
"TRADITION VS MODERNIZATION" DUALISM IN THE STUDIES OF AFRICAN PASTORAL SOCIETIES

Itaru Ohta

Center for African Area Studies, Kyoto University

1. Introduction

In recent years, as African countries work to attain greater national integration, the pastoralists living in remote arid regions have begun to experience great changes. The expansion of the monetary economy, changes in the systems of land ownership and utilization, or the spread of education, are rapidly changing pastoral societies.

One set of factors strongly affecting these societies are the various aid and development projects. Since the mid-1960s, droughts and famine in the African arid regions have attracted international attention. Direct relief aid in the form of food and medical services were followed by the implementation of development projects aimed at "modernizing" the regional economy to withstand droughts in the future. These projects provided such technical assistance as livestock disease control, the boring of water-wells, eradication of the tse-tse fly, the breeding of new strain of cattle, etc. However, the emphasis has been on sedentarizing pastoralists, intervening in their self-sustaining economy, integrating them into the market economy as meat producers, and on making them contribute to national economic growth.

This essay examines the current trend in studies on social change and development among African pastoral peoples, especially in Kenya, and calls for a new direction of approach.

2. Debate on the "irrationality" of traditional pastoralism and the rise of studies on indigenous knowledge and management systems

One of the aims of the development plans was to protect and maintain the arid environment. Among the development planners and environmental conservationists, the prevailing point of view was that the pastoralists were irresponsible with regards to environmental conservation and that the traditional pastoral economy inevitably re-

sulted in overgrazing, which in turn led to the destruction of arid land. The theoretical basis for this argument was Hardin's (1968) "tragedy of the commons." Where individually owned livestock is pastured on group-owned land, the following process occurs, according to Hardin. When an individual adds yet another animal to his herd, from the owner's standpoint it is, obviously, one animal gained. However, the damage to the local vegetation inflicted by this animal is a loss suffered by all the pastoralists who utilize the area. As long as the pastoralist thinks individually, he believes that the more livestock he gains, the larger is his profit. The overall result is that nobody thinks about the impact of overgrazing on the environment (Hardin, 1968). Scholars and development planners who followed Hardin's reasoning not only regarded the pastoral economy as irrational, but they also held that changing the traditional social institutions and value systems was necessary for rational environmental conservation. Many development projects were planned and implemented premised on the above assumption.

Sandford (1983) has voiced his doubts about the above assertions by calling them a "mainstream view." He argued that Hardin's theory was only a hypothesis based on assumed human behavioral patterns, not grounded on evidence. He also cited reports that there was overgrazing even where both livestock and land were individually owned. Horowitz (1986) also criticized scholars who regard the traditional pastoralist as irrational as succumbing to "anti-nomadism stereotypes." Based on a field survey, McCabe (1990) showed that Hardin's assertion did not apply to the pastoral production of the Turkana in Kenya.

As these arguments and prior development plans were reassessed, a new line of argument arose. It held that in each area there are indigenous knowledge and management systems (c.f., Brokensha et al., eds., 1980), which were effective in many situations. So it was important to

introduce developmental projects that reflected the particular characteristics of the community. New researches on African pastoral societies in line with the new paradigm have already begun (Niamir, 1990). Some of these argue that it is undesirable to rapidly turn the traditional pastoralists into meat producers and irrigation farmers (e.g., Baxter, 1985).

3. Negative aspects of social change

Some anthropologists have criticized development projects implemented in African arid lands for not only failing to attain the planned aims, but also to exert a destructive influence on rural communities (e.g., Goldschmidt, 1981). In Kenya, ranching was introduced in Maasailand with the double aim to integrate the Maasai as meat producers into the market economy, and to restore and stabilize the economic strength of their livestock rearing.

As a result of the introduction of the ranching system, the Maasai underwent various changes. One change was the stratification of their society into a wealthy and a poor class (Hedlund, 1971; Galaty, 1980, 1981a). In 1965, several ranches were founded by allotting land to individuals. Then, in 1966 another type of ranch was established in which the land was allotted to groups. Those who obtained individual ranches were people who had mostly received some education, or worked with government-agencies or for the church. They had income sources other than the ranch and were powerful in local politics. Furthermore, they not only received individual ranches but also participated in group ranches.

After a short period it became clear that the area of each ranch was not large enough to cope with the seasonal changes in vegetation. Members of one group ranch let their livestock graze on the land of other ranches. This practice was admitted according to the traditional reciprocal relationships among the local population. However, the individual ranchers enjoyed exclusive utilization of their ranches. This meant that the individual ranchers with membership in group ranches doubly benefited, at the expense of the group ranchers. As the individual ranchers isolated themselves from mutual social relationships, their livestock lost the traditional function as a tool for forming or maintaining social ties, and solely became a source of income to be reinvested.

There are changes within the group ranches also (Grandin & Lembuya, 1987; Graham, 1988). The ranching group had originally been planned to become an inde-

pendent unit of management collectively responsible for maintaining the allotted land, and perform such necessary chores as well-boring, tick extermination, veterinary services, meat marketing, etc. For this purpose, each ranch set up an administrative committee, many of whose members were young people with education. As this handful of members ran the ranches, the majority gradually gave up its participation in the decision-making of day-to-day operations (Galaty, 1981a).

The Il-Chamus are another group where the social changes resulting from development projects have been studied. They traditionally grew grains on irrigated farmland, but in the mid-1950's, the government initiated large-scale modern irrigation and agricultural development projects. These projects aimed at growing crops, not for local consumption but for sending them to various markets. At present, more than 90% of the farmland is used for cash crops, such as onions and hot pepper.

With the introduction of modern irrigation the gap between the wealthy and the poor widened (Little, 1992; Anderson, 1988). The Il-Chamus households with extensive farmland tend to keep larger numbers of livestock. They are able to sell some animals to gain cash for investment in labor and equipment, such as tractors. The poorer households, on the other hand, may have to sell their livestock to obtain enough cash to purchase grain for their own consumption. The wealthy grow enough grain to eat themselves, as well as sell surplus grain to increase their livestock. This leads to even greater capital accumulation which enables them to become city or farmland-dwelling absentee herd owners who manage their livestock through employed herders.

The above summarizes prior studies on social change that emphasize the negative aspects of development. The basic scenario is as follows. Those who succeed have multiple sources of income, including pasturage. Some are salaried workers for the government or church, some are brokers of livestock, or irrigation farmers. Their investments include education for their children, enabling them to become cash earners, when they are grown up. They continue to invest in their livestock which is now managed by employed herders.

The people who have lost their livestock as a result of drought, on the other hand, drift into the towns and to the irrigated farmlands. They provide cheap labor, performing various part-time tasks, or gain a living by making charcoal or local beer. Some of them may become rich enough to own a herd, but herding requires open land

away from the towns. However, their herds would be typically too small to provide cash to employ herders to take the animals to these lands. This dilemma, and the fact that many people attempt to pasture their herds near the towns, leads to overgrazing, which results in environmental deterioration (Hogg, 1987). Some researchers argue that such a dismal process is in progress in most of Kenya's pastoral societies (Little, 1985; Hogg, 1986, 1987).

4. Rethinking the "tradition vs modernization" dualism

The studies examined here advocate the necessity, on the one hand, to focus on the traditional knowledge and technology, and, on the other hand, to issue a warning that an irreversible process is taking place which is detrimental to the majority of the local population. I agree that studies of indigenous knowledge systems are necessary, and I do not think that the dismal scenario is groundless. However, I feel that these studies tend to ignore the actual ways in which the pastoralists are coping with the changes. The local people do not live in isolation from the surrounding society, but are directly involved in the processes of change resulting from the formation of nationhood and the pervasive market economy. Both arguments, that "development is necessary because the traditional pastoral societies cannot utilize the environment in a responsible way," and "traditional societies ceased to function as a result of external influences so therefore they ought to be restored as much as possible," are trapped in a dualism that pits "tradition" against "modernization" (Galaty, 1981b). I think it is essential that a new viewpoint, that tries to understand the reality of social change in progress, where the people make the most of traditional knowledge and values, and yet are sensitive to and adapt to the changes in their new social conditions, is worked out.

In order to overcome the dualistic value judgment of "tradition" versus "modernization," we should develop a standpoint that approaches the pastoralists who are going through a period of rapid change not just as passively weathering external influences, but rather, as exercising their own discrete judgment as to how to adapt to the changes.

Based on this point of view, we formed a research team, represented by Koji Kitamura of Hirosaki University, to conduct a three-year field survey in northern

Kenya, beginning this year. The participants in the first year will be: K. Kitamura, Shinsuke Sakumichi (Hirosaki University), Itaru Ohta (Kyoto University), and Toru Soga (Kyoto University). The former three will study the Turkana, and the latter will work on the Gabbra.

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