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A Bibliography of Karamoja, Uganda: Books and Articles Published in English

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Preface

The Karamoja region of northeastern Uganda is bordered on the east by the Rift Valley escarpment that drops down into the Kenya territory of Turkana, on the north by the Sudan, on the south by the Mt. Elgon region, and on the west by the home territories of the Teso, Langi, and Acholi peoples. A large region of approximately 27,200 square kilometers, it is dominated by the huge semi-arid plains of its center, where rainfall is seasonal, unpredictable, and too often sparse. In the north and south and along the eastern escarpment the land becomes more forested and mountainous, and in the west the area of the Labwor people is better watered.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, Karamoja has been an region of sporadic political concern to outside authorities, first the British colonial rulers, and then the Ugandan national government. Karamoja has been seen by these outsiders as a land of lawlessness and primitive culture, inhabited by bloodthirsty people who preyed upon neighboring groups, and were irrationally attached to their cattle, who refused to participate in modern forms of government and the market economy, resisted formal education and Christianity, and avoided paying taxes. Because of its geographical location, Karamoja has also been seen as a strategic frontier, and thus, its perceived disorder is viewed as doubly dangerous. The early part of this twentieth century history is well-described by Barber in the works cited below. The deeper oral history is provided through the works of Lamphear.

The principal ethnic groups of Karamoja are classically identified within the "Karamojong Cluster," i.e., the Dodoth in the north, the Jie in the center, and the Karimojong in the center-south. The Karimojong further divide themselves into three major regional and ethnic sub-groups, the Matheniko, Bokora, and Pian. The foundation of our knowledge of these groups is based on the major ethnographic works of the Gullivers and the Dyson-Hudsons. Other groups in the Karamojong Cluster outside of Karamoja are the Teso, the Turkana, and one or two smaller groups in southern Sudan. Because the Turkana have

maintained complex and active relations with Karamoja peoples, they figure prominently in several of the works cited below. The principal Karamojong groups in Karamoja are all semi-nomadic pastoralists who also rely on seasonal horticultural production. An economically similar (although linguistically quite different) group, the Pakot or Suk, inhabits a territory in southeastern Karamoja that includes both Ugandan and Kenyan land. In western Karamoja is the relatively more fertile area of Labwor, where horticulture is the principal means of livelihood and the people are ethnically more similar to their Ugandan neighbors to the west. Several very small groups of ethnically marginalized people are also found literally on the fringes of Karamoja. The Tepeth or So are best known through the work of the Laughlins and Weatherby, while our information regarding the Teuso or Ik is sketchy and perhaps unreliable, and about the Nyakwai we know even less.

Much of the published research on Karamoja was done prior to the 1970's. In the early 1970's Karamoja entered a long period of turmoil and distress. As a series of governments were installed and then expelled by force of arms, the disorder at the center spread to the periphery and in Karamoja a wide-open trade in rifles and ammunition rapidly expanded. When the region was hit by a series of severe droughts and famine in the 1980's, the social and economic fabric began to fray as armed groups engaged in continuous raiding and banditry. A brief summary of the effects of this disorder is provided by Quam. The published literature from this period largely reflects these troubled times. Much of it is based on analysis of relief efforts, and some of the more recent items come from the Centre for Basic Research in Kampala which published a series of reports and analytical pieces on the "crisis" in Karamoja.

As noted in the subtitle, this bibliography is limited to books and articles published in English. It does not include government reports or reports issued by international organizations. In the areas of history, ethnography, linguistics, and the social sciences, it is reasonably complete, however, there may be articles in the natural, medical, agricultural, and veterinary sciences that have escaped the compiler's notice. With the establishment of a more peaceful situation in Karamoja, we can expect that new research will be conducted and reported soon in the scholarly press.

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