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Résumé de l'article

La pratique des vols de bétail entre populations pastorales et agro-pastorales a constitué, probablement pendant des siècles, une des formes principales d'activité militaire en Afrique de l'Est ainsi qu'un dispositif incontournable pour la construction du masculin à l'échelle locale. À la moitié des années 1990, dans le Samburu County, au nord du Kenya, un afflux soudain et imposant d'armes automatiques provenant des territoires en guerre de la partie orientale du continent a produit un changement radical des anciens paradigmes de mise en place des razzias. Chez les communautés samburu du mont Nyiro le bouleversement profond des pratiques du conflit a altéré les relations politico-hiérarchiques entre les membres des statuts d'âge des « guerriers » et des anciens en entraînant une alliance militaire aux proportions inédites. L'activité musicale cérémonielle, témoin inattendu de cette transformation, constitue un des espaces d'interaction au sein desquels les nouveaux agencements du système d'âge émergent de manière explicite et sont reproduits dans le temps.

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War and Predatory Economy in Northern-Kenya: How Ethnomusicology Can Explore Social Change

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RÉSUMÉ *La pratique des vols de bétail entre populations pastorales et agro-pastorales a constitué, probablement pendant des siècles, une des formes principales d'activité militaire en Afrique de l'Est ainsi qu'un dispositif incontournable pour la construction du masculin à l'échelle locale. À la moitié des années 1990, dans le Samburu County, au nord du Kenya, un afflux soudain et imposant d'armes automatiques provenant des territoires en guerre de la partie orientale du continent a produit un changement radical des anciens paradigmes de mise en place des razzias. Chez les communautés samburu du mont Nyiro le bouleversement profond des pratiques du conflit a altéré les relations politico-hiérarchiques entre les membres des statuts d'âge des « guerriers » et des anciens en entraînant une alliance militaire aux proportions inédites. L'activité musicale cérémonielle, témoin inattendu de cette transformation, constitue un des espaces d'interaction au sein desquels les nouveaux agencements du système d'âge émergent de manière explicite et sont reproduits dans le temps.*

The end of the nineteenth century in East Africa marked the beginning of a long colonial era. In search of economic opportunities and to evangelize the region, hunters, tradesmen, missionaries and adventurers began to settle in the area. The stories about the populations encountered during these expeditions often emphasized the belligerent nature of their practices in a conscious manner. The myth of the warrior populations of East Africa quickly gained credence in western countries and amongst colonial governments who, at the beginning of the twentieth century, began to impose their power in this region. The most well-known population amongst these East African populations, the Maasai, are a prime example of this process of stereotyping: Their community was often described as a "warriors' society"and their economic system was characterized as fundamentally predatory[1].

When, during the first half of the twentieth century, professionally trained ethnologists began to conduct systematic research in Kenya, Ethiopia and other countries of this region, the interest of experts moved away from romantic reconstructions of the work of missionaries and explorers towards an analysis of East-African populations' social systems, which were considered more stimulating and promising from a scientific perspective. The resulting monographs and the articles dedicated to better understanding those who became "pastoral and agro-pastoral people" instead of "blood-thirsty warriors" marginalized questions concerning the practice of war and cattle rustling (raids). The presence of the colonial armies and the repressive policies implemented in the occupied regions strongly limited the military and cattle rustling activities of the indigenous populations thus making them, in most cases, rare and difficult to observe. In 1965, two years after the end of the British occupation of Kenya, anthropologist Paul Spencer judged the role of the warriors among the Samburu of the north of the country, who were fatally injured by

1. Xavier Péron, *L'Occidentalisation des Maasaï du Kenya. Privatisation foncière et destructuration sociale*, Tome I, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1995, p. 111-124.

decades of colonial presence, to be of "no contemporary significance" [2]. The warriors had become fighters without a war who, according to the anthropologist, existed only to guarantee to the elders the right to a polygamous marriage:

> With an enforced peace under colonialism early in the twentieth century, warriorhood as such has become an anachronism. The fact that these young men have continued to adorn themselves and behave as moran has to be seen in the wider context of the interest of older men, who can retain their monopoly in polygyny only by delaying the marriages of these young men [3].

In Kenya, the departure of the colonists and its rebirth as a new independent country in 1963 restored a certain freedom, especially in the Northern regions where the young post-colonial government had neither the time nor the means to impose any limits on the raiding activity of the pastoral populations that occupied the periphery of the country. Centuries-old conflicts resumed by taking advantage of the decline of military control.

During the 1960s and the 1970s, the impact of these socio-political changes on the work of a new generation of ethnologists resulted once again in the study of the themes of warfare and raiding amongst the pastoral and agro-pastoral peoples of East Africa. The collective work "Warfare among East African Herders" [4] represents a fundamental step in this process of the elaboration of a debate between specialists and of the detailed study of the conflict and its implications for these societies. Since then, other authors have confronted this fundamental theme, by concentrating, for example, on the psychological traumas suffered by victims of raids in Samburu County, in northern

2. Paul Spencer, *The Samburu, A Study of Gerontocracy in a Nomadic Tribe*, London, Routledge and Keagan, 1965 [2004], p. 99.
3. Paul Spencer « Dance and the Cosmology of Confidence » dans Parkin, Caplan, Fisher (eds.), *The Politics of Cultural Performance*, Oxford, Berghahn Books, 1996, p. 184.
4. Katsuyoshi Fukui, David Turton, dir., *Warfare among East African Herders*, Osaka, National Museum of Ethnology, 1979.

Kenya[5], or on the escalation of violence that followed the introduction of automatic rifles in the same area[6].

The nature of these conflicts, since the beginning of ethnographic studies in this region has changed, sometimes radically. New questions have emerged that need to be addressed. The colonists have long since departed, but meanwhile national governments have tried to establish military control in the most remote areas of the country. In addition, globalization has allowed the proliferation of a multitude of deadly weapons. But did the societies involved in these profound political and military upheavals change? Did they react to the transformations of the previous years? Were their economic and social systems the objects of reform or, on the contrary, did they remain intact? The purpose of this article is to answer these questions, and, to address a last one. Can a research based on the artistic and cultural practices of a society—for example, their musical activities—have a role in the understanding of the most complex aspects of social change processes?

An ethnomusicological approach, founded on the analysis of the choreographic performances of both warriors and elders will introduce unexpected data. Music and dance, through their capacity to produce and represent the social structure of the age system, reveal the transformations that have marked these pastoral societies.

RAIDING CATTLE VS RAISING CATTLE

The theft of livestock is a very ancient practice and is extremely common among East African populations. Even today, it represents a primary threat to the authority of several governments—those

5. Ivy L. Pike, Bilinda Straight et al. « Documenting the Consequences of Endemic Warfare in Three Pastoralist Communities of Northern Kenya: A Conceptual Framework. » *Social Science & Medicine*, 70 (1), 2010, p. 45-52.
6. Kennedy A. Mkutu, *Guns & Governance in the Rift Valley. Pastoral Conflict & Small Arms*, Oxford, James Currey, 2008.

of Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia among others—which attempt to limit the insecurity that terrorize the most remote territories of these countries. The purpose of these raids is to challenge the power of local tribal groups, which sometimes overtake that of the police and the army. The practice of cattle rustling has been analyzed and described by numerous ethnologists who have repeatedly emphasized the economic and social role of the raids. For a young man in his warriorhood awaiting the passage to the elders' age-grade, the looting of livestock can bring several advantages, in both the short and long term. Gaining the right to contract marriage by raiding the necessary heads of cattle to pay the bridewealth is certainly one of the most obvious[7]. Also important is the possibility of acquiring a higher social position or the privilege to beget children through the exhibition of fighting and other masculine skills[8]. However, as Spencer clearly showed for the Maasai of the pre-colonial period, from a purely productive point of view, an economy based on cattle rustling is less reliable than one based on a "pastoral mode of production":

> Du point de vue économique, il existe deux modes de production, le mode prédateur basé sur les raids de bétail, et le mode pastoral dépendant de l'élevage pacifique. Si l'on évoque la période pré-coloniale, il est peu douteux que les Maasai furent des prédateurs accomplis, bien que l'élevage en temps de paix leur permît d'accroître bien plus efficacement leurs troupeaux. On peut estimer que chaque moran [guerrier] aurait dû acquérir 20 têtes de bétail chaque année pour égaler les meilleures années d'élevage en temps

7. Edward E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1940.
8. Paul. T. W. Baxter, « Boran Age-Set and Warfare », in K. Fukui, D. Turton (dir.), *Warfare among East African Herders*, Osaka, National Museum of Ethnology, 1979, p. 69-97 ; Anne-Marie Peatrik, « Tuer pour engendrer : les agents d'une masculinité au long cours (Afrique de l'Est) », *Cahiers d'Etudes africaines*, numéro thématique Masculin pluriel, C. Broca & A. Doquet (dir.) vol. LIII (1-2), n° 209-210, 2013, p. 217-245 .

> de paix alors qu'un moran tout à fait extraordinaire n'en acquérait même pas la moitié dans toute sa carrière[9].

Despite the old idealization of the raids, the warriors' predatory activities are not as beneficial to their communities' as wise management of the herds, which even today remains almost everywhere in this region the most efficient form of subsistence livelihood. Yet the case of the Samburu and the Turkana in northern Kenya demonstrate the exacerbation of an old conflict brought back to life by the sudden introduction of firearms and how their intensive and long-term military use, in a context where they were originally extremely rare, has activated a process of change in both social structures and economic systems.

SAMBURU'S AND TURKANA'S AGE SYSTEMS

The Samburu Nilotic semi-nomadic pastoralists are related to the Maasai and share the same language. They live in a semi-arid region of about 20,000 km^2 situated in northern-central Kenya, the Samburu County. Their society, based on age-grades and age-sets, is organized around a hierarchical classification of men and women and aims to define the identity of an individual with regards to his membership to a determined age group (in the case of the men), or in connection with a set of wives.

Boys are circumcised at approximately the age of 14-20 and, after a liminal month-long phase, they become members of the *lmurran* (warriors) age-grade. "Warriorhood" (*lamurrano*) lasts for a period of approximately 15 years. At the end of this period, the young men become *lpayanì* (elder) and acquire, in due course, the associated political and religious powers. The entry into the warriors' age-grade and again into the elders' age-grade takes place within an age-set (*ntowò*, pl. *ntowotìn*) into which the individual integrates by becoming a warrior and will remain a member until death. Every 15 years, a set of warriors is

9. Paul Spencer, « Homo ascendens et homo hierarchicus » in Abélès, Collard, dir., *Âge, pouvoir et société en Afrique noire*, Paris, Karthala, 1985a, p. 177.

promoted to the elders' age-grade and they become the youngest of the elders' sets, which itself is organized into a hierarchy according to the degree of seniority. At the same time, a new set of warriors is created.

The social distance between warriors and elders is therefore connected to the various roles that they take on within their community. The elders retain the political and religious power, the *lmurran* take charge of the military defense of their territory and protect the community's livestock from enemy raids and predatory animals. In the pastoral economy, the *lpayanì* broadly manage the herds, reproductively and through exchanges, while the warriors defend the herds, guiding them towards the best pastures and water sources. These duties oblige them to spend several months with their animals, distancing themselves from their settlements. Finally, we should not forget the active role of the *lmurran* in raiding enemy populations.

Turkana are pastoral Nilotes too, but of the Ateker linguistic group, different from that of the Samburu. They live mostly in a vast arid region on the western side of Lake Turkana, in northern Kenya. Turkana settlements are also present in the northern part of the Samburu County. This proximity has always been a source of tension and is likely a causal factor in numerous recent episodes of violence between the two populations.

The Turkana age system is not based, unlike that of the Samburu, on the coexistence of two types of age grouping (age-grades and age-sets). A young non-initiated boy becomes a member of the men's group, alone or with other novices, at around the age of 18, after a ceremony, called *asapan*, that guarantees him a place within an age-set (McCabe 2004) [10]. Circumcision is totally absent from their traditional customs both for boys and girls. Accordingly, there is no strict differentiation between warriors

10. J. Terrence McCabe, *Cattle Bring Us to Our Enemies. Turkana Ecology, Politics and Raiding in a Disequilibrium System*, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 2004.

and elders age-groups: once the *asapan* ceremony is completed, the newly initiated man acquires the right to marry and to go to war. Officially, his generation-set, even if it is relatively newly-initiated, is not considered to be socially inferior to that of the older men [11]. In reality, the political and religious power of the members of older age-sets is certainly superior with regard to that of the newly initiated: "Groups are placed in chronological order so that the older are more senior. Within each group there is a ranking of members which is defined by the order of seniority of members' legal fathers" [12].

Nevertheless, in the military domain (the defense of the community and its livestock), the collaboration between various generation-sets is much closer among the Turkana than among the Samburu. During cattle rustling campaigns for example, the assistance given to the young people by the members of the older age groups is decisive for the success of the raids; "Captured stock and humans were taken by the more junior age-groups, while the more senior formed a rearguard in the flight back to Turkanaland" [13]. In this regard, Spencer writes: "[T]he tensions between age grades among the Samburu tend to be absent among the Turkana where the age organization is neither strong nor restrictive" [14].

The differences between their respective age systems therefore influence the different approaches taken by the Samburu and Turkana towards the practice of looting livestock. The institutionalization of the Samburu warriors' age-grade strongly limits the participation in raids for the members of the other age-sets not incorporated into this group. The absence of a formalized opposition between elders and warriors is the base for close military collaboration between different generation-sets among the Turkana. All men with the physical capability and expertise

11. Philip H. Gulliver, « The Turkana Age Organisation », *American Anthropologist*, New Series, vol. 60, n° 5 (1958), p. 900-922.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 909.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 916.
14. Paul Spencer, *The Samburu…*, p. 277.

deemed necessary to use weapons, are allowed to participate in the raids. The membership of a definite age group, in itself, does not represent, a priori, a basis for discrimination when deciding who can or cannot participate in a raid.

Nevertheless, in the north of Samburu County, after the spread of firearms during the 1990s, both the old conflict techniques and the institutions related to their age system have been subject to a process of change that has redefined the relationships between elders and warriors and of their roles within society.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SAMBURU WARS

A historical approach to the wars fought before the colonial conquest is extremely difficult. However, thanks to first account witnesses, the memory of local "informants" interrogated by the administrators of the British government, and travelers and first ethnographers who worked in this region one hundred years after the last big battle of the first half of the nineteenth century, we can gain some insight into the military activities of the Samburu during the pre-colonial era.

Three big battles, fought around 1840, are still remembered today because of the consequences they had on the political geography of the populations involved. Before 1840, for reasons that remain unclear, the Samburu were the protagonists of a large migration from the territories of current Baringo County in a northeastern direction towards Samburu County. During this migration, they captured Mount Nyiro and Kulal from the Borana[15] and Mount Marsabit from the Laikipiak Maasai[16]. While the Samburu were moving northward, the Turkana were proceeding

15. The Samburu who live around mount Nyiro today say that their opponents during the battle for the conquest of this mountain were not the Borana but the Maasai. The oldest men still recall the names of their ancestors (their great-grandfathers, warriors of the *Kipeku* age-set, opened in 1837) who participated in this battle.
16. Paul Spencer, *Nomads in Alliance. Symbiosis and growth among the Rendille and Samburu of Kenya*, London, Oxford University Press, 1973, p. 152.

east, towards Lake Turkana, driven by a drought that affected their native territory. They constituted the most eastern branch of the Ateker group, in current Karamoja District, in Uganda [17]. According to Spencer, because of this double migration, the two populations made contact by the 1820s, when the Samburu were passing northward towards Lake Baringo and the Turkana were proceeding in a southeasterly direction. Their first meetings seem to have been peaceful, but by the 1850s their relationship had become confrontational. As if this was not enough, by the 1860s, the Samburu began to fight again, repeatedly, with their cousins, the Laikipiak Maasai, and with the Borana [18]. The Turkana constituted an increasing threat during the successive decades.

One of the priorities of the British colonial government was to bring a conclusion to, either peacefully or through military intervention, the hostilities between native populations and to exercise control over the entire territory. To this end, several administrative centers were established from the south to the north of the country. In the Samburu region, the most important centers were Archer's Post in the south (the oldest one), Barsaloi in the center and Loyangalani in the north. The administrative center of Loyangalani established in 1911, was built with the explicit purpose of limiting the feuds between Samburu and Turkana, which were particularly frequent because of the proximity of the two populations. Despite the presence of the English garrison, the Turkana carried out two major raids against the Samburu in 1913 and 1914 [19]. In 1917, they repeatedly attacked the northern village of Baragoi [20]. The colonial government reacted with military force, carrying out punitive expeditions against the raiders. The possession of spears and shields became illegal

17. John Lamphear, *The Scattering. Time Turkana Responses to Colonial Rule*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992.
18. Paul Spencer, *Nomads in Alliance…*, p. 153.
19. Carlo T. Fumagalli, *A Diachronic Study of Change and Sociocultural Processes Among the Pastoral Nomadic Samburu of Kenya, 1900-1975*, PhD dissertation, Department of Anthropology, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1977.
20. Kennedy A. Mkutu, p. 58.

and between 1934 and 1936 and Samburu arms were confiscated twice [21]. Even certain warriors' songs, ones written about war and raids, were prohibited [22]. Over time, the raiding of livestock and the conflicts between pastoral populations were almost totally suppressed by the colonists. A "forced peace" was imposed by armed force and massive cattle seizures. However, the old rivalries remained and resurfaced in the post-colonial period.

In 1963, the new Republic of Kenya leaded by Jomo Kenyatta was not capable of ensuring a military presence comparable to the one that had previously been provided by the British army in the northern territories during the colonial period. The Samburu saw this profound political change as an opportunity to return to their traditional lifestyle, finally free from colonial control [23]. A result of weakening administrative power in the Samburu District was the reemergence of raids between the Samburu and Turkana. At the end of the 1960's, the Turkana resumed regular attacks on Baragoi and its surroundings. The village of Tuum suffered the same fate in 1969. The Samburu, in turn, reacted to this offensive by organizing several raids against other Turkana communities [24]. Historical hostilities had resurfaced. The feuds and the raids, after the departure of the colonists, started up again, though the large-scale wars of the past never resurfaced in the context of modern Kenya. However, in the north of the Samburu County, everything was about to change once again. The crisis in the countries of the Horn of Africa had considerable and unexpected consequences on the lives, economy, and society of this region's pastoral populations.

21. Paul Spencer, p. 161
22. Bilinda Sraight, « Cutting Time: Beads, Sex and Songs in the making of Samburu Memory » in James and Mills (dir.), *The Qualities of Time: temporal dimensions of social form and human experience*, Oxford and New York: Berg (ASA Monograph 41), 2005, p. 273.
23. Paul Spencer, *The Samburu…*, p. 99.
24. Carlo T. Fumagalli, *A Diachronic Study of Change…; Kennedy A. Mkutu, Guns & Governance…*, p. 58.

FROM HISTORY TO ETHNOMUSICOLOGY: THE DOUBLE PERFORMANCE OF CEREMONIAL DANCES

Samburu musical traditions and practices are intimately connected to the structure of their age system. The analysis of their dances and songs, ceremonial or not, has the potential to inform us about different aspects of social change within their society, which, otherwise, would be very difficult to understand through traditional ethnographical investigation.

The Samburu have historically composed, developed, and executed a series of dances and songs based on their membership to an age-grade or an age-set. Their musical repertoires are thus characterized by strong associations to age groups. Every age-set creates its own songs and dances, and the same applies to the warriors' and elders' age-grades. Similarly, the musical activity is endowed with a creative power: choreographic practices can both unite and separate individuals based on their age. Dances help to define age groups and enhance their social unity by creating perceptible borders that become evident as the dance takes place.

A brilliant example of this process are the collective afternoon dances, which surround the most important ceremonies within the Samburu society, from marriage to circumcision. Elders and warriors, although they perform almost the same dances and songs [25], constitute two distinct groups: the elders dance together or with their wives, the warriors form a separate group and dance with the unmarried girls. The dances thus are the object of a double performance, which takes place in two different moments and two different places. The temporal, spatial, and physical separation of the age groups (although they do execute the same ceremonial musical repertoire) is an explicit representation of their social distance and demonstrate their identities as elders or warriors.

25. With the exception of a single dance, *Lodo*, performed only by the elders.

A double performance of the ceremonial afternoon dances is common practice, widespread in the entire Samburu region, except among the northern communities. In the villages around mount Nyiro, for example, the dance session of the elders does not take place. *Lmurran* and *lpayanì* dance together in a unique performance during which some elders occasionally dress as warriors by using the typical jewels of their age-grade, a behavior that in the rest of the region would be considered unusual. This characteristic of the choreographic practice among the northern Samburu raises a series of fundamental questions concerning the role of music in the social domain. How is it possible to find such major disparities between the communities of the north and those of the center/south? Perhaps we are simply dealing with two different musical traditions within the same population.

Although plausible, this hypothesis must nevertheless be rejected. The Samburu from Mount Nyiro clearly assert that the double performance of the ceremonial dances was part of their repertoire up until at least twenty years ago. As explained by a young elder from a northern village:

> In the past [when we were warriors], we used to say "We do not dance with the elders and we do not dance with the married women." We did not want to. The elders used to dance over there with the married women while the warriors used to dance over there with the girls. In past we [the warriors] didn't want to dance with the elders.
>
> (Recorded interview 07Sim13, 28.08.2013)

We therefore must look for another interpretation. If the Samburu invest their musical practice with this dual role, both productive and representative, with regards to the age system, then, more than just a simple disparity at a musical level this association between elders and warriors may signal a deeper process of social change. The testimony of a warriors' leader, as reported below, stimulates a reflection about the effects of the war within

society, a reflection that, curiously, starts with an analysis of the musical activity:

> G.M.: In the other places where I went [the south of the region], as I told you last time, the elders and the warriors sing separately, but here [in the north, on mount Nyiro] they mix. Why?
>
> S.L.: [Because] the fear makes us love each other. [...] You know, in those places [the center and the south] warriors and elders hate each other because there is no fear!
>
> (Recorded interview 04Tuu13, 04.08.2013)

But fear of what, of whom? What happened in the north of Samburu District during the 1990s that was so significant that it could alter ceremonial dance practices and, perhaps, the balance between age-grades?

An elder (left) dressed like a warrior sings and dances with the *lmurran* in a northern village (G. Marmone, 2013)

THE SPREAD OF FIREARMS IN NORTHERN SAMBURU DISTRICT

In 1991, war once again devastated the political and economic balances in northeastern Africa, which had recently been affected by uncountable conflicts. Somalia, a demographically homogeneous country, but characterized by profound clan divisions, was involved in an intense agricultural crisis. The move to monopolize the best agricultural lands exacerbated the already existing rivalries between clans. At the turn of the 1990s, President Siad Barre instrumentalized these rivalries to distract public opinion from the difficulties that his regime was experiencing. The government at first tried to repress the conflicts that spread within the country, but was obliged to surrender when a major rebellion erupted in central Somalia, around the capital Mogadishu. Siad Barre escaped, leaving the country at the mercy of its divisions and of its internal conflicts. The civil war broke out. Like other countries in the Horn of Africa, Somalia had already been well supplied with weapons of all types from multiple sources—Western, Oriental and African—during the Cold War and, specifically, for military operations such as the Ogaden invasion [26]. However, the break out of the civil war increased imports of firearms, which only added to the many arms already present in the region.

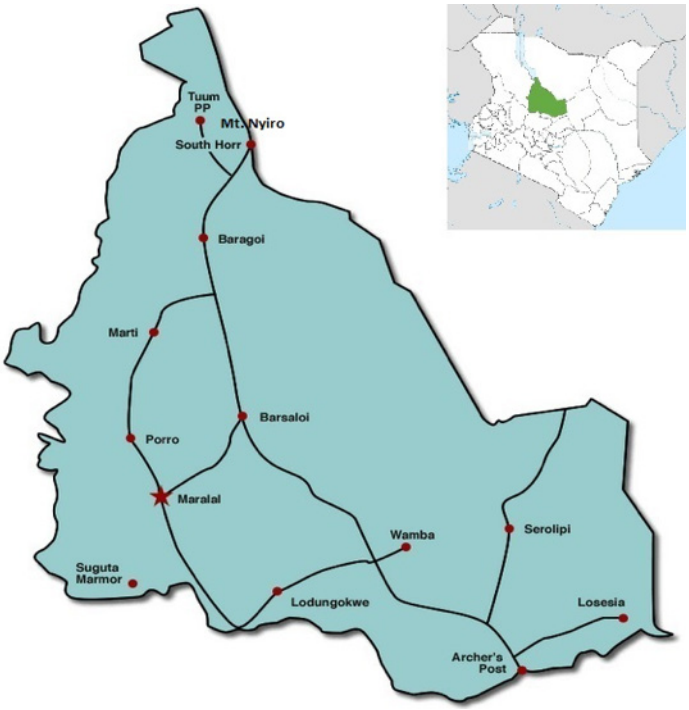
This overwhelming volume of weapons in the Horn of Africa brought about, in the mid-1990s, the proliferation of automatic rifles throughout bordering countries, in particular Kenya and Uganda, where a range of conflicts, both large and small, especially in rural regions, presented an ideal situation for arms dealers. The "low-intensity warfare" [27] between Samburu and Turkana in the North of Samburu District started to attract an increasing flow of rifles—particularly Kalashnikovs, G-3s and M-16s—coming from Somalia and later, from Sudan and Ethiopia. Both populations used to fight in a traditional way, mainly with

26. Alberto Sciortino, *L'Africa in guerra. I conflitti africani e la globalizzazione*, Milano, Boldini Castoldi Dalai, 2008.
27. Ivy L. Pike, Bilinda Straight *et al.*, « Documenting the Consequences… », p. 45.

spears, bows and arrows. A feud or a raid carried out using such arms could have tragic, but limited consequences with regards to the number of killed or wounded people, and to the quantity of livestock stolen. The introduction of firearms in this context provoked significant changes in the techniques used for raiding and fighting. The number of deaths increased tragically while stricken communities sometimes lost their entire herds and were plunged into poverty.

The year of the "official" arrival of the firearms in the north of Samburu County is 1996. During the previous five years, from 1991 to 1995, in Baragoi and its surrounding area, the heads of cattle stolen by the Turkana from the Samburu had been 61 (13 in 1991, 16 in 1992, 13 in 1993, 11 in 1994, 8 in 1995) while only two people had been killed. In 1996, with the spread of automatic rifles, the number of stolen cattle and human deaths dramatically increased: 42'231 animals were stolen from the Samburu and 230 people, from both populations, were killed [28]. These deaths and economic disruptions took place in the Baragoi area. The results of the introduction of firearms are obvious: feuds became open warfare and raids became massacres.

28. Kennedy A. Mkutu, *Guns & Governance…*, p. 97-101.



Source : Bilinda Straight's website - http://homepages.wmich.edu/~bstraigh/ - (modified by the author)

During the following years, the number of the raids stabilized, thanks in large part to the establishment of a permanent police center in the village of Baragoi in 1998. However, the situation never returned to the period prior to the spread of firearms. According to Mkutu, even in 2000, the Turkana stole 7159 heads of livestock from the Samburu, a quantity almost six times lower than that recorded in 1996, but still far from the eight stolen in 1995 [29].

The Samburu from the north of the county suddenly found themselves victims of repeated Turkana's attacks and initially

29. *Ibid.*, p. 97-101.

did not have the strength to respond adequately to the military power of their enemies, bolstered by Kalashnikovs and G-3s. In 1996, the Turkana of Baragoi did not report any thefts of cattle committed by the Samburu, who appeared to have become powerless[30]. Their spears became obsolete "spoons" as they are ironically called today by young warriors who watch their fathers and grandfathers actively use them. But probably the most shocking effect was on the members of the warriors' age-grade, who seemed to no longer be able to make raids or to defend their communities.

The Samburu therefore began to obtain the firearms necessary to rebalance their position in their conflict with the Turkana. In 2000 the head of cattle stolen in the Baragoi area by the Samburu during several raids numbered 5822. In 1996, it should be remembered, they had stolen none[31]. However, this process of military redeployment by the Samburu did not stop with the acquisition of guns to the detriment of spears. Facing an unexpected threat of unknown size, the Samburu's age system had revealed its limitations. Yet the events of 1996 provoked a period of unprecedented social reorganization. To defend themselves and, if possible, to attack numerous well-armed opponents, the traditional criteria for assigning military roles that had developed from the Samburu's age structure had to be rethought. The elders were forced to abandon their position as controllers, moderators of the predatory tendencies of the warriors, and joined groups created not only for defense of their community, but also to conduct raids with the explicit purpose of looting the herds of their opponents.

For several decades, the northern Samburu County—the area stretching from Baragoi to Mount Nyiro was the place where the conflict between Samburu and Turkana was at its most intense and violent, mainly close to the Turkana enclaves

30. *Ibid.*, p. 97-101.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 97-101.

(the villages of Kawap and Nasura, among others). Baragoi is a "multi-ethnic" center, along with Tuum until 1996. This coexistence acted repeatedly as a trigger for the conflicts between the two groups. In this demographic and geographic context, the targets of the raids can be localized often within a few kilometers or even in the same village. Instead of walking for several days, potentially ending up in a very dangerous place within Turkana County, northern Samburu warrior groups prefer to attack Turkana villages that are located within their territory. Similarly, the Kawap Turkana regularly organize raids against mount Nyiro Samburu communities. Firearms worsened the conflict, bringing to a head a situation already tense and difficult to manage by the local police who were unable to assert their authority in the remotest northern territories.

A Samburu warrior poses with his Kalashnikov (G. Marmone, 2012)

In the center and the south of the County, the Turkana community is much smaller and in many areas completely absent. In addition, the strong presence of the Kenyan police and army severely restricts the practice of cattle rustling and the spread of firearms. For central and southern *lmurran*, though many are intrigued by the prospect of owning an automatic rifle, they still mainly use their spears, whereas these have almost completely disappeared in the north. Those who have managed to procure themselves a Kalashnikov or an M-16, are forced to hide them to avoid being arrested. In the north a very high number of men (both elders and warriors) are equipped with rifles because of the conditions of insecurity resulting from the permanent conflict with the Turkana. In the rest of the county, the few firearms present must be shared, to be used during the few raids carried out along the border with enemy territories.

The lastest periods of conflict which affected central and southern Samburu territories took place several years ago (except for the areas at the border with Baringo and Turkana Counties, on the south-western side of the region, where the raiding activity between Samburu, Turkana and Pokot is still common). Most contemporary warriors of the region living far from the border areas never experienced the conditions of war and permanent insecurity that plagued the northern communities. The result is that southern and northern communities, essentially the same populations but with deeply dissimilar living conditions, evolved in different ways. The age system evolved in a limited way but greater changes can be observed in military organization. The pressure exerted by the violence of the armed conflict and the massive introduction of firearms in a defined area of the county led the involved Samburu communities towards an accelerated social change that has developed in parallel with a consistent differentiation of northern Samburu from south-central Samburu populations.

WAR AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN EAST-AFRICA

From the early 1990s, Samburu military organization underwent profound changes. An unprecedented alliance, in terms of dimensions and duration in time, was implemented between elders and warriors to deal with the growing threat represented by the Turkana and their attacks with automatic rifles. The possibility of a military alliance between elders and warriors within the so-called "age-grades societies" of East Africa during large-scale conflicts, had been taken into account as a concrete possibility by several ethnologists:

> [W]hen military activity was still fully pursued, there was no formal defensive organization. When defensive action was demanded, all able-bodied men without distinction of class participated. The reason for this is obvious: the response to an attack was ordinarily a sudden necessity, requiring the combined efforts of all those available. On the whole, the offensive system showed more clearly the stratification of the age-sets; but it is in connection with this aspect that the part played by the "warriors", or junior initiates as opposed to the elders, is over-stated [32].

In this regard, Almagor wrote:

> In an all-out war the entire tribe is united in its goal of defeating the enemy, the effort is usually brief but intense and overrides at least temporarily intra-tribal rivalries. The different interests and rivalries which divide grades and sets can best be observed when inter-tribal feuds are more or less routine [33].

According to Almagor, in addition, a collaboration between elders and warriors for the defense of the community represents

32. Bernardo Bernardi, « The Age-System of the Nilo-Hamitic Peoples: A Critical Evaluation », *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, vol. 22, n° 4 (1952), 1952, p. 327.
33. Uri Almagor, « Raiders and Elders: A Confrontation of Generations among the Dassanetch », in Fukui, Turton, dir., *Warfare among East African Herders*, Osaka, National Museum of Ethnology, 1979, p. 121.

a realistic possibility, but the practice of raids remains a prerogative of the warriors[34].

In these examples the escalations of violence among pastoral people in East Africa is seen as a possible trigger for a military alliance between elders and warriors—especially in the defensive phase—which takes place in the short term, until the return to a situation of normality through the mediation work of the elders. The case of the conflict between Samburu and Turkana is fundamental because it confirms what many anthropologists of the last century had theorized about without being able to make direct observations. But the example of the northern Samburu leads to subsequent considerations. Under the pressure of a large-scale conflict, the alliance between warriors and elders can develop not only in defense of the territory, people and herds, but also to attack in case of a feud. In addition, and this is the most interesting aspect, if the enemy acquires a greater defensive capability using more powerful weapons for example, then the elders may decide to join the warriors and collaborate with them during the raids. After the introduction of automatic rifles, to achieve a raid against a very well-armed enemy such as the Turkana, sometimes the *lmurran* alone are no longer sufficient. The activity of cattle-rustling loses its exclusive correlation with the members of the warriors' age-grade.

The association between multiple generation-sets during the raids is part of a military dynamic which has already been noted in describing the Turkana social system. Among the Samburu, on the contrary, the more rigid distribution of roles between the two age-grades reduces the involvement of the elders in the cattle-rustling-related activities. They are rather seen as those expected to restrain the belligerent trends of the *lmurran* through the persuasiveness of their oratorical skills. Peristiany offers an interesting hypothesis about the differences between military systems in East Africa in relation to age groups:

34. *Ibid.*, p. 127

> The Pokot have such formidable enemies to the north […] that it does not seem feasible to limit […] raiding to any definite age-rank, as in the case of Kipsigis. The Kipsigis had stabilized their position in relation to their neighbors. […] Raiding had become a highly-institutionalized activity whose main purpose was the capture of cattle—the spear-conquered cattle which formed the nucleus and the most honorable part of a man's estate and of a warrior's bride-wealth. Cattle raids regulated by the age-system on on the one hand and marriage on the other had become paired activities to a greater extent than among tribes whose frontiers were open to constant invasions. Among the Kipsigis one raided only as long as one needed cattle to marry and […] this period was regulated by the age-set system. When this objective had been attained, it was time to "open the way" to those who had not yet had this opportunity. […] The Pokot, on the other hand, used their manpower not only as marauders but also to conquer and consolidate the acquisition of extensive enemy territory as well as to defend it against enemies formidable both in number and organization. […] In this type of situation […] the age system does not provide for enforced retirement and […] the offensive and defensive organization is based on the principle of the nation armée so that all able-bodied men carry and use arms as long as they are in a position to do so[35].

To summarize, Peristiany offers the hypothesis that, in East Africa, the populations that live in environments characterized by permanent conflicts, where all the involved communities fight almost without interruption to impose their rule, the structural differentiation in the military field between warriors and elders is very low or totally absent. On the contrary, where the practice of raiding is concerned, a formalization of the roles in relation to the age-grade's membership will be more pronounced

35. John G. Peristiany, « The Age-Set of the Pastoral Pokot. Mechanism, Function and Post-"Sapana" », *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, vol. 21, n° 4 (1951) p. 281-282.

among those populations that have already defined their position in the territory vis-à-vis their enemies and use cattle-rustling almost exclusively for reasons related to marriage or the social status of an individual.

The Samburu age system belongs to this second type. But today, can we say the same thing about the northern Samburu? The hypothesis proposed here confirm Peristiany's suggestion: under the pressure of a violent and protracted conflict, the divisions between age groups must have been set aside to create collaboration between all men capable of fighting. Populations such as the Turkana and the Pokot developed this type of military organization over centuries. Their societies adapted to the requirements dictated by the practice of war by abolishing or not developing strong structural divisions between age-grades. For the Samburu, the discourse may be the same. During the past twenty years, the spread of firearms, as we have seen, has profoundly altered the nature of conflict. The frequency of raids was accompanied by a sharp increase in the violence and power of their enemies. The reaction of the northern Samburu communities implied an alliance and a significant compression of the social distance between warriors and elders which, because of the long-lasting conflict, became part of the structure of society. This process led, from a certain point of view, to a "paradoxical" result: the age and military system among the northern Samburu became increasingly like the Turkana enemies and, at the same time, deviated from that of the central and southern Samburu communities.

The organization of the different Samburu age-sets, which now participate together in raids, matches surprisingly the description of the Turkana by Gulliver. The elders form a rearguard and wait for the warriors to open the fences and push the stolen livestock in their direction. While the warriors fight with the Turkana, some of the elders, the oldest ones, collect the animals while the others join the warriors in the battle:

> […] When we [the warriors] fight with the Turkana, [the elders] take the livestock. As we strike the Turkana to make them escape, they [the elders] drive the animals elsewhere. […] If there were the *lmurran* alone, at the moment when the Turkana start shooting, the animals would escape and many Turkana would arrive. If there are also the *lpayanì*, when the *lpayanì* say "pum" [begin to shoot], we block the Turkana
>
> (recorded interview 03Sim13—08.08.2013).

According to Spencer, the process described has been supported by pre-existing conditions in the territory of Mount Nyiro where lower competition between age-sets for the acquisition of wives was recorded[36].

Therefore, sudden and long-lasting changes in the practice of war profoundly affect the internal balance of a society that the military organization, the age system and even some cultural activities, such as singing and dancing. But the spread of firearms also had a crucial influence on the northern Samburu's economic system, transforming raids into a mode of subsistence as beneficial as the husbandry of animals.

FIREARMS AND THE PREDATORY ECONOMY

The pastoral "mode of production" has historically represented the most efficient means of wealth production.The predatory economy associated with the theft of livestock, on the other hand, could never compete with peaceful animal husbandry and remains a prerogative of the members of the warriors' age-grade, who duly abandon it in the moment of the passage to the elders' age-grade: "Raids are carried out by young men who are regarded as unsettled, 'wild', and irresponsible, concerned only with immediate rewards,

36. Paul Spencer, personal communication, 2014; Paul Sencer, *The Samburu…*, p.318.

'machismo', etc. and less with the economic and political interests of the whole tribe" [37]

However, the use of guns during cattle rustling reversed this disparity by making raids sometimes more advantageous in the short term than the pastoral economy. The Baragoi police data show very clear patterns: in the space of a few years, with the conversion from spears to firearms, raids became an activity that could net thousands of heads of cattle per year [38]. From the second half of the 1990s, therefore, the economic system of the northern Samburu became largely predatory. The elders join the groups of warriors who go on raids, not only for military reasons, but also to exert a direct control over a "mode of production" so important that its administration could no longer be delegated to the warriors alone. Animal husbandry is no longer the only way to enlarge herds. On the contrary, the participation in a raid, for an elder armed with an automatic rifle, can result in the acquisition of dozens of new cattle in the space of a few days. The livestock gained may become the personal property of the raider and can be shared within the community. A third solution is the illegal sale of the stolen cattle on the food market that supplies the county's major cities. This latter represents a new form of economic organization no longer centered on the expansion of herds, but focused on obtaining resources that can be exchanged for cash.

The raids of the past, executed with spears, bows and arrows, could allow the *lmurran* to acquire, over several years, the cattle needed to consolidate their bridewealth. Today, in theory, a warrior could steal more livestock in a few months than that possessed by his own father, thus destabilizing the traditional social and economic balance between the young and elders. Similarly, among the Karimojong of Uganda:

37. Uri Almagor, p. 127.
38. Kennedy A. Mkutu, p. 97-101.

> The guns has made them [the warriors] independent of their Fathers […]. The raids […] allow for long-term investments that will make the young men more independent of their elders. Bridewealth is paid from the family herd and each son or younger brother has to wait his turn before he can marry. This is a father's main lever of power over his sons. Raided cattle allow a young men to circumvent this power [39]

Therefore, besides the military reasons already described, the Samburu elders participate in raids either to take advantage of the opportunities opened up by the use of guns or to prevent the warriors from obtaining wealth that could be potentially dangerous for the stability of the society.

Nonetheless, not everyone agrees with the elders' engagement in the practice of raids. Many *lpayanì* consider the collaboration with the *lmurran* a form of degradation of customs:

> [In the past, elders and warriors] did not mix! There were only the *lmurran* going on raids, not the *lpayanì*, [...] the *lpayanì* remained at home. […]. It's greed that drives them, tell him if you know it, it's greed that drives them, it's the fault of the stomach!
>
> (Recorded interview 01Tuu13—27.07.2013)

> In the past [the elders] imposed the rules on the *lmurran*, [now] the *lmurran* have no rules. […] [The elders] did not go [on raids]. That was in the past. But now they go together, so that [the elders] can take the cattle from all the raids. Now the *lpayanì* go [on raids] because they are greedy for the raided cattle. In the past the *lpayanì* didn't have this greed.
>
> (Recorded interview 12Sim13—05.09.2013)

39. Simon Simonse, « Warriors, hooligans and mercenaries: Failed statehood and the violence of young male pastoralists in the Horn of Africa » dans Abbink, van Kessel, dir., *Vanguard or Vandals. Youth, Politics and Conflict in Africa*, Leiden, Brill, 2005, p. 251.

ETHNOMUSICOLOGY: A PRIVILEGED WAY TO EXPLORE SOCIAL CHANGE

Let us return to one of our initial questions: Can a shift of these proportions of social and economic paradigms be brought to light by an ethnomusicological survey? At first glance, among the northern Samburu, over the last twenty years, the age system structure has not undergone any relevant change. Conflict and firearms brought violence and fear, thousands of heads of cattle have been lost and thousands have been stolen, but, apparently, elders and warriors continue to conserve their roles in society. "The *lmurran* are our army, they must defend our herds" say the elders. "The *lpayanì* take all the decisions and prevent us from stealing cattle from our enemies" say the warriors. It has always been like this in the Samburu County. And yet something has changed. This change is not easy to grasp, but seemingly marginal elements—such as the change in the musical activity—have had the power to reveal profound changes in the relationship between age groups.

Lmurran and *lpayanì* perform two separate dance sessions. Their musical distance generates and evokes their social distance. Their dancing bodies and the groups that they create, distant in space and time during the ceremonial dances, represent two divisions that must be kept apart for the correct functioning of the social "fabric". However, in the north, and especially on Mount Nyiro, for about twenty years, the members of warriors and elders age-grades dance and sing together in a single session. The search for an answer to this purely ethnomusicological question, as we have seen, leads us to the discovery of broader processes of closer links being created between age groups and of overcoming social divisions that otherwise would have remained nearly impossible to resolve.

The analysis of an exceptional form of "musical alliance" revealed the existence of another type of alliance, in this case a military one, born in the same period from the pressure of

the conflict with the Turkana. The Samburu's musical practice, developed to support and create the age system's structure, adapted itself to the process of social change that involved *lpayanì* and *lmurran*. The same dances have contrasting meanings as the southern and central Samburu County version emphasizes incompatibility between elders and warriors, while in the north, the emphasis is on their military cooperation. What remains invariable from north to south is the value of the collective dances among the Samburu: a social configuration—age-grade, age-set, alliance relationship, etc.—can be implemented only through an experience that must be shared between the members of the same group, based on a common and frequent musical practice, which has the power to define their unity. In the case of the northern Samburu, the alliance between warriors and elders has been stabilized and reproduced over time, also through the removal of the *lpayanì* dance session and the gathering of the members of the two age-grades in a single session. *À la danse comme à la guerre*.

The conflict between Samburu and Turkana in Baragoi or on Mount Nyiro is far from over. In recent years, the Kenyan Government has strengthened the presence of the police and the army in the northern Samburu County to contain and punish cattle rustling and exercise control over illegal firearms trade. Hence, the number of raids dropped considerably, but this activity has certainly not disappeared and members of both populations have not stopped regarding it as an essential practice from a social and economic point of view. The villages of Waso Rongai and Simalé were attacked by the Turkana respectively in November 2013 and April 2014. Three warriors were killed and several cattle heads were lost. In July 2012, the Waso Rongai Samburu stole 400 sheep in Kawap. *Lpayanì* and *lmurran* continue to dance together and their military alliance appears to still be strong. The intensity of their collaboration generated a re-examination of the social roles that weakened the boundaries between age groups and altered the balance between elders and warriors. In

addition, the violence of the conflict altered pre-existing economic models based on the centrality of peaceful animal husbandry to those involving the practice of cattle-rustling. Yet the recent reduction in raiding, due to the operations of both the police and the army in the north, may theoretically lead the elders to abandon their guns and return to the full-time management of livestock and political administration in their community. At present, this seems to be a possibility that is not being seriously considered. The still massive presence of firearms makes it difficult to imagine the conflict ending soon. Attacks carried out by the Turkana have not completely ended. The warriors still aspire to earn the respect of their peers by looting their enemies' livestock and the elders seem unwilling to completely abandon the economic benefits provided by direct involvement in cattle raids.