnyigeu was the age set in leadership as the Tugen youth fully occupied the area. Korombori observes that his late grandfather was of Kipnyigeu age set and would always pride himself of assimilating the Maasai and chasing some from the Lowland. He avers that the grandfather would always sing songs sung by his age mates as they formally settled in the

Lowland as the occupants of a new fertile land. Korombori observes that, Kipnyigeu age set were the first group to fully settle in the lowland and married their wives and sired their children in the Lowland. The song which Korombori noted that was always sang by his grandfather is as follows:

*Oh Kimnyigeu chebo koro x2
weeeee Kipnyigeu chekiboru
korox2*

*Nenyooo longeeet Kipnyigeux2
eeei kikiborunen Maasaek.*

*(Oh Kimnyigeu which the area
belongs to X2*

*weeee Kipnyigeu who grabbed this
land X2*

*The shield of leadership belongs to
us Kipnyigeu X2. We grabbed it
from the Maasai*

The song elaborates on how the land belongs to *Kipnyigieu* who grabbed it for themselves. It also points out to the fact that the shield was theirs to mean leadership positions at that era belonged to them.

Initially, when the young Tugen and Pokot youth settled in the lowland with their livestock herds, there was abundant rains and grass for their herds. Grazing fields were rich with grass and salt licks available within the Lowland. Kiptui (2021) observes that the Tugen youth had an abundance of milk and meat during the Kipyigeu era and did not even look for cereals as they were well off with animal products. *Kipyigeu* is a Kalenjin term that is translated to mean being in abundance in the lowland. So, the age set got its name from the abundant nature they had occupied the lowland and the richness of the valley was also signified by the name. Kiptui further observes that, the parents of Kipnyigeu were the real owners of the cattle that the youth were herding in the Lowland but did not travel with them to

the pastureland. The Tugen community had a grazing pattern amongst them that it had a series of steps from one grazing field and source of water to the other. They did not wait until pasture and water was depleted completely in a grazing point. They would send scouting youth to look for better pasture early enough to avoid a disaster of losing all their livestock due to lack of pasture and water.

Kipkulei (1972) elaborates that since the Tugen lived in the hills most of their lives, the Kipnyigeu age set was the first group to descend the hills and settle in the Lowland against the wishes of their fathers. It was always during the dry seasons that the Tugen community moved their cattle and subdivided them so as to ease the hills off the pressure of overgrazing. One or two milk cows were left in the main homes in the hills where the elders and young I children were left behind. The one milking cow left behind was to ensure a steady supply of milk for the ones who remained around the homestead. Goats and sheep were also left behind in the hills as the warriors went downhill to cater for the needs of the larger herds of cattle. Wilson Korombori (OI, 17.08.2023) notes that, even when the warriors went to herd the cattle in the Lowlands as was the case of his grandfather; several warriors were left behind to guard the homesteads in the hill. The goats and sheep left in the highland acted as safe reserve incase the main herd in the lowland was raided or almost cleared by a drought. It was surplus reservoir that acted in times of difficulty.

It is observed that as the Kipnyigeu era was taking place in the Tugen part of the Lowland, the Il Chamus community had settled well in the area around the shores of Lake Baringo (Odhiambo, 2016). Il Chamus were initially known for their fishing abilities and navigating the lake and this enabled them

to sustain their increasing population. They kept small herds of cattle as compared to the Pokot and Tugen communities and focused on fishing more. The Il Chamus were not a threat to the other communities in matters water and pasture as they did not keep large herds. They also practiced irrigation along the shores of Lake Baringo and this enabled them to sustain their increasing population. In 1920, there was abundance of rains in the Tugen Hills and it caused floods in the Il Chamus lowland. The irrigation system which was in place was swept away by the floods observes Anderson (2006). This was devastating for the community which had relied so much on irrigation farming and fishing to sustain their masses.

The numbers of the Il Chamus as noted by the British collector Hyde-Baker had significantly risen just like the Tugen in the Lowland. So, with the floods destroying their farms, the community was left impoverished and had to look for alternative means of earning a living. The Il Chamus warriors then had the duty of sustaining the large population of young and old people in the Lowland. The elders are reported to have advised the youth to now turn back to increasing herd size of their cattle since irrigation farming was not sustainable any longer. The Il Chamus who were used to irrigation and had earlier not been reported to have raided their neighbours the Tugen and Pokot now turned on the Pokot. Anderson (2006) observes that this was the first time the Il Chamus were recorded to have raided their neighbours the Pokot for sustainability.

The Pokot also migrated from the Churo Hills, Paka Hills and the neighbouring Chemalingot area to the Lowlands of Nginyang', Mukutani, Loruk, Rugus and Kinyach areas during the Kipnyigeu era as noted by Kipkulei (1972).

The Pokot warriors sought refuge in the Lowlands bordering the Tugen and Il Chamus communities as there was plenty of water and pasture and the population was still very low in the border. Just like the case for Tugen, the Pokot left behind their old, the children and mothers in the hills as observed by Kandagor (2010). To the researcher, this pointed out to the fact that the Pokot were ready to fight for their share of the Lowland anytime since they did not have with them any vulnerable groups that would be collateral anytime there was a fight in the lowland over resources. The Pokot warriors valued their livestock herds and took good care of them and avoided any distractions from the goal of taking care of them. Lomoywara (2018) observes that the Pokot warriors could be away from their families even more than a year as they sought greener pastures or avoided droughts afflicting their herds and this was the case with the Pokot warriors who settled in the Lowlands of Baringo in large numbers of men and defended their share of the area.

It is thus noted that in the past in the period around 1900 to 1920s, population pressure from the settling communities became one main cause of cattle raids among the communities that occupied the Baringo Lowland. There was constant competition for water and pasture in the lowland by the three communities that inhabited the lowland. The large numbers of the settlers in the area put pressure on the few available resources and with the increasing numbers, the resources got depleted and the warriors turned against each other as they sought to mitigate the losses they incurred with diminishing grazing land. A fight for the resources was thus always experienced and as many members of FGD at Loruk observed (FGD, 12.09.2023).

There was a fight for the available resources due to increased population of the people that had settled in the lowland. This is also supported by Moses Kwonyike (OI, 20.09.2023) who affirmed that since the elders were left up there in the hills by both the Pokot and Tugen, the young warriors always began having conflicts. The conflicts were amongst themselves and against their neighbours and fighting behaviour was a common place and reckless among the youth. The youth had no one to warn them or cool them down as was the norm with the presence of elders. Raids and cattle theft thus began in the lowland and due to the increased and uncontrolled number of people, who had settled in the area, resources were not well controlled too and this led to the perennial conflicts and raids.

Lack of proper Government structures and presence

The Baringo Lowland occupied by the three communities of Pokot, Tugen and Il Chamus is vast and with a rough terrain. According to several informants, there was need for proper government structures to be put in place in several ends of the lowland to ensure proper administration of the lowland and this was not the case. During the colonial period and even after independence of Kenya, the governments of the day have had a challenge in administering the Lowland. The structures in place have not been adequate and government facilities far from the locals who should use them.

Kandagor (2010) contended that traders traversed the Baringo Lowland in search of animal products and wildlife trophy. These traders embarked on long treks across the lowland and were supposed to pay taxes to the government of the day. They came from as far as the Coast of the country. Anderson (2006) corroborates this;

Most Swahili travelers and European traders travelled to Baringo Lowland from the east dropping down from Laikipia escarpment. Early 1900s marked European expeditions that traversed the Hills of Baringo enroute to Buganda although the expeditions were very few.

According to the writer, there were several expeditions which were carried out by Europeans and which the local population were involved. They participated as guides, porters and also provided accommodation to these travelers and traders. Trade goods were provided by the inhabitants of the lowland as Moses Kwonyike (OI, 20.09.2023) also observes. It is also noted that one of the main challenges experienced was the issue of tax collection. There were very few government posts for tax collection hence inefficiency in trying to offer that service.

The German explorer Carl Peters is reported by the informant Kipkoech Yusuf (OI, 20.09.2023) as one of the traders that used the Baringo route. This is also corroborated by Anderson (2006) and also in archival records (DO/ER/2/2/16);

Carl Peters, a German explorer traversed the valley of Baringo on his way to Buganda. He refused to pay "hongo" the payment demanded by the Tugen of all trading caravans across the country.

This archival information indicates how the communities taxed visitors who passed through their land even when the colonial government had not fully established government posts to formally collect taxes. It is noted that the community had an elaborate system of taxation although there is no evidence as

to how they accounted for the "hongo" at the end of the year or how they utilized it. Anderson observes that, Carl Peters battled his way across the hills from Lake Baringo all the way to Mumias and had with him 400 heads of cattle which he obtained from the Lowlands at a very low price. Lengiya Kirimaticho (OI, 20.09.2023) observes that their father narrated to them how Karl Peters acquired cattle from them at low price during the harsh drought times. They sold the cattle to him at low price fearing that drought would even wipe them if left behind anyway. They would then raid their neighbours, the Pokot for replenishing after the trade encounter with Carl Peters. Thus, with the government lacking proper structures at Baringo Lowland to prevent communities from attacking themselves, the Tugen and Pokot communities raided each other so as to recover from the expeditions of Carl Peters and other Swahili and European traders that traversed the area

Kipkulei (1972) indicates that the Lake Baringo area was a magnet of attraction to the travelers and traders during the colonial period. These traders were attracted by the smooth lowland and discouraged by the rugged terrain of the hilly Kamasia/Tugen area of the Tugen Hills. To the government then, the hills were occupied apparently by hostile people who had little or no surplus to trade at all. Kipkulei further asserts that no trader dared to venture into the hills as they lost much rather than gain as was the case at the Lowland. Karl Peters also observed in his writings according to Anderson (2006) that the Tugen on the Hills were mostly old and poor as compared to the young ones in the Lowlands.

Baringo Lowland was of less value to the colonial government and was a liability to it (Kandagor, 2010). Taxes were of low quantity and could not be

economical to have government posts in the lowland. Anderson notes that the government through the Imperial British East African (IBEAC) set up a station in Eldama Ravine in Southern Baringo. This station was far from the Lowland and with no road connection to it. This station acted as a trading post as well as an administrative post for the colonial government. The station was used to drop and pick commodities of trade between Mombasa and Buganda (Anderson, 2006). To a great extent, the station's presence encouraged the communities at the Lowland to engage in frequent raids so as to have the capacity to provide cattle and goats for transport using the railway.

This railroad was named Sclater's Road after the military engineer Captain Bernard Sclater who was employed by IBEAC to survey the route between Kibwezi and Lake Victoria (Anderson, 2006). Furthermore, the route through Eldama Ravine went to Mumias then to Uganda and avoided Lake Baringo and the Lowland at large and this in a way marginalized the occupants from government administrators (Kimaiyo, 2016). With time, this eased the battle for cattle in the Lowland and encouraged the local inhabitants to engage in external trade with their neighbours and took these cattle to Eldama Ravine collection point. They enjoyed a better profit margin as compared to when they traded with the European explorers in the past like Carl Peters.

Since the communities in the Lowland kept large herds of cattle as earlier observed, there was need for proper government structures to be in place so as to solve disagreements before they escalated to raids. Elders were also left in the Hills as they could not be able to withstand the long treks in search of pasture and water which kept on diminishing in the lowland. The search for

fresh pasture at times would take the youth as far as Laikipia at the border with Samburu so the elder people entrusted the youth with that responsibility. Cases of youth misbehaviour lacked appropriate mediation and conflict resolution channels to sort out. The Kipnyigeu were a group of youth belonging to one age set. This gave them the excuse of not respecting each other and solving cases was not that straightforward. The lack of government presence in the Lowland also made issues worse. There was a vacuum in government enforcement of law and order as the police posts in the Lowland were far and few. Thus, lack of proper government infrastructure was one main cause of the cattle raids as the youth felt a sense of security and comfort when committing crime knowing very well that the government response would take long.

Relocation of Baringo District Headquarters and its effects on cattle rustling

During a distressing period, the importance of a government headquarters is felt as that is the heart of resource mobilization and action taken as per the location of the headquarters (Kandagor, 2010). The headquarters of a district or county is important since that is where all government departments and decision making organs are domiciled; hence the chief decision making place. This determines the efficiency at which a situation is addressed affecting the inhabitants that occupy a certain area of the district. This has been the case with Baringo Lowland since several problems and issues have made the government to shift its headquarters from one area to the other within the County. There were times when rampant attacks on the local inhabitants near the government post made the headquarters to be relocated.

In 1900, Sir Harry Johnson who was the Commissioner of Uganda established a government post at Lake Baringo (Anderson, 2006). During that time the administration of Baringo just like many other Rift Valley Counties still fell under Uganda Protectorate. As earlier stated, missionaries, explorers and traders on their way to Uganda passed through the Lowland and thus the Commissioner saw it fit to have a post in Lake Baringo shores. This post served as the first government headquarters for the entire area in within the Lowlands. The post was established at the shores of the Lake in a place known as Loiminange. The three communities of Tugen, Pokot and Il Chamus were therefore ruled from the base in Lake Baringo. This post now acted as the official headquarters of the area. Any cases of cattle theft and misbehavior were at least settled and handled in the government post.

All issues that require government intervention and were within reach could be sorted at Loiminange at the shores of Lake Baringo... (DC/BAR/1/1). Loiminange was the first Baringo District headquarters. The settlement had negative impact on the local population for there were reported cases of assault of fishermen from the Il Chamus community by their renegade youth and these cases were solved in the patrol base among other issues in the area (Anderson, 2006).

The center served for ivory trade explorations which were practiced in the lowland (Kipkulei, 1972). Kerio Valley which falls in the expansive Lowland of Baringo had a vast amount of ivory at that time. Kipkulei further asserts that raiders would take time to engage in theft or raids for cattle as they sought ivory from the valley and these reports were recorded in Loiminange base. Rimoi in Kerio Valley was known by many collectors like Hyde-Baker Harold to be the source of good quality

ivory. According to Anderson (2006), in 1901, Hyde-Baker sent 40 Sudanese soldiers who had accompanied him to collect food and ivory for him by force from the Rimoi community. The inhabitants of Rimoi were enraged by the demand of the collector and refused to hand them the trade goods and food. The local population outnumbered the colonial team and when the soldiers tried to use force, the local inhabitants repulsed them resulting in a massacre. The Sudanese soldiers were all killed and all their food reserves and the ivory they had collected on the way were taken by the local inhabitants (Anderson, 2006).

Anderson further notes that since the Rimoi area was far from Lominange base, it took some time before the information on the massacre was delivered. Fortunately, one ranger from Rimoi had managed to escape and went all the way to Loiminange and alerted the Il Chamus of the massacre and the outcome. Kipkorir (2009) observes that the main reason why the massacre by the Rimoi inhabitants was successful was because the soldiers were alien to the terrain and the patrol base was too far and therefore the local warriors' advantage of the knowledge of the area and massacred the Sudanese soldiers mercilessly. Getting reinforcements from Loiminange was not easy for the soldiers and rangers at Rimoi had no communication network to convey messages fast.

In 1901, the Il Chamus warriors assisted the British soldiers to raid the Cheptulel area near Rimoi to avenge the loss of the Sudanese soldiers. The raid according to Anderson was organized from Loiminange and was successful according to the planners. The Il Chamus community was rewarded with 100 heads of cattle from the captured animals from Cheptulel. It is also recorded that the Il Chamus looted more than 400 heads of cattle for

themselves during the raid on Cheptulel and thus replenished their small stocks in the village (Kandagor, 2010). After this raid at Cheptulel, the Il Chamus were viewed to have used the patrol base which acted as headquarters to their own advantage. Given that the base was in their area they were seen to be in control of the base. The other communities began not to trust the control of government from Loiminange as they were seen to favour the Il Chamus community against the other neighbours. The government decided to move the headquarters from Lominiangi to Arabal (Anderson, 2006). Arabal is in the Lowland but away from Lake Baringo and in the interior deep from the Tugen occupied area to the east. This was in 1904 when they realized that the Il Chamus were using the location of the post against the other neighbours. Since the post was in their area, the other communities feared reporting issues or accessing the post. Any time an attack happened to one community, it was not easy for the security teams to react from Lominiange. The relocation of the post to Arabal created security vacuum in the valley which made Il Chamus venerable. The Il Chamus were raided by the Pokot community and many herds of cattle were driven away in 1905 just a year after transferring the headquarters to Arabal (Kimuren Musa, OI, 26.08.2023). This attack was devastating to the Il Chamus community although there was no report of life lost, the herds of cattle driven away was large leaving the Il Chamus community devastated. This prompted a rethinking of the location of the headquarters.

Kimuren Musa (OI, 26.08.2023) who is a church pastor in Mukutani area observes that his family gave the government some land to establish a government post in Mukutani. The headquarters of the area was thus moved again from Arabal to Mukutani area in

1905. Mukutani to the Il Chamus and the Tugen community is the border between Pokot and the other communities. To them, it is where they met and sorted out any differences that arose at any given time. Later on after independence according to Kiprono Chesang (OI, 26.08.2023), the boundary between Pokot and Tugen at Mukutani became a problem. The Tugen call the place Mukutani while the Pokot call it Makutano to mean a place where the borders meet. The border according to the area chief is still contested between Baringo South and Tiaty as there is no clear boundary despite having beacons put in place by the colonial government to sort out these issues.

It is noted that in 1909, the administration of Baringo was restructured to have Turkana out of the larger Baringo District (Anderson, 2006). This was because the area was so vast and had to be subdivided to have the district governable. The local population had also increased in number and it required to be administered from a near place. In 1914 as Anderson avers, after the strong colonial domination, the headquarters of Baringo was moved from Mukutani to Kabarnet. It is noted that Kabarnet is far much colder and conducive for the whites to reside in unlike Mukutani which was hot and dry. The district of Baringo and Eldama Ravine were now amalgamated into Baringo District and its headquarters now domiciled in Kabarnet with E.B. Hosking as the first District commissioner. A small shelter for the Commissioner in charge of the whole district was put up in Kabarnet at an elevated place that was considered neutral according to Ribo Rikosi (OI, 23.09.2023).

Kabarnet had a better road network from Nakuru through Marigat. The road was passable through all-weather as opposed to Mukutani to Marigat which was still not good for

vehicles. Administrative issues as well as a proper police post was now established in Kabarnet to handle issues of the Lowland better than was handled from Mukutani.

The central place of livestock in the pastoral communities

Traditional Pokot, Tugen and Il Chamus lifestyle centered on their cattle (Kiptui, 2021). Eventually, all the things that a pastoralist man among the communities did was centered on the livestock he kept which formed their primary source of food, wealth as well as status in the community. It is claimed that in the Baringo Lowlands by the 1940s, there were Pokot and Tugen men who had more than 400 heads of cattle. This earned them great respect and status in the community. Their word was law and no one dared to go against what they said at any time, Odhiambo (2016). According to Kipkulei (1972), this is the time when the Tugen attempted to raid the Pokot and were annihilated at a place known as *Kebenop-Korongoro*.

Raw meat, raw milk, blood from cattle and goats was the main diet of the communities that occupied the Lowland (Kandagor, 2010). It is quite evident that the communities valued the place of animal products in the community and depended on their livestock for food and clothing. It was rare for the herder communities to partake in eating vegetables unless during dry seasons when the number of livestock they had was largely diminished (Kiptui, 2021). To the herders, it was considered a taboo to eat meat and drink milk at the same time (Chesikaw, 2019). In a way, they discouraged wastage and encouraged frugality among the community members by encouraging them to choose one at a time and save for the next day.

According to Kipkorir (2002), during famine time the colonial government would distribute cassava flour which was tasteless and very unpopular. During such devastating time at the lowland the inhabitants fell back to their kinsmen from the highlands who supplied grains, dried meat and *mursiik* (curdled milk) which had been stored for up to several months in gourds. At times the communities in the valley sought supplies from their neighbours when it was so severe. It was not hostility among neighbours for the Tugen would seek assistance from the Pokot when there was no alternative for them. Kipkorir further elaborates that, the Pokot version of *mursiik* had a uniquely bitter taste and water had to be added to it to make it drinkable. Among the Tugen in times of distress, the people would actually take anything to sustain themselves. He notes that, in many villages in the Lowland, people were discouraged from eating of fruits and vegetables as they considered them food for their cattle and did not encourage competing for resources with their animals. Butter was the most valued infant food as they were weaned off by their mothers before they were introduced to hard animal products like meat (Kiptui, 2021).

Cattle are life and everything for the Pokot and Tugen communities (Kiptui, 2021). To the pastoral communities, almost every activity they undertake revolves around their livestock or is shaped by their admiration for their cattle. According to Kipkorir (2002), everything from food, materials, rituals, culture, cloth as well as sandals for the communities are centered on the livestock they adore so much. This claim is clearly documented by local administration at the time:

Cattle are more than a savings account in the Pokot, Tugen and Il Chamus communities of Baringo.

It feeds and covers one's shame.
DC/BAR/2/72

Thus, it is quite evident how important livestock have been to the pastoral communities of Baringo Lowland since the time they settled in the valley.

Cattle are not only valued for sustenance in the communities but for daily survival (Mkutu, 2009). All the products that come from the livestock are evidence to the centrality of the livestock in the day to day life of the pastoral community. The economy of the community depends on these livestock (Berman, 1992). Cattle among the pastoral communities was like their bank account. Thus, the British colonialists forced the pastoral communities to monetize the economy and turn away from barter trade. Taxes were to be paid in cash and not in the form of livestock as was the case in the past. Once the cattle were sold and converted to money, the pastoralists were now able to buy commodities they lacked and pay requisite taxes.

During initiation of the Tugen, Pokot and Il Chamus community young boys to men, livestock play a great role (Kiptui, 2021). The initiates are fed with the goat and cow products from the beginning to the end of the ceremonies. A family with large herds will always rejoice during initiation of their sons because they know they will have sufficient respect for feeding the whole team for some time. It is also noted that, in the process of initiation, some of the initiates might have confessions to make and immediately after that, elders are supposed to begin a cleansing session according to Benjamin Kasatem (OI, 13.09.2023). If the confession has some issues demanding of a cleansing, this was immediately done so as to avoid calamities in the community. A goat would be slaughtered to cleanse the

wrong doing of the initiate and all those present would partake in the elaborate ceremony. The Pokot community have their *Orkwoyoon* (prophet) who led these ceremonies (Kipkorir, 2002). Among the Il Chamus, *Oloibon* was responsible for the ceremonies (Odhiambo, 2016). The Tugen did not have a central leadership but had elders who would perform the ritual (Chesikaw, 2019). This is evidence enough that livestock was a source of peace and tranquility in these communities and was so much treasured. In order for the communities to sustain their various requirements large numbers of animals was necessary.

Paul Logisoi (OI, 29.08.2023), the Member of County Assembly of Baringo representing Mukutani ward asserts that, in the Il Chamus, Tugen and Pokot communities live in his ward. And value cattle so much. Livestock are accumulated rather than consumed in these communities. He avers that, all the cases that they handle in the area revolve around cattle theft and trespass. This is also buttressed by Kimengich Kipkech (FGD, 10.09.2023) who while contributing in a group discussion in Loruk observed that, whenever there are ceremonies, small stock like goats and sheep are slaughtered regularly but cows are only slaughtered during special ceremonies. Cattle exchange happens in all major transactions in the communities and act as evidence of seal of a deal.

Drought, diseases and internal disagreements

Drought is a long period of time when there is little or no rain in an area. In the years that the pastoralist communities of Baringo Lowland have occupied the area, many episodes of drought have afflicted them, Kandagor (2010). The herders of the lowland have always lived a closed life and avoided the colonial watch

thus would overgraze the valley and in the end erosion occurs and coupled with loss of rain for some years a drought was the result in the area.

According to Anderson (2006) and corroborated by FGD information in Mukutani, between 1917 and 1940s there was almost an annual catalogue of environmental difficulties, human and stock diseases and a drought enhanced economic decline in the Baringo Lowland. It was not easy for the colonial government to enforce mitigating measures against these catastrophes in the Lowland as they were few administrators and the area was vast. A study of archival information on the Lowland point to an area that had to experience a drought due to poor agricultural practices. It was an unavoidable occurrence since the locals did not consider conservation of the environment but in most cases practiced unsupervised rudimentary methods that destroyed the environment and later escalating to drought and famine.

The Senior Agricultural Chemist, Sd. V.A. Beckley in 1935 reported on a visit he undertook in Baringo and wrote:

Erosion is still bad. The grass cover has minimized sheet erosion-in the areas that grass was planted; they are half an inch to an inch above neighbouring bare area. Gully erosion is proceeding rapidly. In the Baringo Plain, for example on a slope of 1:80 a gully has spread over several acres during the last year, giving a typical "bad lands" picture...

(KNA PC/RVP.2/6/4).

In this description, the specialist is noting how the Baringo land had deteriorated in those days and with little rain the results were a drought and hence loss of cattle by the pastoralists.

Moreover, in 1945, the Chief Soil Conservation Officer made an observation about the Lowland and predicted a severe drought accompanied by diseases because of the condition of the Lowland. Anderson (2006) observes that the report by the conservationist pointed to what was to be experienced and what had happened in the area then.

By March the whole of Southern Kamasia/ Tugen plains were as usual grassless desert. There was not a blade of grass to be seen anywhere; even the barks of certain thorn trees, on which the cattle habitually exist during the drought periods in these areas was in short supply. It is impossible to exaggerate the picture of utter desolation presented by these once good grasslands... (KNA PC/RVP.2/7/3).

This excerpt presents the real picture of the Lowland as many herders lost their cattle and thus had to look for means and ways to replenish their remaining few cattle. Samson Kabutie (O.I, 10.09.2023) observes that the droughts and disease aftermath left their parents with no choice but to engage in raids on their neighbours so as to boost their stocks.

According to Lomiriri Loper (O.I, 20.08.2023), among the Pokot herders, drought is a norm. The environment they live in is so used to droughts than rains. Kiptui (2021) asserts that the Pokot community was resigned to droughts from the time they settled in the Lowland and were always prepared knowing they would be hit by the droughts and famine all the time. The worst drought that is talked about in the Pokot community up and until this contemporary time was known as 'Tapoyo' drought. Henrie Makal (O.I, 20.08.2023), the MCA Kolowa ward, paints

a picture of complete surrender and despair during that period.

Almost all the cows of Pokot in Baringo Lowland died. There was a horrible odour of death that hangs in the air. Birds of prey (vultures) hovered around on the land and in the sky. These birds of the air ate to their fill and the usual predators like hyenas could barely walk. Our proud Pokot people were forced to eat carcasses like wild animals. This drought lasted for some years then when it ended a slight rainfall was experienced and cholera breakout set on the people killing many locals.

This oral narrative and others from the locals' point to a situation of desperation in the communities after such episodes of droughts and famines which in turn immediately set the people on cattle raids to try and replenish the few stocks that remained.

Among the Il Chamus, there were cases of droughts and diseases but their dependence on Lake Baringo for food helped them a great deal. However, their cattle suffered the same fate as the Tugen and Pokot neighbours, Kosiki Lesambicha (O.I, 10.09.2023). The worst drought remembered in Il Chamus land was that of 1938 and 1943, Anderson (2006). These droughts were severe in the area and are still reminisced of till this period. These droughts forced some of the Il Chamus people to migrate to Keiyo area in search of cassava. The Keiyo area at least had some drought resistant cassava which they had planted the previous rainy season and this acted as a savior to the Il Chamus. This drought was called *Nkolonge Imuhogo* by the Il Chamus meaning the drought of cassava, Kiptui (2021). The few remaining Il Chamus in the Lowland slaughtered

goats and cut the meat into threat like pieces, salted, roasted and put it in dug out wooden containers and covered them in fat and honey both of which acted as water and air tight preservatives. The meat would then be taken out in small portions to feed the emaciated children and women in the lowland. Patrick Lendapana (O.I, 10.09.2023), observed that, the massive deaths and loss of livestock during the 1938 drought forced almost all men in the area around Lake Baringo to divorce their wives. This is because they were rendered too poor to support or sustain the women and children. The locals recall of how children and women were abandoned and the mothers had to try all their best to take care of the young ones. It was further observed that, this drought of 1938 as well as the one of 1943 and the others in the past forced the young men to attack their neighbours for replenishment after the tough period. The Pokot and Tugen youth would come to the shores of the lake to try and salvage the few cattle remaining and the Il Chamus would repulse them. This would always lead to constant cattle raids and conflicts.

The Tugen according to Anderson (2006) suffered the most ramifications of droughts. In 1917, there was a deluge that hit the area, swept away several of Tugen herd and they resorted to attacking the Pokot to replenish their stock. The Tugen were hard hit by the deluge and they lost a large number of cattle. The resolve to attack the Pokot neighbours for replenishment was reached and they raided them and got several herds to begin life with again. Immediately after the deluge came the drought of *Kipngosia* that occurred in 1918 to 1919 and the Tugen who were recovering were hit hard again losing the few cattle they had raided from the Pokot. Catherine Tengecha (O.I, 07.09.2023) points out that *Kipngosia* was

severe because the previous year the deluge had messed them up and now the drought had come to completely sweep away what had remained. There was no grain harvested the previous year and thus the only hope was livestock which were also very thin and few.

Two years again of dry season with no grain forced many Tugen to cross the Kerio River to look for maize from Nandi and the Keiyo. The droughts were followed by famine and lack of food for the Tugen. Rinderpest infestation and influenza afflicted the Tugen again the same year 1919, Anderson (2006). These natural calamities that followed each other in succession dealt a blow to the Tugen so much. In 1920, there was sufficient rain and the Tugen embarked again on replenishing mission on the Pokot and the few Il Chamus cattle that had survived the drought. Another drought was experienced in 1921 to 1922 then a break in 1923 and another drought in 1924 to 1925 accompanied by rinderpest infestation and many deaths were reported. Immediately after these droughts the Tugen raided their neighbours so as to replenish. The raids were increasing as the droughts too became rampant. *Talamwei* drought was experienced in 1931 to 1932 and this preceded the *Kiplel kowo* drought of 1927 to 1929. *Kiplel Kowo* drought was the most devastating drought ever recorded or experienced in Tugen area of the Lowland. Oral accounts point out to a desperate situation where white bones were seen everywhere due to death of livestock hence the source of that name. The Tugen people lost a large number of cattle and the elderly and children due to this drought. *Kipkuikui* was another drought that occurred in 1933 to 1934 and it also afflicted the Tugen of the Lowland so much, Anderson (2006).

These episodes of droughts, diseases and internal disagreements on how to handle them led to loss of large animal stocks and once they were over, the communities engaged in raiding so as to try and replenish their stocks and begin over again.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In the precolonial period through to the colonial period, most of the pastoral communities lived peacefully. There were cases of cattle raids reported, but they were primarily for replenishing purposes after natural calamities and were far in between. The upsurge in banditry and cattle rustling with devastating effects were witnessed due to several causes like the factors that took place during Kipnukie era of 1904 to 1917. As the number of occupants also increased, acts of lawlessness seem to have gone up. Absence of a proper government monitoring and facilities like headquarters seem to have a great effect on the way the local communities lived together at the boundaries they shared with their supposedly peaceful neighbours. The study also sought to find out the influence of the central place livestock has been put in the lives of the pastoral communities as well as the effects of droughts, diseases and internal disagreements and concluded that, among other factors, these were the main factors that sustained cattle rustling and banditry in the Baringo Lowland since the past.

Therefore, since the bandit economy seems to thrive in the lowlands because of these factors that can be mitigated by policies and rule of law by the government, there is need for the community members to be encouraged to turn to modern ways of fulfilling cultural demands like dowry. The government

should also introduce alternative sources of livelihood for these communities.

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