Surviving pastoral decline: pastoral sedentarisation, natural resource management and livelihood diversification in Marsabit District, Northern Kenya Deel: "Vol. I"

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Foreword

This book is a result of two PhD projects which started separately, but joined in the course of time. Even though the original of both of us to undertake this study initially differed, its outcome reflects a shared desire to contribute to the welfare of the North Kenyan pastoralists. Our backgrounds could not have been more different. One of us raised in a semi-desert surrounded by animals, the other raised in a wet, crowded urbanised country. We will therefore start this foreword separately, in the way it started.

Adano: I was born in northern Kenya and brought up looking after our herds during my early years. Perhaps by a random chance, my parents took me to school where I was educated in Marsabit for the first eleven years. My mother said: "I knew, since you looked well after animals, you would also look well after other responsibilities" as to why I was taken to school. It still remains convincing and this work confirms her confidence in me.

After these years I proceeded to other parts of Kenya for higher education. It was during these later years and particularly during repeated returns to Marsabit for holidays that I observed a general decline in livestock wealth. I found myself questioning the future prospects of livestock keepers. In particular I wanted to know about ways that people could deploy to respond to this genuine problem. This book, in part, forms my first attempt to understand and provide an answer this concern.

Karen: It was in the drought of 1996 that I first travelled to Marsabit Mountain. I was seated on top of a lorry that transported goods to Moyale. I had mounted the lorry in Isiolo, and I had no idea that this vehicle would wobble for 12 hours in the scorching sun over a pothole all-weather road. The landscape I saw was one I had never seen before. I could hardly distinguish whether the blinking white skeletons in the landscape were dry dwarf shrubs or the bones of dead animals. I had seen Marsabit Mountain hours before on the horizon, but the Mountain looked from far as colourless as the hazed sky. But suddenly, at the end of the day, the landscape changed. A cool breeze, green bushes and the slowing down of the lorry's speed indicated that we were climbing Marsabit Mountain. An enormous elephant bull with long tusks stared at us, as the lorry drove slower and slower. Not far from this elephant cattle were grazing, relaxed and peaceful. Then the road passed Marsabit Forest Reserve. I could not stop looking at all the colours green. The sharp contrast with the surrounding desert was startling. The Mountain seemed to me a great, beautiful green island surrounded by desolate wasteland. The following day I visited the wells in the forest. A crowded place, where thousands of animals and people needed water from just a few small holes in the ground! I was intrigued by the smooth way this watering was done, and my plan was ready. I wanted to study the way residents of Marsabit Mountain used and managed their natural resources in the context of drought and population increase. I had all my favourite topics bundled in this research area: ecological differentiation, ethnic diversity, the agro-pastoral interplay, social change and water management. And most important of all: I could do all this in a beautiful surrounding, where we built our house and lived with people who became so dear to us.

And then we joined our work. It proved to be a great challenge to integrate our different views on all the topics we studied. We not only come from different cultural backgrounds, also our academic disciplines are not the same. Even though we tried so hard (but failed) to study, analyse and write in a similar way, we finally accepted that our work would also be interesting when we kept our own distinct
identities as a Kenyan Economist and a Dutch Geographer. We believe that despite the differences in approach, we largely share the same ideas on the predicament of pastoralism in Northern Kenya.

This work could not have been accomplished without the help and support of many people. The list of all we wish to thank is so long that we don’t know where to start. The order of names does not indicate anything; we are grateful to all we mention.

We want to express our utmost gratitude to our loving and caring parents, Trudeke and Bob Witsenburg, and Arbe Wario who supported us throughout and in countless ways. There is nothing comparable to your support that we can do in return. We express our sincere thanks for everything you have done for us. Thanks also to Michelle, Wendela, Lukas and Florian Witsenburg for their continuous support and their visits to us in the field. Seeing is believing, and in our minds it was an experience they will also never forget! Thanks too for the memorable get togethers around Christmas and “Sinterklaas” that in a number of ways resemble sorios, but missing goat ribs! Our brothers and sisters in Marsabit, Budha, Bidu, Sori, Galgallo, Adho and Abudo Wario Roba tend our share of herds and took utmost care that we felt at home whenever we visited our Olla. Cousin Isako Kushi took care of us as his true younger brother and sister, and made us feel most welcome while in the field.

In Marsabit there were numerous people who assisted us in a number of ways. Of course, we are very grateful to all the people who shared their precious time with us during interviews and offered us insights into their lives. We cannot thank them enough in this text, which they will probably never be able to read. Instead, we will always try our best to contribute to anything that will improve the welfare of pastoralists in Kenya’s drylands.

The fieldwork experience would have been more difficult were it not for the kind support of many friends in Marsabit. We wish to thank Damocha Dibo, Buke Diba, Tumal Orto, Wario Mamo, Godana Jillo, Elema Ali, Lokho Elema, Dahabo Godana, Happi Tuye and Dick and Michelle Ferguson. Through them we acquired the necessary social network that one needs to survive in pastoral areas! We are very grateful for their help and friendship. Also, the staff of former MDP/GTZ-Marsabit, officers of various government ministries and departments, Kenya Wildlife Service and the Forest Department for much needed help.

Many sincere thanks to Ton Dietz (University of Amsterdam), our promoter, who also visited us in the field. We had a great time, and like us he became equally enthusiastic about the area. Fortunately, he kept that enthusiasm during all those years. Especially in times we lost our way, and our own enthusiasm had somewhat changed in panic and despair, he remained optimistic, cheerful and encouraging, and always reminded us of the nice story we could tell if we continued till the end! Thank you Ton for all the support and detailed comments on numerous draft chapters. We enjoyed working with you, and we will always remember your hospitality and friendship. Many thanks also to Annemieke van Haastrecht for your support and friendship. We hope that one day you will be our guest in Marsabit!

Our co-promoters Charles Perrings (University of York, UK) and Mohamed Salih (Institute of Social Studies, The Hague) must have had a hard time reading through the tedious rounds of draft chapters. They found time, never complained, and instead offered us the advice and comments we needed to give the work more depth. We now know how challenging it can be and what it takes to work as a team. Thanks a lot and we are certain that working with you has given us a solid start for the future.

Fieldwork involves enormous teamwork and we worked with many assistants in the field. We had a great time with them, and we thank them for being so reliable, trustworthy and hardworking. We sincerely thank Sales Warguto, Mamo Gutu, Letur Francis, Guyo Dabasso, Anthony Risiaki, Mamo Shamma, Roba Samma, Orge Huqa, Ibrae Mamo, Francis Kateko, Mohamud Arbelle, Samson Teko, Jillo Tuye and Waqo Gololcha on the Marsabit Mountain. At the sample sites in the lowlands we would like to acknowledge assistance of Mohamed Arbelle, Isako Diba, Godana Isako and Yara Gollo. They made us feel welcome, and it is our sincere hope they enjoyed the work, and that it will help them to gain access to a better employment career. We are greatly thankful to the four girls who lived with us in our house in Marsabit.
Nasibo and Halimo Abdulahi, Godana Wario and Orge Hukka. We had so much fun together, that we could not imagine a life without them. Indeed, back in the Netherlands we missed them very much, and we will always remember them as being part of our family.

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Haarlem, September 2004