

Cattle Raiding - Traditions Transformed

In the pastoralist communities animals have a very high value. Nyangatom, Murla, Kachipo, Jiye and Toposa are all pastoralist tribes in Eastern Equatoria and Jonglei States in South Sudan. Traditionally these tribes have been enemies and have been raiding cattle from each other. The frequency of raiding has however reduced the last years. Still it occurs, last on 10th and 12th August 2012.

Text and photo: Per Nordmark

A group of Toposa raiders went near to Boma and raided using weapons. They raided from Jie tribe, located in Jonglei State. It was reported that 45 calves were raided on 10th August, and two days later another 43 cattle was reported raided from 3 cattle kraals. Another third raiding attempt was made, however the South Sudan Army chased the Toposa raiders back and no cattle was taken.

On 14th August people in Namoton, 60 km from Boma had discovered some unknown cattle. The Village Peace Committee and Community Policing Committee reported to Holy Trinity Peace Village, the Community Mobilizing and Peace Building Team. The team went to investigate and found 16 calves, however 25 was reported seen.

The Army based in Boma set out and followed the footmarks of the animals. They reached Namoton village on 16th August after 3 days walk through the bush. The animals were not found and the 68 soldiers continued to Holy Trinity Peace Village (HTPV) in Kuron. They were then thirsty, tired and hungry. Accommodation was provided in HTPV Youth Center and some food and equipment was provided, and a bull was slaughtered by the Chief of Kuron Romolo Ekadawa for food for the soldiers.

A meeting was scheduled with the Namoton village committees the following day. However this day was rainy and the meeting was postponed till next day.

Toposa moving away from their homes in fear of the Army coming



As information spread among the population that the army was on its way, people was fearing fighting and harsh treatment, and most of the people in the Namoton village and villages around packed their property on donkeys and started moving away with their cattle, to hide in the mountains or far from the conflict area.



Much people and animals were moving in the morning of 16th August

In the afternoon of 17th August shooting series from automatic guns were heard, however it was only some few series, then it became quiet.

When the Army arrived, accompanied by the owners of the cattle, the Army demanded the Chief and local leaders to bring the raided cattle back. On 17th 20 heads of cattle was returned to the Chief's place in Kuron. The army kept a low profile and operated very professional, focusing on fact finding and communication with the local leaders.

However on 18th afternoon the local Toposa created an incident with a lot of shooting just outside the gate of HTPV Kuron. People were scared and run for shelter. The shooting incident lasted for approximately 20 min., and in the end some men raided the animals which the day before was returned to the Chief's place.

This shooting was interpreted by the people in the surrounding areas that it was shooting between the local people and the Army. The incident was reported to Juba and further to the Governor of Eastern Equatoria and to the Commissioners of Kapoeta East and Kapoeta North County.

Afterwards it was found that only local people were involved in the shooting, not the Army.

HTPV and the Army were then informed that the Commissioner would come to Kuron to solve the problems.

19th August 2012



UN helicopter with the commissioner's team landing at Kuron Airstrip



On Sunday 19th a UN helicopter landed at Kuron Airstrip. It brought the following officials:

Titus Lokwachum	Commisioner Kapoeta East County
Lokai Iko	Commisioner Kapoeta North County
Carlo Lopuke	Member of Parliament (MP) State (Torit)
Mariano Nachoto	Paramont Chief Katodori Payam
Lipondo Lopwon	Paramont Chief Kuron

In addition 14 soldiers followed as lifeguards. The helicopter also brought some 700 kg of food for the soldiers.

HTPV transported the officials to HTPV Kuron where they were accommodated.

After lunch a meeting was held with the local leaders. Representatives from all the villages were then called for a meeting on 20th August, and they were instructed to bring the raided animals to the meeting.

The authorities is seated for the first meeting with the community on the banks of Kuron River 19th August



This afternoon additional soldiers arrived from Boma making the total force 149.

The visiting authority was greeted in accordance with Toposa traditions



20th August



The morning 20th August news came that the cattle which had been taken from the Chiefs place was returned back; now 19 animals as one was slaughtered for food for the soldiers on day two of their stay.

19 of the animals are back!

At around 1.30 pm the announced meeting was held under the trees by Kuron River. The meeting lasted for 3 hours.

At the beginning of the meeting the women group performed by singing and dancing.



The attendants of the meeting were seated in groups according to defined traditional rules.



Carlo Lopuke, MP of EE State was the main speaker and chaired the meeting.

The meeting was held in accordance with Toposa traditions. However the message to the local people was strong:

- It was made clear that raiding cattle was not acceptable.
- All animals should be returned!
- The raiders would be given some fines and/or other punishment according to law.
- Necessary force would be used to have the requested result.



It was also made clear that the tribes in Jonglei State were disarmed, including Jie and Murle. Therefore it was the duty of the Army to protect them. The tribes in Eastern Equatoria were not disarmed because they should have the possibility to defend themselves against enemies in the neighboring countries. However if they were oppressing the demands from the government disarmament would be done.



*Titus Lokwachum
Commissioner Kapoeta
East County
(left)*

*Lokai Iko, Commissioner
Kapoeta North County
(right)*

Community Policing Committees were appointed from the participants to address the challenges and to bring the animals and the raiders to the place of the meeting. In the meeting representatives came forward and gave the names of those who did the raiding. Also the locations of the animals were given. During the meeting 7 calves and 19 adult animals arrived and were presented.

Lokai Iko, Commissioner Kapoeta North County addressed the meeting.

Then finally Titus Lokwachuma Commissioner Kapoeta East County made a speech, giving a strong message. However he also tried to make the people understand that they are in need of having good relationships with their neighbors, as they traditionally have to move their animals into their territories for pasture during dry season.

21st August

At around 8 am on 21st August a larger group of men were passing on the road outside HTPV Kuron, all singing. This was the selected committee of yesterday who were told to bring the persons who did the cattle raiding. Now they brought 2 men, tied together with ropes around their necks.

The appointed Community Policing Committee is bringing two of the raiders to the commissioner



Commissioner Titus Lokwachuma instructed them to go into the school compound, as the school today had started holidays. The two attained persons were placed on the ground, and guarded by community members and some soldiers.



The raiders are presented for the Commissioners

The Community Policing Committee was given some instruction by MP Carlo Lopuke, who spoke in confidence to them. Then the prisoners were handed over to the soldiers, and the meeting was ended. However a new meeting was called for in the afternoon, and another final meeting the

following day. The aim is to have all animals gathered by then, and that the soldiers would march off back to Boma, bringing the animals back to the owners.



Carlo Lopuke, MP EE State is talking in confidence with the appointed committee.

The responsible for the raiding, described as criminals will probably be given fines, and be taken to Torit for trial.

Raiding with the use of arms is considered a serious crime in South Sudan.

It is identified 4 raiders who participated in the first incidents in Boma.

Then another 4 raiders were involved in the incident when the cattle were raided from the Chief's place in Kuron. Due to this there are two cases to be dealt with.



The authorities are gathered in front of the prisoners

The commissioners made it clear that there have to be some consequences for those involved in cattle raiding. It has to be understood that cattle raiding is no longer a tolerated behavior.

Probably the raiders will be taken out for trial by the helicopter on Friday.



The Paramount Chiefs and the two Commissioners are observing as MP Carlo Lopuke addresses the prisoners

22nd August

Again singing was heard on the road in Kuron. This morning the appointed committee brought 27 cattle and one man, tied with a rope around his neck.

The cattle was not the raided cattle, however cattle belonging to the raiders. The animals were taken to put pressure on the raiders to now bring the animals.

The prisoner was not one of the raiders but a criminal who was feared in the community, and had attacked and injured a number of people using knife. At the arrest he also had tried to stab the Chief. Now the community wanted to use the opportunity when the Commissioner was present to have the man arrested.

The prisoner was handed over to the army.

MP Carlo Lopuke talking to the youth



The committee then had a meeting with the Commissioners and MP. It was agreed that they would have some food and rest. Then in the afternoon they were to go and bring forward the remaining raiders, whose location in the mountains was known.

They should also bring the remaining animals to the Commissioner the coming day. However it was now known that some of the animals were in the area of Namorupus, which is 30 km away.

The committee was expected to walk during night.



The commissioner is instructing the committee on their next duties

It was now scheduled a general meeting the coming day to conclude in the case, and then send the Army and the animals back to Boma.

However by midday it started raining quite heavily in the whole of the area, and the progress might be delayed.

Thursday 23.08

Today it was collected and brought back 45 calves which were raided and 20 adult animals.

Today a meeting was held with the Community Policing committee and MP Carlo Lopuke under the trees by Kuron River.

A final meeting was scheduled for Friday 24th.

Friday 24.08

At 10 am a UNIMISS helicopter landed in Kuron Airstrip, bringing UN military and civilian staff and representative for SPLA to monitor the situation in Kuron, related to the cattle raiding and the humanitarian situation in general. The mission was scheduled for 2 hours, however due to challenges in movement on the ground the visit lasted 3 ½ hour. The status and challenges related to PHCC and the school was assessed and discussed with HTPV staff.



UNIMISS and HTPV between Kuron Airstrip and HTPV Kuron, walking as the car run out of fuel. Then having a meeting with the commissioner, Army Commander, Bishop etc.

A meeting was held with the commissioner, the Army commander and Peace Village staff including Founder Bishop Emeritus Paride Taban. Needs were identified, especially when it comes to transport as the road now is completely blocked. It was concluded that UNIMISS will assist HTPV with some air transport, basically food allocated by WFP.



In the afternoon a final meeting to finalize the case on cattle raiding was held by Kuron River. The 3 arrested persons were presented and questioned. Testimonies by owners of the raided cattle and other witnesses were given.

The arrested persons are questioned on the raiding by Kuron River as UNIMISS take off with the helicopter





Finally the founder of HTPV Bishop Emeritus Paride Taban was addressing the meeting focusing important topics for the well-being and development of the area.

Saturday 25.08

At around 8 am sound of much people was heard on the road in Kuron: The soldiers had departed from Youth Center and were gathering on the area outside HTPV.

Information told that all 71 animals were gathered in the Chief's place.

Just before noon, all the animals were brought, and the Army took off from Kuron with the animals, expecting to use 3 days on the way to Boma.

The animals are brought and the Army is preparing to depart

The three prisoners were locked up in Kuron, and will be taken along by the Commissioner on 26.08 to Kapoeta with UNIMISS helicopter which will collect the Commissioner and his team.



Finally the Commissioner will report the incident with Resolutions and Recommendations to H.E. Governor of Eastern Equatoria State.

The first soldiers are marching off from Kuron