New Usage of Guns under the Third Phase of Disarmament Programme in Karamoja

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Abstract
The idea that the possession of automatic rifles by East African pastoral societies is a problem has featured in contemporary anthropological perspectives. This perception grants legitimacy to policies whose aim is to divest local people of guns. However, efforts by government to disarm the Karamoja and other pastoral groups in order to foster peace have met with resistance. Seeing how the continuing series of governmental interventions whose goal is disarmament are remembered by local people of the Karamoja, and how inhabitants respond to violent military operations designed to remove guns from the region makes us understand disarmament programmes that destroy property and injure inhabitants are regarded as violent acts rather than as desirable efforts to foster peace. The reality is that demand for guns is stimulated by the desire to have guns with which to barter for captives' freedom. The supply and possession of guns is difficult to eradicate, given the complex network of exchange and the need to resort to that network in order to free one's friends and family.

Key words: Karimojong, Dodoth, Ethnography, Violence, Rifles, Emancipation
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Historical Changes in the Ethnographic Study of Armed Conflict in East African Pastoral Societies

North-eastern Uganda, where pastoral peoples such as the Karimojong, Jie, Dodoth, Tepeth, and Pokot live, is one of the most marginalized and violent places in the region. Its meagre rainfall and poor soil do not allow intensive agriculture. Raids against enemies within and between ethnic groups are common, resulting in a continuing chain reaction of violence. Groups that are not well armed become internally displaced and are provided with food, education, and security by the government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Efforts to disarm these groups have taken place sporadically since 1910 (Eaton 2008). The region is now under the third phase of a governmental disarmament programme that began in 2001. Since 1998, I have spent two years in Karamoja in north-eastern Uganda conducting anthropological research among the Karimojong and the Dodoth. During that period, my Dodoth host family lost 300 cattle in 2008, and two family members were shot dead by members of the Jie, who were raiding cattle at a watering point. In 2004, one member of a Karimojong family was shot dead on his way to recover an animal that had been taken in a raid. He was tracking the animal by following footprints left by members of the Matheniko, one of the three main subdivisions of the Karimojong. Violent conflicts have occurred between subdivisions of the Karimojong, between the Karimojong and the Jie, between the Karimojong and the Pokot, between the Karimojong and the Turkana in Kenya, between the Dodoth and the Jie, and between

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the Dodoth and the Turkana. Efforts at peacemaking have not succeeded so far. Disarmament in the name of peacemaking often results in human rights violations and causes physical suffering to inhabitants (Human Rights Watch, 2007).

According to the outline of the 21st century governmental disarmament programme, the current third phase of the programme for North-eastern Uganda consists of three elements: a) a focus on reforming or reinforcing existing laws, regulations, and organizations related to the distribution and possession of small arms; b) efforts to introduce a development perspective into plans for and the practice of weapon collection and destruction; and c) a focus on reducing the demand for small arms and the root causes of violence (Office of the Prime Minister 2007). Although these three approaches have progressed in the context of mutual relationships among those involved, external forces have persistently interfered with efforts to eliminate the root causes of violence such as the proliferation of automatic rifles, the scarcity of resources, and the commercialization of cattle raids. An understanding of these root causes draws heavily from an anthropological paradigm that has undergone drastic change in the past 20 years (Eaton, 2008).

Early ethnography paid attention to factors internal to a society, such as the function of cattle raids in maintaining the ethnic identity and alignment of young warriors, sanctions by elders, and the prohibition of cattle raids within one's own ethnic group. In contrast, the literature of the past 20 years places cattle raids in a contemporary context wherein external factors, such as commercialization and the proliferation of automatic rifles, undermine customary law and communal order, which fosters illegal and violent activities by individuals that are impossible to prevent. Whereas early anthropologists understood cattle raids as conflicts that had particular and limited benefits within a society, the contemporary paradigm is the exact reverse of this in two senses: the focus on the internal workings of the society has shifted to a focus on the external influences affecting it, and a positive perspective in this respect has changed to a more critical one.

For example, Bollig (1990) suggested that the militarization of East Africa and the easy access to modern weapons resulting from the widespread illegal gun trade are important factors in the escalation of interethnic conflict and, furthermore, that the cost of owning weapons has created a need to raid. Among the Kuria, the response to the pressures exerted by the colonial economy, capitalist penetration, and the post-colonial state have transformed cattle raiding from its pre-colonial role of demonstrating the honour of warriors and enlarging the family herds to an illicit, violent, and cash-market-oriented enterprise (Fleisher, 2000; 2002). Mkutu (2008) described this change in the paradigm, arguing that, although traditionally East African pastoralists have engaged in armed conflicts over pasture and water, aggression against the enemy was under the control of elders, and the toll was small because warriors used spears. However, between colonisation in the early 20th century and the current time, the government has defined national and district boundaries, which have separated people from elements of their traditional lives. The authority of the elders has been weakened by the imposition of external administrative systems, and young men are therefore less subject to traditional constraints and feel free to engage in raiding activities. The influx of automatic rifles into the region, in the midst of conflicted ethnic relations worsened by historical events, has intensified intergroup conflicts. Moreover, merchants and ex-army members have recently become involved in cattle raids, and intergroup conflicts are becoming assimilated into organized crime networks (Mkutu, 2008).

Dyson-Hudson (1966) suggested that cattle raids by the Karimojong were caused by po-

litical decisions made with a keen eye on the difficult ecological situation in the region, noting the stringent sanctions placed on stock theft within ethnic groups. Subsequent researchers, in agreement with researchers studying other East African pastoralists, have adopted a paradigm that sets out a peaceful pre-colonial Africa with an intrinsic restraining order as facing a terrible predicament, one created by an encounter with the modern world, especially the factors of capitalism and the proliferation of automatic rifles. Doom (1999) pointed out that for the neighbouring Acholi society, which has been attacked by the Karimojong, Jie, and Dodoth, the continuing raids erode one of the state's means of maintaining the monopoly on violence. Citing Zitelman's (1997) statement, Doom discussed the transformation of pastoralists' raids. He challenged the position that holds that, "conflict at the margin is still characterized by feuds and raids," as an example of classical anthropological writings on "stateless" societies, and argued that this perspective disregards the reality that raids are now bolstered by new military technology. Mirzeler and Young (2000) have noted that the huge influx of automatic weaponry in the last two decades has transformed the nature of conflict, intensified its human cost, and transformed a range of societal relationships. Furthermore, they argued that Jie and Karimojong elders consider that war waged with AK-47s is profane, lacking the spiritual sanction of customary forms. Gray *et al.* (2003) have gone so far as to predict that small arms have triggered the impending extinction of the Karamoja Cluster, undermining the peoples' bio-behavioural adaptability in coping with a difficult environment. Their research demonstrates a positive correlation between the mortality rate and the extent of modern firearms, including heavy armament, among the Karimojong.

Does this change in perspective correspond to changes in the real world? Eaton (2008) indicated that the collusion of warlords in the Kenya–Uganda border region with government and local elites, and the incorporation of cattle raids into organized crime networks and the global economy, have not been confirmed by concrete facts. Rather, Eaton argues, such claims are "unverified allegations" derived from local myth and rumour to explain numerous failures of political and administrative intervention into hostilities in these pastoral societies. Furthermore, diachronic research conducted by Dietz *et al.* (2005) in Marsabit, which showed that violent deaths reached a peak in the 1940s and have declined since then, provides empirical counter-evidence against notions that recent cattle raids have become more atrocious through the proliferation of automatic rifles. In addition, data regarding casualties suffered by the Turkana during raids from 1929 to 1983 demonstrated no clear trend toward increasing mortality or scale of theft during cattle raids during that period (Oba 1992).

The relationship between the proliferation of automatic rifles and violence in Northeastern Uganda remains very unclear. For instance, the rate of casualties by gunshot has shown no steady pattern of increase, as confirmed by Mkutu's observation that data on hospitalizations show no tendency toward increased casualties over an 8-year period. On the other hand, he also indicated that recent data suggest an increase in casualties in all areas (Mkutu 2008). Even if hospital data were able to provide a complete picture, it would have been impossible to conclude from these data that any observed increase in casualties was the result of the proliferation of automatic rifles, because an 8-year period is simply too short to make such a determination.

The naïve picture of modernized firearms "disordering" rural societies should be called into question. Social anthropology has examined how order is established in a "stateless society", although such examination has tended to reduce such societies to idealized social organizations with segmented lineage systems and age-group structures. We should be careful about perspectives that depict the

remote world in ways that give those in power a practical basis for repeated national and international intervention in the name of "aid" and "salvation". Especially when the intervention includes violence and processes that belie the meanings of the cultures being "saved," such positions become morally wrong. The more an intervention uses violence and/or damage to local inhabitants in the name of "pacification," the more immoral is the intervention. It seems appropriate, at least for anthropological work, to ask how an intervention is to be enacted and what the meaning of that intervention is in the context of the daily lives of those who are its target, as against seeking to "re-establish law and order" based not only on unverified alleged root causes but also on a paradigm that, in the absence of national law, leads to the decline of social systems.

Gun Possession

The Encounter between Automatic Rifles and the Inhabitants of Karamoja

A rifle is exhibited in a glass case in the entrance hall of the National Museum in Addis Ababa. It was used for ivory hunting at the beginning of the 20th century. Looking into the dark inside of the barrel from the "mouth" of the iron "neck" that stands out against the red wooden body of the whole, one can see grooves that make a bullet spin, allowing greater accuracy over a long distance, with bullets gaining a dynamic effect as they pass over these grooves. Eastern Nilotes living on the borders between Kenya, Uganda, Sudan, and Ethiopia, such as the Karimojong, Dodoth, Jie, Toposa, Turkana, and Nyangatom, call a gun *atom* (pl *ngatomyan*), a word that originates from the word for elephant (*etom*). The word calls to mind the earliest influx of rifles in the 19th century when Ethiopians, British, Americans, Arabs, and Swahili supplied rifles to Eastern Nilotic pastoralists as payment for ivory and as tools for hunting elephants efficiently. The so-called Karimojong Cluster first encountered gunrunners operating in the Maji border area of southwest Ethiopia (Mburu 2003). Thus, modern firearms were first introduced into Karamoja to secure ivory as a commodity.

After Uganda became a British protectorate in 1894, Karamoja was excluded from British rule for 17 years because its semi-arid land was seen as unsuitable for the production of the cash crops, such as cotton and coffee, that were in high demand in Britain. But elephants were numerous in the area, and many ivory traders were attracted to this unexplored wild region. Local inhabitants joined the traders in ivory hunting and received livestock as a reward. As the number of elephants decreased throughout the world and the price of the ivory trophies they provided climbed, the competition between traders became intense. It was at this point that traders gave pastoralists in Karamoja guns as a means of hunting elephants for ivory or as an expensive reward that replaced livestock as payment for hunting.

For the first time, ivory traders appeared as gun-suppliers in administrative records. The traders were Arabs, British, Americans, Greeks, Ethiopians, and slaves from among the Swahili. Estimating the total number of guns in Karamoja is difficult due to the lack of records, but Mahmood Mamdani *et al.* (1992) reported that at the beginning of the 20th century, guns entered Northern Uganda from Karamoja. They based this assertion on a report written by a district officer, which stated that when two chiefs from the Acholi explored the area including Kotido, Kaabong, and Moroto by the order of the colonial government, they acquired 1,200 rifles from traders who worked primarily in Karamoja. In 1931, the population of Karamoja was estimated by Langlands (1971) to be 65,000. It is almost certain that the population in the 1910s was smaller than that in the 1930s. Thus, in the 1910s, the pastoral societies, including the Dodoth and

the Karimojong, had at least one gun to every 54 people.

Concerning the problem of the small arms and light weapons in Karamoja, the 2007 revised report of the Ministry of Defence and the Prime Minister's Office cited historical studies done by Barber (1964) and Welch (1969) indicating that traders exchanged modern firearms for ivory and slaves both before and after Karamoja came under colonial administration. In other words, in the 1910s, rifles were initially supplied as tools or rewards in Karamoja and were then bartered for ivory and slaves as a form of payment. Not only were guns exchanged but also bullets, and much more frequently than guns, for various daily necessities; a fact that remains true today. For example, in 2003 an AK47 bullet sold for Ush. 500 at Kaabong. This was equivalent to the price of two litres of local brew made from maize or millet, which could be acquired in exchange for bullets. This kind of trading was undertaken by soldiers in the local defence unit; when their salaries were delayed, they used bullets in place of cash to buy brew from local married women. The soldiers were spread all over Karamoja, and in Kaabong County in the Kotido District of Northern Karamoja women stored crops, money, and bullets in big baskets designed for crops. Bullets served many purposes; they were used to purchase daily food such as ground maize or millet or milk from goats or cows, as payment to local medicine men for the treatment of illness or injury, to repay friends who invited one to a feast, or as charity for beggars.

In 1979, President Idi Amin was overthrown. In the same year, the Matheniko, one of the three main territorial groups of the Karimojong, raided government armoury in Moroto, the capital of the district. The Moroto army barracks had been abandoned, and the Karimojong took advantage of the situation to steal a large number of guns from the deserted armoury. The number of guns taken was sufficient for the needs of the group, with a surplus left over for trade with neighbouring ethnic groups (Mamdani *et al.* 1992). Quam (1997) estimated that 10,000 guns went into circulation at that time; Onyang and O'Kasick (2007) estimated that, in addition to 10,000 guns, two million rounds of ammunition were transported at this time; and Odhiambo cited 12,000 guns in accordance with the estimation by Wangoola (2003). An elder recalled that people transported guns in bundles on the backs of donkeys, reminding him of bundles of firewood.

Types of Guns and Acquisition

By 1998, 64% of Karimojong men over 18 years of age owned a gun (n = 123), and in 2003, 90% among the Dodoth (n = 30) owned a gun. In July 2008, I studied approximately 214 rifles owned by the Karimojong in Bokora County, Moroto District. Of these, 89.7% were (semi-) automatic rifles. The rifles owned by the Karimojong can be classified into eight categories as follows:

(1) Amatida: The oldest gun was a small matchlock called *Amatida*. Twenty-two of these were owned by members of the community during my research. This is a handmade gun made of an iron pipe such as water pipe. Two types are found, *abicir* and *logelegel*. Both are shotguns that use gunpowder. They are stuffed and then ignited by friction. The cartridge case is removed by a single shot. The older of the two, *logelegel*, has no sight (Figure 1).

(2) Avtomat Kalashinikov-47s: Sixty-five Avtomat Kalashinikov-47s (AK47s) or copies of AK-47s were found. Locally, the AK47 is called *Amakana*, and it occurs in 10 versions: *Aceger*, *Akeju-asuulu* (or *Akeju-batat*), *Asili-reng*, *Apas*, *Amerikeju*, *Ayesengor*, *Nakasongola*, *Atodobokakilengit* (or *Aritongit*), *Akwapenek*, and *Ariamakor*. Both *Atodobokakilengit* and *Akwapenek* can be fitted with a fixed bayonet (*ekileng*). The sight of *Atodobokakilegit* is ring-shaped (*todo*

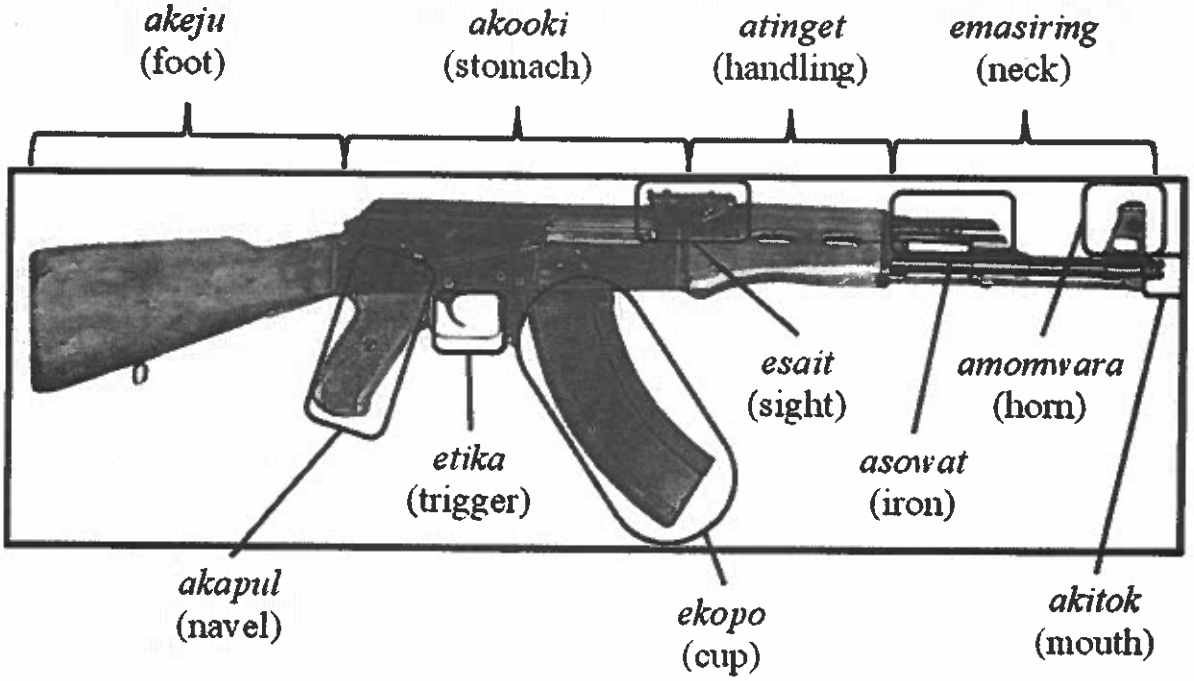

Figure 1: Vernacular Names of Rifle Parts

means round horn shape) and its wooden gunstock is dark (*bok*). Although it is very popular because it is long-lasting and has little kickback, *Nakasongola*, a word that originates from the name of a district in central Uganda where it is manufactured, is an inferior product that melts at the neck from repeated firing. *Apas*, which is a silver-white iron (*apas*), is made in Yugoslavia.

(3) Aliba: The G3 is called *Aliba*. Forty-four G3s were found. Originally, *aliba* meant a small green weaverbird. Germany, France, and Israel were identified as countries where this gun is produced, and the Kenyan police often use G3s.

(4) Eleponbong: The G2 is called *Eleponbong*. Five G2s were found. This gun has a stand and a square "cup". The stem of the word *Eleponbong* (*lep*) is from *akilep*, which means to milk, and the gun is said to run bullets as smoothly as milk coming from a cow.

(5) Eitabui: The Uzi gun is called *Eitabui*. Six Uzis were found, divided into two types: *Acaca* and *Loringiring*. The Uzi is a compact, boxy, and lightweight sub-machine gun. *Eitabui* originally referred to the square 3-liter can of oil that was distributed as aid supply during a period of starvation in 1980.

(6) Light Machine Gun: The light machine gun (LMG) is divided into two types: *Acoronga* and *Narikot*. Thirty-five LMGs were found. People say that *Narikot* "drinks" a chain (*erikot*) of bullets at one time. *Acoronga* has a tripod (*awed*) that looks like a chicken's foot.

(7) Self-loading Rifle: The self-loading rifle (SLR) is called *Epian*, which sounds like the word for thunder (*ngipian*). Thirty-one SLRs, divided into five types, were found: *Locicuwa*, *Lokirion*, *Nato*, *Akosowan*, and *Elekejen*. *Locicuwa* has a split on the side of the barrel near the front so that bullets can be seen as they are fired. *Lokirion* has a black body and a long, quadratic barrel.

(8) Apeledeng: The assault self-loading rifle (ASLR) is called *Apeledeng*. The ASLR is divided into four types: *Achinese*, *Agurigur*, *Agorogoro*, and *Aparipar*. Ten ASLRs were found. *Achinese* is used by the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) when they march in ceremonies. Its mouth appears as small as the eye of a Chinese person (hence the name), and it does not have *ekopo* (a magazine). *Agurigur* is powerful enough to shoot helicopters in the air. *Agorogoro* is an old type of gun and it makes a particular noise (*gorogoro*) as empty cartridges are removed one by one during shooting.

Data on the types of guns and the years of acquisition showed that (1) before 1979, gun transactions were recorded less than once every two years, but from 1980 onward, transactions took place every year; and (2) the AK47 (Avtomat Kalashnikov), developed by Michael Kalashnikov, was adopted by BC USSR in 1947; it spread to the horn of Africa, and was acquired by the Karimojong in 1980. When we divide the history of gun transactions into before and after 1979, the average of the number of guns acquired per year increases more than tenfold, from 0.6/year before 1979 to 6.5/year after 1979 (Figure 2). Thus, the increase in AK47s and G3s demonstrates that guns taken from the centre of the district in raids spread across the area. It can be said that the influx of rifles began in the late 19th century, whereas the proliferation of automatic rifles, especially AK47s and G3s, began in 1980 in Karamoja.

To understand the origins of these weapons, I examined how 35 guns were acquired. The most frequent way of acquiring a gun was by exchange; 17 of the 35 guns were acquired in this way. Among these, 16 were exchanged for animals (cattle, sheep, and goats), and the other one was exchanged for cash (Ush 15,000) and a cow. The second most frequent source of guns was an allocation from the Anti-Stock-Theft Unit (ASTU) (10 guns), followed by guns received as gifts (6 guns), through inheritance (1 gun), and in raids (1 gun). ASTU is the core of the vigilante system, a governmental scheme to remove guns in Karamoja by working in conjunction with legitimate indigenous leaders whose authority derives from their conformity to the traditional values and ethos of their own society. The following case illustrates how guns were legally supplied by a governmental institution.

Case 1

Anoo Ewapetwas allocated an AK47 (*Akwapenek*) after one month of training in an ASTU training camp in Abim in 2003. He was recommended for membership in the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) after 1 year of training. However, if he accepted this appointment, he was supposed to be stationed at Bonbo, Lira District, which seemed too far for him to return home. One night, he escaped from the training camp with the *Akwapenek* and walked for a week to reach Lotome. (January 16th 2005)

Such government-sponsored security institutions are auxiliary forces drawn from the local population, who are provided with limited law-enforcement training. However, delays in pay and harsh military discipline have resulted in many enrolees' leaving these jobs, and stories about the poor working conditions have prevented others from joining. Hence, this system is not working well.

When guns are acquired through exchange, payment is typically in the form of animals (cattle, sheep, and goats) and/or cash. Some merchants specialise in the gun trade, and people can get guns through such merchants or from ordinary people.

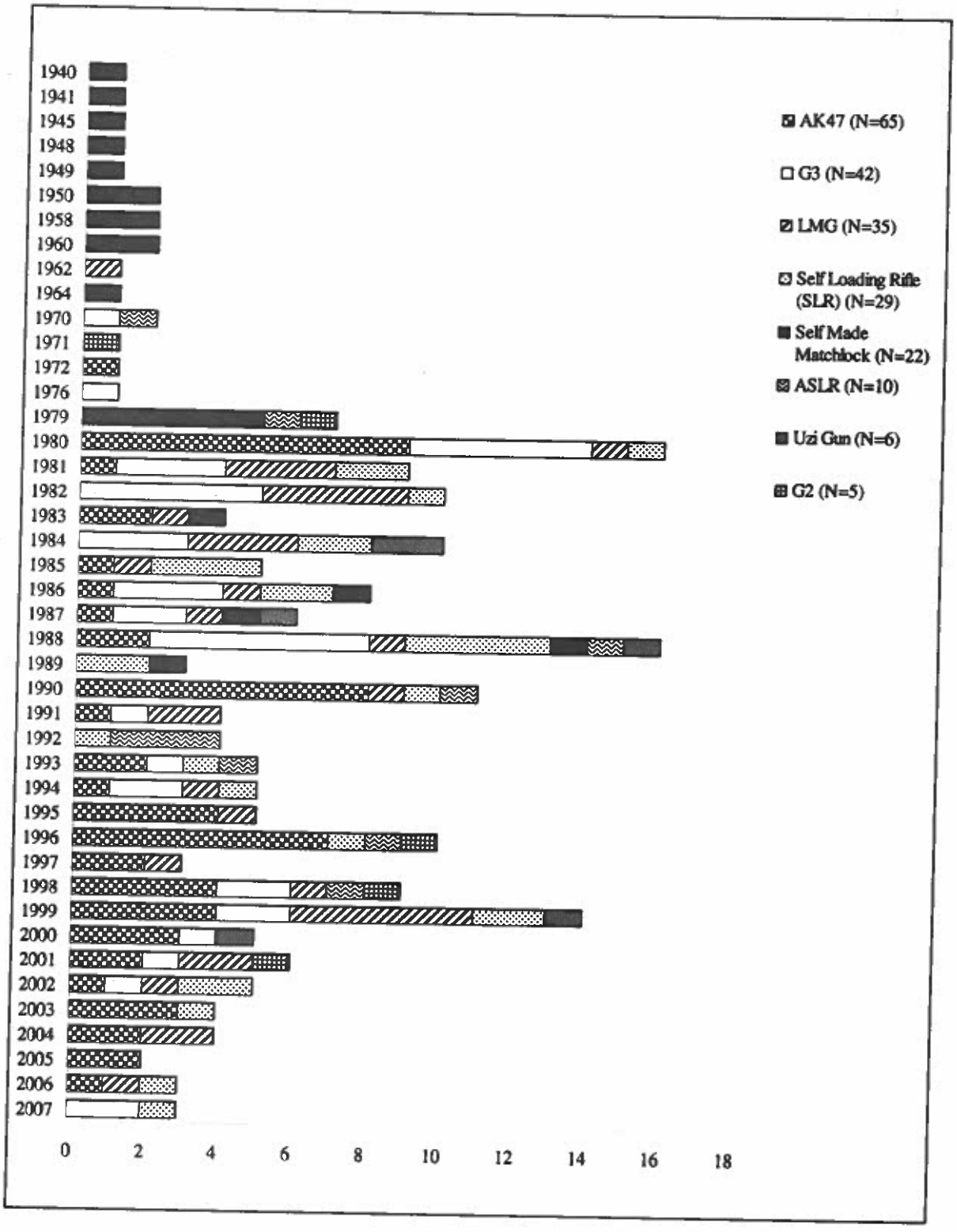

Figure 2: Types of Guns and Acquisition in Bokora (N=214)

Case 2

Lonya, who lived among the Dodoth, in Kalapata sub-county, located his cattle camp (*awi*) at Napoitipot (Kawalakol Parish, Kapedo sub-county) during the planting season (*naet*) of 1976. He was attacked by the Toposa and lost around 200 cattle. Lonya first went to Keyo, his clan mate, and later consulted with two other friends of the Didinga, Gapito and Lokuto. They advised him to go to Kapueta, a big town where many Toposa lived and where Gapito and Lokuto had Toposa friends. In Kapueta, Lonya was introduced by two friends to the county chief. The chief, named Liko, took Lonya to the Sudan police, who found the village where the thieves lived and recovered Lonya's livestock. After this, Lonya gave a castrated ox to Liko. Lonya became friends with Anipinyang, who was Toposa, and the two lived together for a year. During that time, Anipinyang said to Lonya, "It would be good for you to get some guns (*Amicir*, pl. *Ngamiciro*) and exchange them for livestock. The Dodoth don't have guns, which are good for protecting yourself from raids and also for conducting raids." With the help of Anipinyang, Lonya bought seven guns from Toposa villagers. He sold four of them to Lokoli Nyang and Emure in the centre of the Dodoth's land (Kaabong), Nasidya and Lokwanayng in Kalapata. The guns were then traded for cattle; one bought about 15–20 head, although when Lonya bought the guns in Toposa, he had paid 11–13 cattle for one gun. Lonya gave the other three guns to Loita, who was an elder brother of his second wife, to his half-brother Apeyo, and to Nginya Ngai Locham, who took care of his livestock. This was his first experience with trading, and he never did it again. Anipinyang gave Lonya some goats the day before he left, and they comprise the majority of Lonya's goat herd today.

In the Karimojong, the most common themes of the songs composed by local people revolve around cattle raids. Lomer Ikwanabuwo, a 12-year-old shepherd from the Karimojong, created a simple song in February 1998 that describes herding; the song refers to a place ("Lomuriakori"), an ox ("the yellow one"), and his brother (Lokiru): "Go graze in Lomuriakori, there is always Lokiru's gun, go graze in Lomuriakori, there is Lokiru's gun, go graze in Lomuriakori, the yellow one is becoming fat, there is always Lokiru's gun" (Lomer Ikwanabuwo; composed February 1998).

Lomuriakori is a place where cattle graze, especially in the driest season, and inter-ethnic conflict revolves around raiding cattle. The song was inspired by the potential battlefield where the elder brother's gun, always close at hand, accompanies the yellow ox. Thus, a contemporary pastoral scene includes a gun as well as cattle and companionship. We know from this song, which intertwines the sounds of *adaka* (to graze) and *atom* (a gun), that the presence of a gun makes it possible for cattle to graze in a pasture where grass is available to sustain livestock even in the driest season. This setting combining animals with the guns that guard them is such a basic and rudimentary reality nowadays that it even informs the songs of a 12-year-old boy, although this experience may not be limited to the pastoral societies of north-eastern Uganda, but may also be common in African pastoral societies in general (Bevan 2007).

Dyson-Hudson (1966), Gourlay (1971), Novelli (1988), and Knighton (2005), who conducted anthropological research in Karimojong society from the 1950s to the 2000s, all confirmed that the Karimojong maintain most aspects of their lives by utilizing resources that they can acquire within their own territory, and they generally abide by traditional social, political, and cultural norms. Indeed, the inhabitants of Karamoja, who live in the most marginal part of the nation, have lived relatively self-contained

lives. However, guns were introduced from outside their self-contained world and have been used for both defence and offence; they have now come to carry strong cultural meanings.

Disarmament Operations

Memory of Disarmament

After the end of the cold war, the world started to tackle small arms and light weapons as a global problem with respect to international security and development. In Uganda, especially after the decline in the activity of the Lord's Resistance Army in northern Uganda, the modernization of weapons and heavy armaments in north-eastern pastoral societies were taken into serious consideration by international, governmental, and non-governmental organizations. The Karamoja region became the last target for the state's efforts to "pacify" this margin of the nation's territory.

Disarmament can be broadly defined as the removal of weapons from combatants and from general circulation within a population. In this case, the weapons, which in most cases are small hand-held arms, can be either legally or illegally in the possession of certain segments of the population. In a report written by the Ministry of Defence and the Prime Minister's Office, it was reported that the first disarmament involving the Karimojong was conducted in 1961 and 1962 by the colonial government. In 1955, the Karimojong had attacked the Teso, killing 22 people and raiding 2,000 cattle. Several large-scale attacks followed across the national boundary, and the government decided to step in. The government formed a special paramilitary police force, with the main body comprised of the Ganda people, who are Bantu-speaking agriculturalists. However, the objects they confiscated were spears rather than guns, and this disarmament programme is remembered by the Karimojong and the Dodoth as "the season of the spear". One Dodoth elder reminisced that the matchlock type of gun, which is called *Amatida* or *Amiciro*, was less convenient than a spear because it takes time to load bullets and requires him to run away from an enemy after firing a single gunshot. Thus, combatants mainly used spears at that time.

Although Uganda achieved independence in 1962, the regime has changed five times since then through military force, leading up to 1986 when Yoweri Museveni, the current president, assumed power in a military coup. However, even during periods of civil war, the central government continued interventions aimed at disarming people in Karamoja. For example, Milton Obote established peoples' militias in all the frontier districts. This was followed by an attempt at disarmament in 1983–1984, which was launched to encourage people to hand in their guns. The military embarked on operations to recover guns using helicopter gunships from the Kenyan Government. There were reports of livestock seized, kraals and homes burnt, and people killed and displaced. It is said that most Pokot and Matheniko groups crossed into Kenya with their cows and guns to escape the onslaught. In 1983, the "army bombed Matany on December 28th and again the next day for punishment," and in 1984, "government helicopters bombed homesteads, confiscated cattle, and set fire to all of the major trading centres and cattle markets in Karamoja." These events are memorialized as the season of theft (*ekaru akooko*). In 1985, Tito Okello and Major Obonyo came to Kotido, the centre of Jie land, in three helicopters and ordered the disarmament of Karamoja. The elders went to the sacred place, Lomus (*Akiriketh*), and sacrificed a bull to the gods to save them from Tito Okello and his army. In 1986, '*Kandoya*' methods were used on the Karimojong by the NRM Government led by Yoweri Museveni to compel the warriors to relinquish their guns. The year 1986 is called "*ekaru ngolo ayenere ngitunga*

angamuguwae," which can be translated as "the season when people were tied with rope." The story is as follows: "Museveni's soldiers came to the district to confiscate weapons. People who refused to turn them over were tied at their knees and elbows and hung from poles." Thus, government efforts to remove weapons from Karamoja sometimes involved voluntary surrender of weapons, but the people have a strong image of disarmament that involves overwhelming and violent interventions resulting in the loss of property and physical abuse.

Emancipation from Army Base

These memories are not far from the present reality, as these images from the past have echoes still today. But people have little chance to share their experiences, such as that told by one victim of the current security operations. Military operations designed to confiscate guns in Karamoja start with secret information. One or two "intelligence officers" are posted in a barrack to facilitate the process. In Moroto district, at least 25 barracks including detachment, brigade, and divisional barracks, were counted in 2008. Each barracks holds 50–100 battalions. In the actual operation, armies in charge of the area come from barracks and surround a village, usually in the early morning, to capture suspected gun owners and to determine whether anybody else has a gun. Residents are forced out of the village and divided into two lines according to gender, and the males are physically searched. Meanwhile, inside the village, the soldiers go door to door searching for guns and other items such as bullets, military uniforms, and soldiers' caps. If any of these items are found, their owners are either taken to the army barracks or questioned and released. Any man who was not released was taken to the army post and might face a court-martial in the Moroto Barrack Division.

At the army base, captured individuals claimed to have experienced torture; soldiers were said to have beaten people with sticks, forced many people into small, low-roofed huts (*ejaa*) where they could only kneel, and forced people to perform heavy labour and then allow only one or two showers per week. For example, Loyep Edomo was captured and held in the barracks of Lotome sub-county in Moroto district three times for a total of 16 days since November 2007. According to his reports, the daily schedule for those who were captured was as follows: wake at 7 a.m., labour from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. with one toilet break at 10 a.m., eat at 1 p.m., labour immediately after eating until 4 p.m., and a beating at 4 p.m. Labour consisted of carrying stones to construct the commander's hut, watering, firewood gathering, gathering grass for hut roofing, and slashing grass inside the army compound. Given the torture, there are attempts to free those who have been captured.

Once a friend or relative is captured and taken to the barracks, people try to free the captive by any means available because they know that life inside is full of suffering. They know because they hear the stories and see the injuries with their own eyes when they are allowed to visit the prisoners to bring them supper at midday. Table 1 summarizes the results of studies on the whereabouts and condition of people who have been captured. More than 90% of those who were captured in these operations were male (n = 53). Although it is mainly male youth and young men who are abducted, females are sometimes taken as well.

Key resources for freeing captives include having a connection with administrative officers and having cash to pay bribes and buy guns. Especially when prisoners are taken to the barracks or removed to an area remote from the administrative centre prior to being sent to the brigade or Moroto Military Barrack (Division), friends and family of those captured often try to win their release by bribing officials and paying witnesses. Bribes paid to intelligence officers range from Ush 250,000 to 300,000. When people

Table 1: Imprisoned Residents of Bokora County

	Male					Male Subtotal	Female			Female Subtotal	Total
	Age: Teens	20s	30s	40s	60s		20s	30s	40s		
Not yet released		1	2			3					3
Paid cash	3	2		1		6					6
Showed certificate			1			1			1	1	2
Submitted a gun	7	10	8			25	1	1		2	27
Had a witness	1	10	2		1	14					14
Unknown	1					1					1
Total	12	23	13	1	1	50	1	1	1	3	53

(Data for Jan, 2004; Jan, Mar, May, Oct, Dec, 2007; Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Jul, Aug, 2008)

ask an administrative officer to testify that the suspect did not have a gun, they must often offer a small amount of money, perhaps Ush 10,000, or a local brew. Cash is raised for bribes by sons, fathers, mothers, in-laws, and friends who sell goats or by the prisoner's wife or sister who sell brew.

Case 3

Lokiru Apalounya, who is currently 30 years old (as of 2009), was captured in January 2007 and taken to Lotome Army Barracks 1 km away at the Lotome sub-county administrative centre. To win his release, cash (10,000 Ush) was taken to a local-council-of-one (LC1) official, one of many appointed to oversee the smallest administrative unit of the community, the village (*ere*). This cash came from Iiko, Lokiru's 15-year-old younger sister, who sold brewed liquor to earn money to pay her secondary school fees. Their mother, Ayenget, persuaded Iiko to use the money to buy Lokiru's release, and the mother handed over the cash a week after Lokiru's capture.

Out of 49 cases in which a prisoner was freed, a gun was used as payment in 27 cases. In 16 of the 27 cases, the gun was owned by the prisoner, but in the remaining 11 cases, it belonged to other parties. In these cases, the prisoner's brother, friend, husband, wife, or in-laws provided the gun that bought the prisoner's freedom.

Case 4

In April 2007, Lowakori came under suspicion and was taken to Nawaikorot in Bokora county, but he had no gun to trade for his freedom. Inyang, the husband of Lowakori's sister, offered his gun on Lowakori's behalf. Inyang's gun had been purchased shortly before the arrest.

Case 5

In June 2007, Acia Lopusteba was arrested without his gun. He was taken to Morulinga Detachment. His elder brother went to a gun-shop in Bokora county and bought an

AK47 (*Amakana*), paying with two cows and an ox. He gave the gun to a LC1 official, who passed it on to the army commander in the Detachment, and Acia was freed.

Cash for bribes, guns that are newly purchased, and guns provided to free prisoners are treated as gifts, and reimbursement is not expected, as is usually the case among friends and family. However, in one case, a gun provided as payment for the release of a prisoner was part of a more complicated exchange that did involve recompense. In this case, in order for the child of an unmarried woman to become part of the family of the genitor to the child, a gun was given to the unmarried woman's mother, and the gun was then used to purchase the freedom of the unmarried woman's brother.

Conclusion

I have traced the historical course of ethnographic research on the social unrest generated by cattle raids and have discussed the influx and proliferation of guns in Karamoja. This examination suggests that numerous aspects of the current situation, including the declining authority of the elders, changes in the economy, the proliferation of guns, the scarcity of resources, and disruptions in the interactions between ethnic groups, together constitute the root causes of violence. The idea that the possession of guns by pastoralists is a problem has been prominent in contemporary anthropological perspectives, and this view is shared by the state, as evidenced in governmental attempts to remove "illegal" guns. This is a point of view that grants legitimacy to policies whose aim is to divest local people of guns.

The influx of guns can be traced to the import of rifles in the late 19th century. Initially, rifles were supplied to local people as tools for hunting elephants or were given as payment for hunting; later, guns became a medium of exchange for slaves and ivory. Rifles, which have become automatic weapons in current times, are exchanged for animals. They are also used for protection, without which raising livestock would be impossible. Ammunition, too, is regularly exchanged for milk, used as payment for liquor, or given as a charitable contribution.

I have also demonstrated how the continuing series of government interventions whose goal is disarmament are remembered by local people, and how inhabitants respond to violent military operations designed to remove guns from the region. From the perspective of the people, government disarmament programmes that destroy property and injure inhabitants are regarded as violent acts rather than as desirable efforts to foster peace. When the disarmament programme currently in progress resorts to force, the people are terrified, and the friends and family of those taken prisoner struggle to achieve their freedom. Among other strategies, a common way of negotiating a prisoner's freedom involves exchanging newly purchased guns or guns owned by people other than the prisoner. It would seem that these cases satisfy the purpose of removing guns from local ownership in North-eastern Uganda. However, although guns are given to the UPDF in exchange for prisoners, the reality is that demand for guns is stimulated by the desire to have guns with which to barter for captives' freedom. The supply and possession of guns is difficult to eradicate, given this complex network of exchange and the need to resort to that network in order to free one's friends and family. To expect that the disarmament programme in its current form might be effective is no more reasonable than to expect that the network of intimate relationships in the society will disappear.

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