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**Women in Pastoral
Societies in East and
West Africa**

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WOMEN IN PASTORAL SOCIETIES IN EAST AND WEST AFRICA

Susan Joeke and Judy Pointing

Introduction

The considerable literature on pastoral societies in Africa that has emerged during the last two decades has greatly increased awareness and understanding of the complexity and sophistication of traditional rules and institutions governing access to and use of resources under pastoralism. Previous assessments of pastoral societies as "traditional" in the pejorative sense of being resistant to change and isolated from the wider economy, have been shown to be inaccurate and inappropriate as the basis for planning and policy making. Indeed, it has been argued that this conceptualization has in the past resulted in policies which have had a disastrous ecological impact in some regions, notably the Sahel and East Africa (Cribb, 1984: 18). As a consequence, there is now greater acknowledgement of the need for policy making to recognise the importance of traditional arrangements.

While increased attention has been focussed on the way in which changes during and since the colonial era have impacted on pastoral societies, the position of women in these societies has received relatively little attention. By contrast, during the same period, much has been written about the position of women in agriculture in Africa, in particular about the adverse effects on them of the social and economic transformations of the twentieth century. The deleterious impact on women of continuing processes such as increasing monetisation of the rural economy, privatisation of land, and commercialisation of agriculture has been well documented (Palmer, 1985; Henn, 1984; Whitehead, 1987; Guyer, 1984).

Much of the negative impact of these on going processes has been related to the gradual but steady erosion of women's traditional rights, which acted to define and establish the entitlements and obligations of both women and men. Women's traditional rights have proved

to be vulnerable in the face of changing social and economic conditions. Changes have operated to consolidate male access to and control over resources - including women's labour - while simultaneously diminishing the rights and autonomy of women. It is widely recognised that this loss of rights is not solely a matter of justice, but a fundamental issue concerning the health and well-being of women and children. In much of Africa it is women who are responsible for the provision of food and basic necessities for the household, yet the evidence indicates that it is becoming increasingly difficult for many women to meet these obligations. This is due, in part, to the increasing difficulty women face in gaining access to productive resources, as well as to the greater demands being made on their time (Hanger & Moris, 1973).

This paper conducts a parallel analysis of the position of women in pastoral societies, and investigates their points of vulnerability to changes in the political economy of pastoralism in East and West Africa. It takes as its starting point recognition that pastoral societies are not isolated entities; they interact with and are in many respects fully integrated into the national economy. Cash income from non-pastoral economic activities has become an increasingly important supplement to pastoralism for many households. As such, they are neither removed from nor immune to the wider changes which are taking place. Failure to recognise this would have the effect of obscuring the impact of processes of social and economic stratification in the pastoral economy. For this reason, we will be using a broad definition of "pastoralism" to avoid "defining out" those who have been marginalised into destitution or possession of few animals. As Dahl points out, attempts to differentiate between more or less traditional groups would be artificial and prevent proper understanding of the dynamics of such societies (Dahl, 1979: 16).

Most of the literature on African pastoralism is in the form of case studies, and different authors have tended to pursue different facets of women's position. This makes it very difficult to attempt any systematic comparison of gender issues across pastoral societies in East and West Africa. For this reason, we choose to adopt a different approach, focusing on the similarities between the two regions. There do seem to be much stronger similarities than

differences in the position of women in pastoral societies, in terms of traditional rights and entitlements and the gender division of labour.

It is clear that pastoral as well as agricultural societies in sub-Saharan Africa are in a situation of increasing competition for productive assets, especially land, which has brought pressure to bear on traditional rules and institutions governing access to resources. There is evidence to show that the consequent breaking-down of these traditions contributes to greater concentration of wealth and increased social and economic stratification. The paper investigates the way in which these processes have impacted upon women in East and West African pastoral societies. The evidence suggests a remarkable consistency in the effects on the position of women in the two regions. Women's continued access to resources proves frail indeed, neither well protected nor guaranteed. As in agricultural societies, women's traditional rights - and therefore access to resources - are being marginalised and eroded, while simultaneously male control of resources and cash income is consolidated.

Common Property Resources and Rights to Land Use

Land use in pastoral societies was traditionally governed by a complex and sophisticated set of rules and institutions, which provided access to vital although often precarious resources. As "common property resources" the use of land as well as other natural resources such as water, trees and saltlicks was regulated to prevent monopolisation and to avoid degradation through over use. (Talle, 1988: 48). Moreover, the borders of sections of land customarily controlled by different pastoral groups were not immutable, but were changed according to circumstance. During periods of drought reciprocal agreements were entered into to extend grazing rights across sections (Hedlund, 1979: 17). The cooperative use of resources in these ways can be understood as a means of minimising risk in a climatically unpredictable environment: the spatial and temporal variability of precipitation and consequent vegetative cover without regard to land boundaries is a defining characteristic of pastoral arid lands. The

pastoralist strategy of maximisation and dispersal of assets was an adaptive mechanism to these circumstances which permitted survival in times of crisis and allowed for subsequent economic regeneration.

The use of land by pastoralists as a common property resource has come under increasing pressure. Typically, usufruct rights based on residence are replaced by legal formalisation of group or individual ownership of land. This has important - and negative - implications for pastoral women. The symbiotic relationship between land and livestock, and traditional close association of men with herd management has contributed to the exclusion of women from legal title to land. Privatisation of pastoral range land is concentrating land ownership in the hands of men in the same way as has been demonstrated in agricultural societies in other regions of sub-Saharan Africa.

Encroachment onto pastoral land has taken a variety of forms. Large areas of pastureland were appropriated during the colonial era, and the process has continued in East Africa particularly with the creation of national parks - with subsequent discouragement of pastoralists' use of this land - and expansion of the agricultural sector. However, the greatest loss of commonly managed land has occurred through the adjudication of grazing land into private group and individual ownership. The extent of land alienation is graphically illustrated by the Kenyan Maasai, whose grazing lands have been reduced to about half what they were eighty years ago. In addition to the loss of a large proportion of pasture, the quality of the remaining range land has diminished as a consequence, since a disproportionate area of dry season grazing has been lost (Talle, 1988:45).

In Kenya the creation of group ranches on Maasai land was ostensibly designed to ensure the legal rights of the Maasai to the pasture land, and to prevent further deterioration of grazing lands by restricting the movements of pastoralists and their herds between the various grazing and watering places (Talle, 1988:42). Pastoralists were encouraged to join the ranches by being able to gain access to investment loans on the basis of legal title to land, which was not possible under the common property resource system. Fear that failure to register would mean

inability to gain access to land in the future acted as a strong incentive to participate in the scheme (Toulmin, 1983: 55).

In fact, the creation of Kenyan group ranches has had the opposite of the intended effect. Restriction of mobility interfered with the flexibility of grazing patterns which is critical to ecologically sound land use where rainfall is highly variable. Grazing land deteriorated further and environmental degradation continued with the consequent overgrazing.

Particularly controversial is the question of title-deeds given to maasai and non-maasai individuals, leading to conversion of pastureland into private ranches and farms. Although these individual ranches are small in area, they often occupy the best part of the range land, which then becomes inaccessible to the majority of herd owners (Talle, 1988: 42). Furthermore, it has been argued that creation of group ranches intensifies social and economic stratification as they have an inbuilt tendency towards concentration of wealth. This is because even if equal grazing quotas are allocated to members originally, those with more starting capital are likely to lease or buy quotas from other members (Hedlund, 1979:33).

In terms of consolidating access to land, it is important to note that more than 99 per cent of the members of group ranches are men. This situation has distinct parallels with the discrimination faced by women farmers in sub-Saharan Africa, where land is usually registered in the name of the male household head regardless of who actually farms the land. Women are as a consequence excluded from access to loans and extension services which is usually determined by land title. In this way, important resources become concentrated in the hands of men (Staudt, 1975).

The exclusion of women from access to land in this way can set in train events which will confront women with severe difficulties in the future. Analysis of the Katilu Irrigated Agriculture Scheme in Kenya demonstrates the adverse implications for women of such trends. This project was initiated to provide a means of livelihood for destitute Turkana pastoralists

following severe drought and shock losses in the 1960s. Ownership of land was vested in the household head - usually male - despite the fact that it was women who performed most of the cultivation work. As a result, women's work burdens not only increased substantially, but they were in effect turned into marginal producers, denied any ownership or control of assets (Broch-Due, 1983: 17).

The privatisation and individualisation of land is a critical change in the rural economy, and has far-reaching implications for poorer households and women in particular. Title to land opens the door to market-based accumulation, from which women are excluded.

The Sexual Division of Labour in Pastoral Societies

An overall division of labour between men and women is prevalent in pastoral societies. As a rough approximation, it is often observed that men's work is closely associated with herd management and women's work with the children and house.

Men's responsibilities as herd managers include moving, feeding and watering the herds, castration, vaccination and slaughter, as well as building enclosures and digging wells. Younger men and boys perform most of the physical labour and herding, while the older men are responsible for planning and decision-making with regard to livestock (Talle, 1988: 180)

Women's responsibilities include the on going and time-consuming task of house building and maintenance. For nomadic women, this entails dismantling the houses, loading them on to donkeys for transportation, and rebuilding them at the next camp. Women perform all domestic chores such as preparation of food, hides and skins, fetching firewood and water, and are responsible for the rearing of children. They are usually also responsible for food provision, although among some groups such as the Tuareg it is men who make purchases of grain and clothing as women are not permitted to go to market.

Women are also often closely involved in the care of livestock, being responsible for the feeding, watering and care of young and sick animals, as well as for herding those kept near the homestead. They are usually responsible for milking, processing milk products and marketing of dairy products. The balance of work is such that women frequently spend more time than their husbands in animal care. This fact is important and frequently underestimated.

Despite their considerable labour input into the care and maintenance of the herd, however, women are excluded from major decision-making and control over livestock. Cultural and folkloric traditions rationalise this exclusion, maintaining that conflict between men and women is inevitable because women give first priority to satisfying the milk needs of their children while men put the needs of calves - and by implication the herd - first.

Despite overall similarities, some differences are observed in the sexual division of labour between pastoral communities. Among the Tuareg for example, it is men who go to market and make household purchases, as the prevailing Islamic convention restricts the mobility of both slave and free-born women (Oxby, 1978: 284). Among the Fulani, milking is normally the responsibility of men and boys, although interestingly earlier studies indicate that previously milking was done by women (Waters-Bayer, 1985:22). Unfortunately, the reasons for this change in the sexual division of labour are not documented, although it does provide evidence of some flexibility in the sexual division of labour over time. In some areas a similar shift has been observed, in the task of house building, which is gradually being taken over by men. The change in house types to heavier, more permanent structures has altered the traditional division of labour, and men now perform the major construction tasks (Talle 1988: 255). While women benefit by being relieved of the constant task of house-repairing, this change also has negative implications, as it represents male encroachment into traditionally female territory. It also represents a consolidation of male control over an asset which is increasing in value.

Within societies women can and do perform male tasks, such as herding and watering animals in times of labour shortage, although men seldom perform female tasks (Talle, 1988: 180). The substantial out-migration of male labour following the stock losses of the Boran during the

1960s and 1970s led to a shortage of labour for pastoral work. As a consequence, women became involved in male herding and watering activities outside the camp, even though this was at the expense of camp work (Dahl, 1979: 85). More recently, there is evidence of increased involvement of young wives in herding activities in some areas, which has been related to the breakdown of residence structures into smaller units and greater self-sufficiency of the family. The resulting shortage of male labour has necessitated the greater involvement of women in what were traditionally male tasks. These changes disadvantage women by depriving them of the support and benefits of sharing labour with other women in the pastoral household. Women's work load has become heavier as a consequence, and there is evidence that it engenders feelings of isolation and depression (Talle, 1988:251).

These changes are for the most part in the direction of women taking on formerly "male" tasks. This limited degree of flexibility can have negative consequences for range management. Striking camp has always remained the women's task. In places in East Africa it has been observed that where demands on women's time have become very severe, they resist striking camp as often as good use of pasture requires, because it is too time consuming. Overgrazing and deterioration of livestock quality are the result (Dahl, 1979).

What is particularly striking about these changes in the sexual division of labour is the way in which men's involvement in women's tasks is often associated with increasing control over assets which are gaining in value. By contrast, women's involvement in male tasks is usually associated with a shortage of male labour, but there is no evidence to suggest increased control over the products of their labour. A further repercussion - and one which again has parallels with the situation facing many agricultural women - is the way in which commercialisation of production is giving men greater control over women's labour. As women's traditional entitlements to livestock and related resources are diminished by the declining importance of milk, the appropriation of women's labour for male-controlled meat production also raises questions about access to and control of income. Although the evidence is limited and inconclusive on this issue, it would appear that income from livestock is controlled and allocated by men. Certainly it is well established that in the agricultural sector in sub-Saharan

Africa commercialisation of production has increased male control of resources - including women's labour - and income (Staudt, 1975; Henn, 1984).

Entitlements to Livestock

The central importance of livestock in pastoral regions derives from the high-risk nature of the environment: the mobility of animals makes them less vulnerable than crops to localised drought. They are the means for capturing fleeting vegetation resources and converting them into products for human use (Kettel 1988:1). The pattern of herding a combination of animal species with different foraging habits and reproductive rates is a further refinement. Overall the strategy is one of asset diversification and optimisation of regenerative stock capacity.

As livestock are pastoralists' means of survival, they play a central role in the economic, social and cultural lives of pastoral societies. They form the basis of subsistence by providing milk, blood and occasionally meat. Livestock are also prestige goods, providing the means for acquiring and demonstrating wealth, in terms of number and type of animals. The giving and lending of livestock is necessary for building up social networks and gaining power and influence. Culturally, animals act as "ceremonial funds", as gifts on occasions of marriage, child-naming or circumcision, or to provide meat for ceremonial feasts (Baroin, 1981; Dahl, 1979).

Access to livestock is therefore vital for the economic and social viability of the household. Previously, the ratio of humans to animals (that is, the balance between livestock and herding labour) was critical to pastoral viability (Toulmin, 1983:5). For those households which became non-viable due to stock losses or lack of labour, there were various methods for adjusting to disequilibrium. This was achieved by a complex set of rules and institutions which governed flows of livestock or people between different households, co-operation of herding duties, and sharing of food (Toulmin, 1983:8). In the contemporary period, increasingly viability is maintained by the involvement of household members in non-pastoral activities such

as wage labour and agriculture. Thus socially marginal households are becoming more likely to be forced to emigrate, as they have limited claims to borrow stock from other households (Toulmin, 1983:20)

The complexity of livestock rights is demonstrated by the fact that the different rights of different people are often vested in the same animal. The dual role of animals, as both the means of subsistence and the basis of wealth and prestige, reflects the sexual division of labour and entitlements to and control of livestock as assets.

Women are associated with livestock as the means of subsistence, as "milk managers", while men are associated with animals as wealth and prestige, as managers of herds. Traditionally, Maasai women have the right to milk animals and dispose of the associated products, as well as rights to the skin, hide and hair of the animal (Talle, 1988). Similarly, Tugen women's rights in "house property" consist of rights in milking stock which are assigned to them at marriage. In West Africa, Fulani women are entitled to receive all the milk from cows which belong to them or their children by a former marriage (Waters-Bayer, 1985:7)

Milk and milk products can be used in a variety of ways; for consumption within the household or for exchange or marketing. Women also utilise their dairy management roles to build up their own social networks, either by giving dairy products to other women, or by allowing other women the use of one of their own milking animals. In this way, women too build up reciprocal exchange networks, and ensure the flow of food into the household during periods of stress. Women usually have the right to retain any income generated by the sale of dairy produce, although the evidence suggests that this generally used to meet household requirements rather than for personal consumption (Waters-Bayer, 1985:16).

Women's role as "milk managers" is intimately connected to their reproductive and household provisioning roles. Rights to milk depend on women having a reproductive role, as child-bearing establishes a woman's claim to milk. For women past child-bearing age and without cattle, adopting children is a way of ensuring continued access to milk. The declining

availability and dietary importance of milk suggests that poorer women in particular will be less able to gain access to income and support in this way.

While women's entitlements to milk can be linked to their household provisioning responsibilities, it has been argued that across Africa, women gain support, dignity and even some measure of authority from their involvement in milk production (Kettel 1988:8). Conversely, for poor women lack of milk is not only a material deprivation, but makes them feel intimidated and socially inferior (Talle 1988:212). As "milk managers" women control the distribution of milk between animals and humans. This balancing of animal and human needs was the crux of a successful pastoral enterprise, and the decisions taken by women with regard to milk off take were critical to the well-being of both (Talle, 1988: 205). Furthermore, as Western points out, pastoralists are extremely sensitive to differences and variations in pasture because they can monitor marginal differences by measuring milk output. The importance of women's intimate connection with, and knowledge of, the herd through off taking milk has been consistently overlooked, but is probably crucial in monitoring the general condition of the herd and the rangeland. The shift in importance from milk to meat denies women these roles, and diminishes their involvement in livestock decision-making (Horowitz, 1981:84).

As well as being entitled to milking rights, women also own animals, which are often obtained at marriage. Women can also inherit livestock, although their inheritance is usually less than men's, and they often choose not to claim their animals but leave them in the care of their brothers (Baroin, 1980: 3). As it is from brothers that women derive support after the death of their father, this can be understood as an instance of asset dispersal and strengthening of family obligations which can be drawn on in times of need. Among the Tuareg, free women may own animals and even large herds, but market transactions relating to livestock are controlled by men. However, in most pastoral societies a wife's permission has to be sought before one of her animals is sold. While men have management control, they cannot freely dispose of animals in which women or children have rights (Kettel, 1988: 10).

Although herd management is a male domain, women are often involved in discussion and decision-making relating to livestock, especially if they or their children have rights to particular animals. In this way, women play an important role in safeguarding their children's interests in livestock. The Tugen in East Africa demonstrate the critical role that women can play in determining men's access to animals, as it is from their mother's share of homestead herds that men typically receive and inherit animals from their fathers (Kettel 1988: 9). Maasai women are able to negotiate and defend their son's rights to livestock, as well as to make allotments of their own animals to their children. (Talle 1988:248)

While ownership and ability to freely dispose of livestock is circumscribed by male management of herds, their traditional rights to animals do provide women with certain assets and a degree of leverage which can be used to their advantage in both the shorter and longer term. The close relationship which has been observed between some pastoral women and their children is likely to be connected with women's roles as conveyors and guardians of their children's livestock, although little research has been done in this area.

An indication of the impact on women of loss of access to livestock is demonstrated by the way in which the herds of the Tuerog and Fulani were reconstituted after the drought of the 1970s. Replacement herds were assigned to male heads of households, but none of the animals owned by women were replaced. The social consequence was the inability of young men and women to acquire bride wealth and dowries from their mothers, and the undermining of women's influence and status in their own households and communities (Rupp 1976 quoted in Kettel 1988: 10).

However, certain changes are taking place in the pastoral economy which are fundamentally altering women's rights and access to livestock. Firstly, increasing sedentarisation and degradation of grasslands means that the herds tend to be kept at cattle posts in remote areas, away from the homesteads. Secondly, the growing importance of beef production and marketing of stock is adversely affecting women's property rights in livestock. Women now complain that their animals are among the first to be sold (Ensminger, 1984: 64). There

appears to be an increasing tendency for men to appropriate women's rights to livestock without negotiation or permission, as was traditionally required (Dahl, 1979:261; Talle, 1988:224). It has been argued that commercial livestock transactions have made it possible for men to redefine or disregard traditional rights accruing to women and children (Dahl, 1979: 266). This shift from dairy to beef production has led not only to a consolidation of male control over livestock, but also to a shift from women's income to men's income.

Despite the fact that women's traditional rights to livestock were mediated through and ultimately controlled by men, they did provide women with access to certain assets which could be utilised to their advantage. What research is now beginning to demonstrate is that, due to the changes which are taking place in the pastoral economy, women's traditional entitlements - like those of African women farmers - are "secondary rights" and as such, vulnerable to erosion and marginalisation. This is more evident during periods of economic stress, as the case of the Tugen indicates above. It has disturbing implications for the capacity of women to meet household provisioning needs, as well as for wider issues relating to women's autonomy and well-being.

Sedentarisation and Changes in the Pastoral Economy

The available evidence, though patchy, suggests that there is a continuing trend towards an increase in the level of sedentarisation, particularly in East Africa. This trend has been encouraged by the State, which has demonstrated an interest in encouraging the sedentarisation of pastoralists, in order to incorporate them more fully into the market economy and make their productive system more profitable to the national economy (Talle, 1988: 42). This approach has been common to most countries with pastoralists among the population, in and beyond Africa in the twentieth century. The logic for such policies is derived from the concept of pastoralists as somehow "outside" the national economy and it is within this context that land privatisation measures should be analysed.

While sedentarisation is not necessarily accompanied by abandonment of livestock keeping, it is usually associated with greater diversification of economic activity. There is evidence of increased involvement of pastoralists in agriculture, wage labour and petty trading. Sedentarisation has far reaching, although sometimes contradictory, social and economic consequences for women. Broch-Due, for example, points out that there is a tendency for women living in settlement schemes to spend less time on domestic work due to the provision of facilities such as water pumps and grinding mills. However, the benefits derived from this reduction in work-load must be weighed against an increase in time spent on food preparation as a result of the change in diet from dairy to grain products (Broch-Due 1983B:148). While it is difficult to evaluate the net loss or gains for women in terms of the time spent in domestic work, the available evidence does suggest that the overall impact of sedentarisation is largely negative.

A major factor is the general change in social relationships that tends to accompany sedentarisation, between women themselves as well as between women and men. Baxter suggests that sedentarisation tends to narrow the range and alter the texture of social relationships between pastoralists (Baxter 1975:224). For pastoral women, diminishing access to livestock curtails exchange networks which facilitated the exchange of productive resources - milking animals - and food. Poor and childless women are particularly disadvantaged as a result of the breakdown of these redistributive mechanisms.

It has also been suggested that the act of settling allows Islamic institutions to be adhered to more rigidly (Baxter 1975:206). This has particular implications for women, as it implies a tightening of restrictions on their economic, social and domestic activities. While the literature reviewed offers little in the way of empirical support for this claim, there is certainly evidence to suggest that in the pastoral context there has been a considerable degree of flexibility in the adoption of Islamic practice. Baroin points out that among the Toubous the position of women is determined not by Islam but by pre-Islamic rules. The two pillars of social organisation are exogamous marriage and the system of rights and benefits obtained upon marriage, and these fundamentally determine the social situation of women and their roles in

pastoral production. Similarly, Oxby describes the widespread practise of pre-inheritance among the Twareg, (that is, the passing down of many animals before the original owner's death), suggesting that this could be a way of counteracting the disadvantage women face under Islamic rules of inheritance (Oxby 1978:234). These pre-Islamic rules prevail despite their incompatibility with Arab-Islamic practice, and despite the introduction of Islamic laws of inheritance and dowry (Baroin 1981:19). In the pastoral context however, exogamous marriage and marriage rights are integral to ensuring the viability of the pastoral enterprise through the widening of reciprocal networks and maximisation of labour resources. Modifications are therefore liable to be made to Islamic practise where this comes into conflict with maintaining pastoral viability. As such viability is no longer critical when Sedentarisation takes place, this would suggest that a strengthening of Islamic traditions is likely to ensure.

Environmental degradation frequently accompanies sedentarisation, due to intensification of activity and overgrazing in the settlement area, although the main herds are usually moved away to cattle posts in remote areas. Degradation of the pasture lands leads to a deterioration of livestock and a reduction in the productive capacity of milking livestock. In conjunction with the growing emphasis on meat - as opposed to dairy-production, this has a negative impact on women as "milk managers" on two counts.

Firstly, women are - to a varying extent - dependent on milk for provisioning the household. As milk is nutritionally superior to grain, a reduction in the supply is likely to have a detrimental nutritional impact on the household in general and children in particular. It also means that dietary needs must be met in another way. Across pastoral societies in Africa there is a tendency towards increased consumption of grain as a substitute for milk, particularly among poorer households. This change of diet from milk, which requires little preparation, to grain adds to women's work burden by increasing the amount of time necessary for food preparation.

Secondly, a reduction in the supply of milk affects women in terms of their income generating activities, as there is less available for marketing. Although women are responsible for

deciding the proportion of milk for consumption or sale, less milk means either allocating less to household needs, or selling - and earning - less. This has negative implications for household welfare, as there is evidence to suggest that most of women's dairy incomes are spent on meeting household needs (Waters-Bayer, 1985: 16).

This raises two interesting points. Firstly, increased grain consumption has to be provided either by home cultivation or purchase. If households grow their own grain, the question arises of which household members are involved in the cultivation work. If it is women, to what extent does this increase their workload, and are they able to keep control of and sell surplus to generate their own cash income? To what extent is any extra labour input offset by grain sale income?

If grain is purchased outside the household, the question arises as to whether provision remains women's responsibility, or whether - and how - men become involved as a result of the need for cash expenditure. There is evidence of increased livestock sales to meet household needs, but it is unclear whether this is widely used to meet food requirements. If men have become more involved in providing cash income for this purpose, the implications for household nutritional status need to be examined, as the perceptions of men and women with regard to household needs can be quite different. Among the Kenyan Maasai, for example, male households heads make the decisions regarding food purchases, although in some cases women are taking on this responsibility as men spend more time away from home in livestock trading (Nestel, 1985: 197). Unfortunately, the study does not address the question of whether there is a significant difference in their spending priorities. In the same (maasai) context however, Talle observes that spouses often have quite different priorities for cash expenditures and household needs, noting women's complaints about men's reluctance to pay for household requirements and their expenditure on drink (Talle 1988:265). It has also been suggested that little of the income men acquire from commercial ranching "trickles down" to women even though they retain their traditional obligations to feed their children (Kettel, 1988:11).

This difference in perceptions of household requirements is further illustrated by a group of settled Fulani, where milking is the task of men and boys. Women have little control over the amount of milk extracted, or the portion they receive, as it is distributed according to the number of women in the household, their relationship to the household head, and whether or not the woman or her children own cattle, rather than according to need. Although milk only accounts for 10 per cent of dietary requirements, there is some evidence to suggest conflict between men and women in this respect, as the women say that they do not receive sufficient milk. (Waters-Bayer, 1985: 6-8). Grain is provided by men from the proceeds of livestock sales (Waters-Bayer, 1985:22). In this case, men have gained almost complete control over the quantity of food allocated to meet household needs.

A second point raised by reduced milk supply is the impact on women's income generating activities. As detailed above, women in pastoral societies are often "milk managers", responsible for allocating milk for consumption and sale. There is evidence to suggest that although dairy income is retained by women, it is usually spent on meeting additional household needs. This contrasts with their attitude towards income earned in other ways, which they feel more entitled to spend on personal consumption (Waters-Bayer, 1985: 16).

There is, however, little information on the impact of decreasing availability of milk for sale. Either women, and the household, must manage on less; the income must be provided instead by men through livestock sales or other means; or the shortfall must be made up by women earning income in other ways. All three are likely to have a negative impact on women, in terms of either reduced autonomy and control of income (with attendant implications for status and well-being), or increased work burden and demands on their time.

Women have demonstrated their resourcefulness in adapting to and stretching diminished resources, although not without cost to themselves. Among the settled Fulani women, where milk is in short supply (particularly during the dry season), women maximise their earnings from reduced quantities by various means. These include diluting the milk, selling it with prepared cereals, selling it themselves rather than through an intermediary, or selling it at

larger markets rather than locally (Waters-Bayer, 1985:16). Nearly all these options involve greater labour and time input, especially for poorer women, who are the most likely to be involved in food processing as a source of cash income.

The Impact of Environmental Degradation.

Environmental degradation is a noted feature of much of the pastoral range land in East and West Africa, adversely affecting both nomadic and settled households. The multiplicity of women's tasks involves them in a close interaction with and dependence on the natural environment in a number of ways, in collecting wood and water, and foraging for both animal and human consumption. There are therefore particular repercussions for women in terms of diminished access to range land resources, and increased demands on their labour and time.

The intensification of land use resulting from mixed production systems, sedentarisation and population growth has contributed to the degradation of pasture land and depletion of resources, especially in the areas surrounding settlements. Collecting firewood is women's responsibility, and has become an increasingly time-consuming and tiring task as longer distances must be walked to find and gather sufficient wood for cooking, house-building and repair. Dead wood can no longer be picked up while on the move, and the diminishing availability of wood means that settled pastoralists are, out of necessity, adopting the more damaging practice of cutting living wood, and in extreme cases, entire trees or bushes.

The wood shortage problem is exacerbated by two other factors. Firstly, dietary changes noted above associated with greater consumption of grain, usually maize, have increased the amount of cooking fuel required by households. One estimation is that sedentary women use 60 per cent more firewood than nomads, and that the amount of time spent gathering wood has increased by 1300 per cent (Ensminger, 1984: 65). The wood shortage problem is further aggravated by and for poor women, for whom the sale of firewood is an important source of income. It has also been suggested that firewood supply is a major influence on nutritional status, with evidence from Gambia and Guatemala demonstrating that shifts are taking place

towards food which require less cooking time, but which are also nutritionally poorer (Joekes, 1989: 4).

Secondly, as sedentary women tend to build larger and more numerous houses than nomadic women, more wood is required for the building and repair of their homes (Ensminger, 1984: 65). Women often have to travel great distances to find wood suitable for house-building. For women who are poor in cattle, the shortage of cow-dung for house plastering is an additional problem. Talle emphasises the difficulties faced by many poor women in finding materials with which to keep their houses in good repair, an on going and time-consuming business (Talle, 1988: 190).

On the other hand, sedentarisation affects women's water collecting activities in contrasting ways. Collection time is frequently increased by having to travel longer distances to collect the greater quantities of water necessitated by dietary changes (Ensminger 1984:65). However, the development of water sources such as wells and water tanks to provide a permanent water supply has advantages to women in terms of reducing the distance water must be carried (Talle, 1988:53). A major change is taking place nevertheless, as what was previously regarded as a common property resource becomes a transactable commodity. Among the Maasai, natural water sources were traditionally regarded in the same way as pasture: every household had the right to draw water for animal and domestic use. Women were always free to draw water for domestic use from any source, as only small quantities were involved (Talle 1988: 53). Substantial changes in utilisation rights to water sources means that it is becoming common for access to water to be marketed, either for cash or in exchange for livestock. Even water for human consumption is being sold. Women tend to accumulate water debts during the dry season which they pay off when milk becomes most abundant (Talle, 1988: 54). It would seem that as water becomes a transactable commodity, payment becomes the responsibility of women, to be met from milk sales.

Degradation of pasture land also affects women's livestock-related activities by increasing the amount of time that has to be spent in collecting water and fodder for animals. As noted

above, women have responsibility for caring for young, sick and feeble animals kept at the homestead, for which they have to cut and carry fodder. This work is particularly time-consuming in the dry season, when more animals are in a weakened condition, and at the same time there is greater scarcity of fodder. Degradation of the pasture lands contributes to the deterioration of both animals and fodder supply, a combination which considerably increases the work burden of women.

Land privatisation and environmental degradation also result in restricted access to and reduced supplies of wild foods such as berries, fruit, plants and roots. Many of these resources are also important for medicinal and other purposes. Wild foods are mainly collected and eaten by women and children, and provide valuable additional vitamins to an often unvaried diet (Talle, 1988:56). The importance of wild foods to the pastoral diet is unclear, although it would seem likely that poor women are more reliant on these extra resources (Chambers, 1988).

Environmental degradation places an additional burden on nomadic women, as deterioration of the range lands means more frequent moves to find new pasture. As house-moving is women's responsibility, moving more often means that this activity becomes much more time consuming (Dahl, 1979:64). Conversely, as noted above, where women's time is already overstretched the household's mobility is constrained. This contributes to a vicious cycle of overgrazing and impoverishment of stock.

The evidence thus indicates that environmental degradation contributes significantly to women's work load. It suggests that the extra time many women have to spend in subsistence activities such as gathering wood, water and fodder reduces the amount of time available for other economic activities. Women are not only working harder for no extra gain, but are prevented from engaging in more financially rewarding activities. Not all women are affected in the same way however, as wealthier women are able to pay poor women to carry out these time-consuming tasks for them (Broch-Due, 1983B). Social and economic stratification is intensified as wealthier women become confined to domestic work while poor women are

involved in arduous, poorly remunerated work. There is some indication that these developments have a deleterious impact on the status of both wealthier and poorer women (Broch-Duc, 1983B:50).

Conclusion

Analysis of the position of women in pastoral societies in sub-Saharan Africa indicates that, whatever the regional and group differences, there is a remarkable consistency in both the social and economic transformations which are taking place in these societies, and the impact of these processes on women. It is also clear that there are strong parallels between the position of women in agricultural and pastoral societies. Increased monetisation of the rural economy, commercialisation of production and privatisation of land are contributing to the breakdown of traditional entitlements and obligations which formerly governed social relations. As part of this process the underlying vulnerability of women's rights is made manifest. As social relations are restructured women's entitlements are diminished and changes in the sexual division of labour are resulting in increases in women's workload.

It should be stated quite clearly however, that although these processes affect women in all the pastoral societies discussed, they do not impact on all women in the same way. Intensification of socio-economic stratification has increased the differences between women in many ways. Women in wealthier households which have benefited from land adjudication and commercialisation of production have fared differently from women in households which have been marginalised by these same processes. Nonetheless, what does emerge from the evidence, as Talle points out, is that the hierarchical division between the sex's has been widened to the disadvantage of women across Social and Economic groups. Women have been excluded from more and more areas of livestock management and decision. Making, and therefore from control over family resources (Talle 1988:268).

The vulnerability of women's entitlements can be directly related to the fact that their traditional rights were usufruct rights, while rights of management and ultimate control of resources were invested in men. These were converted under pressures of legal "modernisation" to absolute rights in the fundamental asset, land. The critical point is that although women's access to resources was previously embedded in a system of balanced and reciprocal rights and obligations between the sexes, their rights were always in fact derived from men. While women had entitlements to milk and other animal products, and were able to inherit animals and pass them on to their children, they could not themselves dispose of livestock or realise their capital value.

Nevertheless, women's rights were protected within the parameters of the traditional rules governing social interaction, and they did in this way have some scope for gaining access to assets and employing their own strategies of dispersal and maximisation. In the previous era, livestock were the ultimate asset in a land abundant economy, and women's decisions and activities were crucial to herd maintenance even though their rights were derived. Women's close involvement with the herds and their entitlements to livestock conferred on them a degree of influence and status, and they had some autonomy in deciding how their resources should be deployed.

Now, however, this limited authority, and the significance of women's work to the success of the pastoral enterprise is being lost as land becomes bounded and a mixed system of pastoralism with cultivation has emerged. It can therefore be said that as a result of the social and economic transformations taking place in sub-Saharan Africa, pastoral women's rights are being eroded. They are increasingly becoming excluded from access to productive assets with a consequent undermining of their status in relation to both the household and wider society. Not only are women's work burdens becoming heavier, but their labour and the products of their labour are increasingly being controlled by men. This has serious implications not only for the well-being of women themselves, but for their ability to meet the welfare requirements of their households. The evidence from agricultural societies strongly suggests (Kennedy,

1990) that the welfare of both women and children declines as control of resources becomes more concentrated in the hands of men.

Policy Implications

a. Broad policy measures:

- 1) **The contemporary nature of the pastoral economy, with its high level of integration into and contribution to the national economy needs to be acknowledged. It must also be recognised that this contribution is being undermined by two processes (i) by land registration which benefits some pastoralists but marginalises others, (ii) the interaction of legal practices regarding land holding with national economic policy which is conducive to commercial activity.**
- 2) **A two stage change in landholding is taking place; through encroachment onto pastoral and individualisation of land holding. Evidence from agricultural societies reveals women's vulnerability in the process of formalisation of asset holding. Regulation of the use of rangeland should therefore be a priority.**
- 3) **Women's traditional rights and access to productive resources must be safeguarded as the system of entitlements breaks down. Women must not become marginalised in the transition from resources as common property to individualised assets. An immediate priority is to ensure that women are included in the land registration process. Procedures to monitor this should also be developed, as difficulty is often encountered in ensuring women's access to land. In addition women's rights to property must be legally protected through laws governing marriage, divorce, inheritance and ownership.**

- 4) Particular attention should be paid to the increasing socio-economic stratification which is taking place among pastoralists. Pastoral women are by no means an undifferentiated, homogeneous group, and it is therefore essential that policies address the different needs of different groups. Targeting can be effectively aimed at the poorest and most vulnerable. Such measures would also help to enable the poorest households which are most vulnerable to "dropping out" to remain within the pastoral economy.
- 5) Efforts should be made to enable women to retain control of their earnings, which, it has been shown, are largely spent on improving family welfare. This could potentially be achieved by exploiting fixed points in the sexual division of labour, that is by focusing on and promoting existing areas of women's involvement and control. Women's management and marketing of milk products is a good example of the benefits to be derived from involvement by women in the whole production and marketing cycle. However, the study also indicates that there is a scale problem: as such enterprises become larger and more profitable they become vulnerable to appropriation by men. Mechanisms for preventing this from occurring should also be investigated.

Policy Interventions

1. A reduction in the time spent on domestic labour would free this constraint on women's income-generating activities, and is an area where policy could usefully be focused. However, care must be taken not to displace poor women who earn income by performing these tasks for wealthier women. Any displacement must be compensated for by providing new income-generating opportunities. Four main areas have been identified: (i) The provision of water points for domestic use would mean a considerable saving of time and energy, in addition to reducing poor households' expenditure on water and improving health standards; (ii) Easier access to cooking fuel would save time and curtail environmental damage. Creation of village wood lots, where practicable, could also provide employment for poor women. Alternatives

to wood fuel should also be investigated; (iii) Access to maize milling facilities could result in a major reduction in time spent on this arduous activity, particularly for poor women (as poor households are more dependent on grain as a staple). This could involve small scale individual household mills, or larger-scale fixed mills in villages which are within reach of a large number of women for most of the year. This would also have potential for providing employment for some women. Improved processing would have the additional benefit of making grain more digestible, with positive implications for the health and nutrition of children in particular. It also opens up the possibility of marketing grain-based products where women have limited access to milk; (iv) Attention could also be given to ways of reducing the amount of time nomadic women must spend repairing, dismantling and rebuilding their houses.

2. Women's involvement in small-scale dairying should be encouraged and supported, as a means of providing for their families and maintaining their traditional rights to and involvement in the herds. The benefits to women of involvement in their own dairying business, as opposed to selling to commercial dairies, has been demonstrated. Practical assistance can be given in the form of provision of clean water, improved transport and roads, improved processing methods and containers. Support of women's dairying enterprises should particularly aim to protect women's control of their own labour and the proceeds derived from it.

3. The need for increasing alternative income-generating opportunities for women is indicated by the growing dependence of pastoral households on non-pastoral income, and the declining availability of milk both for feeding their families and marketing. This would appear to be a particularly important strategy with regard to those households which are at risk of becoming unviable as pastoral units, especially during periods of stress. Alternative income-generating opportunities should be investigated in partnership with the women themselves, on the basis of their needs and suggestions. Assistance can be given in the form of credit, training, technical assistance, improved public transport and marketing structures.

4. Existing mechanisms for safeguarding women's interests should be supported, for example, the Women's Councils of the Barabaig. This would have three functions: (i) as a

means of resisting appropriation by men of women's labour; (ii) as a means of setting up access to credit and other facilities; (iii) as a means of promoting women's access to and control over land. Where these mechanisms do not exist there may be a need to initiate women's groupings. It is increasingly acknowledged that, especially in poorer societies, collective action through women's groups is indispensable to improvements in women's position. The poorer and weaker are women's rights and control of conventional assets, the more crucial this mechanism becomes.

5. There is scope for nutritional improvement across the pastoral spectrum. Research indicates that settled pastoralists are less well off nutritionally than nomadic pastoralists, while even the 'pure' pastoral diet - though providing more than adequate protein intake - is highly deficient in energy intake. Measures which could be taken in this respect should focus on increasing ability - particularly women's ability - to purchase food, as discussed above. Secondly, efforts should be made to improve pastoralists' own agricultural productivity through improved cultivation practices. Thirdly, dissemination of information about the correct preparation and cooking of relatively new foods, e.g. beans and maize, should improve nutrition.

Directions for Policy Oriented Future Research

1. The limited availability of information on women in African pastoral societies is a serious impediment to policy-making, as well as to promoting and safeguarding women's interests. This situation contrasts with the vast body of research on women in agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa which has accumulated during the last two decades. It seems likely that there are valuable lessons to be learned from this work for application to the pastoral context. Given the striking parallels between the position of women in agriculture and pastoral women indicated by the findings of this study, there would seem to be a strong case for suggesting some concerted work along these lines.

2. **More information with regard to the full implications of reducing the amount of time spent by women in domestic labour.** While in theory time would be freed for income-generating activities, it cannot be assumed that this would be entirely beneficial to women. The evidence suggests there has been a tendency for men to consolidate control over women's labour, therefore the impact on women is likely to be negative if this 'freed' time was similarly appropriated. Despite the arduous nature of tasks such as grain processing, there are certain advantages for women in that they retain control over their own labour, are able to build reciprocal relationships with each other, and can incorporate such tasks with child care and other domestic labour. "Action research" or monitoring of project interventions can provide an appropriate framework for research into this question.

3. **Research on the various income-generating activities pastoral women engage in, focusing on both activities devised by women themselves, and those instigated by outside agencies, e.g. donors, government schemes.** Information is needed on the advantages and disadvantages of different activities, the reasons for success or failure, and the kind of support women require.

4. **Information on control of income and expenditure within pastoral households is a critical preliminary to making suggestions about income-generating activities for women.** Questions centre around identifying the circumstances under which women receive and retain remuneration for their labour; especially from their husbands. Information is needed about the allocation of financial responsibility within the household, and the degree of flexibility in redefining these according to income flows and demand.

5. **Research on the nutritional status of different pastoral groups and the nutritional implications of socio-economic change.** Four areas have been identified by the findings of this paper: (i) Comparative data on the nutrition and health status of both settled and nomadic households, and analysis of the reasons for differences between them. (ii) The impact of the shift to beef production and male consolidation of control over livestock and cash on nutrition, particularly of women and children. (iii) The effect of socio-economic changes on traditional

ceremonies and feasts as a means of access to meat, particularly for women and children. (iv)
The nutritional impact of loss of "wild foods" through land alienation and degradation.

6. Research on women's existing spheres of influence in different pastoral contexts which can be utilised to promote and protect women's interests. There is very little information on forms of organisation in different pastoral groups such as the women's councils of the Barabaig, and the potential for mobilisation through these and other forms such as co-operatives.

7. A related issue is the extent to which women's status within pastoral society is bound up firstly with their involvement in livestock and milk production, and secondly their roles as "spiritual guardians". With the shift towards meat production and declining availability of milk, and loss of areas of spiritual significance (e.g. graves of ancestors) through land alienation, what are the associated effects on women's status in terms of social claims and rights to productive resources?

8. Investigation of whether female-headed households are disproportionately ejected from the pastoral community, and what happens to them in that situation. Little differentiation is made in the literature of the composition of the poorest households, but it seems reasonable to assume that maleless households are unviable in the pastoral context, and are therefore likely to drop out if they cannot be absorbed into or supported by other households.

9. While this paper has focused on similarities in the position of women in pastoral societies, future research could usefully explore the variations between pastoral societies in East and West Africa, and the implications of those differences for women and for policy direction.

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