The Samburu Livestock Trader in North-central Kenya

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This paper examines the activities of the Samburu livestock trader who mediates between the market economy and the subsistence economy of this area. The trading activity of a Samburu livestock trader for two years was analyzed. The result indicates that the livestock trader ordinarily repeats a purchase and a sale at quite short intervals. Rich local knowledge on the climate, prices, and ethnic cultures is indispensable to his trades. The livestock trader integrates the activities as a trader with activities as a herder. For example, he purchases livestock at a drier period when the price falls. After fattening the livestock for some period at his homestead, he sells the livestock at a wetter period when the price rises. He makes his fortune by "livestock-rolling speculation".

The livestock trader makes a profit on the mutual conversion of livestock and cash, as an investor. With the profit, he aims to reproduce the herd, the ultimate core of his social ambition. Therefore, activities of the Samburu livestock traders should not be regarded as an immature commerce, but rather as a unique combination of commerce and subsistence pastoralism.

Key words: Samburu, market economy, livestock trader, local network, laissez-faire capitalism.

1. INTRODUCTION

After the end of the Cold War, most of African societies were confronted with the process of integration into the global market economy. This globalization of the economy is no longer an irrelevant issue even to the pastoralists of northern Kenya.

It is commonly said that anthropologists have a tendency to focus only on community-level phenomena, while economists and world system theorists normally focus on national or global-level phenomena. However, to observe the dynamic process of globalization, we need to explore the intermediate realm of these two levels. In this paper I focus on the realm between communal and national or global-level phenomena.

Speaking from the viewpoint of ecological and economic anthropology, it is trade systems that play a role in mediating between the communal subsistence economy and the national or international market economy. The community study method of ecological and economic anthropology has mainly described the aspects of subsistence economies that largely depend on the natural environment instead of the market. However, this method could hardly serve to show the relationship to the external economic systems that encompass the whole community. Although many economic anthropologists have investigated African markets since Bohannan and Dalton (1962), their role in the mediation between subsistence and market has not yet been sufficiently clarified.

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Hogg (1986: 326) has classified commercial activities in the pastoral societies of northern Kenya into three categories: shop trade, petty trade, and livestock trade. Of the three, the activity that mediates best between the subsistence and the market is the livestock trade. Although, some studies (Little 1985: 144; Hogg 1986: 328–9; Harako 1991) touch partially on livestock traders, little is known about the detail of their activities in spite of a significant role in economic transformation.

In this paper, I describe and analyze the activities of the livestock traders in the Samburu District who play a role in mediating the subsistence and the market economy with special reference to their livestock trading.

The activities of the Samburu livestock trader are readily influenced by fluctuations in the price of livestock, both of which are closely correlated to fluctuations in the regional climate. Especially in East Africa, pastoralists tend to sell fewer livestock in the rainy season when the price of livestock normally rises. Conversely, they tend to sell larger numbers of livestock in the dry season when the price of livestock normally falls. This pattern of the economic supply is called "perverse supply response" (Haaland 1977: 179–81). Although many researchers have referred briefly to this supply response (Dahl & Hjort 1979: 16; Perlov 1987: 2; Sperling 1987a: 267–8; Spencer 1988: 23; Sato 1997: 126), case studies have not accumulated in any number. This study will illustrate how local livestock traders respond to this "perverse supply response".

In Samburu pastoral society, the major role of livestock is not as a means to acquire cash income. The Samburu do not only depend on livestock for their livelihood, but also construct their social relations and perform their rituals through livestock and its products. Thus, livestock forms a foundation for their culture and society.

As Little (1987: 296) has mentioned for Il Chams, markets in northern Kenya poorly integrate local economic systems. Also in the neighboring Samburu, however much the globalization process goes on, these characteristics of pastoral society have yet to be extinguished. Trade in livestock under such conditions is unusual in that it is not covered by the generally accepted idea of "commerce". The aim of this paper is to understand the livestock commerce of this area, depending neither on the common idea of commerce nor on the concepts of traditional anthropology. Through this process of understanding, the concept of "commerce" itself for the pastoral people will be reconsidered.

2. AN OUTLINE OF THE SAMBURU ECONOMY

The Samburu (self-professed Iloikop) are nomadic pastoralists who occupy the Samburu District, in a region of semi-desert in the north-central area of the Republic of Kenya (Fig. 1). They speak the north Maa dialect of the Maa language and belong to the Eastern Nilotic peoples (Sommer & Vossen 1993). The total population of the Samburu was 106,879 in the early 1990s (Republic of Kenya 1994). Samburu society can be characterized by a gerontocracy with complicated age systems (Spencer 1965).

The territory is divided into three regions: the Samburu highland around Maralal (*oldoinyo*), the Samburu lowland around Wamba (*lburker*), and the Samburu plain around Baragoi (*ilbarta*). The area is part of a semi-desert climatic zone where rainfall is quite sparse and erratic. Only in short rainy seasons (e.g. *somiso oibor* [around February], *somiso orok* [around March], *ngergerwa* [around April], *nkukuwai* [around June], *lorikine* [around August], and *ltumlen* [around October]), can rainfall be expected.

At present, most of the Samburu rear cattle, sheep, and goats. The Samburu mainly live on milk. Their staple food is stock products, such as milk, yogurt, butter, boiled and roasted meat. Cattle blood is drawn to drink mixed with milk or meat. Stock products are also utilized as various dairy commodities. Clothes, footwear, ropes, and bed sheets are made of animal skins. They plaster their house walls with cow dung.

The cash economy was initiated in the Samburu by the British colonial administration mainly through the payment of the tax and grazing scheme fees (Spencer 1973: 187; Fumagalli 1977: 210). It is commonly said that the Samburu could live without any cash in a self-sufficient economic system. Even nowadays, when the market economy has become

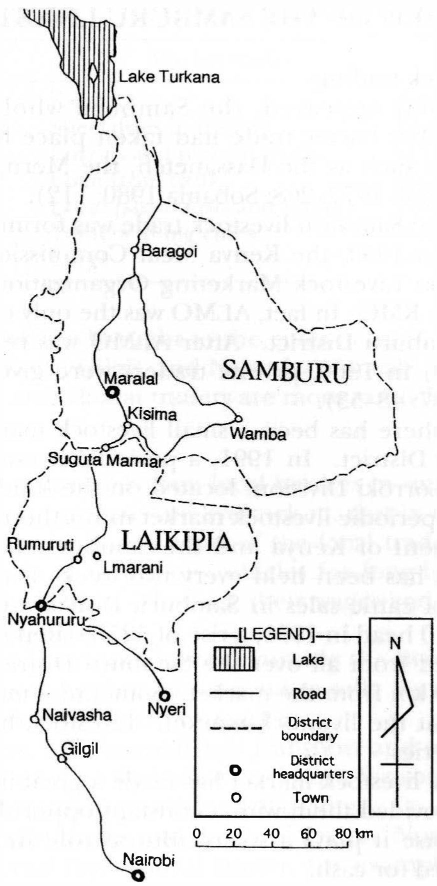

Fig. 1. Map of main towns in north-central Kenya

normal, such a self-sufficient system still functions to some extent.

Since independence in 1963, the Kenyan economy especially in urban areas has made a remarkable growth so that employment opportunities have greatly expanded. Although the Samburu still make their living through livestock-keeping, the number of Samburu wage earners as night watchmen, policemen, soldiers and teachers increased in the late 1970s (Sperling 1987b). In recent years, the Samburu have been recurrently devastated by serious drought (in 1979–80, 1983–84, and 1994) and cattle disease (in 1970 and 1976). Above all, a drought devastated their cattle in 1984, the cattle herd being reduced by half or in some cases completely destroyed. The Kenyan government and foreign development agencies took measures to rescue the damaged economy, adopting modernization policies and structural adjustment programs. Settled agriculture, camel-keeping, school education, and folk craft making were initiated. The first periodic livestock market in Samburu District was established in Suguta Marmar town in 1991. People began selling their livestock to buyers from urban areas after the local livestock market was established.

These factors brought many changes to the Samburu community. People now eat not only livestock produce but also agricultural produce bought with cash. Ready-made clothes made in Indonesia replaced skirts made of goatskin. Plastic beads from the Czech Republic were substituted for necklaces made of the doom palm (*Hyphaene compressais*). Nowadays, it is not unusual to find Samburu with a digital watch made in China, a radio made in Japan, and a bicycle made in India. At present it is not accurate to regard the Samburu economy as a completely autonomous subsistence economy. It has been encompassed as a part of the national or international market economy.

3. AN OVERVIEW OF THE SAMBURU LIVESTOCK TRADER

3.1. Background of livestock trading

Before the cash economy appeared, the Samburu wholly depended on a barter economy. It is reported that barter trade had taken place between the Samburu and neighboring ethnic groups such as the Dassanetch, the Meru, and the Somali since the nineteenth century (Fumagalli 1977: 208; Sobania 1980: 112).

Colonial policy toward the Samburu livestock trade was formulated in connection with a destocking programme. In 1950, the Kenya Meat Commission (KMC) was established. After two years, the African Livestock Marketing Organization (ALMO) was added as a local supporting unit of the KMC. In fact, ALMO was the only organization controlling the livestock marketing in Samburu District. After ALMO was reorganized as the Livestock Marketing Division (LMD) in 1960, private traders were given authorization to buy in Samburu lands (Perlov 1987: 48–53).

Since the colonial era, there has been a small livestock market in Maralal, the district headquarters of Samburu District. In 1991, a periodic livestock market was opened in Suguta Marmar Town in Lorroki Division, located on the southern edge of the Samburu District. This was the first periodic livestock market in northern Kenya, and was under the auspices of the Government of Kenya and the Samburu Country Council. Since its establishment, the market has been held every two weeks (since 1998 every week) on a Thursday. The number of cattle sales in Samburu District increased dramatically, from 1980 head in 1989 to 12,410 head in 1991, a rise of 527% (Republic of Kenya 1993: 43).

Livestock are transported from all over the Samburu District. It is not uncommon to find livestock traveling 100 km from the market. Sometimes more than 2000 livestock and 1000 persons congregate at the livestock market. Livestock buyers from the large cities transport their stock on lorries.

The establishment of the livestock market has made a great impact on the economic life of the Samburu. It has provided them with a constant opportunity for trade. Livestock is significant not only because it plays a socio-cultural role in their community but also because it can be exchanged for cash.

Moreover, the Suguta Marmar livestock market is not the only opportunity for trade. Sporadic trade of livestock takes place at specific locations around other town areas (e.g. Maralal, Kisima, and Baragoi), although on a far smaller scale than the Suguta Marmar livestock market. Some traders may travel to the livestock market in neighboring Laikipia District whose ethnic majority are Kikuyu and Tugen. Livestock trading is common not only in towns but also in homesteads. Among homesteads, livestock are frequently bartered directly without any mediation of cash. If a trader hopes to sell his livestock and fails to find proper buyers, he may travel between homesteads looking for buyers; livestock traders also travel looking for sellers. In short, livestock can be traded wherever and whenever the seller meets the buyer, not at all restricted to the operations of the periodic livestock market.

3.2. Typology of the livestock trader

In the Samburu language, there is no original word that means "trader" in English. To refer to the livestock trader, they use *piasharai*, using a loan word from Swahili, *biashara*, which means "business" in English. Livestock traders in the present Samburu lands can be classified into two categories, by scale and by activities.

Market trader

The market trader purchases livestock from local herders in large numbers usually at the livestock market. Traders transport the livestock to urban centers on their lorries and sell at a higher price there. In most cases, the market traders specialize in commerce and do not keep their own livestock. They have their lorries or pick-up trucks, sometimes hired from another trader. Most market traders obtain a bank loan to purchase the livestock, and do so mostly at the periodic livestock market. But sometimes they purchase directly

Table 1. Two types of livestock trader

Types of livestock trader	Market trader	Local trader
Main ethnic group	Kikuyu	Samburu
Main livelihood	Specializes in trading	Pastoralism with trading
Transportation of livestock	Lorries and pick-up trucks	On foot
Fund to purchase livestock	Loan from bank	Wages and sales of livestock
Main sellers of livestock	Local pastoralists and traders	Local pastoralists
Main buyers of livestock	Traders in big cities	Market traders
Scale of trading	Large	Small

from local traders. Livestock are brought to the cities in an industrial or agricultural area (e.g. Nairobi, Nyahururu, Nyeri, Gilgil, and Naivasha) for sale. Most of the market traders are Kikuyu, while Samburu and Maasai traders are more rarely found.

Local trader

The local trader purchases livestock from local herders in small numbers. He will sell to market traders or transport animals to the livestock market in other areas where the local livestock price is expected to be high. Most of the local traders are Samburu who keep their own livestock. They do not own any vehicles for long-haul transportation, so they normally drive the livestock on foot. They use their wages and sales of their own livestock as funds to purchase more livestock.

It is common for them to purchase livestock outside the livestock market. They collect the livestock, seeking out local herders who intend to sell. Some days later, they sell them in turn to the market traders at the livestock market.

Unlike the market traders, who immediately transport and sell the purchased livestock, most local traders keep livestock at their own enclosure for some time. They castrate and try to fatten the livestock as much as possible until selling.

Table 1 contrasts the market trader and the local trader. Note that the contrast shown is idealized. In reality, one can find a local trader, for example, who hires a lorry when offered a business opportunity. In any case, these two types of livestock traders are both involved in the circulation of livestock between producer and marketer. Both types of livestock trader are playing a fundamental role in reforming a Samburu economy that has traditionally been associated with subsistence pastoralism.

4. CASE STUDY OF A LIVESTOCK TRADER AND HIS TRADING

This case study will illustrate the activities of the Samburu livestock trader. The pseudonym “livestock trader X” has been used to preserve the trader’s identity.

4.1. Profile of a livestock trader

Livestock trader X lives near Kisima town in Lorroki Division (Fig. 1). He was born in 1954 as the first son of a wealthy man and his first wife. The family belongs to the Lokumai phratry. In his childhood, he was a grazing boy who did not attend school. After circumcision, he was admitted to the Lkishili age set.

In the 1970s, serious drought and cattle disease recurrently devastated his family’s herd. Among his brothers, he was the only one who survived to maturity. In March 1974 he went to Nairobi to find work, his first attempt to become a wage earner. He found a job as a watchman at a security company where three Lokumai phratry members worked. After four months, he shifted to another security company on an introduction by an old man of the Maasai. He served there for 10 years as a night watchman.

During those days, he started going to an adults’ school in the daytime, where he acquired Swahili literacy and arithmetic. These abilities are meaningful to his livestock trading activities later.

In 1981, X started livestock trading for the first time when he was home on leave. X used his salary to purchase livestock from local herders and brought the animals by lorry to the livestock market near Ngong Road in Nairobi. Cattle were bought around his homestead, while goats and sheep were collected around Baragoi. He hired a lorry for 6000 shillings one way from Nairobi to Maralal, including payment for the driver. In 1981, he purchased 20 oxen for 100,000 shillings and sold them for 140,000 shillings. The scale of the trade in those days was far larger than it is now. He was forced to discontinue this kind of trade when the fee for a lorry rose.

In 1991, he retired from the company and left Nairobi following his father's instructions. As the first son he was expected to take care of the whole family.

By September, 1996, he had two wives and 10 children. After retirement, he trades mainly goats and sheep on a small scale besides keeping livestock. His family keeps 90 cattle, 202 goats, and 252 sheep apart from livestock for trade.

In X's herd, livestock for trading purposes (*swom piashara*) are conceptually distinguished from the other livestock for keeping purposes (*swom naabare*). The word *naabare* means "to keep" livestock in the Samburu language. Livestock for keeping purposes are mainly composed of female, infant, and bull (uncastrated) livestock. In principle, the livestock are given their names following the matrilineal succession rule; consequently only the founders of the matrilineal lineage are given their original names. For example, if an original cow named "Toie" gives birth to a male calf, this calf is named "Le-toie" after his mother with the prefix "le". If Toie gives birth to a female calf, this calf is named "Ne-toie" with the prefix "ne". This naming system is basically applicable to both sexes and all types of livestock. By contrast, the livestock for trading purposes mostly comprises ox (castrated) livestock in most cases. They are not located in their lineage nor given any name.

Both livestock for trading and keeping are kept and grazed together, although special attention is paid to the livestock for trading since they tend to get lost easily from the herd. Since the categories are not strictly defined, it is possible that livestock for trading are slaughtered on ceremonial occasions and sickly livestock for keeping can be sold at the market.

4.2. A case study of trader X's livestock trading

Accounts

I asked livestock trader X to record all his trades from October 1995 to September 1997 in a notebook. I describe and analyze this record in this case study. To grasp the general tendency of the trade, the data can be judged to be significant, although I found some omissions on the record.

Livestock trader X mainly uses his sales of livestock as a fund to purchase new stock and is not a lorry owner. He can be classified as a local trader in the aforementioned terminology. Table 2 shows the accounts of the trades of livestock trader X during the period. He traded 1113 head of livestock, the trades of goats and sheep accounting for 98% (1096 head) of the total. In most cases, he traded goats and sheep.

The purchase trade accounted for 50.7% (564 head) of the total trade, and sales

Table 2. The accounts of X's livestock trading (from September 1995 to October 1997)

	Number of purchased livestock (head)	Number of sold livestock (head)	Number of exchanged livestock (head)	Sum of purchases (Ksh.)	Sum of sales (Ksh.)	Gross margin (Ksh.) (rate)	Average price of purchase(Ksh.)	Average price of sales(Ksh.)	Margin per animal (Ksh.) (rate)
Cattle	10	7	0	86,000	128,000	42,000 (49%)	8,600	18,286	9,686 (113%)
Goats	60	38	0	89,600	66,200	–23,400	1,493	1,742	249 (17%)
Sheep	494	502	2	598,450	736,300	137,850 (23%)	1,211	1,467	256 (21%)
Subtotal of goats and sheep	554	540	2	688,050	802,500	114,450 (17%)	1,242	1,486	244 (20%)
Total	564	547	2	774,050	930,500	156,450 (20%)	1,372	1,701	329 (24%)
(Ksh.= Kenya shilling)									

Table 3. The composition of X's livestock trading by sex and species (number of head)

	Purchase				Sale				Barter exchange			
	Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
	Calf	Ox	Heifer	Cow	Calf	Ox	Heifer	Cow	Calf	Ox	Heifer	Cow
Cattle	6	0	4	0	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Goats	0	60	0	0	0	38	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sheep	0	494	0	0	0	502	0	0	0	2	0	0
Subtotal of goats and sheep	0	554	0	0	0	540	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	6	554	4	0	2	545	0	0	0	2	0	0

accounted for 49.1%. Barter exchange accounted for 0.2% (2 head). The result shows that he traded 556.5 head of livestock per year, and 1.5 head per day. This indicates that he repeated his purchases and sales at quite short intervals. Sheep accounted for a higher percentage than goats in both purchase and sale. The result seems to reflect the fact that the sheep herding is common in the Samburu highlands where the vegetation is more suitable for grazers than browsers.

The gross margin rate of the trades of cattle (49%) was higher than for goats and sheep (17%). The margin per animal of cattle (113%) was also higher than for goats and sheep (20%). However, X seeks small profits and quick returns, replacing goats and sheep at short intervals, because the growing rate for cattle is too slow. Referring to the fact that the average price of the purchase of the small stock is 1242 shillings, the gross margin per year is equivalent to 63 head of small stock.

Table 3 shows the composition of trader X's livestock by sex and species. Almost all the trade livestock (99%) were of ox livestock; all goats and sheep were ox livestock (100%). Thus, the target of the daily trade of livestock trader X was ox livestock. By contrast, of all the purchase trades of cattle, bulls were 60% and heifers 40%, while no ox was purchased. According to the aforementioned classification, the ox goats and sheep can be classified as livestock for trading purposes, while bulls and heifers can be classified as livestock for keeping purposes. Livestock trader X traded goats and sheep as livestock for trading purposes and cattle as livestock for keeping purposes.

Profit-making

Livestock trader X strives to make a profit, taking many factors of the livestock trade into consideration. The mechanism of his profit-making can be classified into four categories: (1) profit through a regional difference in livestock price; (2) profit through a seasonal difference in livestock price; (3) profit by fattening livestock; and (4) profit by the different attitude toward livestock between ethnic groups. In some cases, more than one profit-making mechanism occurs, but I will examine each category as though self-contained, based on livestock trader X's trading record.

Case 1–1: Profit through a regional difference in livestock price – Rumuruti: Generally speaking, the closer you approach to a consumer area, the more expensive livestock are. In the case of Samburu District, the more you go southward, the more livestock tend to be expensive, because the consumer area of cultivators is located south of the border. Market traders make a profit on the sale of livestock in the southern consumer area that they purchased in the northern producer area. Ordinarily, the local trader purchases livestock from local herders and makes a profit on sale to the market traders. However, according to the circumstances, local traders themselves might transport the livestock to remote cities.

Livestock trader X purchased 16 goats and sheep from three Samburu herders, from around Suguta Marmar and Kisima, at the Suguta Marmar livestock market on 2 January 1997. The average price of these livestock was 1219 shillings. X succeeded in purchasing at a relatively low price.

However since May 1996, the market price of goats and sheep had declined sharply. Therefore X could not sell his livestock at a higher price than the purchase price. Under the circumstances, a friend of X who had traveled to Rumuruti informed him that the price of livestock was rising at the Rumuruti livestock market.

Rumuruti is a town in the Laikipia District, about 80 km away from X's home. Livestock are always in short supply there, because the area does not have a large number of herders. Livestock trader X asked a Kikuyu trader in Suguta Marmar to transport his goats and sheep to the Rumuruti livestock market by lorry. After negotiating with him, a rate of 100 shillings per goat or sheep was agreed.

The Rumuruti livestock market was open on 19 January. Livestock trader X sold 15 goats and sheep for 1600 shillings a goat on average, a profit of 281 shillings per head, if we deduct the transportation fee. This case also indicates how the livestock trader made full use of his network with the Kikuyu to acquire the transportation.

Case 1–2: Profit through a regional difference in livestock price – Baragoi: Livestock trader X traveled to Baragoi, about 80 km away from his home, and purchased 41 goats from one Turkana and three Samburu herders on 2 December 1995. The average purchase price of these goats was 1423 shillings.

X's mother came from Baragoi. Her brother's son lives in Baragoi. He is a wealthy councillor of the Samburu Country Council. Furthermore, X's father is a half-brother of his mother.

X is on good terms with the councillor. He had made some livestock trades in cooperation with him. While X does not have any proper accommodation at Maralal and Rumuruti, in Baragoi, the councillor provides him with free accommodation and meals. The councillor keeps and herds the livestock X purchases around Baragoi. He sometimes even purchases livestock on behalf of X. The councillor also asks X to transport and sell his oxen in Nairobi in his own place. Thus X and the councillor assist each other.

Half of the livestock X purchased on 2 December were from a Turkana shopkeeper in Baragoi. X asked a Kikuyu shopkeeper in Baragoi to transport these goats to Maralal for 3600 shillings (88 shillings per head). The livestock was kept in his homestead for some days.

At that time, X heard that the Baragoi area was devastated by an extended drought. Generally speaking, the dry season is suitable for the purchase of livestock, because the market price normally declines. At the same time, in X's own area livestock was expected to be at a high price, because the drought was not so serious.

In Kenya, where the religious majority is Christianity, many people have a meal together at Christmas. For that reason, livestock are temporarily in demand before Christmas. X was well aware of these fluctuations in prices and had a plan to sell the stock before Christmas.

However, the price of livestock rose less than X expected. He sold 20 goats to a Kikuyu trader at Kisima on 29 December 1995, and was forced to wait to sell the rest until March, selling 10 goats to a Somali trader at Kisima on 9 March 1996. X sold his goats for 1833 shillings a goat on average. The profit was 322 shillings per head, if we deduct the transportation fee.

These cases show that X trades with remote partners who live about 100 km distant from his home. As already shown in Table 2, the margin per head of goats and sheep was 244 shillings on average. By contrast, trade with remote partners showed more margin (Rumuruti: 281 shillings, Baragoi: 322 shillings) than the average. This shows livestock trade with a remote partner was more profitable than the average.

However, remote trade ran some risks, while it yielded larger profit. Livestock purchased at a remote area are apt to go astray or die of illness, because they are strangers to the area and herd. In fact, some goats that X purchased in Baragoi were eaten by hyenas and others went astray. Livestock reared around Baragoi tend to fall ill, because they have no immunity to the diseases of the Samburu highlands. It is true that remote trades are profitable; on the other hand, there can be a loss.

Case 2: Profit through a seasonal difference in livestock price: In the Samburu lands, the quantity of milk, on which people usually depend, decreases in the dry season. Before the establishment of the livestock market, people got through the dry season by slaughtering ox livestock. After the opening of the livestock market, they preferred to buy cheap cereals with the income from their livestock rather than slaughter them. Thus in the dry season they offer more livestock for sale. Consequently, the market price of the livestock tends to decline owing to oversupply.

Conversely, in the rainy season, when herders can get enough milk, they are reluctant to sell their livestock, because they do not need to buy any cereals. Consequently, the market price of the livestock tends to rise owing to undersupply.

As already mentioned, livestock trader X normally repeats his purchases and sales at quite short intervals. He never hesitates to sell the livestock promptly, as long as the price is higher than the price at which he purchased, because the fluctuations in the price, which are easily affected by the erratic rainfall, are not predictable.

However, it does not mean that X takes undue risks in his trading. In the long run, livestock trader X plots his trading strategy, taking advantage of fluctuations in market prices, as long as he can afford to do so.

He purchased 24 goats and sheep from Samburu herders at Kisima from 31 August to 25 September 1997 for 1113 shillings a goat on average. He sold the goats and sheep to a Kikuyu trader for 1267 shillings a goat on average at the Suguta Marmar livestock market. His profit was 154 shillings per head.

Livestock trader X explains that he found a lot of people who hoped to sell their livestock in the dry season. This condition made it possible for him to buy livestock at a comparatively low price. But he missed the opportunity to sell at a higher price than he purchased. Accordingly, he did not sell but continued to keep the livestock at his enclosure, because he could afford to survive the dry season with the profit of his livestock trading. After a while, the market price of livestock rose following rains. X sold at a high price stock that he had bought at a low price in the dry season, taking advantage of this trading opportunity.

In the long term, X also follows this typical trading strategy. Figure 2 shows the relationship between the rainfall record and the number of purchased and sold goats and sheep within a given period. All rainfall values in this paper are based on records made

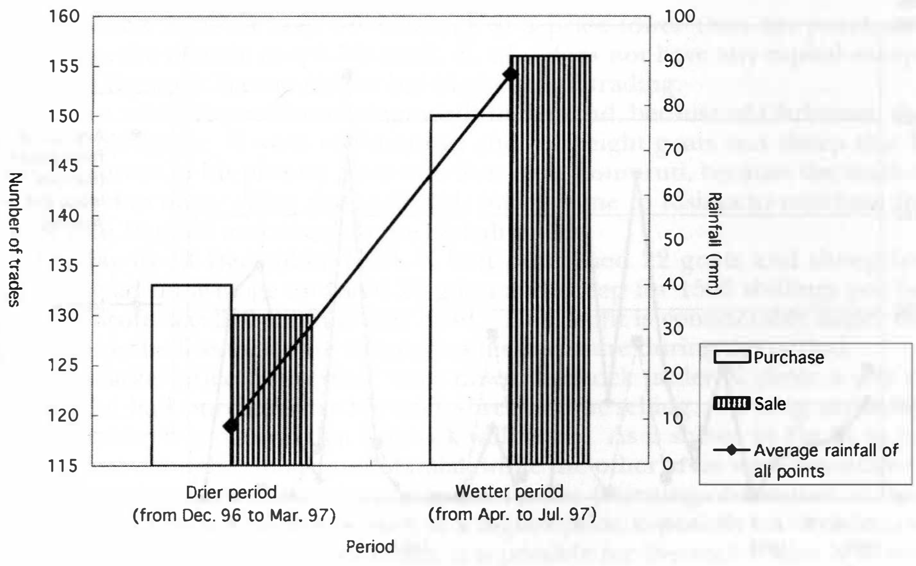

Fig. 2. Rainfall and X's trades
(Rainfall data is based on records supplied by the Kenya Meteorological Department)

available from the Kenya Meteorological Department. Where there are omissions, the average is taken as the value of the month. Each four months were sampled to show rainfall differences clearly. The rainfall value in the figure is the average of four locations in the Samburu District (Baragoi, Isiolo, Maralal, and Wamba). From December 1996 to March 1997, only 9 mm was recorded, which indicates it was a drier period. In contrast, from April to July 1997, there was 87 mm of rainfall, which means it was a wetter period. As shown in the graph, in the drier period, the number of livestock that X purchased (133 head) was more than he sold (130 head). But in the wetter period, X's sales (156 head) were more than his purchases (150 head).

This example reaffirms how X repeats purchases and sales at short intervals, because the value of both purchases and sales indicate almost the same result. On the other hand, the example also shows that to make a profit, X tends to purchase livestock in a drier period when the price falls, and tends to sell in a wetter period when the price rises, although the difference is slight.

Case 3: Profit by fattening livestock: From 18 to 26 May 1996, livestock trader X purchased 14 goats and sheep from four Samburu herders around Kisima and Suguta Marmar. His plan was to sell immediately. However, the market price of livestock was low from May to December 1996. At this period, the normal sale price went down from 1200 to 800 shillings. However, X himself could not explain precisely why the price had fallen.

Rainfall can be regarded as one of the factors in the declining price. Figure 3 shows the amount of the rainfall for each month at Maralal and the average of the other three places (Baragoi, Isiolo, and Wamba) in the Samburu District.

In the Samburu lands, the heaviest rains, known as *ngergerwa* in the Samburu language, fall around April. The amount of rainfall in April 1997 was about 200 mm. However, as shown in the figure, rainfall had not been plentiful until around June in 1996, which means the regular rains were delayed. Rainfall in June was 172 mm at Maralal, but only 83 mm at the other three places. This means that there was delayed but sufficient rainfall only at Maralal, while the rainfall at the other three locations was not yet enough to recover from the drought. Furthermore, in the following months, the rainfall called *lorikine* is normally predicted around August only for the Samburu highlands around Maralal. In the event, in Maralal, the rainfall in August 1996 was 190 mm, and about 25 mm at the other three locations.

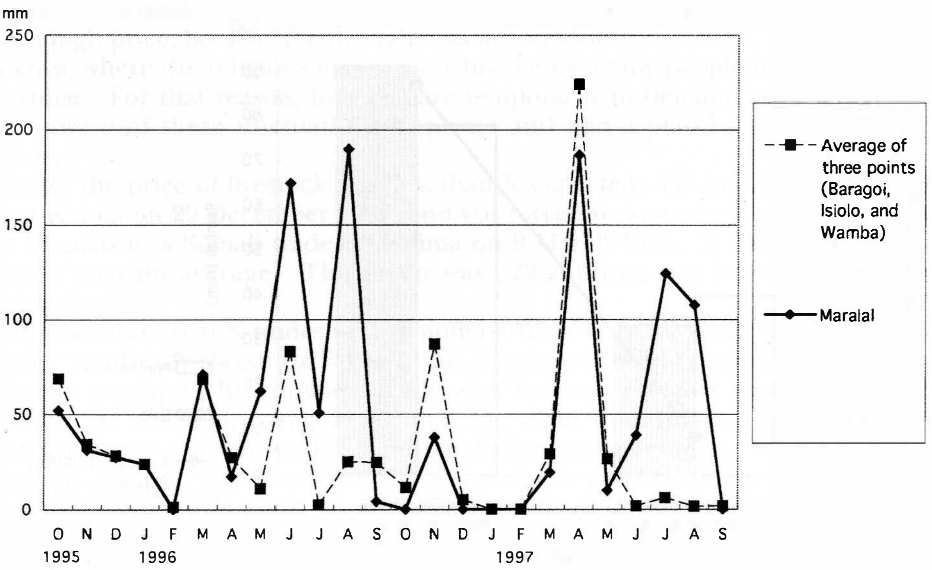

Fig. 3. Monthly rainfall
(Rainfall data is based on records supplied by the Kenya Meteorological Department)

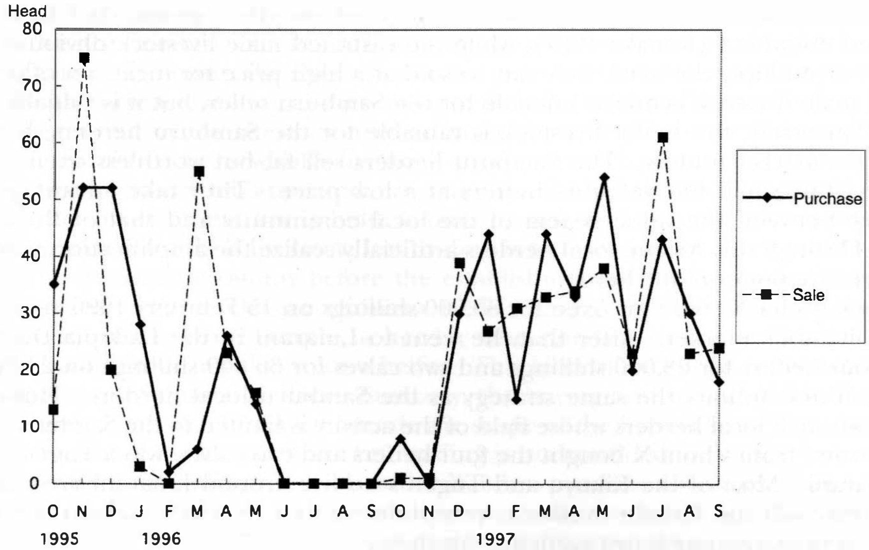

Fig. 4. Livestock trader X,trades each month

During this drought, many herders from the other three locations sold their livestock for cereals. Furthermore, at that time, the Samburu were in conflict with the Turkana around Bagagoi and the Somali around Isiolo. Consequently, many herders rushed to the Suguta Marmar livestock market, the only safe market in the whole district at that time. They sold their livestock at a low price, because they are not familiar with the normal prices at Suguta Marmar. These multiple factors are all related to the falling price of livestock.

From 18 May to 24 October livestock trader X did not sell any livestock but kept the animals at his enclosure. Figure 4 shows the number of goats and sheep that X traded each month. From May to November 1996, there is a marked drop in his trading. This contrasts sharply with the other months, which show constant trades. As mentioned, X trades an average of 1.5 head of livestock per day. Therefore, it was quite exceptional for him to leave trading for five months. At that time, X left the livestock trade completely and even switched to furs.

Livestock trader X never sells his livestock at a price lower than his purchase price. Once he misses the chance to sell his stock, X, who does not have any capital except from his own sale of livestock, has no choice but to give up all trading.

In December, when livestock are temporarily in demand, because of Christmas, the price started going up again. X went to Rumuruti and sold eight goats and sheep that he had left at the enclosure of his phratry mate who lives near Rumuruti, because the market price was too low at that time. After that, a Somali trader came to Kisima to purchase livestock by lorry. X sold 15 goats and sheep to the Somali trader.

From 18 May to 13 December 1996, X had purchased 22 goats and sheep for 1136 shillings per head on average and sold 25 goats and sheep for 1506 shillings per head on average. His profit was 370 shillings per head. This profit is considerably larger than the average, because the livestock were fattened at his enclosure during the period.

When the market price of livestock went down, livestock trader X chose a way to keep the livestock he had purchased at his enclosure without selling. As long as pasture and water are available, it is natural that livestock will fatten. As is shown in Fig. 3, in July and August, they had enough rain around Maralal, while the other areas were devastated by the drought. This means that X's area was suitable for the fattening of livestock at that time. Once his livestock become fat, he can sell at a higher price, especially on occasions such as Christmas. When the market is in disorder, it is possible for livestock trader X to return to his original activity of livestock-keeping and make a profit on the activity itself, unlike the market trader who specializes in trading.

Case 4: Profit by the different attitude toward livestock between ethnic groups: As I have already mentioned elsewhere (Konaka 1997), while the castrated male livestock obviously cannot give birth or multiply the herd, they can be sold at a high price for meat. In other words, castrated male livestock is not so valuable for the Samburu seller, but it is valuable for the buyer. Conversely, the heifer livestock is valuable for the Samburu herders, but not so valuable for market traders. The Samburu herders sell fat but worthless oxen at a high price, and buy small but valuable heifers at a low price. They take advantage of the difference between the value system of the local community and that of the livestock market. Through this system, local herders artificially realize the amplification potential of the procreative power of the herd.

Livestock trader X sold four oxen for 80,000 shillings on 15 February 1996 at the Suguta Marmar livestock market. After that, he went to Lmarani in the Laikipia District and bought four heifers for 28,000 shillings and two calves for 36,000 shillings on 20 February. He himself also follows the same strategy as the Samburu local herders. However, he differs from such local herders whose field of the activity is limited to the Samburu lands.

His partner, from whom X bought the four heifers and two calves, was a Tugen who lives near Lmarani. Most of the Kikuyu and Tugen who live around Lmarani are cultivators. They readily sell the female livestock, complaining that livestock harm their garden, because livestock-keeping is just a sideline for them.

It is unimaginable for the Samburu to sell female livestock as the cultivators do. They normally never sell their female livestock except for situations when they do not have proper male livestock to sell. Female livestock is important not only because they can multiply the herd, but also because they can be goods for exchange (ex. bridewealth) within the community. Female livestock are also a Samburu symbol of value, and the Samburu sometimes make fun of Kikuyu and Tugen cultivators who sell heifers so easily.

The livestock trader is aware of this different attitude toward livestock between ethnic groups. Needless to say, livestock trader X hopes to acquire female livestock that is valuable for him. However, at the livestock market in the Samburu lands, it is difficult to acquire the female livestock at a low price, because the Samburu herders rarely sell their female livestock. Accordingly, livestock trader X sometimes visits the land of cultivators and buys heifers there at a low price. This means that he is different from the local herders in pursuing a more active strategy: he targets the female livestock not only within the pastoral area, but also in the cultivator's area. Thus, livestock trader X trades the livestock, taking advantage of the difference in the value system between ethnic groups.

There is another example of trading, which is not concerned with livestock trader X but with his nephew. In 1995, this nephew exchanged his ox, which was worth 17,000–18,000 shillings, for two heifers with two Samburu livestock traders, in condition that this nephew added an extra 1000 shillings. The two livestock traders, who were from Laikipia District, where heifers are relatively cheap, had bought those two heifers from a Nandi man for 16,000 shillings. They expected to make a profit by the sale of the cheap heifers to Samburu herders who highly estimate heifers, although in this case they bartered for an ox and expected to sell the ox at a higher price.

Those livestock traders also take advantage of the difference in the value system between ethnic groups. However, they are even more active traders than livestock trader X, because they trade heifers not for keeping, but for making a profit. This case typically shows how the "commerce" of the Samburu livestock traders, who are embedded in the local systems of value and exchange, is different from the "commerce" in modern market society.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Trade inside and outside the market

The Samburu economy, which was once solely based on the subsistence economy, has rapidly become involved in the market economy. This process was caused by many factors (e.g. the spread of school education, the increase of wage labor, and the collapse of cattle herds by drought and livestock disease). But there is no doubt that the most important factor was the establishment of the livestock market.

Before this the method of disposal of livestock was restricted to slaughter, gift, and barter exchange. However, the livestock market gave Samburu herders an opportunity to obtain Kenyan currency, as long as they brought their livestock to the market.

At the beginning of the livestock market, most of the traders were Kikuyu from large cities. The Samburu were wholly livestock producers. However, in recent years, the Samburu livestock trader has appeared, crossing this ethnic division of economic role.

Because the livestock market is held at one- or two-week intervals, local herders can reliably obtain cash for their livestock, but trading is not restricted to the periodic livestock market. The Samburu economy before the establishment of the livestock market can be characterized as barter exchange (Konaka 1997: 152–3), which is still common among herders even today. For example, a herder who needs a heifer for his bridewealth exchanges his 12 goats and sheep for a heifer. This kind of exchange is not accompanied by any restriction of time and place. Similarly, the buying and selling of livestock among Samburu herders can also be found outside the scope of the livestock market, so even since the establishment of the livestock market, trading is not confined to this market.

The local trader, including livestock trader X, often purchases livestock from outside the market. Local herders who need cash unexpectedly for food, medical, and school expenses sell their livestock to the local traders, without waiting for the next livestock market. They owe this opportunity to obtain cash at any time to the local traders, who may have some cash on hand to purchase livestock. For example, among the records of livestock trader X, I observe four cases when X purchased livestock within his homestead. To sum up, the local traders find a niche outside the livestock market that the periodic market cannot provide for, and offer local herders the opportunity to convert their livestock into cash more freely than the periodic market. This implies that not only the periodic livestock market but also the activity of the local trader plays a role in connecting the subsistence economy with the market economy.

5.2 Local network

To summarize, livestock trader X forms following three types of network: of neighbors, of kinship and phatry, and trans-ethnic networks.

Neighbor network

The local trader, including livestock trader X, forms a network with his neighbors. He uses this network to purchase livestock. I have analyzed elsewhere (Konaka in press) the number of trading partners by the aforementioned category in the case of livestock trader X from October 1996 to September 1997. The result indicates that "the local trader" accounted for 75% of his purchase partners (N = 28). This means that X collects livestock from smaller traders who purchase the livestock in each place rather than purchases directly from herders. The analysis also clarified that X normally purchases livestock from a wide range of herders, taking no notice of the phratry and kinship relationship.

Kinship and phratry network

As illustrated in Case 1-1 and Case 1-2, livestock trader X himself transports livestock to remote areas 100 km away from his home on the basis of his kinship and phratry network. In Rumuruti, a phratry mate of X had kept his livestock in his place, until the market price of livestock recovered. In Baragoi, the councillor who is a son of X's mother's brother, provides him with free accommodation and meals. In remote areas, the neighbor network is not meaningful. Accordingly, X bases his trading in remote areas through the kinship and phratry network. We can find only these two instances in X's case study. However, these trades are significant, because, as already shown, livestock trade with a remote partner is more profitable than the average.

Trans-ethnic network

According to my analysis of the number of livestock trader X's partners, other ethnic groups, such as Kikuyu or Somali, constitute most of his sale partners (94%) (N = 16). Moreover, X succeeded in expanding his trade, asking traders of other ethnic groups to transport his livestock by lorry. One of the reasons why he could form a trans-ethnic network can be found in his life history. During his working days in Nairobi, he enriched not only his educational background, but also his experience of a multi-ethnic environment.

These three types of network make it possible for X to cover a wide range of the livestock trade. The three networks themselves do not have any intersection point, except livestock trader X. Most of the Samburu herders do not get acquainted with the market traders from neighboring ethnic groups. On the other hand, most of the market traders are unable to speak the Samburu language. Livestock trader X is quite exceptional on both sides. Hence livestock trader X plays an important role in mediation at the intersection point of these three networks.

5.3 Mechanism of traders' profit-making

The method by which market traders make a profit is relatively simple: through the transportation of livestock from the herders' area to the consumer area.

On the other hand, local traders make a profit by various methods. They trade mainly within the Samburu District, so that they cannot expect to recover a large profit on the transportation of livestock. However, as we have examined, they can make a profit through their own unique methods.

In the Samburu lands, there is a great difference of climate, because of the topography. Therefore, it may commonly happen that it rains heavily in one area, while only slightly in another. The regional price of livestock also fluctuates, according to the amount of the rainfall of the area. These unpredictable fluctuations are the reason why the local trader repeats his purchases and sales at quite short intervals. Livestock trader X is usually eager to collect information on regional price fluctuations. Whenever the opportunity arises, he trades, taking advantage of subtle regional differences in livestock price.

In short, to make a profit, it is necessary for local traders to be well acquainted with the local affairs of the Samburu lands. Local traders do not only depend on the market principle, but also on the local mechanism of profit-making, which relates closely to the specific features of the Samburu environment.

5.4 Profit-making on conversion

Economic anthropologists Bohannan and Dalton (1962: 7) have pointed out that societies with peripheral markets differ from societies without markets in that the market place is present, but not necessarily in the sense that the market principle is more widespread. They suggest that some distinguishing characteristics of economies with peripheral markets appear to be the following: (1) from the viewpoint of the entire economy, market sales are not the dominant source of material livelihood; (2) participants in peripheral markets are sometimes "target" marketers. These "target marketers" engage in marketing sporadically to acquire a specific amount of cash income for a specific expenditure, such as a bicycle or tax payment. The Samburu society can be said to be a typical example of a society with peripheral markets, if we follow Bohannan and Dalton, but can we classify livestock trader X as the target marketer?

It is true that livestock trader X stopped any trading when the market price of livestock declined. However, except in special cases, he continues his livestock trading constantly. Moreover, we cannot find any concrete goal for his trading, such as a bicycle or tax payment.

When livestock trader X worked as a wage earner in Nairobi, his wage was used to purchase livestock. He used all the financial rewards that I gave him for research assistance to purchase livestock. He has a bank account, but his total deposits have been 0 shilling for two years, because he usually uses all the money he has on hand to purchase livestock. As mentioned, he trades 1.5 head of livestock per day with cash.

Livestock trader X purchases new livestock one after another, as long as his budget allows. His method of trading reminds me of an investor in company stocks rather than a target marketer. For livestock trader X, livestock and cash are two modes of property ownership, both of which can be converted into each other. As illustrated, X purchases livestock in the dry season when the price falls. After fattening the livestock for some period at his homestead, he sells them in a rainy season or at Christmas when the price rises. To make the best profit, he seems to consider the most timely occasion for exchanging from cash to livestock and from livestock to cash. As the land speculator makes a fortune by land-rolling speculation, so livestock trader X makes his fortune by "livestock-rolling speculation".

Running some risks is unavoidable in X's livestock trading, because it is a sort of speculation. In particular, remote trade is more speculative. I pointed out that the remote trades are profitable; on the other hand, they can incur a loss. Livestock trader X hopes to make a fortune at a stroke, taking the risk into consideration.

However, the purpose of X's trading should not be regarded as the pursuit of cash profits. As is shown in Case 4, X purchases female livestock that can procreate, when he has the chance. He usually mentions that the ultimate aim of his trading is to reproduce cattle, the core of cultural value for the Samburu, with a profit that he makes on his trading. Livestock trader X is now a famous and wealthy herdowner. His village mate also suggests that the growth of his herd is remarkable, because he invested the profit on his livestock trading in his herd.

Even now, in the social life of the Samburu, livestock has more value in use than cash. For the Samburu, livestock are important not only as a means of subsistence but also as a means of social communication. For example, if a person gives a castrated sheep (*lker*) to another person, they call each other *paker*, which means "a castrated sheep", without referring to their proper name (Spencer 1965: 54; Fumagalli 1977: 87–8). In the Samburu community, livestock can be a medium of social linkage.

The common aim of all Samburu men is to take as many wives as possible, to have as many children as possible, and to make their family as large as possible. However, in Samburu society, men cannot marry without paying livestock as bridewealth to their affines. To become mature, it is necessary for any Samburu to perform many rites of passage. But in many cases, to perform the rites, they need livestock and its products. For example, when sons and daughters are circumcised, an old man smears some butter on the head of the father. Therefore, without livestock, parents cannot make a man or woman out of their son or daughter. For the Samburu, to make their family large is to have as many head of livestock as possible.

For market traders, livestock is meaningful only if it is an item for sale. In contrast, for local traders, livestock itself is significant, as a means for livelihood, as goods for exchange, and as a symbolic vehicle to recreate culture. The decline of the market price of the livestock does not mean the decline of the social value of livestock within the Samburu community.

5.5 Livestock trades as a part of pastoralism

In his famous book *Stone Age Economics*, Sahlins (1972) examined the "structure of underproduction". He suggested that the domestic mode of production harbors an antisurplus principle. Geared to the production of livelihood, it is endowed with the tendency to come to a halt at a certain point (Sahlins 1972: 86). Spencer (1998: 35) recently claimed that Sahlins does not consider pastoralism in detail. Spencer draws our attention to the aspirations of pastoralists to acquire cattle, referring to the "obsession" argument by Evans-Pritchard (1940) and the "rudimentary capitalism" theory by Paine (1971).

The trades of livestock trader X, examined in this paper, are supported by this aspiration to acquire cattle. X is completely different from those who are satisfied within the structure of underproduction in his unlimited aspiration to acquire cattle. In locating the trading of X in the theory of economic anthropology, these arguments on target marketers or the structure of underproduction are not particularly meaningful.

As Spencer represented in the word "laissez-faire capitalism" (Spencer 1998: 41–3), the pastoral economy depends on the natural growth of the herd. In pastoral capitalism, the herd, which is capital to herders, continues to grow up automatically, as long as the herder maintains an adequate husbandry. Their lifestyle appears to be indolent, because any effort makes not much profit.

What livestock trader X practices is this "laissez-faire capitalism". X keeps his own livestock at his enclosure. This makes it possible to return the livestock that he fails to sell at the livestock market to his enclosure again, when the market price of livestock declines. If he takes the opportunity, his trading becomes active. If he loses an opportunity, he ceases any trade and leaves everything to the natural growth of the herd. He knows well that this natural growth can make a profit at the livestock market again. Thus, livestock trader X integrates the activities of a trader with the activities of a herder.

Livestock trader X appends the unique systems of profit-making to his original herding system, both of which arise from his aspiration to acquire cattle. This mixing of commerce and subsistence makes it possible for him to artificially amplify the natural growth of the herd. X makes a profit on the mutual conversion of livestock and cash, as an investor. With the profit, he aims at the reproduction of the herd, the ultimate core of his social ambition.

Markakis (1993: 6) has pointed out that for pastoralists in the Horn of Africa, involvement in trading is a means of supplementing subsistence. However, the case of livestock trader X suggests that not only does trading complement subsistence herding, but also subsistence herding complements trading, as is shown when unsold livestock were returned to his herd. X's trading and subsistence herding are complementary to each other. Livestock trader X can be characterized by the unified economic system of trading and subsistence pastoralism.

The trading style of a Samburu trader is too distinctive to be covered by the generally accepted idea of "commerce" in Western market societies. However, this does not mean that this trade is at the rudimentary or immature stage of commerce that appeared in the transition to the market economy. The evidence presented in this paper shows that a rich local knowledge on climate, prices, and ethnic cultures is indispensable to such trading. Such trading requires even more sophisticated knowledge than the trading of market traders. The activities of the Samburu livestock traders should not be regarded as immature commerce, but as a unique complex of commerce and subsistence pastoralism.

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