Pastoralists and markets: livestock commercialization and food security in north-eastern Kenya

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Pastoral environment

This chapter presents a general introduction to pastoralism within the broad mission of this study, and gives some background information to the study area. There are a substantial number of studies on the subject of pastoralism and other forms of livestock rearing in the dry lands (Dahl & Hjort 1976, De Bruijn & Van Dijk 1993, Dietz 1987, 1993, Zaal 1998) although few focus on the Somali pastoralists of Kenya (Nunow 1993). Some of the literature will be reviewed, while paying particular attention to studies that address livestock commercialisation and pastoralist survival. As an entry point, a definition of pastoralism is necessary. Once a broad definition has been adopted, the literature on trade and food security in pastoral areas is explored. We will also discuss the role of women in pastoral societies, particularly among the Somali. Pastoral resource tenure and aspects of public policy are also considered since the impact they have on the pastoralist enterprise is important. The study area will be outlined in terms of geographical location and physical characteristics. Somali social and cultural systems have significant consequences on the use and disposition of their resources, including livestock, thus some of the salient features of these systems will be reviewed. Livestock production and trade, which are at the core of this study, are discussed in the last section of this chapter.

Introduction

This study focuses on the arid and semi-arid lands (Asals) of north-eastern Kenya. The Asals account for about 80 per cent of the country’s land area, with over 50 per cent of the nation’s livestock population but only 20 per cent of its human population. The main economic activity in these areas is pastoralism, usually but not exclusively nomadic, and this forms the basis of the livelihood of the Somali pastoralists of north-east Kenya, as in other similar areas of Sub-Saharan Africa.
Although pastoralism has remained the basis of survival of most of the Somali society of north-east Kenya, there is mounting pressure on this very form of survival, i.e. livestock. Some of the pressures that have come to bear on these pastoralists over the last few years include, but are not limited to, diminishing range lands, insecurity, cattle raids, and low livestock prices during certain periods of the year. These factors have had the combined effect of making Somali pastoralists more susceptible to the adverse effects of natural calamities such as droughts and livestock losses from disease and raids. Consequently, the Somali pastoralists are increasingly diversifying their sources of livelihood into non-pastoral activities to include crop farming, charcoal burning, firewood gathering, casual labour, and cottage industries - mat-making and wood carving. In this process of diversification, however, the Somali pastoralists tend to use the incomes they earn in excess of their immediate subsistence needs, to buy livestock as a means of saving and future security. Thus, we argue that any sustainable food security in this region should either be sought through the livestock domain, or through alternatives compatible with pastoralism and which do not disrupt the pastoral system of production and values.

This study examines whether the Somali pastoral economy has the inherent potential to reach a stable food security situation. The research further examines whether there are positive caloric terms of trade (Tc) between livestock products and grains. Although pastoralists are often said to be disadvantaged in trade through low livestock prices, the Tc is mostly found to be in their favour (Dietz 1987, Zaal 1998). If indeed the Tc is in favour of the pastoralists, then there is a possibility that they could improve their conditions even with smaller herds through participation in the market economy, and hence create a more stable food security situation for themselves. Besides the food security implications, this could also have positive effects on the environment in the long run, since there would be less pressure on the range. However, such environmental gains could be negated if more households were to use the area with their smaller herds due to the space resulting from the reduction in herd sizes of the existing households. The growth of the number of households could be a result of natural population growth and the formation of new households and of immigration. In such a case, the cumulative effect of the increased number of herders on the range may actually be more degradation rather than an improvement of the range.

**Pastoralism: Contemporary issues**

*The definition of pastoralism*

The definition of pastoralism as a production system has not remained static over the years but has experienced a certain degree of dynamism that reflects the changes in the pastoralist enterprise. However, most of the literature on the subject tends to agree on the basic criteria for defining pastoralism. It is often the 'breadth' or the 'narrowness' of the criteria used that accounts for the differences in definitions. Zaal (1998:21-24) discusses extensively various definitions and the criteria used to arrive at them. Sandford (1983:1,
in Zaal 1998:22), for example, focuses on income and economic activities as the main criteria:

People who derive most of their income or sustenance from keeping domestic livestock in conditions where most of the feed that their livestock eat is natural forage rather than cultivated fodders. In most cases also, pastoralists devote the bulk of their own and their families' working time and energy to looking after their livestock rather than to other economic activities.

Other important criteria needed for an appropriate definition of pastoralists include: change, dependence and exploitation, internal differentiation, and the pastoralist identity. For instance, Ellis (1989) has advanced a definition with reference to peasant societies in terms of their market integration which may also hold true for pastoralists. His definition ties together 'aspects of income and self-definition, access to and use of resources, internal differentiation and dependence and change', attributes that describe the majority of pastoralists. Making use of various expositions of the term, Zaal (1998:24) defines pastoralism as follows:

Pastoral societies consist of interacting groups, households and individuals who define their livelihoods on livestock production on natural pastures, using grazing, water, livestock, labour and immaterial resources which they own or have access to and who are characterised by a partial and variable engagement or incorporation in imperfect markets beyond their direct control. When only part of their livelihoods is based on pastoralism and most on other activities, these societies may be called agro-pastoral (in the case of cultivation), urban-pastoral (in the case of urban-based activities), or any other combination of terms.

The term pastoralism may be used in a more restrictive form by only including those who depend entirely on their livestock for their livelihoods, or it may be broadened to include all others who depend on livestock and other economic activities in various proportions. Roger (1999) distinguishes between exclusive pastoralists and agro-pastoralists. While exclusive pastoralists depend only on their livestock for their survival, agro-pastoralists grow some crops for their food needs to supplement their livestock products. He also distinguishes between nomadic and transhumant pastoralists. Transhumant pastoralists are differentiated by the existence of a permanent base from which the livestock move back and forth depending on the season of the year. The existence of 'exclusive' or 'pure' pastoralists is doubtful, and pastoralists are increasingly involved in activities that generate additional food and/or income for themselves. Wherever they are not involved in crop production, pastoralists may be nomadic or transhumant, depending on whether the whole homestead moves with the animals (former) or there is a permanent homestead from which only the animals move depending on the season of the year (latter).

Livestock-based resources not only dominate in the livelihoods of the pastoralists, but the household labour allocation is also strongly influenced by herding or other practices that contribute to the productivity of the system. This definition allows for the exclusion of the absentee herd owners from our definition of pastoralism. Similarly, mobility should be incorporated in the definition because it is considered as a key production strategy, be it one of entire homesteads (nomadic) or mobility only of the
animals with the homesteads more permanent is fixed/based (transhumant) Taking Zaal's definition (1998) as a basis, we propose a slightly modified version of it as follows:

Pastoral societies consist of interacting groups, households and individuals who define themselves as such, are permanently based for most of their livelihoods, and use most of their labour on livestock production in natural pastures, using grazing, water, livestock, labour and non-material resources which they own or have access to, have the possibility for livestock mobility whenever needed, and who are characterised by a partial and variable engagement or incorporation in imperfect markets beyond their direct influence or control. When only part of their livelihood is based on pastoralism and most on other activities, these societies may be called agro-pastoral (in the case of cultivation), urban-pastoral (in the case of urban-based activities), or any other combination of terms.

Pastoralists and market activities
Trade and exchange has been part of pastoral economies for generations although its importance has varied over the years and among the seasons. Trade and exchange has enabled the pastoral system to survive and flourish for thousands of years. Pastoralists, even those who have never had much demand for supplementary food, usually sold or exchanged animals for goods they could not produce, e.g. tea, sugar, tobacco and clothes (Markakis 1993). However, their level of participation in the market varied from one pastoral community to another as well as from one region to the other. Unless they are under pressure to purchase food or critical inputs such as veterinary drugs, the pastoralists’ participation in the market depended on the economic environment of the market with high susceptibility to external interventions (Kerven 1992). For instance, the arrival of new traders at a market, other things remaining the same, tends to stimulate sales by the pastoralists. While it has been argued that pastoralists are responsive to price increases and tend to increase off-take accordingly (Kerven 1992, RoK 1986), it has also been suggested that pastoralists sometimes receive low prices for their animals due to manipulation by traders (Samatar 1987, Samatar et al 1988). The extent to which the pastoralists can improve their bargaining power in the market essentially depends on their ability to take collective action, which may not yet have happened in the case of the Somali of north-eastern Kenya. The formation of pastoralist associations in some parts of Garissa District and other parts of north-eastern Kenya may be a possible means by which the pastoralists could increase their influence on the market. However, such associations so far only take the form of water-users associations, some of which indeed seem to be working well.

Among other factors, the ability of pastoralists, both communities and individuals, to actively participate in trade may be influenced by their proximity to the market where livestock products, especially milk can be marketed. The distance to market centres is usually dictated by the availability of pasture and water within a 'reasonable' distance from the market place. Presumably the pastoralists' proximity to market centres could significantly improve the nutrition of their children since milk could then be sold to purchase high-caloric maize meal (Fratkin & Smith 1993). For this to be the case though, there must be buyers for the milk and the availability of grain as well. Besides, the proceeds from the milk sales may be used to purchase other products such as clothes and
weapons and may not necessarily benefit the nutrition of their children. On the other hand, it should be noted that the proximity of the trading centres is often inversely related to good available grazing. This in turn impacts negatively on livestock productivity. Close to a trading centre, there is less grazing and what there is, is usually of poorer quality. It has also been observed that those pastoralists who stay close to trading centres for longer periods are usually those with insufficient herds for their subsistence.

If pastoralists are to trust the market, there is the need for harmonious relations with other key players, especially traders. In northern Somalia, it was reported that trader-producer relationships were strengthened by the fact that the pastoralists were risk-minimising rather than profit-maximising (Samatar et al. 1988). This implies that the Somali pastoralists would dispose of their animals depending on whether they needed money for a particular purpose but that they also consider the non-monetary value attached to the specific animals they offered for sale. Accordingly, most pastoralists sold livestock for specific purposes and as long as they obtained enough money for their purchases, they parted with their animals for such a price. This suggests that the pastoralists are 'target-sellers' who may sell livestock when they have a specific target of money for a purpose. We would like to argue that the pastoralists are, first and foremost, subsistence producers whose production techniques and strategies are geared towards producing enough food for their livelihoods. Thus, their involvement in the markets may be viewed from the wider perspective of strategies for survival, be it in livestock production or reproduction of social relations necessary for the continuity of the pastoral system.

Price considerations by pastoralists are usually in terms of the intrinsic value attached to the animal as well as the price of the goods they wish to buy. In remote areas, traders may have an advantage in determining prices since they can collude and create a single-buyer situation while the pastoralists may not be able to act collectively in response to such a situation. Enhanced availability and dissemination of current market information could increase the market benefits that accrue to the pastoralists since they would determine the most opportunistic time and place to sell their animals. In most pastoral societies, especially those in East Africa, pastoralists will sell their livestock as long as the prices offered are high enough that they exceed or at least equal the social value attached to a particular animal.

In the case of the Somali society of north-east Kenya, colonial reports refer to them as good traders and people who indulge in trade once they appreciate the value of money. One such report states:

History of all the Somali tribes clearly shows that their natural bent is towards trade. The first obstacle to the breaking down of the ancient belief in the sanctity of possessions in stock is removed when the value of money is recognised. The difficulty however lies in the disposal of such stock. Besides, the prevalence of cattle diseases has rendered quarantine regulations essential and for many years, practically the whole of northern Frontier Province has remained in quarantine (PC/NFD/6/1/1, 1927).

Although the Somali are said to have appreciated the need for monetary exchange years ago, many pastoralists in northern Kenya are still frustrated today by the lack of
reliable markets for their livestock and livestock products, as well as by the many artificial barriers such as movement permits and quarantines. These impede trade and negate the potential gains from trade that would otherwise have accrued to the pastoralists.

Trade and exchange in pastoral societies is not only in livestock, but also in livestock products such as milk, hides, skins, and butter (ghee). Although increased off-take of milk could improve the food security of the pastoralists in the shortterm, it could undermine the very basis of their survival in the longterm, in so far as it impairs herd replacement by ignoring the needs of the calves (Finkel & Darkoh 1991). If calves are denied minimum milk requirements, they may not survive even a mild crisis, and this eventually undermines the potential for herd reproduction. Thus the needs of calves must be balanced with the amount of milk off-take, if pastoral sustainability is to be achieved. At the same time, it is important that grains are made available to pastoralists if their market participation is to improve their food security through the use of caloric-rich grains. It has been found in Sudan that grains are imported into the pastoral areas and sold in the local retail outlets by members of the community who often give credit to pastoralists (Morton 1993). Among the Somali pastoralists in Kenya, credit facilities are usually restricted to those who are related, and/or those who have mutual obligations to each other developed over time. Traditionally, such credit was repaid in the form of livestock, but it has increasingly been paid in cash in recent years.

With increased commercialisation and the emergent household-centred ownership of resources, the economic power of the household is increasingly becoming dependent on the sale of livestock and livestock products and the related need for and increase in the size of the herd. Such interest in herd growth may not necessarily be the same as the traditional prestige-seeking purposes, but may be based on economic rationale resulting from increasing market involvement. Livestock marketing and increased participation in trade could be a process of constructing or reinforcing that market integration. In such a process, it is possible that the pastoralists could change their production strategies from that of large stock such as camels and cattle to small stock. Should that happen, increased commercialisation may worsen food insecurity in the longrun since camels and cattle are the backbone of food production among many pastoralists in Sub-Saharan Africa. Although cattle and camels are not superior to small stock per se, they produce more milk per animal and fetch higher prices per animal than small stock. However, small stock may in fact realize higher prices per unit weight. Due to the different feeding behaviours of the different livestock species, it would be wise to keep a mixture wherever possible in order to optimally exploit the range and minimise the effects of drought.

In recent years, arguments have been advanced that pastoralists enjoy favourable terms of trade in terms of caloric value, and that they should be able to increase the off-take of livestock and livestock products and purchase foodstuffs, especially grains. Fratkin and Smith argue that, despite the pastoralists' preference for milk, maize yields about five times more in caloric terms (Fratkin & Smith 1993). Dietz goes into a more detailed computation of caloric values of livestock products (goats) for maize grains among the Pokot in Kenya, and he considers the Tc to be in the range of 7:1 and 20:1 (Dietz 1991). Similarly, Zaal (1998) in his study among the Maasai of Kajiado in Kenya
and the FulBe pastoralists of Burkina Faso found caloric terms of trade that were favourable to the pastoralists in both areas. His study among the Maasai revealed an average ratio of between 6.7 and 10.3 for cattle to grain, and 9.5 to 10.2 in the case of small stock for grain. In Burkina Faso, Zaal obtained a figure of 13.0 for sheep against millet, and 8.8 in the case of cattle against millet. Similarly, a study among the Bedouins in the Negev, Israel, revealed Tc ratios of 27:1 to 71:1 for sheep against wheat, and 36:1 to 97:1 for goats against wheat (Degen 1998, Degen et al, forthcoming). In all these cases, we find that the pastoralist would be many times better off in caloric terms if he purchased grains by selling livestock products.

However, for the benefits of a favourable Tc to be harnessed by the pastoralists, Dietz suggests some basic preconditions. Animals should be available for sale, buyers should be willing to buy, grains (or any type of food) should be available, and the terms of trade should be reliably good for livestock (Dietz 1991:10-11). In a number of cases, these conditions may not all be present, which diminishes the potential gains from the Tc between livestock and grains. Due to market imperfections and storage problems in many pastoral areas, the pastoralists do not benefit as much as they should, and some continue to survive, courtesy of various mechanisms of mutual social obligations which tend to improve their food insecurity.

Food security and social support mechanisms

The term 'food security' refers to food production, food availability, and accessibility to that food by the people. Food availability refers to the presence of foodstuffs in an area, while food accessibility refers to the ability of households and/or individuals to obtain food for consumption. For instance, it is possible to have sufficient amounts of food in a country, or even in a region, and yet have food insecurity if the food cannot be accessed by those who need it. Accessibility is both physical, in terms of distances, and material, in terms of the means to acquire the food. In times of drought, both the availability and as the accessibility of food become limited to many households, making livelihood strategies a continuous struggle for many.

During and immediately after the severe droughts of 1980, 1983, 1992 and 1996, many pastoralists experienced severe food shortages. In the case of north-eastern Kenya, the drought of 1992 is said to have been one of the worst in living memory in the region. Although the rainfall in that year was higher than it was during the droughts of 1980 and 1982, the effect of the drought was more severe because the rainfall fell over a limited time period, too brief to be useful for livestock. Like many other pastoral societies in Africa, Somali pastoral society has various mechanisms for resource-sharing during periods of scarcity. Some of the main ones used regularly include: gifts of milk ('hirsi') to poor households, lending lactating animals, and 'donations' of a mixture of animals including some in lactation. Writing about the Boran of northern Kenya, Oba (1994) observed a similar interaction between the poor and the better-off.

Traditionally, the Somali pastoralists mostly sold live animals and sometimes hides/skins and ghee, while the sale of milk was very rare. Excess milk was given to those who needed it and this tended to reduce food insufficiency in deficient households and hence reduced food insecurity for such households. Writing on the Boran, Oba
emphasised the importance of livestock sales to purchase foodstuffs such as tea, coffee, sugar and tobacco, and the importance of these items in strengthening household relations. It is these relations that are valuable during times of need and they are usually treated seriously in societies in northern Kenya such as the Borana and the Somali.

Unfortunately, most of the traditional systems of mutual assistance are on the decline among the Somali pastoral community and in other pastoral societies. The major explanation for this is probably the reduction of the resource base for many households and the monetisation of livestock products. Generally, when the number of households in need of assistance is greater than those who can assist, the process breaks down or declines since those who could provide assistance are put under pressure beyond their capacity. Many pastoral households in north-east Kenya have been forced out of traditional pastoralism into either sedentarisation or refugee camps, although they still consider themselves as pastoralists. The monetisation of livestock products such as milk similarly weakens the mutual support mechanisms between and among households.

Some scholars have voiced concern that increased commercialisation may break down the traditional social security network through the individualisation of livestock and livestock products (PoulSEN 1993). In the case of livestock, where several related people could have an interest in a single animal in the traditional system, commercialisation tends to place the household head at the centre of decision-making independent of his kinsmen and relatives. Besides, the milk, which was traditionally given free to the poorer households, is increasingly being marketed (DAHL & HJORT 1976).

Given that pastoralists have been participating in the market for many years, why is it that the majority of them have had their food security situation become increasingly precarious? It is unlikely that there could be only one answer to such a question, and many factors, both internal and external, are responsible. These factors include different kinds of government interventions, lack of infrastructure, recurrent droughts and various other threats (the weakening of the social security system, ecological insecurity and physical security). In any case, it is hoped that increased participation of informed pastoralists in the market could improve their situation. It has generally been found that the pastoralists mostly sell live animals to meet immediate needs and they seldom sell in order to save for the future. Whenever there is a surplus from the sale of animals, many pastoralists tend to use the excess to purchase some small stock, or cheaper animal(s) as a replacement for those sold.

It has been suggested that the behaviour of the market may be used to predict food stress because the market is the only means through which pastoralists are able to purchase foodstuffs when livestock products are insufficient for their subsistence (HESSE 1987). Although the degree of marketing may be intensified during times of food stress, market participation in itself does not necessarily mean the need for more food, as livestock may be sold for other purposes as well. More important than the degree of market participation could be the condition of the livestock brought to market for sale. Often, pastoralists sell mature male animals (LITTLE 1985), and only resort to selling females and immature animals (males and females) if they have exhausted their mature males. Increased numbers of female animals or immatures on the market is likely to be an indicator of impending disaster. It should be noted, however, that such a supply of a
specific species and category of stock may also be in response to specific demands for the animals by buyers.

Women in pastoral societies
Besides its implications for social security systems in many societies, increased marketing could marginalise women and turn them into mere 'labourers' in the pastoral sector rather than the active and important players in the livestock production enterprise they were in the traditional system. A situation could arise where the men sell livestock products such as milk, hides and skins, traditionally a female domain, and use the proceeds to buy non-food items. This would have profound implications for the food supply of households and the role of women in household food management.

The importance of women in many pastoral communities may be appreciated even more when one considers the other roles they play in the pastoral production system (Box 1). Among Somali pastoralists, the milking of animals is traditionally a female task, although the men sometimes help in milking the camels and to a lesser extent cattle, but never small stock. In almost all cases, the control of milk and milk products lies in the domain of women. Since women do the milking, they determine the amount of milk off-take, and hence the survival of the calves and ultimately the growth of the herd. It has been pointed out that although the women may know the effect of denying the calves enough milk on herd viability, they may risk it if there is an acute shortage of milk (Bruggermann 1994), especially if they have young children. Joekes and Pointing (1991) maintain that the crux of a successful pastoral enterprise is the balancing of the milk needs of the calves and those of the people in the household. Thus women are said to have the security of their children as their priority, while men usually emphasise herd growth and the future resource security of their families as their major concern. Control over milk resources is the key involvement of the women in the livestock production enterprise. With commercialisation, there seems to be a decreasing role for the women in the important production-related processes in the pastoral enterprise.

In most pastoral societies, including the Somali, the women market the milk and other livestock products such as hides, skins and ghee, and they control the income obtained. In some cases, they use this income to purchase foodstuffs for the entire household and hence contribute to food security (Fratkin & Smith 1993). However, the men usually control the larger incomes from the sale of live animals and tend to use most of their incomes on non-food items such as clothes, diesel for the borehole generator the herbal stimulant 'miraa/khat',1 to water the animals, and the repayment of debts. Despite the significant contribution women make to household food management, commercialisation may restrict the ability of women to control milk resources, and thus their income, since men could be attracted by the increasing monetary importance of these resources, as has been observed among the Fulani of Nigeria and in the Omdurman region of Sudan (Fratkin & Smith 1993).

Among the Somali pastoral society, the role of women in livestock production and social reproduction is enormous (see Box 1).

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1 Miraa/Khat usually chewed by men although women also use it. It is widely consumed in northern Kenya, Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti and Yemen.
Box 1: Role of women in Somali society

The Somali pastoral women, like many of their counterparts in other pastoral societies, are heavily burdened. Recent trends in sedentarisation in Somali society may lead to a decrease in certain activities like shelter provision, but may lead to more demands in other areas, such as providing for their families.

The women are responsible for three broad categories of activities: care for young and weak animals around the homestead; domestic chores in the house; and provision and maintenance of shelter for the whole family.

1. The animals left behind in the homestead require constant care and attention during both the dry and the wet seasons. These are mostly the young and, weak animals that cannot go with the rest of the herd - due to disease, those that have recently given birth, the disabled or old. The pack animals used by the household are also included in this category. The women have to take them to places of good grazing (especially the male camels) in the morning, and keep an eye on them during the day at intervals, and finally bring them home in the evening. This task becomes more laborious during the dry season when the women have to look for forage and water for the animals at home. Sometimes this involves many hours of walking for both water and forage.

2. The household domestic chores are carried out by women and include, milking the animals especially small stock and cattle, inter alia, preparing food for the household, distributing the food, cleaning the utensils, washing clothes, care of the children, fetching water - often on their backs, selling milk wherever possible, and purchasing food from the market centres.

3. Building houses is also the responsibility of the women. The task of preparing materials such as ropes and cover materials made of grass stitched together, is a life-long process for the women. They fetch the poles for construction and construct the house. Whenever they move, the women dismantle the house and load it on the backs of the animals and then reconstruct the house in the new location. Due to the frequent movements of many Somali pastoralists, this task is still a time-consuming one for many women.

Resource tenure and politics

Regarding the natural environment, pastoralists in many parts of Africa have been accused of destroying communal resources, i.e. water and pasture. Earlier theses on environmental issues concerned with communal lands have advanced the view that pastoralists using communal lands have no individual incentive to take care of resources since it would not pay them to do so. However, more recent works by scholars have rejected these arguments and maintain that it is indeed the absence of common land that may be the tragedy rather than its presence. Runge (quoted by Lyne & Nieuwoudt) argues that common property is a resource whose use is restricted to a specific group of
people. Each individual within the group uses the common resource, well aware that his behaviour and his use of the resource are being observed by others (Lyne et al. 1990). Traditionally, the use of common land was regulated by the users and they determined who should have access to it (Harris 1980, Monbiot 1994). Thus, ...'in true commons everyone watches every one else, for they know that anyone over-exploiting a resource is exploiting them' (Monbiot 1994:10). There appears to be confusion between communal access and open access. While the former has established a user regime which is respected by all those involved, the latter does not. For instance, if and when one pastoral community has had a localised problem e.g. drought or outbreak of disease, the community would approach its neighbours for temporary use of grazing lands and the neighbours would meet and decide whether to grant the request or not based on past reciprocal relations. In the absence of such arrangements, communal access is limited to the particular community that 'owns' the land.

Perhaps the most critical blow to the pastoralists and their common lands is the loss of traditional grazing areas to parks, ranches, cultivation and urbanisation. The latter two have been important in explaining the decline in communal lands among the Somali pastoralists of north-east Kenya. In areas where the government does not recognise pastoral land rights as in that region, there has been a scramble for farm plots along the riverine areas for irrigation in order to secure rights to land that can ensure survival in the event of herd loss (Baxter 1993, Zuppan 1994). The emergence of irrigation schemes along the only permanent river in the area, the Tana, has denied the pastoralists both convenient access to river water and to dry-season forage. Gamaledin also found a similar situation among the Afar pastoralists in the Horn of Africa (Gamaledin 1993).

In addition, trading centres have increasingly been established in the area, mainly for reasons of political opportunism. Unfortunately, the success or failure of a politician in north-east Kenya is measured by how many trading centres he creates, and how many locations he upgrades to divisions, how many chiefs he helps to appoint, and how many schools he establishes. Trading centres continue to emerge wherever a watering point exists. This has significantly affected the traditional grazing system in which grazing areas furthest from water were used during the wet season when the frequency of watering the animals was much less and the animals were strong and able to travel long distances to water (Dahl & Hjort 1976). Grazing close to the wells was reserved for the dry seasons when the animals were relatively weaker and could not travel long distances. This is no longer possible and the pastoral lands continue to diminish with all the grazing areas being exhausted at the same time. The pastoralists are now more vulnerable to long dry seasons, not to mention droughts.

Many commentators on pastoral economies have emphasised the need for governments, institutions and policy makers to understand the local socio-economic and political systems as a prerequisite for the success of their interventions (Lane & Swift 1989, Little 1985, Poulsen 1993). Aronson (1980) argues that governments and other institutions must take into account the multiplicity of pastoral resources, the need for

2 The pastoralists in north-east Kenya live on land which is registered under the Trust Lands Act, where the local government holds the land 'in trust' for the people. However, the government has the right to do as it deems fit with the land, hence the creation of game parks and game reserves in these areas without any consultation with the local people.
pastoral mobility, the long-term strategies and aspirations of the pastoralists, the multiplicity of goals, sensitivity to interventions and the fact that livestock ownership and management may be in different hands. In the past, interventionists in the pastoral economy based their plans on alternative systems and this led to the failure of many projects, though their intentions may have been good. For instance, mobility of livestock and people was seen as destructive by some outsiders, while pastoralists see it as an important production and management strategy. Pastoralists move around in order to utilise scattered resources which has practical implications for long-term environmental conservation in these areas. Pastoralists must be included in the debate on development policy, and land tenure reforms backed by an appropriate legal framework must be introduced if intervention in the pastoral sector is to improve in a sustainable way. While pursuing a similar line of argument, Behnke and Scoones (1992:25) stated that:

Any official attempt to foster opportunism by maintaining livestock mobility would require the development of legal formats capable of providing security of tenure while permitting flexibility of use patterns.

The process of pastoral sedentarisation, which has been viewed by governments as the panacea for pastoral problems, tends to restrict mobility, and in many cases, has been responsible for large-scale environmental degradation (Aronson 1980, Poulsen 1993). Policies to try to settle pastoralists in Kenya started in the colonial period and carried on in independent Kenya. It was thought that, the sedentarisation of the pastoralists, would facilitate their administration and control. In recent years, a process that may be described as 'double sedentarisation' has been occurring in some parts of north-east Kenya, when pastoralists are attracted to towns or trading centres and also to irrigation schemes along perennial water sources. It is often those pastoralists who have lost their animals to drought or raids who move to market centres hoping to obtain wage labour to feed their families or to benefit from relief handouts. The luckier ones receive plots in the irrigation schemes and cultivate the land. In many cases, these pastoralists restock from farms or other incomes, and re-establish themselves as pastoralists.

Apart from those who were forced to settle due to insufficiency of resources, it should be mentioned that some pastoralists were compelled to move to towns due to existing insecurity in north-east Kenya because of widespread banditry (Bruggerman 1993). The Somali community of south-eastern Ethiopia and north-east Kenya have usually been considered politically suspect by their governments and they are often given inadequate protection by the state (Fratkin & Smith 1993, Markakis 1993). This had an impact on the local performance of the pastoral economies of these areas. Somali pastoralists may be said to have been politically marginalised since they have remained on the periphery of both the national economy and national politics. There has been little effort, if any, to integrate them into the national economic and political mainstream. Doornbos (1993:116) defines political marginalisation as follows:

Political marginalisation [.....] is understood to be a process by which certain categories within a political framework, be it classes, ethnic minorities, or occupational strata, are gradually excluded from the making of decisions about their own affairs, and see the scope of their autonomous action increasingly circumscribed by
externally imposed restrictions. It does not necessarily imply impoverishment, though a relative reduction of resources, both productive and sustenance, is an inevitable implication.

In the case of the Somali of north-east Kenya, political marginalisation takes the form of emergency laws only applicable to the people of northern Kenya, to remove Somali entrepreneurs involved in large-scale trade, and a general denial of their proportionate share in national development. Political marginalisation is often reinforced by economic impoverishment as well, through restrictions on both people and their livestock, and the poor state of infrastructure such as roads, water, health and electricity. In the past, many policies were designed for Somali pastoralists without consulting them, and this eventually led to projects having minimal success and impact. For instance, the livestock marketing policies that were pursued in the 1960s and 1970s were those outlined in the Swynnerton Plan of 1954 in which the northern Kenya range lands were to produce immatures to be fattened on ranches and resold for slaughter. According to Mukhebi (1986), it was explicitly stated that this was intended to reduce the pressure on the range and not necessarily to improve the welfare of the pastoralists (author's emphasis). This can further be understood by the fact that the immatures were the lowest priced, and at the same time the most important in herd growth. Naturally therefore, the pastoralists were reluctant to respond to the demands of the livestock market principally because it was not in their interest to do so. Indeed, those marketing policies were exploitative since land and labour were being drawn from the pastoral economy which was expected to bear the risks and costs of production while being completely deprived of the profits realised from the sale of mature animals (Kerven 1992, Markakis 1993). A similar situation was reported among the Turkana in Kenya, where they resisted selling their immatures at livestock auctions organized by the government.

Most of the official government views on livestock production and marketing are still based on the idea of sedentarised livestock keepers, instead of pastoral nomads (Morton 1994). However, there is a need to integrate nomadic pastoralists in livestock production and trade policies to improve their trade and food security status. It has been suggested that indirect interventions through infrastructural development could be the most beneficial way of improving the pastoral economy (Kerven 1992). Such infrastructural development may include road networks, holding grounds and water development. Dietz (1993) emphasised guaranteed markets, minimum prices during droughts, livestock insurance and regular availability of grains as some of the key

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4 The Swynnerton Plan was a policy paper on agricultural development in African areas of Kenya which was compiled in 1954 at the time of the Mau Mau insurgency. Among other issues, it called for the introduction of a strategy for limiting livestock numbers to presumed carrying capacities. It was on the basis of this paper that grazing schemes and water projects were conceived and subsequently implemented.

5 Livestock auctions were organised by the government irregularly and the pastoralists had to bring their animals to specified auction yards for sale. Animals were sold on the basis of live-weight. It should be noted that no auctions have been held since the mid 1980s.

6 Some insurance firms in Kenya have lately proposed insuring livestock against droughts, but the expected high premium will still make it difficult for most nomadic pastoralists to take up such
Map 1.1 Location of Garissa District showing the study locations
aspects through which governments could assist if sustainable food security in pastoral areas is to be realised (Dietz 1993).

Study area

North-eastern Province is the home of Somali pastoralists who derive their livelihood mainly from livestock and livestock products. They are generally nomadic and move with their animals as dictated by the availability of pasture and water. In periods of drought or during some dry seasons, they move to neighbouring regions, some of which are in other countries, especially Somalia and Ethiopia. Historically, the pastoralists in north-eastern Kenya have close clan relationships with those in southern Somalia and the south-eastern region of Ethiopia, having been split by colonial demarcations which subsequently put them in different countries. This study was carried out in the Garissa District. It is one of three districts in North-eastern Province, the others being Wajir and Mandera. The district is the second largest in the province and the fourth nationally.

Location of the study area

Garissa District has an area of about 43,931 km² and an average population density of about 3 persons/km². The district has borders with the Republic of Somalia to the east, Lamu District to the south, Tana River District to the west and Wajir District to the north. Garissa town is the provincial headquarters and is about 400 km from Nairobi on an all-weather road. However, the inter- as well as the intra-district road network is poor with roads becoming impassable during the rainy seasons. Map 1.1 shows the location of Garissa District in relation to its neighbours, and the actual study locations within the district. The southern divisions of Ijara, Masalan and Hulugh are unsuitable for camel rearing and more cattle are kept in these divisions than in the rest of the district. Camel rearing in the southern parts is limited by the presence of tsetse flies and dense vegetation. The northern divisions receive lower rainfall and more camels are kept there. While cattle tend to do well with vaccinations, camels remain very vulnerable to the tsetse fly and are therefore kept away from the tsetse area in the southern divisions.

In terms of its physical environment, the area is almost flat with an altitude ranging between 70m and 400m. The Tana is the only perennial river and flows through the western part of the district throughout the year. The area is hot and dry, with an average annual rainfall of between 200 mm and 500 mm and high evapo-transpiration rates. The rainfall often comes torrentially and erratically with much of it falling over a short time period. The southern divisions receive relatively higher rainfall than those in the north which may be explained by the coastal influence in the south. Although the rainfall records are not well kept in many parts of rural Kenya, we were able to obtain figures for most years. Figure 1.1 and figure 1.2 present the annual rainfall for Garissa District for the period 1966-1996 and monthly average rainfall for 1982-1997 respectively.

The rainfall variability between as well as within years is quite high. There are two peaks: one in 1968 and another more than 20 years later in 1989. The lowest rainfall levels during the period were recorded in 1980, 1983 and 1996 when less than 150 mm
of rainfall fell in each of these years. The lowest figure for the entire 30-year period was recorded in 1996 which experienced only 67.1 mm of rainfall. Except for the years 1968 and 1989 which registered rainfall of 900 mm and 635.5 mm respectively, all the years had rainfall within the range expected for arid and semi-arid lands, with the upper limit at about 500 mm per annum. If the extreme figures for 1968 and 1989 were left out of the computation, the annual average would be about 294 mm of rainfall per year. Indeed, about half of the 30-year period shown on the graph had annual rainfall of less than 300 mm, making most of the area fall within the range for arid rather than semi-arid lands. It should be noted that the rainfall variability is not only in annual amounts but is distributed over the year as well. The variability in rainfall and its unpredictability make the lives of the pastoralists difficult. Cases have been known where incorrect predictions and subsequent migrations have led to the demise of entire families. The distribution of rainfall is of more importance than its quantity since it determines forage growth. The distributional variability within a year is presented in Figure 1.2. Although we only present the variations between the months in the diagram, there is also a lot of variation in the number of days of rain in any given season which influences the pastoralists' economic activities and livestock production.

The monthly rainfall figures for Garissa show a bi-modal distribution with peaks in the months of April and November. These are the long rains (March-May) known as *deer* and the short rains of October-December, known locally as *gu*. In some years, the

Figure 1.1

**Annual rainfall for Garissa District 1966-1996**

![Rainfall graph](image)

Note: The figures for 1978 and 1979 were computed by averaging those for the two years on either side, i.e. 1977 and 1980.

Source: Meteorological Department, Garissa and Nairobi.
length of the two rainy seasons may not be distinctly different, making their classification into 'short' and 'long' rainy seasons less useful. However, despite the importance of bimodal rainfall for pasture growth and hence good livestock production, rain sometimes falls heavily over a few days, with most going to waste as surface runoff. It is common to experience heavy downpours of more than 80 mm in less than a week. Such rainfall, though substantial in absolute terms, does not positively influence the lives of pastoralists and their livestock.

Day-time temperatures are generally high, ranging between 34°C and 38°C, while nights are cooler with temperatures between 22°C and 24°C. The mean minimum temperature is about 23°C while the mean maximum is usually above 34°C (Figure 1.3).

Figure 1.2
Average monthly rainfall for Garissa District 1982-1997

Source: Meteorological Department, Garissa

Population density and settlements
Garissa District's population census for 1969 and 1979 recorded totals of 64,521 and 128,867 people respectively, about 8,065 households in 1969 and 16,100 in 1979. The census records show that the annual population growth rate during these periods was remarkable, averaging at about 4.4 per cent and 5.7 per cent respectively. However, the above figures for population growth rates appear to be on the high side and the actual rate of growth may be between 3.0 and 3.5 per cent. According to the 1989 census, Garissa District had a population of 124,835 persons. This implies a negative population growth of about 0.4 per cent during the ten-year period which might not be correct. Although there may have been some migration out of the district, there has been an inflow of
population at the same time, especially into Garissa town. A reduction in the district's population between 1979 and 1989 is considered unlikely.\textsuperscript{7} According to official projections (RoK 1996), the district population was estimated to be about 226,000 at the end of 1996, or about 32,285 households.\textsuperscript{8} This further confirms the inaccuracy of the 1989 census figures, although it is difficult to obtain a reliable estimate of Garissa's population because of the nomadic nature of the majority of the people.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.7\textwidth]{Garissa_Temperatures.png}
\caption{Mean maximum and minimum temperatures for Garissa District 1982-1992}
\end{figure}

\textit{Source:} Meteorological Department, Garissa

The mean population density in the district is about 3 people per km\textsuperscript{2} (Poulsen 1993). The 1980, 1983, 1992 and 1996 droughts were very severe in the district and there was mass migration to the divisional and district headquarters, and even to neighbouring districts in search of livelihood, mainly in the form of relief handouts. Water and market centres usually act as poles of attraction to those who have fewer livestock than they require for their subsistence. In general, a combination of water, security and the presence of a market centre would be a strong pulling force for the district's population.

\textsuperscript{7} The results of the 1989 census, which were released 5 years after it was conducted, are generally considered suspect, not only in the case of Garissa District.

\textsuperscript{8} An average household has 7 people. This excludes the population of the Dadaal refugee camps.
Population distribution is not even, with more than half of the population being settled in the four riverine divisions of Central, Balambala, Bura and Masalai. Between them, these divisions with only 10.7 per cent of the total area of the district, have 56 per cent of its population. The Central Division is the most densely populated in the district with about 32 persons per km\(^2\) in 1979 and 56 persons per km\(^2\) in 1994, because of Garissa town which is both the district and provincial headquarters. Garissa town had an estimated population of 64,387 in 1996 (Rok 1997). The northern divisions are generally larger in area than those in the south, but they have lower population densities. This is due to their remoteness and their poor infrastructural development - especially the absence of roads. They are usually cut off from the rest of the district during the rainy seasons. Most of the banditry in the district is reported in the northern divisions which border the Republic of Somalia.

Somali pastoralists move with their animals in order to utilise the sparse and widespread pastures. The movement of these nomads to water and pasture is often influenced by the presence or absence of seasonal laghas\(^9\) and water pans which provide pockets of temporary settlements during the rainy season. The Somali pastoralists tend to follow a general pattern of movement during the dry seasons when they move into areas that are less affected, either within or outside the province. As the dry season progresses, the herd is split into 'dry' and 'wet' herds. The dry herds, consisting mainly of bulls and dry cows, are taken long distances by the herdsmen, while the wet herds of cows and lactating females are left behind with the household the settlement centres. As the herd is divided for strategic and security reasons, so is the labour of the household and its members. Depending on the length of the dry season, the Somali herders may move into territories outside their own which sometimes results in bloody conflicts if they cannot agree on arrangements with the local tribesmen.

**Social-cultural systems of the Somali**

The origin of Somali society and its history remain subject to conjecture since recorded information is only available from the start of the colonial period. However, there is a distinct possibility that they came from the Bai region of Abyssinia, present-day Ethiopia. The period of entry to northern Kenya is equally uncertain, but there is evidence to confirm that the colonial government found the Somali community fully established in the then Northern Frontier Province and Jubaland. According to colonial records, the Somalis first came as bands of young men looking for adventure and opportunities, crossing through the Jubaland and into the Galla country around the Dashek Wama area. The Galla was a collective name referring to all Boran-speaking communities. The Somalis in Jubaland did not refer to their respective clans or sub-clans at that time, but to a collective term, *Eji*,\(^{10}\) the equivalent of the term 'British' in English (Mahony 1929:19).

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\(^9\) Laghas are dry river-beds which carry water during the rainy season. Depending on their size, they may keep flowing after the rains have ceased. In addition, they have groundwater close to the surface and therefore provide a source of water in the early part of the dry season.

\(^{10}\) The term *Eji* is often used as a collective term for Somalis in relation to non-Somalis. It only includes the 'Nasab' Somali. However, when talking about one Somali group and another, the Somali have always identified themselves on the basis of their clan families, clans or sub-clans depending on the circumstances.
It was the Ogaden clan that came to what was then Telemugger District, present-day Garissa District. Some of the Ogaden came to be called Rer Wama (people from Wama area in Ethiopia), who were mainly cattle keepers as opposed to the other who kept camels and small stock. It was because of their cattle-rearing culture that the Rer Wama were the first of the Ogaden to come to the Tana and push the Galla across it. The Galla\(^1\) who crossed the Tana to the south came to call themselves the Orma, while those who remained with the Somalis to the north of Tana are known as the Wardei. The Wardei occupied a lower level in Somali society, usually as shegat\(^12\) for the sub-clan that was responsible for their affairs. Except for a few who are fully assimilated and enjoy equal status with the rest, most of the Wardei are now in the south of the Tana river area where they joined their Orma brothers. The majority are Muslims and speak the Somali language fluently.

Apart from the shegat, the Somali community has privileged as well as low-class members. Both categories can be found among most of the sub-clans of Somali society. Those who were held in high esteem, mainly because of their religious prowess, include the Asharaf and the Sheikhal. They have a sound knowledge of Islam and were often consulted on important religious issues. They existed more as sections of Somali culture rather than as sub-clans, and live within most of the sub-clans. In general, Somali society is divided into two main social classes: the Nasab\(^13\) and the Nasab-diman.\(^14\) Among those who had low social status within society were the Nasab-diman, the Tomal (blacksmiths), the Ghaibailleh (hunters), and the Midgan (hunters). The Ghaibailleh and the Midgan are both hunters but the former are said to be 'clean' feeders while the latter are 'unclean' feeders. Both belong to a low class in Somali society. The Tomals are industrious people but often shunned by the rest of society because of their skills in making tools and other materials, which are considered non-Somali. As a result, they keep very much to themselves, although they are now slowly integrating into a number of the Ogaden clans in north-east Kenya. In fact, Somali society has enjoyed certain aspects of industrialisation and seen advances in technology thanks to the Tomal. The Ghaibailleh, the Midgan and the Tomals are all found as shegat in many Somali clans, including some in north-east Kenya. The Biemal, Balaad and Rahanwein are small sub-clans considered to occupy a slightly lower level in society than many of the larger sub-clans of the community.

In terms of culture and social systems, the Somali community of north-east Kenya has various levels of social relations and social organisation. It is a patriarchal society with decisions at the household level being taken by the head of the household.

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\(^{1}\) Although the origin and meaning of the word Galla is not certain, it is likely that it was derived from the word Gal, which means: "had contact".

\(^{12}\) Shegat is a general term used to refer to those who adopt the identity of another clan or sub-clan as their own. Thus, they adopt a new identity, often opportunistically, due to their weakness. Shegat may be a voluntary action or through force.

\(^{13}\) Nasab is a collective term used to refer to all the so-called pure Somali. These were considered clean and non-polluted as opposed to the other category. It includes the ordinary Somali as well as the superior ones mentioned above.

\(^{14}\) Nasab-diman is the opposite of Nasab and, literally means 'less Nasab' or simply, not clean or pure.
However, the head of each household is, in turn, bound by decisions of his\textsuperscript{15} immediate \textit{reer},\textsuperscript{16} the basic family unit consisting of related households. The various heads of households within the \textit{reer} deliberate on issues affecting them, and those involving them and their neighbours. These deliberations are usually conducted in meetings called \textit{shir}, in which consensus is always sought and received on each issue by all in attendance. Within the Somali community, civil affairs, control of grazing and water resources are traditionally managed by a group of elders at various levels of the sub-clan and clan structure. Disputes are settled by informal courts of elders or by Islamic courts, usually conducted on neutral grounds and attended by all the elders from the aggrieved parties. Although land is communally used, rights of use are obtained through occupation of the land by one group. The basic land use unit is the \textit{degaan},\textsuperscript{17} traditionally associated with a particular clan or sub-clan, but all others using it from time to time can have a say in its management. A water source may belong to a sub-clan, a clan or an individual, but agreement can mostly be reached with others wishing to use it through various means of returns or obligations which are already in place.

The social and political structure of Somali pastoralists revolves around a kinship set-up. Usually this set-up operates at five main levels: clan family, clan, sub-clan, primary lineage, and the \textit{diya}-paying\textsuperscript{18} group. The clan family consists of six major groupings including: the Dir, Issaq (Idoor), Darood, Hawiye, Gurreh, and Sorransor. Of these, the Ogaden clan of the Darood clan family live in Garissa District. Figure 1.4 (a) shows the various clan family groupings, and the clans and sub-clans that descend from them. Garissa District is inhabited by the Ogaden communities. Figure 1.4 (b) shows the various sub-divisions of the Ogaden clan.

The Ogaden sub-clan of the Darood clan-family forms the main body of Somali pastoralists found in Garissa District. Because of its highly segmented nature and the fact that it is dispersed over a wide area, the clan-family rarely functions as a political unit. At the clan and sub-clan level, Somali pastoralists are usually localised to some extent which each clan and/or sub-clan occupying a defined geographical core area, often spread over a very wide area. Traditionally, there was a single ruler known as \textit{Sultan, Ugas, Boqor} or \textit{Garad} but who operated in an often largely symbolic capacity. This leader made the most important decisions for his clan or sub-clan, but not without consultation with other elders in his group. However, the personality of the individual concerned, the strength of his kin, and sometimes even the area he came from enhanced the power of the office. A particular lineage, or \textit{reer}, within the clan and the sub-clan sometimes served as a source from which the group chose their \textit{Boqor} or \textit{Ugas}, (see figure 1.4 (a) for the Somali genealogical tree). During the colonial period, the administration managed the affairs of

\textsuperscript{15} Heads of households are always men. When a woman without a husband is on her own, her father, brothers or brother-in-laws represent her household in making critical decisions on her behalf.

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Reer} is the local name for an extended family. Members of the \textit{reer} are usually closely related and they are often people with a maximum of four agnatic levels from each other.

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Degaan} is the Somali word, in its broadest sense, for the general area occupied by one or more sub-clans and their stock associates.

\textsuperscript{18} The \textit{diya}-paying group usually consists of a particular lineage and their associates who pay and receive blood money for killing someone from other parties. The effectiveness of this group has diminished significantly with an escalation in killings in recent years due to increased insecurity in the region.
Figure 1.4 The genealogy of the Somali

(a)

Somali

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irir</th>
<th>Gardir</th>
<th>Yahabur</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hawiyeh</td>
<td>Eji</td>
<td>Gurreh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jambeli</td>
<td>Fatuma</td>
<td>Ali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gungungabba</td>
<td>Dir</td>
<td>Hubeir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jibedi</td>
<td>Molkah</td>
<td>Matan-Habiba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ajuran</td>
<td>Saransor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahan (Isaq clans)</td>
<td>Dornbirra = Darood Ismail (Arab)</td>
<td>Degodia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kabiallah</td>
<td>Sideh (Marehan)</td>
<td>Gaaljaal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kombe</td>
<td></td>
<td>Massareh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harti</td>
<td>Komadeh</td>
<td>Dirisama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gari</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Absameh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majerten</td>
<td>Warsangeli</td>
<td>Seyid (Dulbahante)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dashiishle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jidwak</td>
<td>Ogaden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bartira</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB. The names underlined are those found in the northeast Kenya. Since the Ogaden sub-clan is the dominant one in Garissa district, the diagram (b) will give the various sub-divisions of this sub-clan.

Source: Garissa District Political Record Book (PRB) - 1928 - 1943
DC/GRA/3/6
each Somali group through their traditional rulers. For ease of administration, they were later appointed as colonial chiefs.

Given the nomadic nature of their economy and their suspicion about the intentions of the colonial government, many Somali refused education for most of the colonial period. This led to the colonial chiefs taking their children to schools in order to show the rest of their people by example. Consequently, the immediate family members of the leaders became the first to be exposed to Western education, and hence became employed in some administrative tasks under the colonial government. When Kenya achieved independence, the early political leaders from the Somali area were mainly the sons of the colonial chiefs by virtue of their education amidst the mass illiteracy prevailing in the region at that time. They continued to dominate the politics of the area until the introduction of multi-party politics in Kenya in 1991.

In terms of communal identity and administration, the primary lineage often coincided with the reer and was, more or less, the smallest unit of societal identity. However, there was no traditional office of leadership at the primary lineage or at the reer. Nor was there any effort towards localisation. Although they do not have defined territorial units, the primary lineage groups were known to have traditional grazing areas which they utilised according to the season. Although such grazing areas were associated with a particular lineage, it was possible for others to use the same grazing after consultations between the two parties, usually when there was a localised dry season. If there was some enmity between the two groups at the time, then consultations were not possible and the grazing land would not be open to the 'outsiders' until peace was
restored. There is no formal political organisation except for the *diya*-paying group which jointly pays and receives compensation for murder and other personal injury. Thus, the *diya*-paying group was traditionally the legal basis of Somali social organisation. The number of members ranged from a few to as many as several thousand, depending on whether part of the *reer* or part of the sub-clan was involved. This depended on whether both parties concerned were from the same sub-clan, in which case the payment or receipt of the compensation would be the responsibility of the particular *reer* only. If the claim was between one sub-clan and another, the whole sub-clan would form the *diya*-paying group. Within the *diya*-paying group, the elders usually held decision-making powers due to the absence of any established offices of leadership.

*Livestock production and trade*

Nomadic livestock rearing accounts for over 90 per cent of livelihoods in North-eastern Province. Most animals are kept for subsistence although livestock marketing appears to be gaining prominence in recent years. Settlement patterns and the species of livestock kept are mainly influenced by the availability of pasture and water. Most of Garissa District's goats, sheep and cattle are reared in the southern divisions which enjoy relatively higher rainfall, while most of the camels are in the north which is a drier and tsetse-free area. While the hardy animal can go without water for as long as 120 days, the camel succumbs easily to tsetse flies. With the possibility of crop cultivation being limited by lack of water, there is little local production of foodstuffs. Livestock deaths were higher in the southern divisions during the last drought and many pastoralists suffered seriously from a lack of food.

According to official figures, Garissa District had the second highest number of cattle in the country in 1987 (Table 1.2), after Narok/Transmara Districts. It was estimated that there were about 700,000 head of cattle, 100,000 sheep and over 675,000 goats in Garissa District. It was estimated to have 82 per cent of all the cattle in North-eastern Province, 26 per cent of the sheep and 42 per cent of the goats. These figures remained fairly stable until the onset of the 1991 drought which caused the livestock population to decline by more than 50 per cent. Indeed, since the 1991 and 1996 droughts, livestock figures have not recovered their losses. In 1998 there were 350,000 head of cattle and 227,000 small stock (Table 1.1). Livestock numbers were heavily decimated by the 1992 and 1996 droughts which impoverished many pastoralists. Although the loss of livestock was much more severe during the drought of 1991/92, with the cattle population declining by 60 per cent and that of small stock by 58 per cent, the recent drought of 1996 seems to have had more impact on the pastoralists in the area. This is possibly because it followed so soon after the one in 1992. The 1996 drought was felt by fewer people but more severely because it was more localised than widespread. The pastoralists of southern Garissa lost up to 80 per cent of their cattle although the overall decline in the district's cattle numbers was only 20 per cent. This forced a large number of pastoralists to move to urban centres and refugee camps where they could receive food aid from government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).
Table 1.1

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>700,000</td>
<td>280,000</td>
<td>373,000</td>
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<td>440,000</td>
<td>352,000</td>
<td>334,400</td>
<td>350,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goats/Sheep</td>
<td>600,000</td>
<td>250,000</td>
<td>298,000</td>
<td>420,000</td>
<td>462,000</td>
<td>314,400</td>
<td>209,590</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Camels</td>
<td>74,000</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>73,000</td>
<td>74,000</td>
<td>77,000</td>
<td>70,000</td>
<td>63,000</td>
<td>64,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poultry</td>
<td>12,500</td>
<td>15,600</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>13,500</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>nd</td>
<td>nd</td>
<td>nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donkeys</td>
<td>3,764</td>
<td>3,200</td>
<td>3,648</td>
<td>4,200</td>
<td>6,300</td>
<td>6,370</td>
<td>5,370</td>
<td>6,270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beehives</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>608</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>nd</td>
<td>nd</td>
<td>nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLU</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: RoK 1997a; nd = no data; TLU is based on camel = 1, cattle = 0.7, sheep = 0.1

Table 1.2
Livestock numbers in Garissa District, Asal areas, and Kenya, 1987 (x1000 heads)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Beef Cattle</th>
<th>Sheep</th>
<th>Goats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Garissa District</td>
<td>693</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total ASAL</td>
<td>5761</td>
<td>4144</td>
<td>7283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsewhere, non-ASAL</td>
<td>3310</td>
<td>2300</td>
<td>1245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Total</td>
<td>9071</td>
<td>6444</td>
<td>8528</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ASAL denotes Arid and Semi-Arid Lands. See Table 1.1 for more recent figures for Garissa District.
Source: RoK, 1992:22

Although the Somali pastoralists are closely attached to their livestock, they engage in livestock sales, usually for supplementary subsistence purposes rather than for profit. During the rainy seasons, the animals are taken further from the settlement into the wet-season grazing areas, at which time there are reduced supplies of animals for sale and subsequent high prices. This is, however, the period for herd reproduction and herd building which implies fewer sales by many of the pastoralists except for specific cash needs such as the payment of school fees, the purchase of veterinary medicines, and the payment of debts incurred during the dry seasons. However, the supply of animals on the market increases during the long dry seasons when the pastoralists need cash for food purchases, but prices also decline significantly at this time. Income from livestock is usually from livestock sales, sales of hides and skins, milk and occasionally ghee in years of good rainfall. Camels are more important in milk production while cattle, sheep and goats are the major subsistence and cash animals. Although they produce much more milk per animal, camels are fewer in number and their ownership is limited.

Market transactions by Garissa pastoralists are common but the scale of market participation often varies between areas and over the seasons. Major livestock markets include the urban centres of Garissa, Nairobi, Mombasa, Lamu and Athi River. There are also smaller trading centres in the district where livestock may be sold but these are usually not available all the time and prices are lower than in the larger markets. Milk is usually consumed locally and its sale is only seasonal. If and when there is milk to sell, the pastoralists usually sell it in the trading centres within their immediate neighbourhood. Hides and skins are marketed outside the district; they are used in the leather-tanning industries elsewhere (Poulse n 1993).
Since most of the livestock sold in the district are destined for the main market in Garissa town and more distant consumer markets, high costs and risks are involved, especially in terms of labour and time. Given the spatial separation of the points of production of livestock in the rural areas and those of consumption in the major urban centres, the costs of marketing are high and difficult to estimate. In order to reduce these costs and accelerate livestock trade, physical infrastructural development, especially trekking routes and holding grounds between the two points, becomes crucial to the flow of livestock from one point to the next. Since most of the non-livestock based foodstuffs consumed by the pastoralists come from other parts of the country, a better road network would improve both the delivery and reliability of these foodstuffs to rural areas. The sale of livestock is influenced by, among other factors, the species of animal and its sex. For instance, the Somali pastoralists perceive milk as the most important food resource and they attach special significance to camels, especially lactating females. Since female camels are raised principally for milk, it is difficult to purchase lactating or mature females in the markets.

Food cultivation and trade
Irrigation schemes were introduced into Garissa District following the severe droughts of the early 1980s and some local Somali pastoralists moved into cultivation through irrigation along the Tana River. Some have since restocked and returned to nomadic pastoralism, but others have divided their labour between farming and livestock rearing while those who returned to pastoralism still maintain their plots in the irrigation schemes. In addition, a group of pastoralists who either lost all their livestock during the droughts of 1992 and 1996, or who were left with insufficient stock for subsistence, moved to towns and trading centres to survive on wage labour and relief food since they could not obtain plots in the irrigation schemes. Although they still see themselves as pastoralists, this group has very little chance of re-establishing its pastoralist way of life in the foreseeable future.

Consumer goods are obtained from Garissa town and distributed through divisional headquarters to smaller centres. The National Cereals and Produce Board (NCPB) and the Kenya National Trading Corporation (KNHC) were very important as reservoirs of food supplies in the district before food liberalisation reduced their role. The NCPB started its operations in 1987 and the district imports maize, rice, sugar and beans through these stores. However, with the onset of the liberalisation of the food market, the role of the NCPB and the KNHC diminished substantially. While the KNHC has already closed down due to its inability to compete with private traders, the NCPB acts as a food store for relief food from the government and other food donors. The largest role in the provisioning of foodstuffs in the area, including grains and other cereals, is now played by some wealthy wholesalers who have their own food stores. Although more reliable than the government stores, the private traders usually charge slightly higher prices than government stores but they are popular because of their longer opening hours during widespread availability throughout the week as opposed to the government stores that have only limited periods of operation.
Conclusion

We have reviewed some of the literature on pastoralism and related it to this study. A broad definition for pastoralism has been adopted after considering various alternative definitions, many of which focus on only some aspects of the subject. Background information on the study area such as its geographical location, economy, population and the socio-cultural systems of the people have been discussed. A review of the literature on livestock production and trade has highlighted some of the issues under study, in particular, livestock commercialisation and the trade in foodstuffs, which together form the core of the study subject.

Social support systems of the Somali and their function in mitigating food insecurity, and the various kinship relations that operate within the society have been discussed and illustrated in this chapter. Women play an important role in Somali society as they tend to bear most of the household burdens. Attention has thus been given to highlight their role in society. Although land is communally owned, its use is not open to all and many political and social obligations decide access to land, and sometimes to water resources. Resource tenure and politics have therefore been discussed. While the current study focuses on Somali pastoralists still involved in livestock production, attention will also be paid to impoverished pastoralists around Garissa town.