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# Women and Cattle Rustling: A case Study of Pokot Women in North Western Kenya

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## Abstract

*This paper is about the participation of pastoralist Pokot women in cattle raiding in north western Kenya. The paper presents that the subject of women participation in cattle raiding has long been ignored by eminent writers on the subject, and was not a priority research area. It identifies four key studies on pastoralism and cattle raiding in eastern Africa which ignored women's role in it. Very recent studies on the topic have not been systematic. This paper transacts cattle raiding and women using social cubism theory, a framework that is found appropriate given its dynamic and multi-dimensional nature. The paper concludes that Pokot women are active participants in cattle raiding.*

**Keywords:** Pokot, Kenya, women, cattle, rustling, conflict, social, cubism

## 1. Introduction

Some studies greatly defined subsequent areas of research in pastoralism in Kenya and the entire Eastern Africa region. The definition of priority areas for research led to some areas being favorite while other deserving topics were ignored. Four studies particularly stand out in this. I will briefly present each of them. In 1980 the publication of “*The Future of Pastoral Peoples*”, proceedings of an international conference defined the subsequent studies on pastoralism for much of the 1980s, 1990s and even further into the 2000s. The conference brought together a constellation of the world's renown anthropologists, researchers on pastoralism and policy advisers. A total of thirty-one papers were presented out of which only one was on women. Papers focused on the following themes: the role of anthropology in pastoral development; the political economy of pastoralism; the economics of pastoralism; the role of government in pastoral development; and the research process, strategies, goals and methods. The conference was actually women-blind. As observed by Vigdis Broch-Due, et.



al (1980),

“In the past women’s roles have been neglected by development planners and social science researchers. Women were not mentioned at this conference until a special request was made. This has serious implications for research priorities. The critical role of women in the household economy is neglected. Women have been considered as passive participants in their social world. This bias has made researchers to be preoccupied with the formal power structure of pastoral societies yet there are important areas of decision making for women as well as ways they have of influencing male decisions.”

In the section of research priorities gleaned from the thirty one papers and floor discussions of the conference, the following were set to guide subsequent research for decades to come: influence of the state on pastoralism, pastoralism in a regional perspective, the market for products of pastoralism, the household economy of the pastoralist, and pastoralist resources. The role of women in pastoralism was not considered a priority research area, and for decades ahead.

The second publication was the edited volume “*Warfare among East African Herders*” (Fukui and Turton, eds 1979). The publication had nine contributors out of whom five concentrated on the warfare between pastoralist communities living in the lower Omo valley in South West Ethiopia. They principally tackled themes including the military role of age-sets, pastoralist’s aggression and the nature of expansion. The other three authors were more inspired to write on the Maasai (Jacobs), Maasai and Samburu (Fratkin) and Tatoga (Tomikawa). Jacobs (ibid) argued that the aggressive notion of the Maasai was more historical than contemporary. Other writers in this publication particularly Almagor, Baxter and Tornay all presented that centralization of authority was a key impetus for warfare among pastoralists.

The five papers were focused on the communities living in the south Omo Valley (or north of Lake Turkana). They discussed inter-group warfare. Tornay concentrated on the warfare between the Nyangatom, Dassanech, Mursi, Hamara and Kara communities. Almagor wrote on warfare among the Dassanech while Fukui concentrated on the Bodi, Dime and Mursi warfare. Todd investigated the aggression between the Dime and Bodi. In the papers of the southern Ethiopian communities there is concurrence that territorial expansion was not the main persuasion in the warfare because conquered territory was not occupied by the victorious participant group. Rather the motivation for warfare was,

*The cultural value of killing enemies, the acquisition of livestock, retaliation and revenge (Galaty, 1983).*

In a book review, Berntsen (1980) noted that the nine papers in the trend-setting publication were focused on the age-graded pastoralist groups of Kenya and southern Ethiopia. The writers specifically were: P.T.W. Baxter (Oromo); Alan Jacobs (Maasai); Horimichi Tomikawa (Datoga); Eliot Fratkin (Samburu); Serge Tornay (Nyangatom); Uri Almagor (Dassanetch); Katsuyoshi Fukui (Bodi); David Turton (Mursi) and Dave Todd (Dime). The southern Ethiopian studies were undertaken between 1968-1976, a time of intense pastoralist conflict hence



readers are treated to the live accounts of both victims and raiders. The salient features common in all the papers were: interrelationship among age-organizations and warfare, technology, strategy, causes and effects (Berntsen, 1980). One noticeable absence was the focus on women in the fighting communities. The papers presented, and, the book review by Berntsen (*op.cit*) provide a key conclusion on studies of warfare among pastoralists. Orthodox literature on warfare among pastoralists tends to conclude that they raid or fight each other for one thing- acquisition of cattle, an obvious over-simplification of pastoralist warfare. In the case of southern Ethiopia, acquisition of cattle was not the immediate concern in the inter-pastoralist warfare. Instead it was desire to occupy agricultural land of the other group for cultivation or the harvest of mature crops.

For instance the Mursi raided the Bodi to lay claim over agricultural land they had quietly infiltrated before. Dassanetch raids were a response to decline in food production occasioned by intense and persistent flooding of their territory. The incessant Nyangatom attacks on the Kara community forced them to abandon ripe fields of grain which the Nyangatom harvested. The Bodi were more motivated with the murder of an enemy than acquisition of cattle. For the Oromo, the prestige associated with killing an enemy ranked as high as that of acquiring cattle, although for the Oromo and Maasai raiding for cattle remained supreme. As noted in Baxter's report on Oromo,

*A young man who did not acquire at least one trophy was not welcomed as a son-in-law. A successful warrior received cattle, sexual favors and great prestige.*

Jacobs reporting on the Maasai showed the high motivation for cattle in raids as he wrote,

*Maasai elders complained that the British ban on raiding would mean that the poorer young men would have difficulty acquiring wealth in order to marry and settle as elders*

The lacunae in this publication was the lack of mention of the role women play in the warfare. The women perspective in the warfare that tore communities apart for decades was not documented, hence this influence on later studies was apparent.

Three decades later, Carol R. Ember *et.al* released a new publication in 2015 titled, "*Rain and Raids Revisited: Disaggregating Ethnic Group Livestock Raiding in the Ethiopian-Kenyan Border Region*". The focus of the paper was on the relationship between weather (rainfall) and intensity of raiding among Borana, Dassanech, Gabbra, Garre and Samburu pastoralist communities. The report presented detailed weather and raids data across the pastoralist groups. It concluded that there was more livestock-related raids when one group moved closer to other ethnic groups whether in the wet or dry season. Women and raids was not mentioned.

One of the most consolidated and elaborate collection on pastoralism across the world was written by Blench (2006). The report is divided into thirteen chapters with wonderful precision. He acknowledges the romanticism associated with cattle raiding as initially presented by Fukui and Turton (*ibid*) but preferred to discuss cattle theft and its urban tentacles. In the section on role of women in pastoral society the focus is on the household tasks allocated to



women. Women are presented as a homogeneous group in all pastoralist societies. They are considered as subjects of patriarchy. The role of women in cattle raiding is tacitly absent

### 1.1 Women in Pastoralist Conflict and Cattle

According to Ninsiima (2006) in reference to the Karamojong of eastern Uganda a married woman is free to abandon her husband for another one if he does not have enough cattle and cannot raid to acquire them. Watakila (2014) in a study of Nilotic communities found that women in pursuit of recognition often encourage warriors to stage cattle raids. Odary, Komba and Nyamato (2020) in reference to Pokot observed that young women decorate new initiates with products of their own labour. In return the initiates promise acquisition of cattle for appeasement into marriage. Pastoralist women mock men who fear to raid for livestock among the Pokot. Instead the brave men are celebrated (Tulel, 2013).

In reference to the Somali of the greater Mandera area the role of women in raids was laid bare.

*Women are said to encourage men and boys to take up arms. If a woman shakes her hair loose, it is worse than being hit by a spear. Women cajole those who are reluctant, sometimes by humiliating them in public or private (an undocumented Somali respondent).*

Women push men and boys with words meant to gender-shame and humiliate them such as accusing them of being women (Odary, Komba and Nyamato, 2020). Among the Dassanech, women push their sons to raid in order to obtain cattle for bride wealth. They prepare meals and amulets for them after a successful raid (Watakila, 2014). Generally women are described as spoilers of good inter-ethnic relations for gain. The primary target in the raids is cattle that often finds way into the formal market and to a lesser extent into restocking (Mburu, 2002).

The livestock raids have been on increase (Mkutu, 2008; UNDP, 2011). The raiders are mainly young men below 30 years. The cattle raids are hierarchical in character. The first are the mass raids which may involve hundreds, even thousands of raiders attacking a neighbouring community. The second level are the “adakar” (cluster of related families) involving up to one hundred youth raid a neighbouring kraal of another community. The lowest in hierarchy is a handful of often about 10-20 warriors target small, isolated and unprotected kraal of the neighbouring community. There has been a general decline in mass raids (TUPADO 2011). The widespread mobile phone network has reduced the attractiveness of large raids and as well improved the ability of the administration and victim community to prepare thereby diminishing the motivation of the attackers (Wamuyu, 2014).

In a study by Kimani, Okemwa and Masiga (2021) they report that in terms of participation in cattle raids the Pokot respondents said that men only 71.5%, men and women 27.7% and women only 0.8% participate in the various aspects of cattle raiding. This affirms that cattle raids are not a male-only affair. In addition women were found to be key in sanctioning of cattle raids. Women involvement in cattle raids has also been reported by Cheserek, Odenyo



Livestock raids are a gendered experience. However the role played, nature, extent and level of involvement remains a grey area of research on women in pastoralism.

The four publications referred to above have one thing in common-the role of women either as perpetrators, facilitators or victims was not investigated or even implied in any of them. Studies on pastoralism, women and cattle raiding only began to emerge in the after the turn of the century. Hence the study of the participation of women in warfare among East African pastoralists apart from being too recent, still remains a lacuna.

Further the existing theoretical frameworks used to study the role of women in the recent studies failed to capture it comprehensively and I therefore utilize a new theoretical framework of social cubism to demonstrate better how it captures the multi-dimensional nature of the role of women in cattle rustling.

This paper is designed to investigate and contribute to debate on this topical, but often ignored area of social research.

## **1.2 Ethnographic Profile of the Pokot People**

GOK (1950) reported the Pokot as the Suk and were about 60% pastoral (pipatich) and 40% agricultural (pipagha). Their language is similar to Nandi in vocabulary and structure. Suk was a nickname given to them by the Maasai – a reference to ignorant people living in the hills and cultivating.

Later on they adopted cattle keeping. Initially they lived in the territory towards the western end of Cherengani hills at Mt. Sekerr. After many years of close interaction with the Karamojong and Turkana they acquired many of their customs including singing, baboon dance and sapan a rite of passage before they descended to the lowlands to practice pastoralism. Beech (1911) described them as a people who were suspicious of one's motives, selfish and without affection.

The pastoralist Pokot are rich in cattle and look with contempt at their agricultural brethren for being poor. Their mode of life is simple and befits a people who are constantly moving with herds and families. GoK (1951) reported that the East Pokot cattle wealth made them rank among the top two cattle keeping communities in East Africa. Their interests outside cattle are minimal. They have elaborate cultural ceremonies which encompass an individual all through life. The most prominent cultural ceremony in sapan a (Peristiany, 1951).

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

In order to transact this paper, a social cubism theory is utilized as a framework for analyzing the role of Pokot women in cattle raiding. The multi-faceted nature of social cubism theory is found to be a richer body of knowledge for analyzing the dynamism embedded in women and cattle raiding.



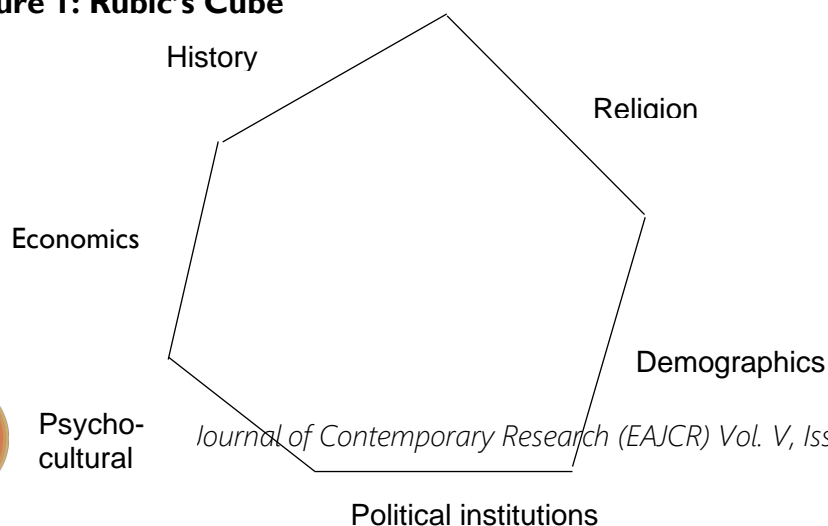


## 2.1 Social Cubism Theory

Initially designed for analysis of international ethno territorial conflict, but it can also be used to analyze micro-conflicts in other settings such cattle raiding and the consequences that follow. The relevance of social cubism is entrenched in the following:

- It enables the researcher to look at Pokot women and raiding for livestock from many corners. It also makes one to acknowledge that sometimes, under different conditions, in different contexts the factors about women and cattle raiding can be interconnected in unique ways.
- In a geographical setting inhabited by members of different pastoralist communities, such as north-western Kenya, social cubism theory gives the researcher the luxury to take stock of and put into account several factors in a dynamic pastoral environment.
- The use of social cubism to understand the participation of Pokot women in cattle raiding on neighbouring Turkana, Marakwet, Samburu, Il Chamus and Tugen communities will shed light on the forms of participation and motivation, and contribute to resolving the problem of cattle raiding in northwestern part of Kenya.
- In north-western Kenya, most communities struggle with the problem of inter-ethnic conflict whose causes can very easily be related to cattle raiding. Some of the conflicts that arise out of Pokot cattle raiding are managed or addressed using other local or government approaches. In other cases some communities have a fatalistic view that there is nothing to do about it. However, social cubism can be used to examine and analyze the problem of Pokot women in cattle raids.
- In north-western Kenya there are several ethnic groups hence this presents issues of cultural differences and how different communities perceive cultural practices, participate in them or react to them. In some communities cattle raiding by women has played a significant role in their socialization.
- The theory draws its inspiration from Rubic's Cube hence the theory uses "a social cube of conflict as having six interrelated components: history, religion, demographics, political institutions and non-institutional behaviour, economics and psycho cultural (Mc Kay, 2002).

**Figure 1: Rubic's Cube**



The six factors are dynamic, they interact with each other simultaneously or not, in whole or in part. The social cube may be understood or drawn in a particular way depending on the factors e.g. participants, circumstances, situation in this case of Pokot women in cattleraiding. The social cube is dynamic and new information may be added on any side to assist in better understanding of women in cattle raiding. Given its reproductive nature (ability to accept new ideas, facts as the situation unfolds, to change) remains its strength to understand the motivation of Pokot women in cattle raiding.

The dynamism in social cubism allows it to consider or add new information hence leading to social change. Social cubism is the opposite of functionalism given its ability to accept social change. Social cubism theory is itself designed to analyze conflict. Conflict theory in its original form is confined to macro structures and macro interests. In this context conflict theory can be used to explain the social interests of Pokot women in their entirety in cattle raiding, but not as individuals.

The participation of Pokot women in aspects of cattle raiding has baffled many scholars interested in pastoralism, culture, gender and conflict. The theoretical bases presented here attempt in a small way to explain this phenomenon to varying degrees of success. Social cubism theory was originally designed to aid in analysis of macro level conflict particularly international ethno-territorial conflict. However, it is also applicable to micro level (as conflict between two ethnic groups in a local environment) conflict analysis (Byrne and Carter, 1996).

The theory presents an opportunity to consider several factors that motivate women to participate in cattle raiding. Equally useful is that it presents possibilities to consider in resolving conflict emanating from cattle rustling between Pokot and other neighboring communities. In addition, the theory offers another option to researchers to look at other related factors such as poverty, cultural expectations, scheming by other communities, livestock markets among others in understanding cattle raiding and women. Using a cube which has four sides, a social cube is presented as having six interrelated sides: history, religion, demographics, political institutions, non-institutionalized behavior, economics and psych cultural factors. All the factors interact at different times, levels and within changing forces. (Herzberger, 1996).

All the interacting sides are dynamic just as the practice of cattle raiding is dynamic, different styles, forms, times, magnitude for instance are used with different consequences each time. Of the six sides this paper rallies with three of them which are relevant for this paper- history, religion and psycho cultural all which attempt to elucidate Pokot women participation in cattle raiding. History makes us aware that the practice of cattle raiding has been part of Pokot culture from the time they descended from the hills on abandoning the tedious and unprestigious task of cultivating, and adopted cattle keeping (Lamphear,1992; Peristiany,1951; Beech, 1911).

Therefore, Pokot women participation in cattle raiding is tied to the history of the Pokot as a





people. With the dynamism implied, social cubism attempts to overcome the most arching weakness found in structural functionalism-its inability to account for social change as noted from its Comtean and Durkheimian origins (Ritzer and Stepnisky, 2017). At another level social cubism appears to focus on general conflict and conflict resolution, while this paper is retained at group behavior in cattle rustling. Hence the theory largely remains deficient in giving an adequate account of what motivates Pokot women to so actively participate in cattle raiding.

On the religious front, the story of human creation as narrated in Genesis, woman is presented as inferior to man, having been created as an after-thought on God realizing that man was lonely and/or overworked and needed a helper (Crouch, 2010). The theory of woman creation which portrays woman as weak and subject to man does not apply in the context of Pokot women and cattle raiding. In cattle raiding women play a key role, they are the engine behind the practice. Women condition men in terms of when to stage the raids in this risky enterprise.

Pokot women are not passive in cattle raiding. The psychocultural lens is more elucidating in my attempt to understand Pokot women and cattle raiding. Culture is the frame of life, it conditions how people perceive and define events in their life. In the eyes of Pokot women, cattle raiding is the in-thing that men must do if they are to win women favor for marriage. It is rational, right and a cultural obligation. The tying and fastening of leketio cultural practice to protect their sons and husbands affirms the centrality of Pokot women in cattle rustling. Even feminist theory (Davis, 2017) with its traditional focus on patriarchy as the universal cause of women subjection in all societies falls short in accounting for cases where women play a leading role.

### 3. Methodology

The study used a sample size of 137 adult male and female residents of the border areas of Mukutani (Baringo), Yatia (baringo), Loruk (Baringo), Masol (West Pokot) , Nasolot (West Pokot) and Ameyan. The residents of these locations were purposively sampled because cattle raiding is most prominent in these border areas. Similarly all adult members in these field sites have direct and indirect experience of cattle raiding therefore they have the knowledge necessary to answer the inquiry.

The data used to write this paper was collected over a three year period 2018-2021 in West Pokot and Baringo counties. In particular data collection was done in Tiaty East sub county of Baringo and in Pokot Central and Pokot North Sub counties of West Pokot County. The two regions are occupied by the pastoralist section of the Pokot (pipatich). Their agricultural brethren live in the higher sections ideal for crop farming. The sections selected were ideal for a study of cattle raiding since the practice takes place in the drier sections that border the Turkana, Marakwet, Samburu, Tugen and Il Chamus communities all who have been victims, at different levels of the incessant Pokot cattle raids. (d) Description of the Study Area

In Baringo County the Pokot pastoralists live in Tiaty Sub County which has 24 administration locations. The area is lowland and receives an average of 600mm of rain per annum. The



average temperature is 350c. The human population is 131,984 (County population is 754,014) living in 28,896 (County 150,174) households (KNBS, 2018). The poverty incidence is 72.9% compared to 45.2% nationally (GoK, (2018a).

In West Pokot County, the pastoralists live in the northern and north eastern plains with a lower altitude of 900m above sea level. The low altitude areas occupied by pastoralists are Alale, Kacheliba, Kongelai, Masol and Parts of Sigor. Administratively these areas are in West Pokot, Pokot Central and Pokot North sub counties (GoK, 2018b). The lower altitude areas receive 600mm average rainfall annually and 300c of temperature. In 2018 the population density was 63 persons per km square compared to 164 persons per km square in the highland agricultural areas (GoK, 2018b).

### 3.1 Data Collection and Analysis

In this study an explanatory research design was adopted to help explain the role of Pokot women in cattle raiding. The aim was to understand the Pokot pastoralists and raiding over a period of time, pastoralism and the role of women in the dynamics of pastoralism. The study used secondary and primary data sources.

The secondary data sources were academic literature, research reports and government reports were particularly found useful in understanding the dimensions of the Pokot pastoralists, Pokot women and cattle raiding.

Primary data sources were: Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) with Pokot men, women and youth. All the discussions centered on the topic of cattle keeping, cattle raiding and the role each section of society played. In sum twelve FGDs were held, six in Baringo County and an equal number in West Pokot County. Each FGD was planned, organized and held on an independent day. Each FGD had between 10-12 members who were carefully selected from the population following a criteria that had been developed. The assistance of the village elders and women leaders was particularly useful in identifying the appropriate participants. Only those who freely consented to the discussion were allowed to participate. No identifies of the participants were taken in order to maintain anonymity of the responses and safety of the participants.

Key Informant Interviews for in-depth discussions were held with: chiefs, heads of the Kokwo (Pokot council of elders), youth leaders and the heads of Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organization at location levels. Out of this method more detailed information was obtained on Pokot aspects of Pokot history, cultural practices and the role of women. The combination of the methods helped to corroborate and yield reliable data.

A short structured questionnaire was administered to 137 adult male and female respondents in the study area. The aim was to obtain particular quantitative information and position on certain aspects of cattle raiding and the role women play. The method yielded useful information that was used to tie the loose nodes in the study. Through this method I established that women were at the core of cattle raids.



Descriptive statistics were generated and used for primary quantitative data. Content and thematic analysis were used to analyze qualitative data to identify key themes. In particular thematic analysis were completed using NVIVO 12 version.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Applying Social Cubism theory to Results

Based on the information obtained from the diverse respondents there is strong consensus that cattle raiding is a gendered process. It involves all people in the community contrary to the innuendos and assumptions held by commoners, administrators and some scholars of pastoralism in eastern Africa. Another point that emerges strong is that cattle raiding is a process, it is not an instant event. It goes through several prior stages. The action of going on a raid is among the last sections of the process. In addition it was also apparent that the female at different ages (unmarried, married, elderly) play different roles in the cattle raiding process.

The Six Sides of Social Cubism theory and Pokot women in cattle raids:

#### 4.1.1 History and the history of cattle keeping

For a deeper understanding of Pokot women in cattle raiding the history of the cultural practice is necessary. Readers deserve to know the history behind the cultural practice. Cattle raiding is not a recent creation. From the time the *Suk* (original name of present Pokot) descended from the hills and abandoned agriculture to adopt cattle keeping in the plains coincided with their emphasis on cattle. They first acquired cattle culture from the Karamojong (Stewart, 1950). Oral history has that Pokot people regard all cattle to belong to them and it this knowledge forms a great part of their world view (Pierli, et. al. 2006). Recorded history of the Pokot is a history of cattle after they acquired it from the Karamojong and later surpassed them in appropriation and accumulation. A Pokot person's life is all tied around cattle and their history is a history of cattle. As reported by Peristiany (1951) the *sapana* rite of passage, the most important event in the life of a Pokot man begins and ends with cattle, and the discussions and blessings by elders are about how to acquire and keep cattle. The merry making and the *adong'a* dance in which both men and women partake has cattle as the key subject. Therefore Pokot women's dalliance with cattle raiding is understood in this perspective.

#### 4.1.2 Religion and acquisition of cattle.

Pokot life is so engrained with religion. From childbirth, initiation, marriage, rites of passage and death, tororot (God) is at the centre. Possession of cattle and doing all it can to bring home cattle and to protect its tenders is interpreted as a favour from tororot. The cattle are conceived in the image of tororot. Pokot worship cattle. To them cattle is tororot because it gives them everything in life- food, dress, bride wealth, a means of social exchange, licence to perform *sapana*, fame and social recognition. Tororot is placed so high that only a cow can be sacrificed to appease him (Mutsotso, 2010). Eastern Africa's pastoralist's obsession



with cattle was long reported in the cattle complex (Herskovits, 1923). Therefore Pokot religion has a strong influence on the people's view of cattle and any action including women participation in cattle raiding is justified on this premise. Pokot culture from birth, initiation, marriage and death invoke cattle (Mutsotso, 2010). Sapana rite of passage only assumes significance if cattle is involved (Peristiany, 1951; KNCHR, 2016). Since religion is at the core of every Pokot aspect it makes it difficult to address or change the women participation in cattle raiding. When Pokot women partake in cattle raiding they are fulfilling tororot's wish. When the cattle raid mission succeeds it is a blessing by tororot. Before going on a raid an animal is sacrificed and its intestines examined by the p'kwanian (the very religious respected religious old man known for his knowledge of interpreting intestines). He examines them for omens indicating the status of the impending cattle raid. Black spots in the intestines show crows and birds of prey coming for carcasses of the dead cows due to disease. A long white line ending in a red spot shows a line of enemies coming to attack. A large round spot is a grave and sign of sickness among people. The interpretations of the intestines make people decide whether to raid for cattle or not and the chances of success.

#### **4.1.3 Psychocultural, planning for cattle raids and women sanctions**

Culture being the totality of the socially acquired ways of life is key in how people perceive themselves and what they are expected to do. It defines how Pokot women view themselves in the context of the most prime resource-cattle. Culture determines what is considered normal behaviour. A normal way of being, a true Pokot woman in spirit and deeds requires one to participate in cattle raiding, but in another community it will be considered unacceptable or even a criminal offence. The social boundary of the Pokot women is drawn according to the values and myths they have been socialized into. Hence any attempts to address the overall problem of cattle raiding should be considered in view of the cultural map in which it takes place. A Pokot woman, just like all Pokot men is wired into the totality of Pokot culture surrounding cattle. Her frame of mind and socialization is geared towards playing her part in the acquisition of cattle ever since Merkol, the legendary Pokot leader showed them how to acquire and keep cattle wealth. Therefore Pokot women are part and parcel of the preparatory stages and actual cattle raids.

In the sample (N=137) a total of 35% respondents showed that planning for cattle raids was the sole responsibility of men, 52.5% men and women, 10.3% women only and 2.2% elders. Therefore the data demonstrates that women take part in the process of cattle raids although at a relatively lower scale compared to men. What is however more revealing is that planning for cattle raids is a collective enterprise involving men and women, hence far removed from the over-simplification apparent in existing literature and knowledge that it is an entirely male social enterprise. Female respondents (n=65) most of them 89.1% agreed that women play a role in cattle raiding, and that they are part of it before and after the raid take place.

It was observed that women play more background roles in cattle raiding. These roles include preparing for food 88.9%, spying 76.2%, encouraging men 94.1%, singing praise songs 93.4% and accompanying male warriors 2.2%. Therefore women play more motivating and inciting roles in the cattle raiding enterprise. The dramaturgy of women involvement is more



in the subtle back-stage activities and far less in the front-stage, and this probably informed existing knowledge that effectively blanks women out of cattle raiding according to popular view. In an earlier comparative study it was found that Pokot women were 7.7 times more involved in concealing information about cattle raids than their Marakwet counterparts (Kimaiyo, 2016). In an interview with a male Pokot key informant in Loruk area he said,

there cannot be cattle raiding in this community without the concurrence of women. Women are at the centre of it

Women are great influencers. Women exert pressure on men or their sons in anticipation of what lies ahead. Women deploy several sanctions towards men and boys. This pushes the men to do something lest they are branded useless or at the worst christened women. The sanctioning puts great pressure on men to demonstrate otherwise against the reductionist labels. Results show that the shaming as cowards 86.8%, demeaning those without cattle 94.3%, and contempt of those without cattle 64%, decline to dance with the cowards during adong'a 57.2%, prevent cowards from attending certain ceremonies 22.1% and denial of food 29.2% are some of the sanctions that men and boys hardly withstand. Therefore women unleash a plethora of sanctions that push men to go on cattle raids. An elder from Masol, very familiar with cattle raiding remarked,

to a large extent there would be no cattle raiding without women. Most cattle raids are done to satisfy them personally and fulfill societal expectations that strongly revolve around women and cattle. When women interests are low the rate of raiding reduces. Women are the energy behind cattle raiding. Women are like the ants in an anthill. You don't see them building but you see the results

#### 4.1.4 Tying Leketio

Every married woman has a waistband (leketio). Leketio plays a key role during a cattle raid. Every woman whose husband or son has gone for a cattle raid must tighten leketio to protect them from harm. The tighter the leketio the more the protection. If there is an injury or death on the husband or son the woman is blamed for having loosened her leketio. The success of the cattle raid is therefore dependent on how diligently women play their role back at home.

Women blame following unsuccessful cattle raid can also be extensive. They are accused of not having played their role well. The men blame women 82.6%, women blame themselves 18.0% and women blamed by raiders 4.0%. In the event that a raider killed an enemy in the raiding activity he does not, on return, enter his house or mother's house until he is cleansed by elders and medicine men. Following the increased reliance and use of guns all raiders are cleansed on return since it is difficult to tell the one who fired the fatal shot.

In all circumstances, however, the warriors display all their prowess in order to ensure that they do not elicit the condemnation of women. Being humiliated in public, especially for the unmarried young men can be particularly daunting in several ways. In the first place he will attract no girl, potential in-laws or potential suitors will be taken over by other more promising men, they will have no cattle with which to pay bride-wealth and will not dance with the girls





at night. Therefore the expectations of girls puts a great responsibility on young men to undertake cattle raids. Besides this young men are expected to show initiative. A female respondent in Turkwel village of West Pokot said as follows:

*Every boy is expected to use his initiative to obtain cattle to pay his bride wealth. Whose son will be looked at by a girl yet he has no cattle to start with. A boy cannot expect to be given cattle to start with. A boy cannot expect to be given cattle by his father. He must look for his own to pay for his own wife just like his father did not depend on anybody to pay his bride wealth.*

#### **4.1.5 Women as Spies**

Besides playing the advisory role to raiders, women also undertake spying which is key to undertaking a successful raid. This finding is not however in tandem with the previously held knowledge that spying and gathering of information was the sole responsibility of men (Pkalya, et.al. 2003). Therefore to 53.2% of the respondents cattle raids would not go on if the women were not involved or opposed it hence strengthening the thesis that women play a role in cattle raids.

#### **4.1.6 Political institutions and the evolving role of Pokot women**

Laws and policies introduced in Kenya reflects the shift in public policy that had reigned since the early 1900s. The Constitution of Kenya 2010 (GoK, 2010) makes supreme the law and subjugates any aspects of cultural practice, whatsoever. The Penal Code (Section 278 on stealing of stock and Section 295 on using force to acquire another's property criminalize cattle raiding as cattle theft involving dangerous weapons with violence. The East African Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization (EAPCCO) in a 2008 memorandum declared cattle raiding as a serious criminal offence in the respective national laws of the member countries. The new laws in the member countries that now criminalize cattle raiding has led to changes in the practice.

Drawing from Anderson (1997) policy entails purposeful behaviour in addressing an issue or problem. He identifies six criteria to consider: policy being deliberate and purposeful; action taken by government officials; policy emerges as a response to calls for action or inaction regarding a specific issue(s) by citizens or other groups; policy deals with action, what government does but not merely intention; specific action whether positive or negative; and public policy is authoritative, based on law, legitimate and with enforcement capabilities.

Therefore with the new laws and policies in response to cattle raiding the challenge to the old paradigm is imminent. With the new realities the new generation of Pokot women will have completely different expectations compared to those of their mothers or grandmothers or any other previous generations in Pokot history. It will also impact the new generation of men whose own expectations will begin to shift given the new law and policy which have explicitly stated that cattle raiding whether directly or indirectly, including aiding the process would no longer be condoned and was illegal. In addition to the law and policy, organized civil society groups have continued to address the issue of cattle raiding among the Pokot





community (World Vision, 2013). Therefore political institutions is applicable to the understanding of Pokot women and cattle raiding in the face of law and other regional control measures. They have changed the culture of cattle raiding. The changes in cattle raiding due to laws and policies demonstrates the superiority of social cubism over other social frameworks in understanding cattle raiding.

The role of women in cattle raids has not remained traditional or conservative, it has kept evolving in response to changes in the wider environment. The Only 16.3% of the respondents said women still perform the traditional roles compared to 83.7% who were confident that roles had kept changing. The roles have changed in line with changes in the wider environment.

Table 1: Evolving roles of women

New Role	%
Participate in peace keeping	78.9
Discourage cattle raiders/warriors	64.1
Help raiders hide stolen cattle	23.3
Assist in identifying cattle raiders to police	44.5
Arrange marketing of stolen cattle	16.0
Incite men/boys to raid	21.5

Given the changes in the wider environment including the dwindling cattle herds, increased policing, punitive laws, widespread use of mobile phones, increased use of guns, heightened vigilance and increased importance of education for youth, women participation in cattle raids appears to wane. The most plausible explanation is that the benefits are low and more difficult to come by while the risks have increased. In fact only 16.3% of all the women who were part of the sample indicated they had directly benefitted from cattle raids. Most women 76.4% strongly agreed that cattle raids had brought more suffering to women and society and would not support it today. The forms of suffering included: death or injury of spouses and sons, high possibility of arrest and imprisonment, loss of livestock in retaliation, disruption of livelihoods and frequent construction of house dwellings. In the present circumstances there is higher women disapproval of cattle raiding.

## 4.2 Demographics

The magnitude of cattle raiding in north-western Kenya is underestimated and what is reported is only a fraction. The practice has decimated households, livelihoods and made large territories a no-go-zone. The victims more often resort to famine relief donations while others abandon cattle keeping completely to concentrate on non-cattle sources of livelihood, while others migrate to the southern settled parts of the country. Even though, the magnitude of the impact of cattle raiding on neighbouring communities has never been fully documented and/or estimated. What is not in doubt however, is that the impact is monumental in terms of population movements. Social cubism theory makes it possible to assess the impact of cattle raids on the numbers and victim communities of north- western Kenya. It provides opportunity to assess the magnitude of the cattle raiding on the victims and how they respond in terms of demographic changes. The demographic component of the theory provides a framework through which population movements and changes occasioned by cattle raiding can be

assessed. However for this paper this was not assessed but this component of the theory is relevant.

### 4.3 Economics

The economics domain is hinged on the notion that women have less control and/or access to economic resources therefore subject. In the context of Pokot women participation in cattle raiding the economics domain of the theory is not helpful in diagnosing the involvement of women in cattle raiding since they do not participate as subservient.

## 5. Conclusion

The problem of cattle raiding is an old practice and women involvement in it has been as old as the practice itself. Cattle raiding is a gendered practice, it involves all members of society playing or contributing different roles at different stages of the process. The role women play is explicit to the extent that without their involvement the practice would not go on. The motivation to undertake it would be lacking among the men and boys. Women play more backstage roles that are key to cattle raiding. Social cubism theory has proved a useful frame work for analyzing the role of Pokot women in cattle raiding. The authors of the theory did not themselves imply or prescribe that every form of conflict or conflict resolution events must be analyzed using all the six attributes of the theory. Far from it they recognized that different situations and actors in conflict involve factors which interrelate differently. Applying the theory on women in cattle rustling helped to ensure that the problem of study was dissected from the six sides and the results showed some of the sides were more plausible than others.

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