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RESERVE

**THE MARKETING OF HIGHLAND SAMBURU CATTLE:  
A COMMUNITY STUDY OF PASTORALIST CAPABILITIES  
AND OPTIONS IN THE SUBSISTENCE AND COMMERCIAL  
SECTORS.**

*The Marketing of Highland Samburu Cattle: A Community Study of Pastoralist Capabilities and Options in the Subsistence and Commercial Sectors*  
By

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The Marketing of Highland Samburu Cattle: A  
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By

Diane Catherine Perlov

Abstract

This paper addresses the premise that the traditional use of livestock, whether for purposes of ritual, subsistence, or economic savings and investment, adversely affects the flow of beef from the pastoral sector to the commercial market. A twenty-two month research project concerning this issue was conducted among a highland Samburu pastoral community. The investigation focused on the relationship between the traditional and the commercial circulation of cattle in order to properly assess this current approach to pastoral beef production and marketing.

Preliminary results indicate that low market participation by herd-owners is not a result of pastoralist hoarding their cattle within the traditional sector, nor is commercial ranching essential to ensure off-take from the pastoral herds. On the contrary, the research suggests that the depressed commercial market is a reflection of a stagnating pastoral economy, and that under conditions of prosperity herdowners seek out trading in the commercial sector as a modern avenue for investing back into pastoralism. What is therefore recommended for the rejuvenation of the Samburu livestock marketing system is development efforts aimed at the overall pastoral sector and towards restitution of confidence in the durability of pastoralism.

INTRODUCTION

It is frequently asserted in the study of pastoralism that traditional uses of livestock (i.e. gifts, loans, exchanges, sales, and consumption transacted within the pastoral sector) adversely affect the supply of beef to the commercial marketplace. Based on this assertion, Kenyan development policy has aimed at integrating the pastoral economy into the national economy in order to increase the flow of beef from the pastoral sector. The method commonly proposed for achieving this end has been the development of the commercial livestock marketing system in pastoral regions and the inducement of pastoralist participation.

For the most part, research findings have supported this approach. Prominent throughout the anthropological literature on pastoral economy has been a discussion of the pastoralist's tendency to accumulate large herds of livestock (primarily cattle) for purposes of ritual, subsistence, and economic savings and investment. Pastoralist behavior is further characterized by a reticence to market these animals commercially except in order to fulfill immediate cash needs. The ritual approach emphasizes the cultural and social aspects of cattle-keeping. Cattle are thought to be acquired in great numbers not for their subsistence or commercial value primarily, but because of their immense religious and social value. The pursuit of social and cultural goods is thought to be economically rational because they have a durability that economic goods lack. The subsistence orientation seeks to explain the accumulation and disposal of cattle in terms of the subsistence requirements of the pastoral household in highly variable climatic conditions. Those focusing on the economic value of cattle emphasize that pastoralists invest in building up large herds when this proves to be the best return on capital.

However considerable the evidence of cattle accumulation in traditional pastoral society, there is no evidence that this is the cause of low participation in the commercial market. What is fundamentally lacking is an investigation of the precise relationship between the traditional and the commercial circulation of cattle in order to properly assess the current approach to pastoral beef production. In addressing this specific problem the research project first investigated the condition of the commercial market, then the acquisition and disposal of cattle through both commercial and traditional channels, and is now in the process of analysing the role

of the commercial market in pastoralist economic strategies.

The research was conducted among a community of Samburu pastoralists, located in Baawa, on the Leroghi Plateau of northern Kenya. While engaging predominantly in pastoral activities, the sample population has recently become involved in agricultural production and some wage-labor employment. Partly because of its economic diversification and partly due to its location within twenty kilometers of three market centers, this particular community is renowned as one of the most advanced and market-oriented on the plateau. While these are characteristics of a community receptive to development inputs, they are also rather unique characteristics in the district, and specific recommendations based on this study may have limited practical application. For agricultural production is rarely found elsewhere in Samburu communities, so that most Samburu pastoralists are dependent on their livestock as the fundamental source of both food and cash. Moreover, most Samburu have marginal contact with the commercial market. Markets are distant from settlements and sales are most often made through an intermediary trader rather than by the producer himself.

In a general sense, market development policy is an attempt to place these pastoral communities in the situation that we presently find at Baawa, where pastoralists demonstrate a growing commitment to commercial marketing. In this way, Baawa represents a community in the second stage of market development, and an appropriate research site because it provides an opportunity to understand the criteria by which pastoralists evaluate the commonly proposed market options. Therefore, the main contribution of the study will be in assessing the appropriateness of new technologies, in providing a basis for monitoring the secondary consequences of development inputs, and in presenting general recommendations for Samburu market development.

The research was conducted over a twenty-two month period from January 1981 to November 1982. The specific site was the Ilkiloriti group ranch, beginning nine kilometers south of Maralal township. The group ranch covers 5,116 hectares and is bordered on the east by the Kirisia hills of the Leroghi forest, on the west by Kisima town, and on the south by the old Kisima-Wamba road. At the last group ranch census taken in 1979, there were 337 registered members. In the first month of the study a random sample

of ninety-six households was selected from the register to whom an initial socioeconomic survey was administered. From this population I selected twenty-nine households representative of economic and social status, settlement location, and developmental stage of the family. In conducting the investigation, traditional anthropological methods were employed. These consisted primarily of informal interviews and observations of community activities. A series of questionnaires were also administered to the sample, covering specific livestock and non-livestock transactions, household income and expenditures, and labor allocation. In addition, the structure and functioning of the district commercial livestock market was investigated through market documents as well as interviews with relevant market officials, traders, and buyers.

## 2. The Commercial Market

### 2.1 Structure and Function

The Ilkiloriti herdowner may sell his stock either at his enjang (homestead) or at the market centers. Within twenty kilometers of the Baawa area there are three daily marketplaces: at Maralal, Suguta Marmar, and Kisima. While there is always the risk of trekking an animal into a market center and not finding a buyer, most sellers, as well as buyers, prefer to negotiate at the marketplace where sales receipts are issued, protecting both transactors from accusations of theft. At the marketplace a herdowner may sell animals directly to another herdowner, to a local butcher, or what is most common to an intermediary. The following is a discussion of the four main intermediaries operating within Samburu District.

The largest cattle trader is the government operated Livestock Marketing Division (LMD). They periodically hold auctions where they buy cattle by kilo weight directly from the producers. Once purchased the stock are retained in LMD managed holding grounds for the purposes of vaccination, quarantine, and fattening, and are eventually sold as slaughter stock to the Kenya Meat Commission (KMC). The LMD is the preferred buyer for Samburu when selling their large animals.

Of the private traders, there are only a few who compete on the scale with LMD and these operate in a similar fashion. They rent grazing

rights within LMD holding grounds, and similarly prefer to sell slaughter stock to KMC. For these traders who do not require a quick turn over of stock and are most able to fatten their animals, selling to KMC appears to be the most profitable and reliable marketing option.

Most numerous are the long-distance private traders who supply beef to the private sector. There are few Samburu traders operating at this level, while the majority are Kikuyu and Somali. They buy all kinds of stock by the group rather than by the individual animal, and establish the purchase price by sight rather than by live kilo weight. Livestock bought in this way are rarely fattened but are moved quickly from the pastoral sector to private butchers in the large urban centers. Samburu herdowners prefer to sell to this type of trader as the price is highest for the lighter weight Samburu stock. Moreover, there are few restrictions as to the kind of livestock the traders will accept and, for the most part, the herdowner can expect immediate cash payment. Unfortunately, this market channel is the riskiest for the trader. While having the potential of making great profits, these traders are highly vulnerable to livestock raiding, debilitating diseases which may kill animals en route to urban markets, and more importantly to shortages of cash and credit within the marketing system.

The fourth type of livestock trader and the one operating on the smallest scale is the local Samburu trader. He will buy individual animals or small groups of stock from the pastoral sector or from the marketplace and sell to local butchers, other traders, or Samburu herdowners. Turnover is generally fast and credit sales are significant. Many herdowners engage in this type of trading sporadically, taking advantage of an immediate opportunity to build up their personal herd. However, failure is high; many find that after one serious loss they are financially unable to continue.

In the past three years there has been significant changes in the composition of traders operating in highland Samburu District. LMD, who was able to buy such large quantities of Samburu cattle from 1975-1979 has stopped holding auctions in the highlands and has expressed no plans to return there. The belief that herdowners refuse to sell by kilo weight is stated as their main grievance with the highland markets. Other traders

suggest that LMD's problems extend much further, principally that it is no longer capable of competing financially with private traders as the chief KMC supplier.

With respect to the three largest private traders in Samburu highland District, one has died and none of his sons are carrying on the business; the other two continue to engage in the livestock trade, but for the most part have ceased to deal with Samburu cattle. Stock theft is stated as a main problem for these traders. Security is inadequate along stock routes as well as within the LMD holding grounds. A second problem results from the fact that there are virtually no disease-free zones left in the highlands, frustrating any efforts to quarantine and fatten cattle for sale to KMC. A final problem frequently mentioned is that the Samburu herdowners are no longer willing or are no longer able to meet purchase demands.

On the other hand, a large number of long-distance traders who focus on private sector buyers are operating, albeit sporadically, and there has been an apparent proliferation of local Samburu traders (although their exact number and volume of trade are not distinguished in the market records). These traders are expanding their trading operations, taking advantage of the market channels left vacant by LMD and large private traders. Moreover, long-distance traders who normally operate strictly in Maasailand have recently been buying Samburu cattle due to the shortages of Maasai beef cattle. These traders establish their prices according to the demand value of beef and not by kilo weight. Therefore, the current high market value for Samburu cattle appears to be a temporary price inflation due to the increased competition for beef between local and down-country butchers. By being flexible and able to buy from various marketplaces, operating with low over-head costs, high volume, small profits, and a quick turn-over of stock, these third and fourth level traders have been the intermediaries most adaptive and operative under current market conditions.

The local butchers complain that the result of inflating the market value of Samburu stock during recent years has been an interruption in the regular flow of cattle from the pastoral sector. Herdowners, able to await the arrival of the highest paying traders during the wet season periods, refuse to sell their stock to local buyers. However, even the



long-distance traders complain that their supply of Samburu cattle is less than they expected. Although these explanations differ, most traders place substantial blame for the low volume of trade on pastoralist recalcitrance.

## 2.2 Volume of Trade

Highland market records support the assertion by cattle traders that the present volume of market sales is low even though the average price per head of cattle is quite high (see Table 1.).

Table 1. Volume of Trade at Highland Samburu Markets\*

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Cattle Sold</u>	<u>Total Price</u>	<u>Average Price Per Head</u>
1982	126	132,557.00/-	1052.04/-

\* Figures are from the Samburu County Council livestock market files.

However, these same records reveal that in past years when superior market opportunities were present the Samburu responded with increased cattle sales. This is shown on Table 2. which compares volume of cattle sales and average price at highland Samburu marketplaces through the drought years of 1978-1980. In 1978 and 1979 there was a marked increase in both the volume and average price of cattle sales due to the occurrence of LMD auctions. In 1978 LMD alone purchased 283 cattle at a high average price of 838.36/- per head; and 421 cattle in 1979 were purchased at an average price of 763.20/- per head.

Table 2. Volume of Trade at Highland Samburu Markets\*

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Cattle Sold</u>	<u>Total Price</u>	<u>Average Price Per Head</u>
1978	311	256,776.25/-	825.65/-
1979	521	381,598.00/-	732.43/-
1980	122	71,843.00/-	588.83/-

\* Figures are from the Samburu County Council livestock market files.

The records support the findings of other recent studies which suggest that pastoralists do respond to high priced markets (Little 1981; White and Meadows 1979).

These conflicting reports indicate that pastoralist marketing behavior is not wholly characterized by a "perverse supply response" (described more fully by Dahl 1979) nor by a responsiveness to price incentives. Clearly, a multiplicity of factors determine the off-take of cattle from pastoral herds.

### 3. Socioeconomic and Ecological Setting

In assessing Samburu marketing behavior, it is first necessary to examine pastoralist marketing capabilities in terms of socioeconomic and ecological constraints as well as herd size and herd composition.

Ilkiloriti group ranch lies at between 6,000 and 6,700 feet elevation. The climate is moderate and the annual rainfall is between 500 and 700mm. The group ranch consists of three major ecozones. Northeast of Kisima town lies a bush and wooded grassland plain of scattered thorn bushes. The most prominent types of vegetation here are: A. nilotica, Croton dichagamus, A. gerardii, Lantana camara, and Euclea divinorum. A variety of grasses are also found throughout the plain, the majority of which are annuals. As the Ilkiloriti plain climbs toward the Leroghi forest the area turns into an evergreen bushland with hilly and interspersed patches of forest. This second ecozone owns a number of hardwood trees, most notably: Acokanthera friesiorum, Olea africana, and Juniperous procera. Finally along the edges of the Kirisia hills stretches a more densely forested zone.

Traditionally, the highland Samburu graze their herds within the Leroghi Plateau. With respect to the Ilkiloriti group ranch, wet season grazing is conducted within demarcated grazing blocks I. and II., which are located in the Ilkiloriti plain neighborhood. As the dry season approaches herds are moved steadily into the more elevated grazing blocks III. and IV. located within the evergreen bushland ecozone. At the peak of the dry season cattle may be grazed (for a fee) within the Kirisia hills forest reserve, or taken to cattle camps up to eighty kilometers away to areas northeast and northwest of Maralal township. However, for the major part of the year, the Ilkiloriti

group ranch is a viable ecological unit and the bulk of herds remain within the ranch boundaries.

The Ilkiloriti group ranch was incorporated in 1973. A major justification for the group ranch was the establishment of developments such as dry/wet season grazing blocks, government loans for financing various development inputs, and cattle dips. With the development of the ranch came an increase in both population density and the number of permanent settlements. Among other things, these permanent settlements made possible the introduction of agriculture and the diversification of the Samburu economy. Cropping, however, was restricted to the edges of the forest reserve in an attempt to control the amount of ranch land cleared and given up for cultivation. The zoning has created three types of neighborhoods in the region: 1) a pastoral neighborhood engaged in virtually no cropping, 2) a pastoral neighborhood cultivating on a small scale, and 3) a predominantly cropping neighborhood with a significant interest in pastoralism. In short, while Ilkiloriti group ranch members are all actors in a common set of social and political institutions, one may recognize in the area three distinctive neighborhoods. These three neighborhoods are: 1) Ilkiloriti 2) Baawa and 3) Lorian, and they differ according to ecological zone, demographic conditions, social affiliations, and economic specialization.

Ilkiloriti is located on the grassland plains that lie northeast of Kisima. Although it is closest to the salt lake of Kisima, it is the neighborhood which lies the furthest from the forest reserves and the dry season watering points. The area is the most sparsely populated of the three neighborhoods, with a population density of 1.4 households per square kilometer. The Samburu of Ilkiloriti are further distinguished in that they are predominantly of the Pisikishu phratry. Only 13% (n=23) of Ilkiloriti residents practice cropping, and may be regarded as "purer" pastoralists. Consequently, their diet differs from those Samburu engaged in cropping, and consists of primarily milk, meat, and tea. Economically, the Samburu of Ilkiloriti are known as goat specialists as well as cattle herders, and sell very few local resources on the commercial market beyond goat and cattle products.

In contrast to Ilkiloriti, Baawa is located in a moist and fertile environment below the Kirisia hills. Sources of wood and water are never far

away, supporting a more dense population of 2.1 households per square kilometer. The Samburu of Baawa are predominantly of the Masula, the largest piratry. Nearly all Baawa residents engage in cropping to some degree (91%, n=47), so that their diet includes a substantial amount of maize, beans, potatoes, squash, and other vegetables. Agriculture, however, is a recent introduction into Baawa, and for many, this year represents their first harvest. It is therefore understandable why vegetables are not the preferred diet, and are grown primarily as a store against drought and disease, or to feed the children. First and foremost, the Samburu of Baawa regard themselves as cattle-keepers. Following that, they are interested in cattle-trading, and in many cases bring in considerable profits.

Lorian is the neighbourhood located in the most densely forested part of the group ranch, with the highest population density of 3.5 households per square kilometer. The most prominent distinguishing feature of Lorian residents is that they are predominantly Dorobo who have become assimilated into the dominant Samburu culture. Formerly hunters and gatherers, the Dorobo-Samburu are considered by other Samburu to make poor livestock managers are to be more adept at market-oriented enterprises such as bee-keeping, beer-making, pottery production, blacksmithy, and wood working. The Dorobo of Lorian, as with all other Samburu, express the aspiration to accumulate large herds of cattle. However, these people are generally quite poor, and for the most part, have been unable to breed sizable herds. Many households moved to Lorian precisely because they were too poor to survive in the pastoral sector; they were forced out of the lowlands or highland plains into the forested neighborhood of Lorian where they have taken up agricultural production. In fact, as Lorian is well suited to cropping (once garden plots have been cleared of trees and bush), maize production tends to be the community specialization. Of the sample Lorian population 100% (n=14) were involved in cropping. Also of importance, although not commensurate with their reputation, are those non-pastoral, market-oriented activities particular to the Dorobo.

The resulting economic diversification of the majority of Ilkiloriti group ranch households has reduced the pastoral herdowners' reliance on selling his stock in order to meet immediate cash needs. A herdowner may depend on his crops for food and often on his son's salary remittances for

cash. In fact, the main benefit of cropping is perceived by the pastoralist to be that it allows him a decisive advantage in building up his herd size. Of all the 1992 wet season commercial livestock sales for the research sample only 27% (n=30) were transacted solely in order to fulfill cash needs. The cash from the remaining 73% of the transactions was largely invested back into the pastoral economy either in the form of livestock purchases or the extension of credit to other Samburu herdowners.

#### 4. Herd Size and Herd Composition

The Samburu regard themselves chiefly as cattle-keeping people, although their herds comprise an increasing number of small stock and a few camels. In 1973, at the incorporation of the Ilkiloriti group ranch, the Maralal Range Management Division recorded a total number of 8,695 animals, 59% of which were cattle and 40% of which were sheep and goats. The 1979 census shows a marked increase in the importance of sheep and goats. Out of a total group ranch population of 10,625 animals, only 44% were cattle, while 55% were sheep and goats. The growing significance of small stock in the region is in part a strategy adaptive to drought and disease conditions. The 1978-1980 drought decimated highland herds. Because goats in particular reproduce at a higher rate than cattle and are more drought resistant, many herdowners see them as a more appropriate investment for re-building their herds. Moreover, sheep and goats are less susceptible to East Coast Fever (ECF), a disease which entered the Samburu highlands shortly after 1970 and constitutes the major threat to cattle populations. Within the group ranch, the emphasis on goat rearing is more pronounced in the drier neighborhood of the Ilkiloriti plains than the forested Lorian and Baawa areas. While only 27% of Lorian herds are composed of sheep and goats, 40% of Baawa herds are sheep and goats, while Ilkiloriti herds consist of 53% sheep and goats.

Along with representing a declining proportion of pastoral herds, the average number of cattle held per household appears to have decreased in recent years. One prominent trader in Maralal estimates that ECF may have resulted in as much as a 60% reduction of the local pastoral herds. Magnifying the threat posed by ECF are the conditions of sedentarization

and wildlife conservation in the region.

As stated in the previous section, the neighborhood of the group ranch most densely populated is the one where residents are most sedentary and most involved in cropping. Such a condition makes it difficult to properly manage pasture areas so as to minimize the tick population. For instance, residents are no longer able to burn off grazing areas in the dry season. Moreover, as more land becomes zoned for cropping, the tick-infested grazing areas become more densely stocked with cattle, increasing the number of animals exposed to the disease. East Coast Fever is further spread by tick-infested wildlife, that are abundant in the research area. Wildlife is found particularly in the forested Baawa and Lorian neighborhoods, where the community dip is situated. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon to see zebra grazing side by side the livestock, or a variety of wildlife watering at the dam located just alongside the dip. Even if all cattle were to be dipped regularly, ECF could not be controlled until the wildlife are cordoned off from the group ranch grazing blocks.

Currently, the mean number of cattle for a household of eight is forty, with a Standard Deviation of fifty-three. Such a high Standard Deviation is a good indication of the considerable degree of variation in livestock holdings between pastoral households. In fact, only 25% of the household population (n=96) control 71% of the cattle population (n=3699), while the remaining 75% of the households control only 29% of the cattle. Due to the vast difference between rich and poor herdowners, speaking of a mean herd size of forty can be very misleading. As we see in Figure 1, half (49%) of the households have no speakable surplus of cattle to market and subsist on an average of nine head of cattle (Standard Deviation is six). While the distribution of sheep and goats are not calculated here, wealth in small stock was found to coincide with wealth in cattle.

The composition of cattle herds also appears to have changed. In 1973 there were proportionally more calves and immatures and less adult females (see Table 3.)

Figure 1. Distribution of Cattle by Household, Ilkiloriti Group Ranch

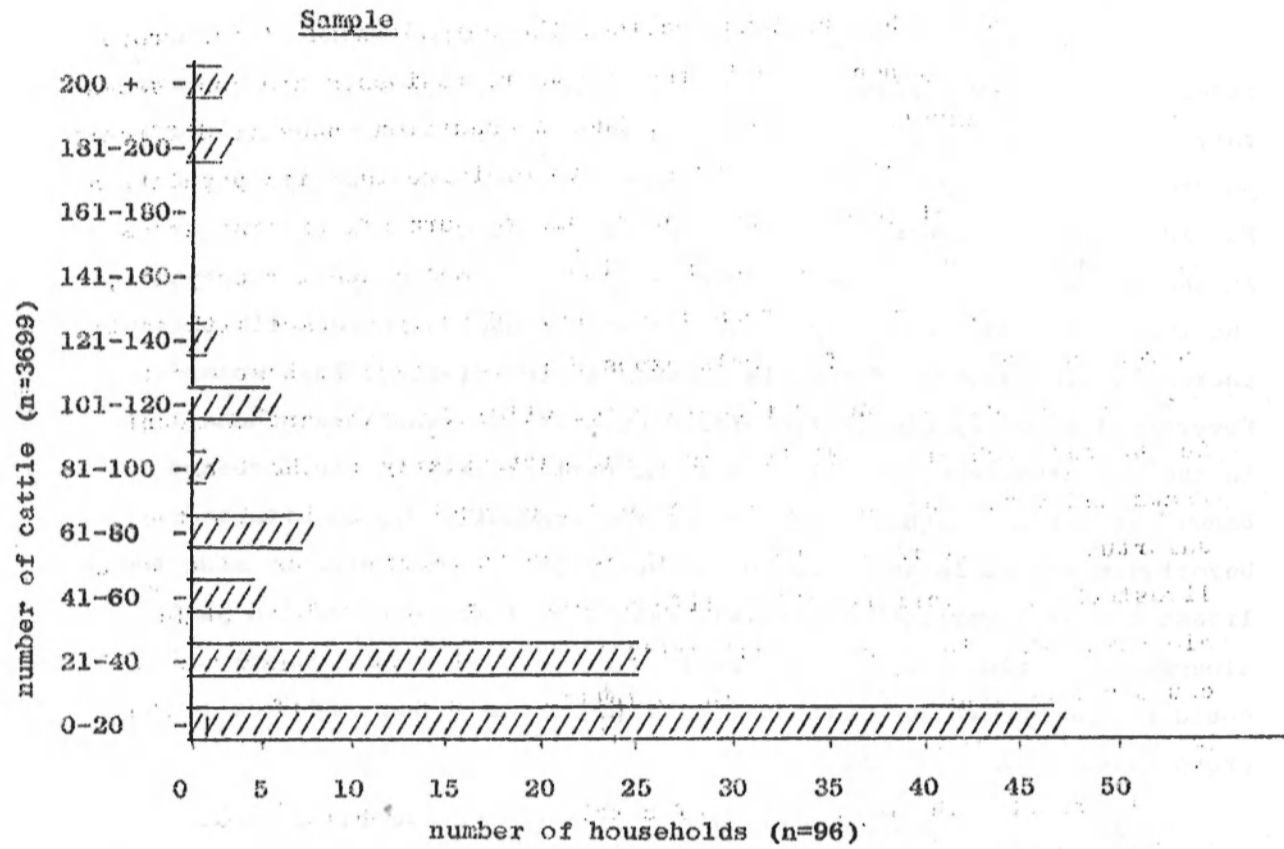


Table 3. Composition of Cattle Herds, 1973 (n=5,144)

<u>% cows</u>	<u>% bulls</u>	<u>% steers</u>	<u>% calves and immatures</u>
45%	4%	5%	46%

\* Figures are from the Ilkiloriti group ranch census conducted by the Range Management Division, Maralal.

In 1981, adult female cows form a much more significant proportion of the herds, while the percentage of calves and immatures is reduced (see Table 4). This may be due in part to the recently increased pressure on the subsistence functions of the herds, as well as to the high mortality rate of calves from ECF.



Table 4. Composition of Cattle Herds, 1981 (n=3,699)

<u>% cows</u>	<u>% bulls</u>	<u>% steers</u>	<u>% calves and immatures</u>
56%	5%	17%	22%

\* Figures are from a random sample of ninety-six Ilkiloriti group ranch households.

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Finally, the disease factor affects not only the quantity of cattle available for commercial sale, but the quality as well. Due to the debilitation by disease of Samburu calves, along with the lack of essential minerals, perhaps aggravated by overmilking, Samburu cattle tend to grow very frail and light. When they are sold by kilo weight they weigh decidedly less than a comparably sized grade animal. Not understanding the importance of bone weight in beef production, the Samburu have become rather bitter about the generally low comparative market value of their stock. It is an additional factor which aggravates pastoralist marketing capabilities.

#### 5. Herd Ownership and the Traditional Circulation of Stock

Cattle are owned individually. However, a number of people have various rights over one particular animal so that its disposal is rarely a simple procedure. Rights over cattle are discussed in this section under four headings: inheritance rights, milking rights, usufruct rights, and ultimate disposal rights.

##### 5.1 Inheritance Rights

A herdowner frequently allocates his animals to his children while he is still alive. The son or daughter doesn't inherit ultimate disposal rights over these animals until the father dies, although he/she may have complete responsibility for their welfare long before this. Theoretically, a son may be prevented from selling any of his animals by his father as long as he is alive.

##### 5.2 Milking Rights

When a man marries, he allocates particular milking cows to each of his wives. The wife then has rights over all the milk of her cows, and she may



dispose of this milk and the milk products as she wishes. For instance, if she sells the milk the profits are hers. Similarly, a woman may give or exchange milk to a needy friend without asking for her husband's consent. However, she has no right to dispose of the cow itself without her husband's permission.

Milking rights may also be loaned to other households if the herdowner has a surplus of lactating cows. This type of loan is called keruu. Generally, the cow remains in the donor's enkang, and the borrower comes to collect the milk twice a day. In some instances the actual cow is lent out, but this is unusual. A herdowner normally wants to supervise the overall care of his cow and its calf as well as ensure that the cow is not being overmilked by the borrower. As a result of these conditions, the keruu is by and large a transaction between a wealthy "patron" and a dependent "client" residing in the same enkang. As with the donor's wives, the borrower has rights only over the milk and may not dispose of the cow or allocate it to anyone else.

### 5.3 Usufruct Rights

Frequently, the animal itself is loaned and kept in the borrower's enkang. One common loan of this type is called ketaaro. Lactating cows may be loaned to kin, affines, or bond associates if they live far away and are in need of milk, however, most often ketaaro animals are loaned at the donor's request. A herdowner has various reasons for dispersing his animals to distant locations. Sick animals may do better in a particular climate; a herdowner may want to send his healthy stock to distant yet greener pastures; he may want to hide his animals for some reason, or situate them closer to market outlets. In any case, the caretaker is allowed to consume the products of that animal, but the responsibility in case of death, or loss, as well as for ultimate disposal of the animal remains with the donor.

Aitogaroo is a similar type of transaction which pertains specifically to the loaning of bulls. A herdowner may want to breed his bull with a particular cow, or he may want to send his bull to a particularly healthy breeding area. Conversely, a borrower may request a bull for breeding with his cows. As with the ketaaro, the donor is the party responsible

for the death, loss, and disposal of the bull.

All of the offspring of animals loaned in these ways belong to the donor. Frequently, he will give one away to the borrower if his animal has been particularly well cared for, but this is not required of him.

#### 5.4 Ultimate Disposal Rights

Disposal rights belong exclusively to the herdowner, and there are only three traditional transactions in which these rights are transferred. One is when an animal is exchanged (ketapashaki); another is when an animal is gifted (nosotua); and the third is when an animal is loaned in an esile. An esile loan is a transaction whereby a herdowner will borrow an animal, usually a steer, expressly for the purpose of selling or exchanging that animal. In return, the borrower must repay an animal, usually a heifer, to the donor upon request. Even if the steer dies before it is sold, the borrower still owes the donor a heifer. Thus an esile is a traditional guaranteed loan, and is the only such guaranteed loan. These loans may remain outstanding for generations and are frequently passed on as an inheritance from father to son. They are the most contractual of the Samburu traditional loans, and as such they are generally not transacted with relatives or bond associates. For the most part they are transacted with independent trustworthy herdowners, and are extremely important in enabling a herdowner to take advantage of a particularly timely market opportunity or to fulfill household cash requirements without the entanglement of familial obligations.

Finally, it should be noted that having ultimate disposal rights over an animal does not make the actual disposal of it completely frictionless. For if a herdowner decides to sell his son's inheritance or one of his wives milking cows he can be sure to meet with some resistance. In addition, in-laws who have their eyes set on a particular animal, or the herder using an animal may put a great deal of pressure on the herdowner not to sell it.

While traditionally this system of transactions resulted in the dispersal of cattle throughout Samburu land, many factors are currently affecting its depression.

With ECF found in virtually every highland traditional grazing area there is no longer a disease-free advantage to exchanging or loaning cattle to distant pastures. Nor would a herdowner be sure that the one caring for his animals is as conscientious as he is about dipping and vaccinating his animals.

In addition, increased sedentarization has brought about a restructuring of social rights and obligations, further restricting traditional livestock transactions. Territorial-based social bonds are strengthening, while kin and age-based social bonds are eroding. Growing commercialization and the resulting individualism have also reduced the extent of loans to all but an inner social network. The Samburu claim that distant bond associates and relatives can no longer be trusted as much as those who live nearby. As a Samburu expression states it, Latia ino lalasho lino (Your neighbors are more your brothers than your brothers who live far away.).

One result of these conditions is that fewer loans are being negotiated between distant communities or for independent commercial sale purposes. Particularly affected by this is all esile loans. Herdowners, citing examples from the recent past, discuss how frequently esile contracts have been broken. On the other hand, more loans are being negotiated between pastoral neighbors, and for explicitly subsistence purposes, so that the traditional neighborhood loans of keruu and ketaaro have become preeminent. As a consequence, poorer herdowners who are unable to negotiate independent loans as they did in the past have been forced to "eat their capital" and become dependent on wealthier patrons for their subsistence. The poor client will exchange his labor and political support for purely usufruct rights in cattle (primarily milking cows). From the patron's perspective, his recent involvement with cropping has increased his labor requirements and his ability to absorb poorer pastoral households. This current emphasis in traditional loans therefore limits commercial cattle sales not only for the pastoral client who has no surplus to sell, but for the wealthier patron who has an increased number of dependents to support.

#### 6. Conclusions and Implications for Commercial Market Development

There are many factors contributing to the decline of pastoralist participation in commercial cattle marketing. Initially, we see that the market structure remains underdeveloped; buyers operate irregularly and prices fluctuate widely. It cannot be surprising that such conditions bring in an irregular supply of beef. Secondly, the adoption of cropping provides a second subsistence base to pastoral households and more flexibility in their marketing strategies. Perhaps the most significant of any single factor is the present size and composition of pastoral herds. There are simply fewer healthy cattle available for profitable market sale. Moreover, cattle are currently a very poor investment, as the prospects of building up a formidable herd of healthy cattle are so bleak. In short, the two principal incentives for commercial marketing: 1) fulfilling cash needs and 2) pursuing investment opportunities are currently lacking in the pastoral economy. Finally, we see that the present traditional use of livestock further limits the number of cattle available for sale and has aggravated the downward spiralling commercial market sales.

As a result of the reduction in overall cattle marketing, the wealthy herdowners tend to breed much more stable herds and maintain the same animals for a longer period of time. Cattle are sold in order to make large cash expenditures. However, these are primarily old stock, and are sold most often to buy young animals that rejuvenate the herd or replace those lost by disease or slaughter. Looking at the cattle transactions for the wet season of 1982, out of a total population of six hundred and three cattle, wealthy herdowners (through gifts, loans, sales, loss and consumption) disposed of only fifty-six cattle. For the same season they acquired (through purchases, loans, gifts, and births) the comparable number of fifty-nine cattle. Even the wealthiest herdowners refrain from loaning or buying cattle that they fear will only die of disease or be lost to thieves. Many are saving their cash in banks, awaiting investment opportunities to return to the pastoral economy.

The study has implications regarding commercial market development. For an understanding of pastoralist evaluations of commercial options

is basic for the success of any marketing scheme. Previous studies suggest that under surplus conditions, pastoralists respond by investing in livestock, regardless of agricultural options (Little 1981; Schneider 1980). The explanation for this strategy is that livestock are the best social and economic investment opportunity available to pastoral herdowners.

In part, the present study supports these findings. However, while previous studies contend that this strategy explains the reticence of herdowners to participate in the commercial market, the present study suggests that when possible the commercial sector is actively sought out as a modern avenue for investing back into the traditional pastoral sector. A blind animal is sold so that two young ones may be bought; a barren female cow is sold and replaced by a number of goats. These transactions are more the rule than the exception. As earlier mentioned, only 27% of the 1982 wet season commercial sales were solely in order to fulfill immediate cash needs. In short, the study suggests that pastoralist market participation may not be determined so much by economic necessity as it is a result of an economic investment strategy. Just as a depressed commercial market is seen to reflect a stagnating pastoral economy, an active commercial market is considered by pastoral herdowners to be a reflection of a prosperous pastoral economy, one allowing for growth and worthy of economic investment. In this way, the development of commercial livestock marketing must be preceded by the development of the overall pastoral economy.

The research suggests that this goal is not an impossible one, and that commercial ranching is not essential for ensuring off-take from the pastoral herds. Central recommendations are listed below which are aimed at rejuvenating confidence in the durability of pastoralism.

1. Restrict the encroachment of agriculture and zone particular areas for pastoral production.
2. Enforce existing regulations regarding disease control:
  - a) Develop the holding grounds as true disease-free zones.
  - b) Reduce raiding and theft.

- c) Manage pastures to reduce tick populations by controlling seasonal access to grazing blocks.
  - d) Restrict unauthorized herd movements.
  - e) Fence group ranch grazing blocks or otherwise eliminate wildlife from livestock production areas.
  - f) Enforce mandatory vaccination programs and improve the quality and quantity of dipping facilities.
3. Develop the commercial market infrastructure to ensure the reliability and regularity of livestock sales.
4. Expand the investment options for livestock production (i.e. skins and hides, milk products).
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