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Charles Ocan

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Pastoral resources and conflicts in North-Eastern Uganda: the Karimojong case

Charles Emunyu Ocan

Introduction

Pastoralists and agropastoralists in northeastern Uganda are increasingly finding themselves under stress. This social stress has had several manifestations, ranging from violence and civil war to drought and food insecurity. At the centre of this stress are the Karimojong pastoralists, who face increasing pressures on their traditional patterns of mobility while bearing blame for the violence resulting from cattle raids.

Behind this scenario are vital questions of property tenure, political rights and empowerment, the role of the state and "modern" economic influences. Dominating political thinking are questions of the viability of pastoralism and the extent to which it is necessary to practice pastoralism, as compared to other forms of economic activity, in the regions in question. This question gains more significance as tensions between neighbours increase.

This study underscores the factors that define conflicts in the region relative to forms of property: regimes of tenure over and access to resources at individual, community and inter-community levels. How do resource access and control relate to existing conflicts? How, on the other hand, do conflicts affect resource use, access and control?

This study also distinguishes the in-

ternal dynamics and the external influences that have defined property relations, and examines how solutions thus far attempted, from various perspectives, relate to existing official policy provisions. Furthermore, the paper reflects on the need to redefine policy on the basis of a concrete understanding of realities on the ground.

It is crucial to distinguish individual interests from community interests, and seriously examine the question of equity which is often associated with pastoral relations. This paper tries to distinguish between the various facets of these conflicts and show that the real gist of conflict does not necessarily lie in the relations between different ethnic communities. Some conflicts are the result of manipulation by specific interests, who portray disputes as occurring between different communities, in order to cover up the identities of the real beneficiaries. Who, then, are the victors, and who the victims, of these conflicts?

The nature of the conflict

In the precolonial past, pastoral mobility was certainly an essential aspect of sustainable production in the Karamoja region, which lies in the northeastern sector of Uganda. Because of resource variability over an extensive area, animals were moved to track resources in a seasonal pattern across temporary graz-

ing camps. However, these mobile pastoralists also had permanent settlements and retained usufruct claims on land as long as they remained members of a given community. Members of the community not engaged in herding lived in these settlements all year round.

The need to track resources for pastoral sustainability, and the need to have a settled home where kinship aspirations could be achieved, created dual and contradictory demands, which were resolved through a production pattern known as transhumance. This pattern ensures pastoral mobility for production and reproduction, while it guarantees permanent settlement for the pastoralist, with a claim on certain land for crop cultivation to supplement pastoral products. Up to now, transhumance has constituted a vital production strategy by the pastoralist developed in response to the demands of a difficult environment.

Mobility overcomes difficulties of a semi-arid environment, which is characterized by unreliable rainfall as well as temporal and spatial resource variability. The animals are moved in such a way as to track pasture resources at different times across regions of differing potential. The process also allows for regeneration of grass potential through rotational use, which ensures that fallow intervals will occur.

Equally, pastoralists manipulate herd size and composition so as to ensure faster growth of the herd, thus maintaining a continuous output of milk and blood to ensure daily sustenance. Within the relations which exist between people, and between people and their environment, conflicts arise over the control of resources by different communities. Discussing traditional practices in Karamoja, Novelli (1988:94) presents the cause of these conflicts in the following way:

The first of the concrete problems that the Karimojong must face every day is that of securing grass and water for the herd even at critical moments, while at the same time avoiding falling prey to the enemy.... If there are no pacts, then there will be struggle, and the strongest will secure those pastures and sources, after having captured the greatest number possible of heads of livestock from the enemy, and having killed those within range of their guns.

However, in the past there were mechanisms that allowed collaboration and understanding between different communities, and conflicts were more often only aggravated by extreme natural conditions; most accounts of present-day cattle raids record them as dry season acts (Novelli, 1988; Dyson-Hudson 1966; Cisterino, 1979).

The relationship between permanent settlements and grazing areas, and the institutions and organizations that evolved through them, provided a major mechanism for reducing conflict and ensuring sustainable use of scarce pastoral resources. One of the impacts of external intervention in Karamoja has been the disruption of these processes, and the distortion of the dynamic relationship between permanent settlements and grazing camps.

Hardin's (1968) formulation of the "tragedy of the commons" has often been extended to imply that pastoralists have no interested claim on land and therefore are likely to destroy it through selfish motives. Environmental degradation in pastoral areas is said to be a result of this assumed communal ownership of land. The fact that there are outstanding conflicts between different communities among pastoralists in Karamoja over grazing resources and cattle, and between Karimojong pastoralists in general and their agropas-

toral neighbours, attests to the fact that the land which supposedly has no claim indeed has conflicting rights and claims on it (Ocan 1993).

Although much of the chaotic manifestation of conflict in Karamoja centres on the worsening spate of cattle raids, the genesis of the conflict lies in constricted access to grazing resources. The effect of this inadequacy of resources has been the diminishing of herds, which then soon need to be replenished, often via raids, which themselves spark off reprisals.

As the Karimojong society has been incorporated into wider economic spheres, it has become possible for some individuals to take advantage of growing opportunities to promote their own personal gain. Equally, in order to sell their programmes, the same people are exploiting tribal and national differences to justify the attacking and plundering of other communities branded as enemies. Whereas in the final analysis benefits from a raid accrue to a few individuals, the actual raids are organized around tribal or sectional groups which identify other targeted communities as enemies.

Distortions

a). The impact of state intervention in Karamoja has included the disruption of production patterns based on mobility. This was achieved through a protracted process which started with the cordoning off of Karamoja between 1911 and 1921 by the British Colonial Authority. These machinations were motivated by British expansionary aims, and by the need they perceived to block Italian interests that were already vested in Ethiopia to the north of Karamoja. To the British authorities it was necessary to curb the possible expansion of their rival's territory. Once the cordon san-

itaire policy had been established, Karimojong pastoralists were forced to remain in their tribal land. Superficially, "Tribal Land", in this case simply defined as the region of permanent settlement where mostly agriculture took place, was considered to be the only "tribal" territory. Thus the definition of "ethnic" territory by the colonial authority was reckoned only as residential areas and not productive areas.

The removal of outlying dry season grazing resources was a blow to the balanced utilization of the Karamoja ecosystem, which had been evolved by the Karimojong pastoralists through long experience. This colonial policy certainly met overt opposition and had to be enforced through heavy military presence (Barber 1969). Between 1921 and 1940 the British Colonial authority was preoccupied with defining her international boundaries for the British East African Protectorate (subsequently Kenya Colony) and the Ugandan Protectorate, along the Karamoja-Turkana axis. This process greatly disrupted relations between the Karimojong pastoralists and the Turkana of Kenya, as well as other communities in the region (Mamdani 1992).

More significant was the creation of space in Karamoja to accommodate the Pokot, whom the white settler farmers displaced from certain areas of the Western Highlands of Kenya. This process denied the Pian section of Karimojong pastoralists dry season grazing territory, and since then the Pokot and Pian have regarded each other as enemies (Brassnet 1958).

From the 1940's emphasis shifted from restricting the pastoralists to marginal areas where they had built permanent settlements because of access to permanent water rivulets, to creating settlements in high-potential areas. With a view to settling pastoral-

ists and encouraging their adoption of agriculture, the authorities proposed to relocate them westward, in areas previously reserved by pastoralists for dry season harvesting. According to Dyson-Hudson (1987) the core of this policy was expressed in an anti-pastoralist polemic. In recent times similar policy formulations have influenced NGO efforts in the region.

In his review of Oxfam operations in Karamoja, Dyson-Hudson (1987) critically points out the organization's failure to acknowledge the dynamic seasonal relations between different ecological categories which make up Karamoja. In essence, its policies failed to recognize the productive relationship between permanent settlements and grazing camps. According to Dyson-Hudson (1987), due to seasonal variations in climate and rates of animal morbidity, mobility provides the optimal use of variable resources. He also cites the unreliability of crop cultivation due to unreliable quantities and occurrences of rainfall as another factor militating against crop cultivation.

By restricting stock movement, these approaches have created livestock congestion, resulting in overgrazing and growing prevalence of cattle diseases. The response to this situation by pastoralists has been to raid so as to restore the size of their herds, yet in the process they worsen relations with neighbouring communities. Besides increasing conflict, this approach has damaged the potential of what was previously kept as dry season grazing reserves. In the process it has encouraged Karimojong pastoralists to encroach further onto their agropastoral neighbours' land in search of grazing. They even raid neighbours whenever their cattle are depleted, a situation that individual-centred interests have exploited to make commercial gain while worsening tensions in the region

(Ocan 1992b).

b). Another distortion of the social fabric in Karamoja is connected to the relations between permanent settlements and the grazing camps. In permanent settlements, dominant relationships were formed within kinship, age-set and generational networks. Institutions of clanship were central in defining kinship relations, which were primarily extended through marriage. Within clans, important distinctions were established between elders and the "warriors" (herdsmen) through age segmentation, which, especially for males, served to differentiate the society. Even prior to colonialism, these relations were imbued with dynamic and changing significance that revolved around battle commanders, whose leadership comprised the authority of the elders (Ocan 1992a).

These developments partly resulted after emphasis had shifted from clan relations to territorial relations. Because of migrations resulting from mobility and the search for more secure areas, most clans were dispersed. For security and production purposes, neighbourhood relations superseded clan relations. Novelli (1988:37) has argued that:

In a conflict among persons of different clans or territorial sections, one usually sides with the people of one's own section rather than with those of the clan of his origin. As paradoxical as this affirmation may appear, this never-the-less reflects an important aspect of Karimojong culture: Concreteness... In fact, one relates usually to those with whom one lives, not with those whom he sees perhaps once in a lifetime.

At the time the society was expanding, the dominance of elders was built on systems of age stratification, with age groups, which intersected with clan

or tribal relations, being consolidated through ritual. But the society was increasingly challenged by new forces, that influenced the wider interests of Karimojong, namely security, access to resources and organizational coherence.

It is the grazing camps that most embodied these wider relations. Because dry season foraging took pastoralists long distances away from their permanent settlements, people from different communities often met, and as a result affinal relations were struck between distant communities. In time, as these ties grew stronger, the pastoralists were able to exchange portions of their herds with friends, which ensured distribution of risks over a wide area with widely differing potentials.

It was also possible for intermarriages or immigrations from one area to another to take place in a bad season. By restricting mobility and tying pastoralists to officially defined "tribal land", these wider relations were shattered and the narrower clan and age set relations were over-emphasized. Because each group was made to redefine its territory within narrower confines, more conflict was bred, even between previously close communities.

To the anthropologists who studied Karamoja in the 1950's, it would be a great surprise to learn that the Matheniko, Bokora and Pian communities are now at war with one another. Previously these were known as the "three fire-stones which supported the Karimojong pot." Through the debilitating approaches cited above, emphasis has returned to age, generational and clan relations, which has turned formerly close-knit societies into enemies.

The impact of the wider economy and the more modern military dimensions raids have acquired have also, in recent times, changed the status of the elders. Elders no longer wield the

power granted to them through colonial intervention because, for security reasons, most animals are no longer kept near permanent homes. Instead animals are guarded by warriors and their military leaders, usually in camps far from permanent settlements. This implies lack of control of herds by elders, who generally stay in the settlements. Given the fact that most herds are now built up through cattle raids in which elders currently have very small hand, their role in cattle control is dying out. The fact that elders stay in the permanent settlements also cuts excludes them from the power structure existing in the cattle camps. Since the safety of the animals relies on military prowess, it is those who have the weapons and the authority to command who are at the forefront of decision-making.

More recent distortions of social organisation in Karamoja therefore include the collapse of the authority of leaders and the disruption of the functioning of other indigenous institutions. The institution of age generations, epitomized by the elders' authority, is an obsolete historical fact in Karamoja. The list of the leaders in Karamoja who control the politics of cattle camps — the late-Apuno Opeikongu, Kete in Matheniko and Bokora, respectively — includes very young persons whose power far exceeds that of the elders.

The significance of cattle raids

The most visible aspect of conflict in north eastern Uganda is that of cattle raids. Elsewhere I have identified three major tendencies in cattle raids (Ocan 1992).

a). Some raids are carried out as joint community efforts, to secure the survival of the herd in the face of external threats and to increase the size of the herd, with the purpose of guaranteeing

community sustenance.

Traditionally this type of raid was determined and sanctioned by the elders and executed by the warriors. Their defensive logic was to protect the herd and ensure its survival, while their offensive purpose was to increase the size of the herd and expand their grazing territory.

Since affluence in a pastoral society depends on livestock wealth, an individual's position is measured by his ability to build more stocks. Through marriage and exchange of portions of the herd, an individual is able to expand his relations and securities. The modus operandi of these relations is cattle wealth, and raiding provides a viable means for its acquisition.

Novelli (1988:93) identifies two strategies employed by Karimojong pastoralists in the conduct of raids and the defense of their livestock:

One of these precautions is the creation of a security belt, 'a no man's land' around their territory. Its extent is calculated according to the average safe distance from enemy incursions, and one that allows for their own raids (1988:93).

The creation of this 'no man's land' constricts available grazing area. Although the extent of this area should determine how much area is available to a given community for forage, access to it becomes a function of the ability of one group to disengage others. Much of the area is therefore rendered unusable due to fear by contending parties, which leads to undergrazing. The struggle to control and dominate this area is the crux of the conflict between warring parties.

Vast areas around Lorengedwat, about 50 kilometres south of Moroto town, have for a very long time been 'no man's land', contended for by the Pokot against a joint force of the Bokora, Ma-

theniko and Pian. Recent developments have seen conflicts between even the latter three, making the 'no man's land' even more extensive and volatile.

Novelli (1988:93) presents the second strategy of Karimojong pastoralists raiding as:

... not to have all of one's livestock in one herd, but to distribute it among herds of relatives and friends, at least in part, keeping in turn some of theirs in one's own.

In this respect, in case of a calamity such as sickness, only part of the herd suffers. The multiplication of these relations in the past used to curtail raids to some extent. If one community knew that a good portion of its livestock was in a neighbouring community, it usually sought joint defence rather than confrontation.

Generally, a traditional raid would only be called after wide consultation and examination of facts on the ground, and after approval had been received from the elders. The scope of conflict in this type of raid was minimized through broader relations of reciprocity and collaboration between different communities, and compliance within communities.

b). Due to modern economic influence, especially through market pressure, individual interests have become dominant in cattle raids. Although raids on a community basis as cited above still exist, their primary motives are giving way to individualistic and narrower interests. These raids — motivated by self-interest and acquisition — do not simply occur when disasters have depleted stocks, nor do they result from fear of the likely occurrence of such disasters. Rather, they take place any time the raiders are set and sure of their defences. Their final intention is not to increase survival from livestock products, but to sell livestock for money or for

more weapons.

While the first kind of raids hinge on community interest and are controlled by the community through elders, the latter hinge in private interest and are controlled by armed corral leaders (Ocan 1992b:2).

One of the factors that has promoted the individualization of raids is the acquisition of modern weapons which has in turn made raids more destructive and extensive in scope. The growing significance of armaments has boosted the position of those who have access to weapons, both as individuals and as communities.

The major source of modern weapons, for Karamoja, has been the military in Uganda. When the Amin regime was overthrown in 1979, soldiers fled Moroto and Kotido barracks, leaving behind piles of weapons which were looted by Karimojong warriors. The immediate beneficiaries of this were the Matheniko and Tepeth, whose territory surrounds Moroto town, and the Jie, whose administrative headquarters is in Kotido.

Prior to this period, the Dodoth, located at the northern tip of Karamoja, dominated military relations in Karamoja, because their proximity to the civil war in Sudan gave them access to rifles. After 1979 the military balance in Karamoja changed and the Dodoth lost virtually all their herds to the Jie and the Turkana of north-western Kenya.

The acquisition of modern weapons by most Karimojong groups later made it possible for them to mount raids throughout the neighbouring districts, to an extent never before reached. The agropastoralists of Teso lost nearly one million heads of cattle in just the few years from 1984 to 1988 (Ocan 1992b).

As raids grew into extensive military ventures crossing several nation-

ality boundaries, the role of war leaders commanding raiding parties compromised the position of the elders. The courageous young men who herald these raids command more respect and wield greater power than the elders. De facto, they are the ones actually referred to as elders now. For example, in Bokora county Kete (29 years old in 1990) and Alinga (30 years old), and in Matheniko Apuno (39 years when he died) are the viable leaders of cattle politics. Okudi (1992:37) has argued that: "The main determinants are possession of modern weapons, courage, ability and capability to organize and lead successful raids".

These modern aspects of raiding involve a cross-section of interested parties who train warriors in the use of modern weapons and military warfare. All sorts of individual interests, emerging out of different communities, are represented — including those of former soldiers from neighbouring districts, politicians, state officials and traders (Okudi 1992; Ocan 1992b).

Although the above-cited interests dominate raids, the raids are organized to appear as if they are inter-tribal, so as to mobilize populist support of the war lords from their respective communities. Because of this, tensions between different communities have worsened over time. While as a group the raiders who wreak havoc are often of diverse backgrounds, the fact that they emanate from a certain group and claim to be representative of that group breeds inter-group hatred and reprisals.

The agropastoral neighbours of Karamoja define all Karimojong as enemies, even when they are aware, for example in the case of the Iteso, that a gang of raiders led by an Etesot, Jesus Ojirot, was part of the Karimojong contingent that cleaned all the cattle out of Tesoland. This failure to interpret the

exact interests that promote raids has compounded conflicts between neighbouring communities in north eastern Uganda.

c). A third element that I identified in raids in north eastern Uganda is the state, both in its official capacity and through the individual acts of its officials. If we construe raids as the forceful taking of livestock, then official raiding has mainly been in the form of confiscation and forced sales at low prices.

State policy has often justified cattle-grabbing as a punitive measure against raids or as recovery of raided animals. The approach used is often indiscriminate, affecting even those who are innocent. And the raided animals "recovered" through confiscation rarely reach the victims of the original raids. For example:

In 1988, the Uganda government troops of the National Resistance Army (NRA) confiscated thousands of cattle from the Karimojong under the pretext of compensating those whose cattle had been raided in Teso, but the cattle disappeared between Soroti town and Katakwi. In effect, cattle keepers in the region had no official institution to ensure protection of their property (Ocan 1992b: 23).

Government troops and officials, in their individual capacities, have equally participated in grabbing cattle. This was made worse by civil war which almost created anarchy in the district neighbouring Karamoja. Between 1987-1989, it was virtually inconceivable for a civilian to possess livestock in Teso, Kitgum and parts of Lang. According to popular opinion in the region, the government in Uganda is actually to blame for having encouraged raids as a weapon to defeat anti-government rebels. Since the rebels were seen to be drawing popular support from the people, the impoverishment of the people through cattle raids

was seen as a useful weapon to break that support. However, rebel groups in the region have equally been implicated in cattle grabbing.

The other method used by the state to alienate the pastoralist from his livestock has been through forced sales. This policy was adopted in Karamoja as a follow-up to the cordon sanitaire policy which closed off Karamoja to the outside world, between 1911-1921. During the period of colonial administration, forced sales were instituted through the policy of destocking. After restricting pastoral mobility, the colonial state identified overgrazing as a serious problem in Karamoja. Overgrazing was clearly a direct consequence of the pastoralists' inability to utilize outlying resources, due to restricted movement. However, state officials argued that it was due to the 'mentality' of the pastoralists, who sought to increase livestock numbers for their own sake. Forced sales under colonial policy were greatly facilitated by droughts and famine situations in certain years. In 1941, taking advantage of a famine situation, officials were able to buy up to 1,500 head of cattle every day in the area. In return, "the people were given money to buy grain for which the government was sole supplier", (Cisterno 1979:74). Dispelling official claims that pastoralists were against the sale of livestock, Cisterno further says that:

The people in Karamoja were never opposed to sales of animals once they saw the need. While government was offering peanut prices, the Karimojong people were smuggling their animals into Kenya to fetch higher prices (1979:74).

In good years, Karimojong pastoralists often resisted forced sales, but the administration sometimes responded with confiscation. According to Dyson-Hudson, this policy assumed the great-

est proportions in the 1950's when "punishment through cattle fines now took a most vicious trend, that is, the female stock" (Cisterino 1979:77). While famine was raging in 1953, the colonial government officially confiscated 4,720 heads of cattle (Ocan 1992b:11).

Attempts at a solution

a) Individual Responses: Differing Opportunities

Prior to the alteration of traditional patterns, people in the region responded to disasters prompted by natural hazards or conflict through migration. Assistance could also come in the form of reciprocation from those previously assisted, relatives through lineage or marriage, or barter trade with neighbours. These community-centred responses to calamity no longer apply effectively, just as the institutions associated with them in conflict resolution lie silent. The prevalence of individualistic responses to the effects of conflicts and disasters is a result of a situation where community responses have broken down, creating desperate reactions.

Although the effects of changing social relations and increasing conflict over resources have, in general terms, led to misery and social tension, at the individual level the capacity to respond to the scourges of conflict and impoverishment varies from social category to category. Among Karimojong pastoralists the number of people having large herds is shrinking, while those with no animals at all are on the increase. Considering the fact that at the current level of development livestock provides the surest means for survival, many pastoralists are increasingly prone to disaster. Among agropastoralists, it is not feasible to change to alternative sources. Their agricultural output has been constricted because of loss of draft power

previously provided by big male stock. This has often led to food insecurity and destitution.

One of the most common responses to loss of livestock has been the sale of livestock. This solution has been advantageous to the cattle traders, who profit from desperate sales and then take the cattle to sell in Kampala, where they fetch higher prices, as noted below:

The price of meat did not drop in Kampala whereas the price of cattle dropped in the affected areas. In 1988, according to the Soroti District Annual Report, the average price of a cow was 1500/=, up from 500/= in 1987. This implied a phenomenal collapse in relative prices given the fact that the economy was facing inflation (Ocan 1992b:27).

Around church and trading centres and "NGO islands" in Karamoja, a large number of destitute people living and begging can be seen. In agropastoral areas there has been a lot of displacement of peasants from their homes. In February, 1991, over 27,000 people were reported displaced due to cattle raids from Kapelebyong and Amuria counties in Teso. Most of them were encamped in very poor conditions near administrative centres (Ocan 1992b:22).

The glorification of military might especially has led to brutalization of much of the community in Karamoja and its neighbourhood. Many pastoralists now see guns as the only answer to their quagmire. The association of guns with the security of cattle has equally brought in the danger of guns not properly controlled. Guns have contributed to robberies and grabbing of property by the poorer population for personal survival, while ensuring enrichment for those who exercise actual control and ownership over these guns. Analyzing the significance of guns in current relations in Karamoja, a local newspaper

argued that: "Without a gun, therefore without cattle, in an ecology where cattle are the only answer in the immediate short run, you cannot help being a pauper, a destitute..." (The New Vision 1991).

Another aspect that has contributed to increased raids in the region has been the absorption of warriors into the central army. There is a high defection rate from the army by these warriors (Ocan 1992b). The transformation of cattle raids into modern military offensives was actually a result of this recruitment of warriors into the national army. Novelli (1988) has attributed the breakdown of the moral fabric in Karamoja to this factor and to the 1980 famine, which led to the massive impoverishment of Karimojong pastoralists.

Against this background, a few individuals are making fortunes by promoting cattle raids, while others sell foodstuffs for enormous profit during famine situations. Other well-placed people in Karamoja, through NGO or state connections, have been able to turn to crop agriculture in the more fertile areas of Karenga in Dodoth in the north, Namalu in Pian in the south, and Iriir in Bokora in central western areas of Karamoja. These were previously dry season grazing reserve areas and their occupation for crop cultivation, though contributing to individual enrichment, is producing increasing conflict over pastoral resources and creating environmental problems by disrupting the ecosystem that has ensured seasonally-balanced utilization of heterogeneous resources.

Alongside this misery and intensification of conflict between different communities and nationalities, government machinery has also tended to break down, creating more disorder. Overall, individual responses to crisis in north-eastern Uganda have been born of des-

peration on the part of the majority. Through a process of massive impoverishment of this majority, a process of enrichment for those few who wield authority in the manipulation of the conflicts in the region is also taking place.

b). Vertical Olive Branches

Realising the instability resulting from state-determined boundaries, subsequent regimes in Uganda have tried to reduce tensions in the region by organizing border meetings. But the social analytical frameworks used to interpret societies in these regions view age stratification as an unchanging attribute of the Karimojong social formation and the existing distribution of power. In this context elders are viewed as the pivotal wielders of power and authority, and are therefore called to be the main participants in these meetings. The other category of people often involved in these meetings are local politicians who have climbed to positions in the central government or local administration. The fact that cattle and grazing politics centre around war lords and herdsmen makes the choice of participants in these meetings virtually irrelevant in seeking solutions. Often, decisions arrived at in such meetings lack the channels through which they might be redirected back to the people concerned. In the day-to-day affairs of the Karimojong pastoralists, the above-cited officials have an insignificant influence in terms of compliance and control. The influence that they do have lies in their increasing ability to alienate pastoral resources for personal benefit through privatization, which puts them at the front line not of battle but of conflict of interest.

I have argued elsewhere (Ocan 1992b: 29) that the recommendations from these state organized forums neither reflect a concrete understanding of the problem nor do they strive for

democratic reforms involving the pastoralists. A meeting held in July 1981 between politicians and administrators from Karamoja and Turkana characterizes the dominant official view in seeking solutions to the problems of the region. This meeting urged:

- enforcement of traditional oaths (which assumed that cattle raids were a traditional affair which could be prevented through ritual practices);
- the use of military force to disarm the pastoralists. The meeting recommended the creation of several police posts to effect this proposal. It also recognized the need to abandon pastoralism in favour of "other forms of economic activity" because pastoralism was seen as the cause of chaos in the region;
- to accomplish these tasks it was necessary to organize public gatherings to raise the consciousness of the people.

None of these propositions recognized that part of the problem lay in the disruption of the pastoralist's way of life. No one proposed pastoralists' involvement in charting out a solution; instead, the pastoralists were seen to be the ones who should be enlightened by outsiders, who would tell them how to abandon their very livelihood.

c). Horizontal Olive Branches

There have been numerous attempts by different groups in the region to recreate harmony. During the dry season pastoralists and their agropastoral neighbours sometimes agree on how far the pastoralists can go with their livestock into the territory of the agropastoralists. Rules and obligations to which strict adherence is expected are worked out. In recent years, the occupation

of Kapelebyong county by pastoralists from the Bokora group of Karamoja was partly a result of such an agreement. Unfortunately, due to the conduct of some self-seekers among the Karimojong pastoralists and local officials from Kapelebyong, these relations later turned sour. Some pastoralists started raiding the Iteso, while local officials instituted punitive fines of cattle against the pastoralists, even for very minor offenses. These fines went directly to the benefit of local officials, who created the impression that it was the Iteso who were amassing Karimojong wealth.

Another typical attempt at a solution was a meeting between the pastoralists of the Pian group from Karamoja and the people of the Magoro and Toroma sub-counties in Usuk county of Teso. This peace meeting, held early in 1993 was attended by war lords and herdsmen from Karamoja. Each side agreed to take action against perpetrators of wrong-doing from among its members. Although this meeting was condemned by "elders" and senior government officials from both sides as illegal, the two communities have been enjoying fairly harmonious relations since then.

A third development within Karamoja has been the creation of local institutions parallel to existing government structures, which, unlike government structures, are based on production rather than residence locations.

In Uganda, people are organized into local Resistance Councils (RC's), created at the village level by the state but having representatives at all levels of the hierarchy up to the national assembly. The condition for election into the executive of the various levels of these councils is residence in a given area. Since the people who really matter in pastoral relations, the war lords and warriors (herdsmen), are not resident in the permanent settlements for

most of the time, they are automatically ineligible for election. Although most of the contentious issues to be resolved by these committees and councils regarded cattle and pastoral resources, those elected into the councils are not key persons in cattle politics.

Since 1992, starting with Kotido district in northern Karamoja, the pastoralists have decided to create non-official "RC systems" parallel to the existing government arrangements, to cater for their mobile pastoral interests. However, joint operations between these mobile RC's have allowed them virtually to commit highway robbery. Many communities, including the Jie and the Matheniko, the Bokora and Matheniko, and the Bokora and the Pian, have struck fresh alliances meant to ensure peaceful coexistence during outlying grazing periods, using non-formal organizations.

There are numerous other efforts being made at the local level to ensure non-conflictual use of resources, compliance with agreed-upon rules and resolution of conflicts. Local organizations, such as Matheniko Peoples Development Initiative (MAPEDI), are an example of attempts to create local organizations to promote peaceful coexistence in the region (Wabwire 1993).

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The late Charles Emunyu Ocan served both as a professional journalist and a researcher. He was a research fellow of the Centre for Basic Research in Kampala and in 1994 was a Visiting Fellow at the International Institute for Environment and Development in London, England. He pursued research on questions of land policy and tenure in Karamoja District in Northeastern Uganda, and served as the Ugandan Country Representative in the Eastern African Research Network for the Arid Lands and Resource Management (ALARM).

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