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RESERVE

THE RENDILLE ECONOMY - Some Preliminary
Findings on Trading Activities.

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THE RENDILLE ECONOMY - SOME
PRELIMINARY FINDINGS ON TRADING ACTIVITIES

By

G. K. Njiru

A B S T R A C T

In this paper sales of camels, cattle, sheep and goats by Rendille, a nomadic pastoral tribe occupying the Laisamis Division of Marsabit District in Eastern Province, between August 1979 and July 1980 are presented. Prices paid to pastoralists for this livestock and prices realised by traders at various markets are also presented. The sale of the Livestock Marketing Division (LMD) of the Ministry of Livestock Development, in the purchase of cattle is also discussed at length.

The next section discusses trade in the six most important items which pastoralists buy. These items are maize meal (posho), sugar, tea, tobacco, cloth and shoes. The purchase of these items can account for upto 90% of the income got from the sale of livestock by pastoralists. The relationship between livestock and skin sales on one hand and the sales of these items is shown to be a very strong one.

Some of the major hinderances to trade identified in the paper include lack of capital by traders, very poor road network, long distances to markets for livestock and skins and to distributors of items desired by pastoralists, and a lack of reliable well organised markets for the products which pastoralists want to sell. It is shown that although the prices for livestock and skins were poor pastoralists managed to sell approximately 3.3% of their sheep and cattle, 83.8% of their sheep skins and 60.4% of goat skins. They purchased goods worth Shs 2,804,711 or 116 Shs per capita, despite frequent shortages of posho the main item.

Finally preliminary recommendations on how to improve the marketing of livestock, skins and retail goods are made. It is suggested that provision of better markets, credit and incentive goods will result in more livestock and skin sales and the purchase of more goods from outside the district. This would make the pastoralists more commercial and open opportunities of enjoying the consumption of goods and services hitherto unavailable to them.

THE RENDILLE ECONOMY - Some
Preliminary Findings on Trading Activities.¹

INTRODUCTION

This paper reports the preliminary findings of a study among the Rendille of northern Kenya. The Rendille are a tribe of approximately 21,000 people (1979 Census). Of these 19,856 occupy Laisamis Division of Marsabit forming the bulk of its population of 24,143 people. They are pastoral nomads who keep camels, sheep, goats, cattle and a few donkeys. Due to the low potential of the land animals must keep moving from place to place because grazing or browse in each place gets exhausted after use by livestock for only a few days or weeks.

The Rendille occupy about 22,000 km². Their homerange is bounded by Lake Turkana to the west, Oldoinyo Mara and Ndato Mountains to the South-west, River Merille to the south, Chalbi Desert to the north and Marsabit Mountain to the north-east (see map 1). Most of the area lies between 400-700 meters above sea level and receives an annual precipitation of 100-200 mm on the lowlands which gradually increases to 700 mm in the highlands. The predominant vegetation types are annual grasslands, dwarf shrubland and shrubland which cover approximately 80% of the land (Herlocken 1979) Woodland, bushland and perennial grassland occur along seasonal rivers and on the slopes of Mts Marsabit, Kulal and the Ndato Range.

Their economy is subsistent with, until recently little production for the market. Livestock and livestock products and the natural vegetation supplies most of their demand for food clothing, housing and domestic utensils. Sixty to ninety percent of their diet is milk of which about 80% is camels milk.² This is because the milk supplied from cattle and goats is only available in very small quantities during the dry season. The other

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented to the Scientific Seminar on UNEP-MAB's Integrated Project in Arid Lands held in Nairobi from 1st to the 3rd of December 1981.

2. Sabine Schwartz: Personal Communication 1980.

portion of the diet is filled by meat, blood, and purchases of maize-meal, sugar and tea which are brought in from outside the area. Money for the purchase of these foods and a few other items comes from the earnings of a small number of employed Rendille and from the sale of sheep, goats, camels, cattle and skins. Commercial sales of milk and meat to the few missionaries, researchers, teachers, traders and government officers in the area are negligible.

CONTACTS WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD

Up to the late 60's the Rendille were living more or less as they have lived since time immemorial (Sobania 1979). The colonial administration maintained minimum contacts with them because their land was unsuitable for alienation and they produced little that interested the administration. At the same time attempts to control border crossings by Gabbra and Boran into and from Ethiopia occupied most of the attention of colonial D.C's. Except for providing transport camels for travel within the District Rendille were left alone (Spencer 1973).

After Independence shifita troubles in Northern Kenya occupied the new government. Only after the end of hostilities in the late 60's was government activity increased in the area. At the same time a ban which had been imposed on Missionary activities in the District was lifted. The early 70's therefore saw the establishment of mission stations, police posts and schools among the Rendille. These attracted some pastoralists who settled more or less permanently around them. Trade which had hitherto been by Camel Caravan's and which was limited by the nomadic nature of the people has now improved. These permanent centers have attracted traders who try to serve the food clothing and other needs of these peoples.

As trade becomes increasingly accepted as part of everyday life the society's economy is slowly changing from purely subsistence bases to one where surplus animals and skins are exchanged for goods imported from other parts of Kenya and the rest of the world.

The present study has the objective of broadly describing the economic relationships that exist within this pastoral nomadic system. (see Njiru, 1980 for details). An understanding of these

relationships is felt to be important in the formulation of management guidelines to facilitate better utilisation of it by the pastoralists. They also aim at suggesting economic incentives for encouraging increased sales of livestock, reducing over-stocking and at the same time ensuring that productivity increases arising from improved management contribute to the raising of living standards in the area.

OBJECTIVES OF THIS PAPER

This paper analyses the livestock marketing system in Rendille territory³ together with related sales of foodstuffs and other items desired by pastoralists. Quantities traded and the efficiency with which this is done is discussed. Finally ways of making the present system more efficient in moving more animals and animal products out of the area and bringing in more of the goods which pastoralists want are recommended.

METHODS USED

The data used here was collected through participant observation, formal and informal interviews of Chiefs, Councillors, Missionaries, District heads of Livestock Marketing, Trade, Veterinary Services, and Range Management and approximately 90% of all traders with shops in the study area. Two structured questionnaires were administered to the traders while informal interviews of the others were conducted as need arose.

Trading centers in the area have been visited on many occasions for the purpose of familiarisation with traders and their trading practices. Only after the researcher had come to know and be known by traders did the formal interviews start. Although most traders understood Kiswahili a local person known to them and able to speak Rendille was always present in the interview. The activities of the Government of Kenya's Livestock Marketing Division (LMD) which purchases animals from traders and pastoralists at Badasa near Marsabit town were monitored by participation of the author in these sales.

3. According to figures from the 1979 National Population Census, Table 2, there are 24143 people in Laisamis Division. 19856 of these are Rendille while the other 4287 are mainly Samburu and Turkana (of whom there are 3990 and 2929 in Marsabit District respectively). The Samburu are found at the southern fringes of the division's border with Samburu Dist. and on Mt. Kulal. The Turkana are found on the lake Turkana shores near Loiengalani. All are pastoral nomads and references to Rendille in the text include them.

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As in other studies of a similar nature lack of accurate records led to a heavy reliance on what people chose to tell.

Since few people are frank about the level and sources of their income, difficulties in getting this information were to be expected. The position here was complicated by the fact that many of these traders are engaged in illegal activities. It is common for some of them to move animals across district boundaries without a veterinary officers permit, to trade in livestock without a livestock trader's licence or in skins without a licence. Some charge prices which are higher than those allowed by the price controller and exchange goods directly for livestock, a practice which is not allowed. All these are punishable with heavy fines if one is convicted in a court of law.

Since some of the questions asked touched on these very issues, the traders found themselves in the difficult position of being asked to give information on their illegal activities. It was therefore expected that attempts would be made to cover up. To get round this problem it was made very clear that the study was not connected with price control, or government police activities and that any information provided would be treated with the strictest confidentiality. It was further stated that some of the difficulties encountered by traders arose from a lack of understanding, on the government's side, of the special problems facing traders in such remote areas. If this state of affairs was to be remedied through this study it was absolutely essential that they tell the truth.

As additional checks enquiries about each traders activities from reliable local sources were made by the assistant who in many cases knew somebody in the center. A lot of time has also been spent observing pastoralists buying and selling and in informal conversations with cooperating traders. Prices of retail goods were ascertained by actual purchases of goods, and interviews of people who stayed in these centers and purchased things there. Prices paid to pastoralists by traders and those realised when traders ultimately sold livestock and skins were however difficult to countercheck. This is because no animal or skin is exactly like another. Through the observation of numerous sales and the use of

a questionnaire designed to reveal quickly any discrepancies in price information the researcher is satisfied that the price data got was as close to reality as can be under similar circumstances. The fact that the interviews were conducted after the researcher had spent over eight months in the area and made friends among the traders especially at Ngurunit, Kars, Laisamis, Loglogo and Gatab greatly improved rapport and reduced deliberate misinformation to a minimum.

LIVESTOCK AND SKIN SALES BY RENDILLE

Most trade in livestock and skins is conducted through small traders operating in the nine trading centers within Rendille Territory and through sales to the LMD which buys animals from Marsabit at least once every year. The small traders then trek or truck the animals to Marsabit town or to centers outside the district and sell them to bigger traders, slaughterhouses, ranchers etc.

The following section analyses livestock and skins sales from the area between August 1979 and July 1980. This period was selected because it covers one year and represents two important events which could act as reference points for aiding the memory of the interviewees. These were the national population census of August 1979 and the purchase of cattle by LMD in July 1980. Table 1 below gives a breakdown of the origins of the traders interviewed. Map 1 shows the location of the trading centers and the area being studied.

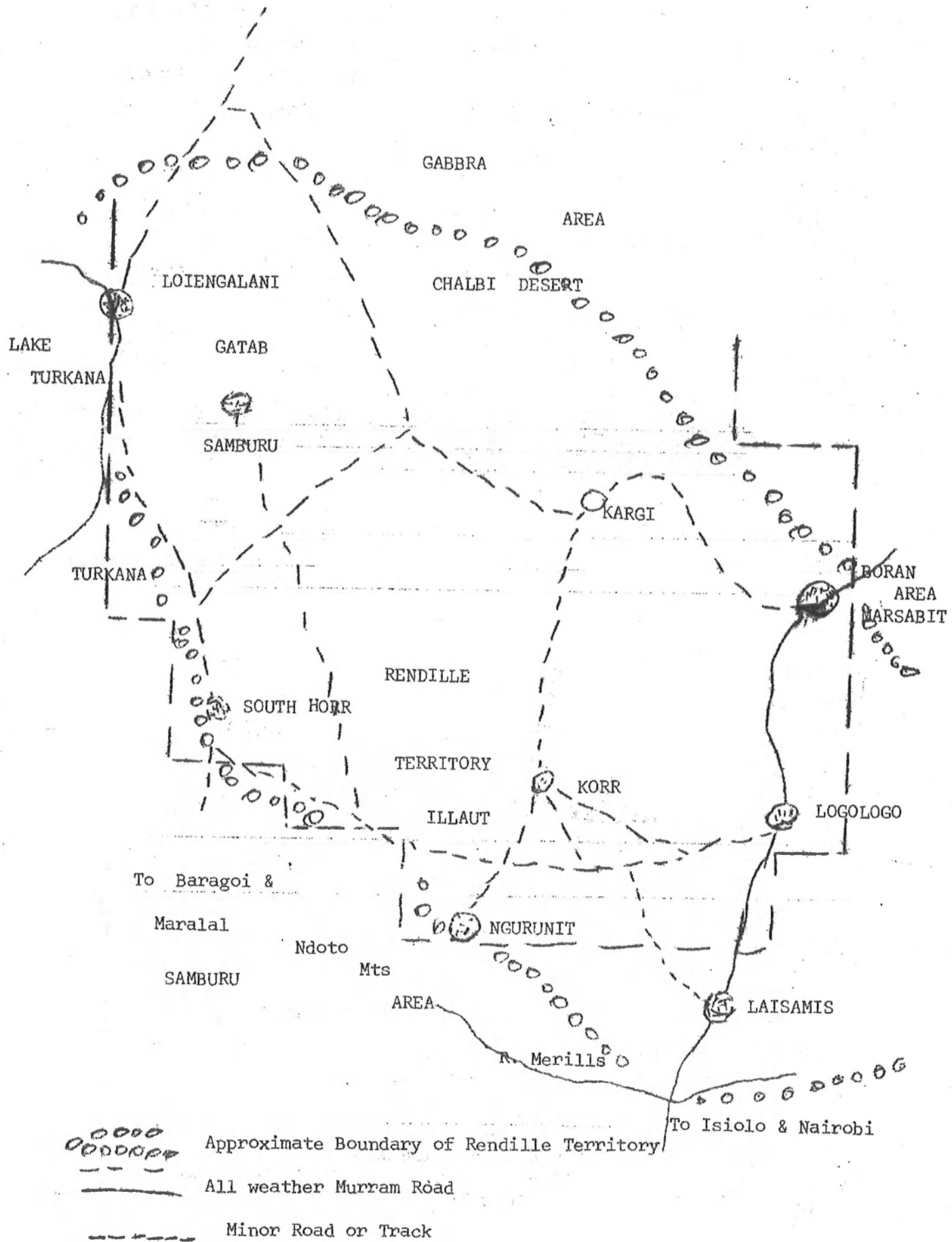
Table 1

DISTRIBUTION OF TRADERS AND CENTERS
IN RENDILLE TERRITORY 1979/80.

CENTERS	NO. OF TRADERS	NO. INTERVIEWED
Ngurunit	2	2
Illaut	5	2
Korr	6	6
South. Horr	4	4
Kargi	5	5
Mount Kulal	1	1
Laisamis	8	6
Loglogo	4	4
Loiengalani	2	2
TOTAL	37	33

Source: Own compilation.

Map 1: DISTRIBUTION OF CENTERS WITH TRADERS IN RENDILLE TERRITORY



Two traders at Illaut and two at Laisamis were unavailable for interview for various reasons. All other traders were interviewed as shown in Table 1. In this discussion no attempt is made to extrapolate the findings to the four traders who were not interviewed.

The data at hand shows that the present livestock marketing system is facilitating the sale of significant quantities of livestock and skins by pastoralists.⁴ Records of Revenue earned are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2.

NUMBER AND VALUE OF LIVESTOCK AND SKINS SALES BY PASTORALISTS TO THE INTERVIEWED TRADERS AND IMD BETWEEN AUGUST 1979 AND JULY 1980.

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>NUMBERS</u>	<u>AMOUNT EARNED (KSHS.)</u>
CAMELS	0	0
CATTLE	1458	759464
GOATS	5489	513428
SHEEP	2030	195285
SHEEP SKINS	28828	221004
GOAT SKINS	18068	172096
		1,861,277

Source: Own Compilation

Contrary to popular belief that pastoralists in this area are reluctant to sell animals, they sold livestock and skins worth 1,861,277 to traders and LMD in this period.

4. Livestock marketing and retail trade will be discussed as if they are separate to avoid confusion. When their organization is understood the very close interrelationship between them be explained.

The above figure does not include all sales because a number of itinerant traders from Meru, Baragoi and Maralal come to the area and buy cattle, sheep and goats for sale in their home towns. The numbers bought vary from year to year. In the period in question they bought approximately 500 sheep and about 100 cattle.⁵

In addition to this many of the Rendille from the area between Kargi, Logologo and Karare also sell their stock at Marsabit. The county council cess collectors have been asked to count the numbers sold by Rendille this year. Repeated observation of animal sales at the Marsabit Market indicate that between 5 and 30 sheep and goats and 1 to 5 cattle from Rendille area are sold here everyday. The maximum number of animals is sold during the time when LMD is purchasing cattle at Badasa near Marsabit. This is because LMD rejects many animals for various reasons and the owners prefer to sell them at lower prices other than return home with them.

Assuming that between August 1979 and July 1980 five sheep and one cow were sold per day for six days every week in Marsabit, the total sales would be 1565 sheep and goats and 313 cattle (This figure is likely to be on the low side).

The pastoralists who sell at Marsabit and to traders from outside the area get better prices than those who sell to interviewed traders.⁶ Since these prices are unavailable we will assume that they were the same as those paid by interviewed traders and that in the case of smallstock the proportions of sheep and goats sold were the same. This then gives the following additional figures.

5. These estimates were made with the help of chiefs of Korr, Laisamis and traders from Illaut and South Horr.

6. All traders were complaining that this is why pastoralists preferred to sell to these people.

Table 3.

SMALLSTOCK AND CATTLE SALES TO ITINERANT TRADERS
AND AT MARSABIT BY RENDILLE PASTORALISTS BETWEEN
AUGUST 1979 AND JULY 1980

ITEM	NUMBERS	AMOUNT EARNED (SHS)
CATTLE	413	179655
GOATS	1507	140961
SHEEP	558	53679
		<u>314,295</u>

Source: Own Compilation

This brings total sales and Revenue to the figures shown in Table 4.

Table 4:

ESTIMATES OF TOTAL SALES OF LIVESTOCK AND SKINS
BY RENDILLE IN THE PERIOD AUGUST 1979 TO JULY 1980

ITEM	NUMBERS	AMOUNT EARNED (KSHS)
CAMELS	0	0
CATTLE	1871	939119
GOATS	6996	654389
SHEEP	2588	248964
SHEEP SKINS	28828	221004
GOAT SKINS	18068	<u>172096</u>
		2,235,572

Source: Own Compilation

The Rendille therefore earned a sum of Shs 2,235,572 from the sale of livestock and skins.

These figures represent a commercial offtake for small stock, camels and cattle of the proportion shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5.

COMMERCIAL OFFTAKE FOR RENDILLE LIVESTOCK IN THE PERIOD AUGU. 1979 TO JULY 1980

ITEM	NUMBERS SOLD	TOTAL POPULATION ¹	% SALES
CAMELS	0	41400	0
COWS	1871	56810	3.3
SMALLSTOCK	9584	287040	3.3

Source: Own Compilation (1980)

1. ~~Population~~ estimate figures are from Field (1980). They include animals from areas occupied by Babbra and Borana pastoralists. However they also exclude the area between Laisamis, Marille and Koiya which is in Rendille Territory. This partly covers, for the extra Boran and Gabbra animals included but it should be noted that Rendille animals are likely to be slightly fewer than this.

Table 5 shows that the commercial offtake from Rendille area is very low. It is below the FAO figure of 5% (FAO 1971) and below that maintained by pastoral nomads elsewhere. Meadows and White (1979) found that commercial offtake figures for Maasai cattle ranged from 5.4% to 12.5% and averaged 8% between 1973 and 1977.

No camels and hides were sold through traders in this period. The reasons given were that there is no market for camels and that all hides are used for beddings and other domestic purposes. Skins are also used for women's wear. The 23 traders who dealt in hides and skins estimated that they purchased only 60.4% of all goat skins available and 83.8% of sheep skins. The main reason for this was that goat skins are preferred material for women's wear.⁷

7. Men no longer wear skins except for a period before circumcision when the initiate wear sheep skin cloaks.

These estimates of the proportion of sheep and goat skins sold make calculation of the total offtake of smallstock possible. If the 28,828 sheep skin sold represent 83.8% of all sheepskin available and the 18068 goat skins represent 60.4% of goat skins, total sheep and goat skins available are 34,401 and 29,914 respectively. When these are added to total sales of live sheep and goats which number 9584 (Table 4) the total offtake of smallstock from the area is approximately 73,899 head. This is approximately 25.7% of all smallstock in the area (Table 5). The figure is slightly larger than the 20% estimate of the 1979 - 83 Marsabit District Development Plan (1980)

Total offtake for camel, and cattle are presently not calculable but ongoing research by Dr. Field (Field, 1980) is expected to throw some light on this.

GOODS PURCHASES BY RENDILLE

Livestock sales are made for the purpose of getting money. This is then used to purchase goods and services which pastoralists cannot produce or which they would rather buy. In Rendille area the main items purchased are posho, sugar, tea, clothes, tobacco, shoes, cooking pots, water containers, beads and other decorative items, veterinary and human medicine, school fees, pangas, and knives.

Since most people live far from the main trading centers, what they can buy is determined by what the traders in the trading center nearest to them have on their shelves. In a sense, Says ~~It~~ that supply creates demand is applicable. This is because if the desired goods are not available in a particular center all the pastoralists near will not sell animals because the money from such sales is of no use to them.

Following this logic one would expect a close correspondence between the values of retail goods sold and proceeds from livestock sales in the area. For the sake of brevity this analysis will focus on the six most important commodities bought by pastoralists. These are posho, sugar, tea clothes, tobacco, shoes. Together they account for over 90% of the value of items sold in some of these shops.

Posho is the most important commodity among these items. It is used to supplement supplies of the livestock based foods which are often insufficient in the dry season when livestock produce little milk the pastoralists' staple food. At the height of drought posho is the main food in practically every home which has access to it. Contrary to suggestions that pastoralists take posho only in times of stress an ongoing study of the expenditure patterns of employed Rendille's shows that families with enough camels, cattle and smallstock to provide all their protein and energy requirements still buy posho even during the rainy reason. It is probable that posho mixed with milk to form porridge is becoming increasingly popular among salary earners. However, when the money to buy posho has to be generated by sale of the more highly valued livestock, ordinary pastoralists may prefer to forego this luxury during the rainy reason.

During the periods of February to April, and July to October when grazing is poor posho¹⁸ is so important to business that some traders actually close their shops and go to look for it as soon as it gets finished. During these periods which are also the periods when the bulk of livestock and skins sales⁸ are made, the main preoccupation of pastoralists is with food. If traders in a particular center do not bring in any posho pastoralists may actually migrate to places where it is available. This results in fewer animals and skins purchases for the traders concerned. All traders therefore try their best to stock posho at these times.

During the survey period traders indicated that when supplies were available they could sell a total of 2258 bags of posho in any one of the dry months. This is equivalent to about $2\frac{1}{2}$ bags everyday for the 29 traders who sold it.

Sugar is another commodity in great demand. It is used in tea and for sweetening the posho porridge. Studies on food consumption in these areas indicate that families near trading centers consume as much as half a kilo of sugar a day.⁹

8. Skins sales are more during the dry season because this is the time when animals are eaten and when many die.

9. This is from unpublished data collected by Sabina Schwarte at Kon in 1979/80. Dr. Eva Muhia who conducted some nutrition studies in the area also made a similar observation to this author.

Due to its bulkiness and the fact that monthly purchases are not high enough to justify the hiring of transport by individual traders, sugar is never bought on its own. It is usually purchased on posho trips.

As a result although sugar is in great demand throughout the year its supplies in all centers are best during the dry season when the high demand for posho justifies constant trips to the bigger centers where supplies are found. Pastoralists have learned to drink their tea without sugar during the wet season. The 29 traders who sold sugar stated that they were able to sell a total of 407 bags of sugar or 14.1 kg. per trader per day during the months when supplies were available.

In the year of the survey there was a national shortage of posho. The study area is very far from the main posho producing areas of Rift Valley and Western Province. Distribution problems due to the large distances involved make posho shortages at Isiolo and Meru the main supply centers for northern Kenya common even in good years. When there is a national shortage as in the survey period the government, through the National Cereal Board, a parastatal organisation charged with marketing of cereals, intervenes to ensure that remote areas of the country also receive some supplies. In 1980 the shortage was so large that massive imports of maize had to be made. To ensure fairer distribution of imports and the little posho available from local sources the Provincial administration through District Commissioners, District officers and chiefs were requested to clear applications for posho by any traders, in their area before it could be sold to them by the Board and to ensure that there was no hoarding or overcharging.

Despite this government intervention sales of posho in the study area were very low and traders estimated that they were only able to sell the equivalent of two months supplies under normal circumstances. The price of posho also rose from an average of one shilling and fifty cents a kilo in 1978 to an average of two shillings and fifty seven cents a kilo in the study period.

Sugar supplies which are influenced by availability of posho were estimated as being equal to four months supplies. This is because due to scarcity of posho traders loaded larger quantities

of sugar per trip than they did when posho was plentiful.

Tea is another commodity which is very popular with pastoralists. Its supplies in this period were again limited by government rationing as there was a national shortage of tea. Each trader could only purchase a maximum of 10 packets of 10kg. each per month. The 29 traders who sold the commodity indicated that they sold 273 such packets every month. Tea is so popular that on the many occasions when sugar is not available pastoralists will drink sugarless tea.

A large percentage of adult men and women in this area chew tobacco. This has been going on for a very long time. As tobacco does not grow in the area it has to be imported. In pre-colonial times supplies were acquired through camel caravans to Meru where skins and livestock were exchanged for tobacco, millet, maize and other agricultural foodstuffs (Sobania, 1980, Dahl 1977). In recent years traders have taken over the function of importing it. Frequent trips are unnecessary since a trader can buy up to one years supplies on one supply trip. The 30 traders who sold it estimated that their total monthly sales were 1246 kg.

Another popular item is tyre shoes. The many thorn trees in the study area make protection of feet essential for herdsmen. Although traditional skin sandals exist and are worn by most people, sandals made of remains of tubes and tyres are becoming increasingly popular. These last longer than the skin sandals and give more protection as the sole is quite thick. The 26 traders who sold them indicated that pastoralists purchased a total of 536 pairs of shoes every month.

Traders in this area close their shops very often. This is usual when supplies of the main commodities are not available; when traders go to sell livestock in Marsabit or outside the district; or when they go for major supplies trips. As a result it is unlikely that these traders sold more than ten months' supplies of tobacco, posho and tea.

Sales of decorative and non-essential items like beads, red ochre, trinklets, cloth and clothes are highest during the rainy season. This is the period when food purchases go down as grazing improves and livestock

satisfy more and more of pastoralists food requirements. Harding at this time can be done by boys and girls since animals do not go far and surface water is available making the tedious watering of animals unnecessary. People get into a festive mood and day and night dances for the young and old alike become common. People start concentrating on beauty and it is at this time that most men especially morans buy a blanket or several yards of material to use as a loose covering for the body. It is also at this time that the few women who wear manufactured cloth buy it.

During the four months of the wet season each of the 26 traders who sold cloth and clothing sold approximately 70 metres of material per month.

Table 6 below summarises the vital information on sales of retail goods.

Table 6. QUANTITIES AND VALUES OF COMMODITIES BOUGHT BY RENDILLE : BETWEEN AUG. 1979 AND JULY 1980.

Commodity	Unit	Quantities	Value Shs	No of Months When sold
Posho	90 kg bag	2258	10,044,750	2
Sugar	100 kg bag	407	719,000	4
Tea	10 kg packet	273	444,500	10
Tobacco	kg	1246	406,300	10
Shoes	pairs	536	88,065	10
Cloth	metres	1826	102,088	4
Total		-	2,804,711	-

Source: Own Compilation

In terms of a population of 24142 people these figures represent per capita consumption of the magnitude shown in Table 7.

Table 7.

PER CAPITA CONSUMPTION OF THE FIVE MAJOR RETAIL ITEMS BOUGHT BY
RENDILLE, 1979/80.

ITEM	AMOUNT PURCHASED	PER CAPITA CONSUMPTION	UNIT
Posho	406,440	16.8	Kg.
Sugar	162,800	6.7	Kg.
Tea	27,300	1.13	Kg.
Tobacco	12,460	0.52	Kg.
Cloth	7,304	0.52	Meters
Shoes	5,360	0.22	Pairs

Source: Own Compilation

The total expenditure figure of 2,804,711 shillings exceeds revenue earned from livestock sales by 569,139 shillings which is 25.4% of this revenue. This difference is larger because some other items estimated to account for another 10% of pastoralists' purchases have been left out of this analysis.

The excess of expenditure over earnings can be accounted for in many ways. First, a substantial amount is earned by many people in the area who are employed by traders, missions, schools, police, administration, various government, ministries and tourist lodges. Secondly, the traders, their families and dependants use some of the items which they sell. Thirdly, people from the area working in Marsabit and in other parts of Kenya send gifts of money (remittances) to their friends and relatives. If the behaviour of the employees of UNEP-MAB Integrated Project in Arid Lands (IPAL) is typical, such gifts of money range from around 17% of the employed people's incomes during wet months to around 30% in the dry months when demands for help are highest.

Fourthly, due to absence of savings and the high mobility of livestock most pastoralists living near trading centers have a habit of taking things on credit until a substantial debt is incurred. This is then repaid by the sale of an animal to the traders and the process begins again. This alone might account for the whole of this deficit. Finally, these calculations are based on estimates given by the various traders. While the calculations are expected to give a more or less true picture of events errors in estimation cannot be ruled out.

CONCLUSIONS ON VOLUME OF TRADE

The discussion above has shown that between Aug. 1979 and July 1980 people in Rendille territory were selling 3.3% of their livestock 60.4% of their goat skins, 83.8% of their sheep skins and very few if any cow hides and camels. Out of the proceeds from these sales they bought the quantities of goods shown in Table 5.

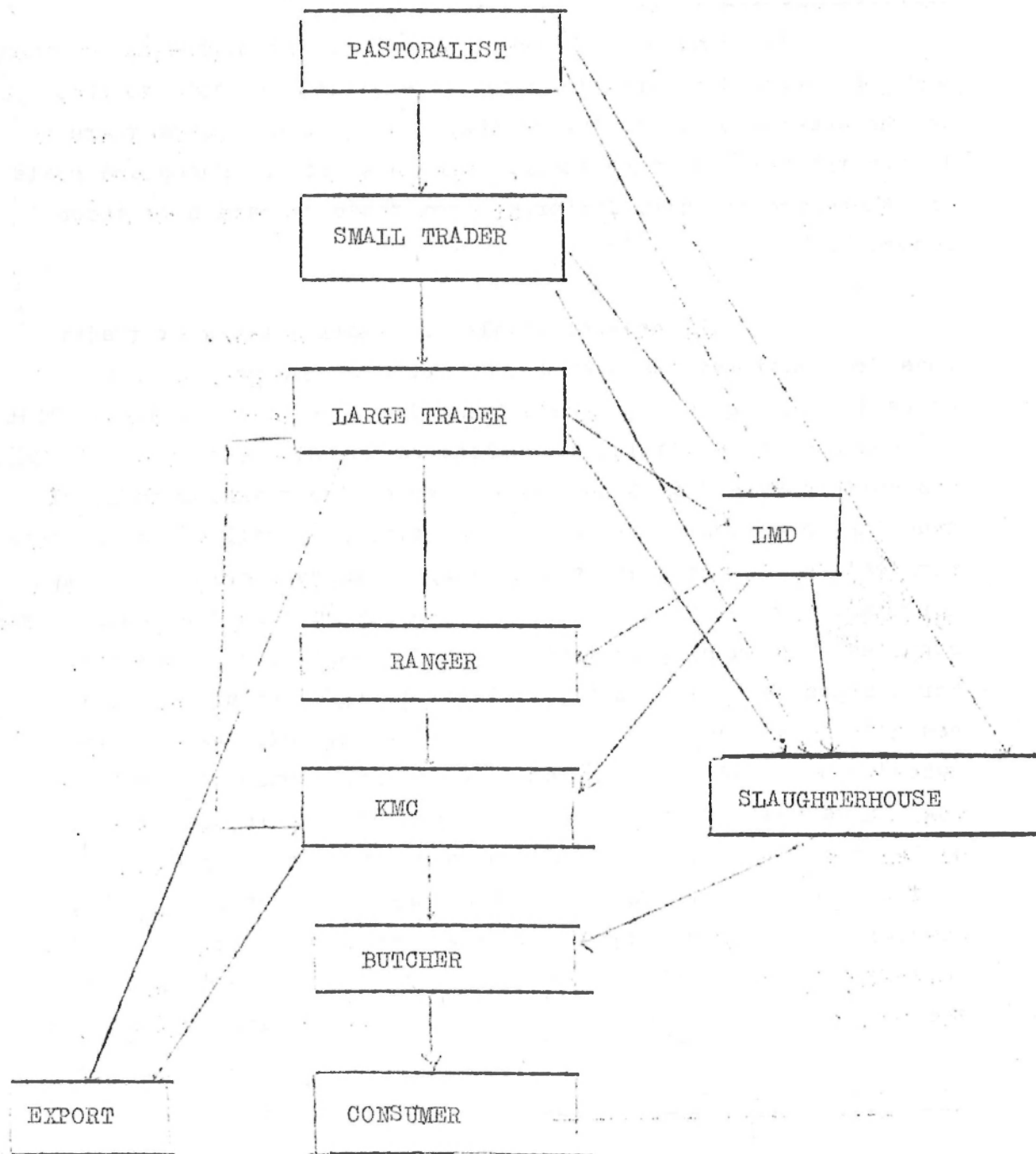
ORGANISATION OF LIVESTOCK MARKETING

CATTLE MARKETING

The way in which a market performs depends on its organisation, the number of participants and the volume of trade handled (Whetham) 1972). Figure 1 is a simplified version of the various channels through which cattle are marketed from the study area.

Pastoral nomads sell their livestock to small traders in the trading centers near them or to itinerant traders who come to their Manyattas looking for them. These small traders buy slowly over periods ranging from a few months to two years. When they have a certain number of animals or when they hear of good prices they take animals to the larger towns where the animals are sold to larger traders, LMD, or to slaughter house owners. The large traders and LM sell their immature animals to Ranchers for fattening in the higher potential areas of the country. Mature animals are immediately sold to slaughter houses or KMC for slaughter. The seat is then sold to butcheries for sale to final consumers. Some of the large traders export live animals while KMC export meat.

FIGURE 1. MARKETING CHANNELS FOR CATTLE FROM RENDILLE TERRITORY 1979/80



K.M.C. Kenya Meat Commission.

In Marsabit district where LMD actively buys livestock at least once every year, pastoralists may be able to bypass the small trader and sell direct to it. A few pastoralists also manage to sell their animal to Marsabit slaughter houses for local consumption.

SHEEP AND GOAT MARKETING

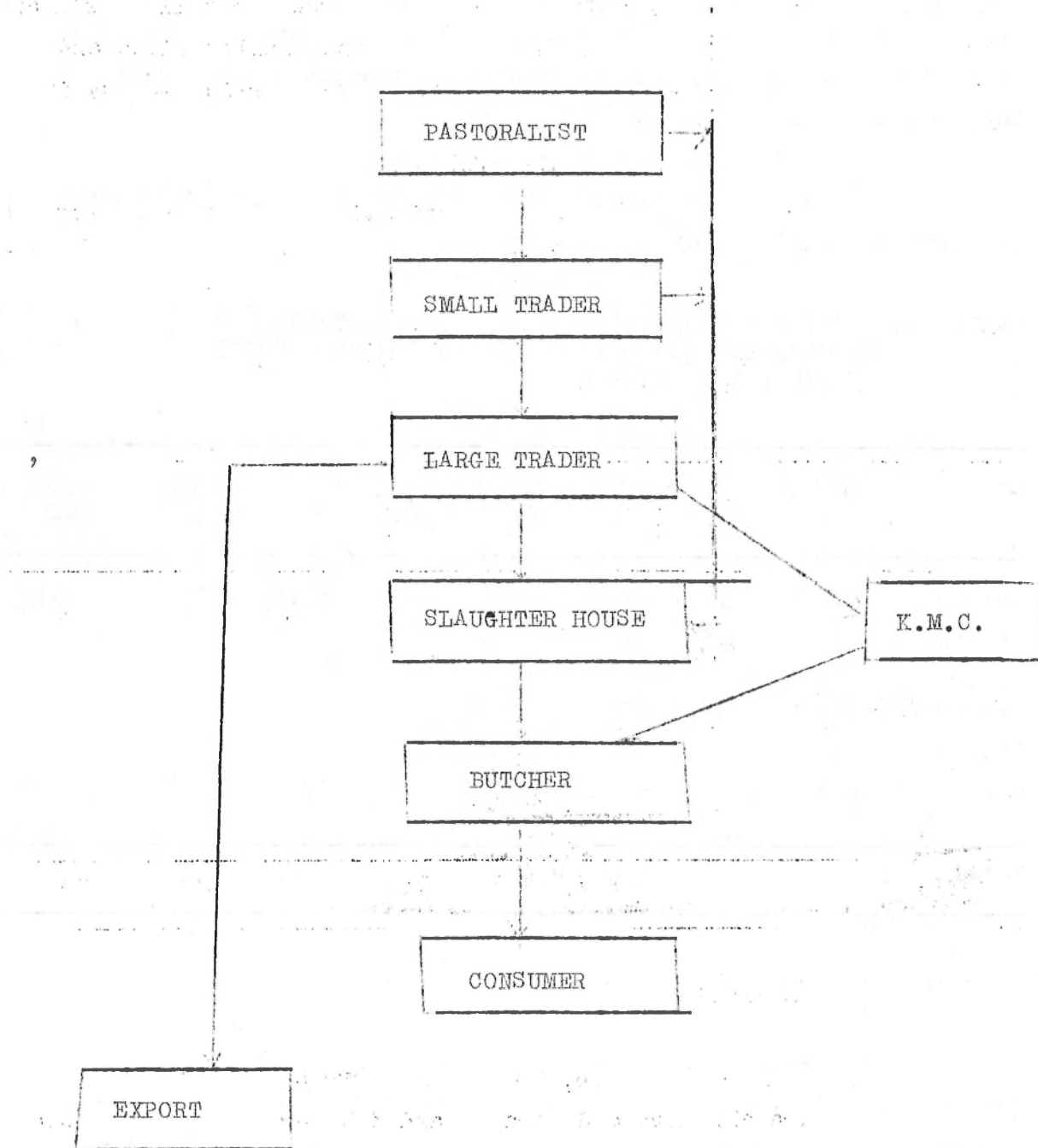
The government is not involved in the marketing of sheep and goats except in the slaughter of any that are sold to KMC. Due to the absence of fattening ranches for sheep and goats there is little trade in immature stock. The channels for sheep and goats are therefore slightly different from those of cattle as shown in Figure 2.

As in the case of cattle the small sheep/goat trader buys from pastoralists over a long period. However, when it comes to selling he has more options than the cattle trader. This is because transportation of smallstock to Nairobi or even further is quite easy and does not require expensive trekking to Isiolo, trucking to Nanyuki by lorry and to Nairobi by rail as is the case with cattle. Ample sheep and goat space is available on the many lorries going to Isiolo, Nairobi, or other centers down country for supplies or returning to them from a delivery trip to Marsabit. For charges ranging from as little as 10-15/= per animal it is possible to transport sheep to Isiolo or Nairobi. As a lorry takes about 100-200 sheep/goats even a small trader can manage to take his animals to the slaughterhouses of Dandora, Dagoretti, or Kariobangi and thus bypass the small and large traders. On the other hand he can trek the animals to Marsabit, Isiolo, Maralal or Baragoi and sell to large traders and butchers there. Pastoralists who live near Marsabit also take their animals to the town and sell them to butchers and large traders directly.

SHEEP AND GOAT SKIN MARKETING

Trade in sheep and goat skins has the simplest channels. Pastoralists sell to small traders who sell to larger traders in larger towns. These sell the skins to tanners or to exporters. The former sell some of the tanned leather to local shoe manufacturers and export the rest.

Figure 2. MARKETING CHANNELS FOR SHEEP AND GOATS FROM RENDILLE
TERRITORY 1979/80.



Since the value of skins is very small very few pastoralists undertake journeys to Marsabit or other large town to sell a skin and even if they are near the town they sell to the smaller hides and skins traders. The large hides and skins traders prefer to buy in large quantities from small traders.

The tables below show the destination of livestock from the area through the various channels.

Table 8: DESTINATION OF CATTLE FROM RENDILLE TERRITORY THROUGH LMD AND THE 33 TRADERS FOR THE PERIOD AUGUST 1979 - JULY 1980

TOWN	BULL & OXEN NO.	PRICE %	PRICE KSHS	VALUE KSHS	COWS NO.	PRICE %	PRICE KSHS	VALUE KSHS
Isiolo	32	4.2	954	30528	23	31.5	954	21942
Marsabit	20	2.6	900	18000				
L.M.D (Marsabit)	602	78.3	826	497589				
Baragoi	15	2.0	900	13500				
Meru	100	13.0	360	36000	50	68.5	360	18000
Total	769	100	774	595617	73	100	547	39942

Source: Own Compilation

In addition to these, 100 cattle were sold to itinerant traders from Maralal, Meru and Baragoi and 313 were sold by pastoralists in Marsabit (see page 9). This accounts for 1255 cattle leaving 616 of the 1871 cattle sold by pastoralists still in small traders hands.

One notices that a large share of all cattle (935 out of 1255 or 74.5%) were sold at Marsabit. Since all cattle bought by LMD and some of the 313 sold by pastoralists were later taken down-country Marsabit acted as an assembly point.

Another important point is that of the 842 cattle sold through LMD and the interviewed traders 769 or 91.3% were males.¹ This fact is also observed in the analysis of goat and sheep sales below and will be discussed later.

Table 9 below gives similar destination of sale information for sheep and goats.

TABLE 9: DESTINATION OF GOATS FROM RENDILIE TERRITORY SOLD BY THE 33⁺ TRADERS FOR THE PERIOD AUGUST 1979 - JULY 1980.

	MALE GOAT NO.	PRICE %	VALUE KSHS.	FEMALE NO.	PRICE %	VALUE KSHS.
Isiolo	1132	24.2	150			169308
Nairobi	1720	36.7	144			276400
Baragoi	633	13.5	106			66850
Laisamis	70	1.5	131			9200
Marsabit	415	8.9	199	55	4.8	130 650
Meru	602	12.9	150	40	38.1	150 6000
Logologo	49	1.0	150			7350
Unkown	60	1.3	150	60	57.1	100 6000
TOTAL	4681	99.9	147	105	100	120 12650

Source: Own Compilation.

In addition to these sales through interviewed traders as further 1507 goats were sold. The majority of these (1142) were sold at Marsabit by pastoralists. The others (365) were sold at Baragoi Maralal, and Meru by itinerant traders (see page 9) for explanation). This makes total sales equal to 6293 which is less than the total of 6996 goats sold by pastoralists to traders. 703 goats still remained with them.

From the information above one notes that only 1557 or 22.2% of total sales were made in Marsabit.

All the rest were sold outside the district with Nairobi and Isiolo taking the Lion's share.

Table 10 shows destination of sheep sold through traders.

TABLE 10; DESTINATION OF SHEEP FROM RENDILIE TERRITORY SOLD BY THE 33 TRADERS FOR THE PERIOD AUGUST 1979 - JULY 1980

	MALE SHEEP		PRICE	VALUE	FEMALE SHEEP		PRICE	VALUE
	NO.	%	KSHS.	KSHS.	NO.	%	KSHS.	KSHS.
Isiolo	315	21.9	193	60900	10	26.3	140	1400
Baragoi	22	1.5	110	2420				
Nairobi	680	47.4	155	105170				
Marsabit	315	21.9	147	46200	15	39.4	130	1950
Meru	60	4.2	150	9000				
Laisamis	7	0.4	185	1295	13	34.2	185	2405
Logologo	7	0.4	130	910				
Unknown	30	2.1	150	4500				
	1436	99.8	160	230395	38	99.9	151	5755

Source: Own Compilation.

An additional 558 sheep of which 423 were sold at Marsabit by pastoralists and 135 were sold to Meru, Maralal and Baragoi itinerant traders were also sold (see page 9 for explanation.)

This makes the total number of sheep sold equal to 2032 sheep which is less than the 2588, bought by these traders 556 sheep there still with traders.

The number sold at Marsabit is 738 or 36.3% of the total. All the others were sold outside the district with Nairobi and Isiolo taking major shares. Females sold through the interviewed traders were only 2.6% of total sales.

These persistently low sales of female livestock by traders and to LMD are also reflected in total sales by pastoralists to them.¹¹

TABLE 11. SEX COMPOSITION OF LIVESTOCK SOLD TO LMD AND THE INTERVIEWED TRADERS BY PASTORALISTS. 1979/80

ITEM	TOTAL SOLD	MALES SOLD	%	FEMALES SOLD	%
Cattle	1428	1355	94.9	73	5.1
Goats	5489	5348	97.4	141	2.6
Sheep	2030	1928	95.0	102	5.0

Source: Own Compilation.

It is difficult to understand this situation since there does exist quite a number of females which could be sold either because they are past their productive stage or because they are barren.

Four possible explanation for this situation are:

- (a) that pastoralists have not yet accepted that females of whatever description should be sold,
- (b) that the buyers don't like females as is the case with LMD,
- (c) that the animals sold must be strong enough to make the several hundred kilometers trek to Isiolo and even to Athi River (K.M.C. factory). Since most of the females sold would be culled ones it is likely that they would be too old to make the trek.
- (d) Finally, it may be that the internal prices for females are higher than what traders are willing to offer.

This is definitely true of fertile females. The position with respect to old culls and barren females is not clear.

It is possible that all the above factors contribute to the low sales of females. The importance of each would then depend on circumstances facing each trader or herdowner.

Table 12 below shows the destination of hides and skins. Note that the prices of goatskins are slightly higher than those of sheepskins. As stated earlier all skins were sold through established traders and Marsabit, Baragoi and Isiolo took the lions' share of supplies.

TABLE 12. DESTINATION OF SHEEP AND GOATS SKINS FROM RENDILIE TERRITORY
SOLD BY THE 33 TRADERS FOR THE PERIOD AUGUST 1979 TO JULY 1980

	GOAT SKINS			PRICE	VALUE	SHEEP SKINS			PRICE	VALUE
	NO.	%	KSHS.	KSHS.	KSHS.	NO.	%	KSHS.	KSHS.	KSHS.
Marsabit	11840	67.2	13	149800	22240	79.2	13	281720		
Baragoi	2755	15.6	15	42590	1275	4.5	8	10650		
Maralal	1033	5.9	19	19800	555	2.0	9	5100		
Isiolo	2000	11.3	16	32000	4000	14.3	9	36000		
	17628	100	14	242734	28070	100	12	333470		

Source: Own Compilation.

ORGANISATION OF THE RETAIL MARKETING SYSTEM.

All the retail items sold in shops within Rendille territory come from outside the district. Because of the distances involved and the small quantities traded most distributors who distribute products to shops in other parts of the country do not do this for centers in the district. The farthest place where these people supply goods is probably Archer's Post which is over a hundred kilometers from the border with Marsabit.

There are about 7 traders licenced as wholesalers in Marsabit town (Marsabit District Development Plan, 1980). They are supposed to get commodities from agents in Meru, Nanyuki, and Isiolo, and supply to smaller traders in the smaller centers. For reasons which are still not very clear, only the suppliers of tea and beer seem to be active. Supplies of sugar were good until the elections of 1979 when the major suppliers who are politicians, spent all their money in the campaign for political posts. The situation began to improve in mid 1980 but there were complaints that the margin for wholesalers was too small and they were selling retail instead.

As a result every small trader has to buy most of his supplies outside the district. Table 13 shows the percentage of traders and the percentage of monthly of monthly supplies of each item which were supplied from a particular source.

TABLE 13: SOURCES OF SUPPLIES OF FIVE MAJOR RETAIL ITEMS BY TRADER AND QUANTITY

ITEM	POSHO		SUGAR		TEA		TOBACCO		CLOTH ¹		SHO	
ITEM	%T	%Q	%T	%Q	%T	%Q	%T	%Q	%T	%Q	%T	%Q
Marsabit	15.6	4.9	34.4	33.9	86.3	88.3	19.4	12.8	12.5		12	5.7
Baragoi	12.5	6.6	12.5	6.9	10	5.9	9.7	4.9	4.2		4	1.9
Maralal	6.2	4.9	6.2	5.2	3.3	5.9	6.5	8.4	4.2		0	
Meru	50	67.8	15.6	28.3	0	0	25.8	22.5	20.8		12	23.5
Isiolo	15.6	15.9	31.2	25.8	0	0	38.7	51.4	0.8		4	3.0
Nanyuki	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7.6		0	0
T. Falls	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4.1		0	0
Nairobi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	45.8		68	67.2
TOTAL	99.9	100.1	99.9	100.1	99.6	100.1	100.1	100	100		100	101.3

Source: Own Compilation.

1. It was difficult for traders to know what clothing came from where. We were therefore unable to quantify the percentages involved.

Table 13 shows that except for tea and sugar where 88.3% and 33.9% of quantify supplied came from Marsabit all the other items were supplied from outside the district. Meru and Isiolo provided the largest share while Baragoi and Maralal provided most of the requirements for South Horr and Illaut which are partly in Samburu District.

Retail goods therefore have to be transported for long distances and this involves large expenses in hiring vehicles. It also makes frequent small purchases uneconomic. Table 14 below shows the averaged distances covered by traders in order to get supplies of each commodity. The distances to and from the supply center are given because due to the remoteness of most of these places there is only one way traffic and the lorry usually goes back empty.

Whereas several months stocks of shoes cloth and tobacco can be bought per trip making many supplies trips unnecessary, posho and sugar have to be bought very often. This is because they are bulky and go fast so that to remain adequately supplied one has to keep on replenishing his stock. Most of these items are bought on posho trips. Since a lorry has to be hired for the posho, a trader can buy other extra goods like tobacco, clothes and shoes

TABLE 14: AVERAGE DISTANCES TRAVELLED BY SURVEY TRADERS TO GET SUPPLIES OF
RETAIL GOODS, 1979/80

ITEM	AVERAGE DISTANCE (KM)	RANGE
Posho	462	36 - 1022
Sugar	374	0 - 732
Tea	220	0 - 492
Tobacco	395	86 - 492
Cloth	691	160 -1236
Shoes	780	124 -1236

Source: Own Compilation.

and carry them at no extra costs. The problem is that to fill a 7½ ton lorry with posho and sugar in the usual proportions of 70 bags posho and 10 bags sugar costs 14850/= (a bag of posho cost 150/= while that of sugar cost 435/=). On top of this are the costs of hiring the lorry averaging 2400/=¹² and of the traders accommodation and transport expenses while looking for the commodity averaging 1000/=. The total cost of the supplies trip is therefore about 18250/=. This is beyond the ability of most of the interviewed traders except after a very successful livestock sales which only happens once or twice a year. The usual thing is for two traders to combine resources and jointly hire a lorry. Again even this is a problem because each trader will still have to raise about 10,000/=. Sometimes as many as five traders from different trading centers combine for the exercise. This raises expenses, as all of them will have to go and incur travelling and accommodation costs, and reduces profit per trip. The trip also takes long to organise and is full of problems as each trader tries to load as much of his products as he can.

During periods of posho shortages long stays at the supply centers are made necessary because supplies are finished as soon as they arrive. At times traders have to wait for as long as one month while their shops are closed.

Because of very poor roads transporters often refuse to hire lorries to traders from certain places like Gatab, Illaut and South Horr. When this happens a trader is forced to hire a lorry, offload it somewhere on the way and look for transport from the area. This can be very expensive in both time and money as exemplified by one such trip when the Gatab trader spent over 2400/= to take a lorry of posho from Meru to Horr and then had to hire a

Mission lorry for about 2000/= to take the posho to Gatab after it had stayed in Horr for a number of weeks.

EFFICIENCY OF TRADE IN THE AREA

Up to now livestock and retail trade have been discussed separately. This was necessary to avoid confusion and to show clearly how each is organized and the quantities involved. This having been done it is important to bring the reader back to the reality that in practice the livestock trader and the retail trader are one and the same person. The two aspects of trade are so interlinked that when asked whether to be a successful livestock trader one needed to trade in retail goods 97% of the traders answered in the affirmative. The reasons given for this answer were that while trading in retail goods was very troublesome and had low profit margins it was necessary for the success of livestock trade.

This observation is very true because although money is extensively used in trade it is only used as a unit of account. A pastoralist usually brings a goat or skin, determines its prices, buys his posho and other items worth the value of his goat and disappears with only a few shillings for tobacco purchase before the next sale. Alternatively he gets goods on credit and when the debt is sizeable he brings in a cow which is valued and part or all of the proceeds pay for the accumulated debt. It is no wonder therefore that as a trader goes on acquiring livestock more of his money shifts into them and the shop becomes increasingly bare until at the time of selling the animals - usually at the beginning of the dry season - there is very little in the shop. When he sells his livestock he comes back with a lorry full of retail goods and the process begins all over again.

From this relationship one can see that if for any reason a trader is unable to sell the livestock he has accumulated he cannot be able to bring in retail goods. If after the sale of livestock he is unable to buy retail goods, he will have difficulties acquiring livestock because people sell to buy.

An understanding of this relationship is basic to any discussion of efficiency of both livestock and retail trade. The main cause of inefficiency in livestock trade is lack of a well organized marketing system.

CATTLE:

Although LMD purchases animals at Marsabit the auctions are not well publicized and LMD policy changes so often that very few traders rely on selling to LMD. There are several reasons for this; (a) they only give about two weeks notice. This notice is too short. It is not long enough to move animals from Loiengalani or even Gatab, explaining why no animals from these places have never been sold to LMD for the last three auctions. (b) the type of animal bought is subject to so many policy changes that it is difficult to buy animals for sale to LMD because what they want changes so often. An example will illustrate this point. In July 1979 LMD bought all animals above the weight of 120 Kg. In July 1980 they bought only male animals over 180 Kg. Big bulls and old animals however healthy looking were rejected. The rejection criteria was so arbitrary that when some of the rejected animals were brought back the following day they were accepted. In July 1981 LMD bought male animals between 175 kilos and 350 kg. Aged and sick animals were not accepted. This auction was closed prematurely due to an outbreak of foot and mouth disease among the purchased animals. In October 1981 LMD went back and this time also the maximum weight limit of 350 was removed.

These policy changes mean that a trader can never be sure that he will sell all his animals at LMD prices. He might be forced to sell some at Marsabit market and during LMD purchase times prices are at their lowest here. Any profits gained could all be lost by sale of some animals at such low prices. This actually happened in July 1980 when traders from Sololo trucked animals including female ones at 120/- an animal only to be sold at Marsabit that LMD were not buying females. One of these told me that he sold the females at prices which could not meet the initial cost and his transport cost. At this auction alone well over 800 animals were rejected. At total of 4052 head of cattle were bought (Marsabit District Annual Report 1980). The 1981 case is even more confusing, after rejecting large animals in July LMD came in October willing to buy them.

LMD may have very logical explanation for all these changes. The point is that whatever the logic they must know that they are buying animals from people who bought the animals one or two years before. If changes have to be made they should be made two years, or at the very least, one year before so that they can be announced at the preceding year's auction. The present policy of impromptu changes in animals wanted is damaging LMD's image as a reliable outlet and it is no wonder that traders still trek their animals to Isiolo and other towns for prices which are not significantly better than those of LMD and at greater risk.

LMD take a very long time to pay for the animals they have already accepted. The payments of the animals sold in July 1980 were made after more than one month. For a trader who has sold all his animals and who has an empty shop at home this delay is extremely frustrating. For the pastoralist who came from two hundred kilometers away to sell one bull such a long stay away from his animals could be disastrous to his herd. The expenses he incurs while waiting for the money to come may be so large that he would rather sell to a trader who pays him half that price-cash. Clearly, if one of LMD aims is to encourage sale of livestock from arid areas this delay of payments does the opposite.

LMD only buys at Marsabit mountain. While this is a central place it necessitates very long treks by pastoralists and traders who come from the area around South Horr, Illaut, Ngurunit and other areas near the district's borders. Some of the animals travel from Merille to Marsabit one hundred and twenty kilometres away only to return there on the way to Isiolo. This is true of most Rendille animals. It would be better for the LMD to start buying animals in centers like Laisamis on their way from Marsabit. Over 50% of Rendille cattle sold to LMD infact come from this area.

Sheep and Goats

Sheep and goat marketing has a good skeleton organisation which could easily be improved on. The major problem - which affects all types of trade in the area - is the lack of capital by traders, over 70% of whom operate on a capital of less than 20,000/-. Because of this very few are able to buy many animals and in attempts to increase numbers they depress price levels to a point of discouraging sales by pastoralists. Because of slow buying they also keep animals for very long periods raising overheads and reducing profit-ability.

Since transportation for sheep and goats is easily available from the many lorries taking goods into the area this avenue should be explored. If smallstock traders became better organised they could hire all the space on Isiolo bound transport reducing charges and making lorry transportation for other goods cheaper. It could also be said that specialisation in this trade could prove useful if it was encouraged. Envisaged here is a system where small traders specialised in buying animals from pastoralists and selling them to a few big traders who would then arrange for sales outside the district.

These traders would be able to make themselves conversant with market conditions both locally and abroad and make the best use of this knowledge.

At present a lot of time and money is wasted by small traders looking for markets for only a few head of sheep and or goats.

Lack of information also makes smallstock trading very risky because if a trader takes animals to Nairobi or Isiolo and doesn't get a good price he still has to sell fast as smallstock are liable to fall sick after changes in weather. This probably explains why prices in Nairobi and Isiolo are sometimes lower than those in Marsabit. Such differences could also be explained by differences in the size of goats or sheep sold.

SKINS

The marketing of skins is well organised. The small trader sells to a few big traders in Marsabit or other large towns and those in turn sell outside the district. This is the kind of organisation recommended for sheep and goats and operating for cattle (if only LMD did not have so many shortcomings). Where long distances have to be travelled it pays to have large numbers of animals travelling together as this reduces overheads. At the moment however skins are of low quality mainly because of ground drying. Pastoralists should be encouraged to frame dry their skins as this could improve quality and prices (Mittendorf & Louwes, 1963)

CAMELS

At the moment no camel marketing system exists. This is mainly because people in the high potential area of Kenya do not like camel meat (Ministry of Agriculture 1975, 1968). The potential for exports of camels to Arabian markets where they are regarded as delicacies exist but they have not been exploited (Govt. of Kenya 1980). If this potential was utilized it could provide an additional source of income to Rendille households. It is suggested that this be done through provision of facilities like: weighbridges, stock routes and veterinary services which can help promote export of camels by traders if the government is uninterested.¹³

13. This situation has changed somewhat and in 1981 a trader from Isiolo bought over 50 camels from the Rendille for sale in Arabia. Efforts to interview him had not yielded fruit at the time of writing.

RETAIL GOODS MARKETING

As noted earlier the main problem here is the transportation of goods over long distances by traders. This problem can ably be solved through the establishment of Kenya National Trading Corporation's depot and active wholesalers for most items in Marsabit so that traders can get most of their supplies from the district. The road network in the district should also be improved as this raises transport costs and makes some places completely inaccessible after rains.

At the moment most traders have a problem of not having enough money to run their business. The average starting capital for all the traders interviewed was only 11,450/-. This leads to delays in raising enough money to finance a supply trip and to long periods when traders have nothing to sell. Apart from the loss of profit during such periods this discourages livestock marketing because pastoralists are not guaranteed of food and other supplies if they have money.

As noted earlier (see discussions on sheep and goat marketing) lack of funds affects all aspects of business and efforts to provide credit facilities should be made. At the moment there is no commercial Bank in the whole district. This makes borrowing or saving difficult. One should be started and if possible provided with mobile facilities so that remote centers can be served.

At the moment price controls are very unreasonable. Although few traders follow them the costs of flouting them are very high in the form of bribes and fear of prosecution. Price controls should be scrapped altogether in these areas. If this is not possible an effort should be made to make controls which allow a reasonable profit margin for every center. The present blanket controls for the whole district can never fulfil this adequately because they do not take account of the large differences in cost that apply to places like Laisamis on the Marsabit Isiolo main road and Loiengalani, several hundred kilometers from any posho supply center. Registrating that traders in these two centers should sell posho at the same price is unreasonable and favours these people whose transport costs are lower.

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