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Special Issue on
Pastoral Societies in Africa: New Possibilities for Sustainable Development through the Interaction of Scientific Researchers and Development Workers

Edited by: Nyamongo IK, Ohta I, Sun X and Hazama I

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Forward: Dialogue for Sustainable Development in East African Pastoral Societies

The arid and semi-arid regions of Africa are populated by a number of pastoral societies. For centuries, cultures associated with subsistence livestock herding have developed. However, African pastoralists experienced sweeping ecological and socio-economic changes in the twentieth century. The increasing frequency of droughts, loss of access to natural resources, politico-economic marginalization in both the colonial and post-colonial eras, ethnic conflicts and insecurity, and large-scale international and national development projects have all had a heavy impact on pastoral societies. On the other hand, with the expansion of globalisation and communication technology, and with increasing interaction between pastoralists and development agencies, more pastoralists are beginning to understand their situation in a wider context and are communicating their problems and views to national governments and development agencies. Among the problems for pastoralists are poverty, economic discrimination, insecurity, and a lack of access to political decision making, education, and public services.

Recognising these trends, the Institute of Anthropology, Gender and African Studies at the University of Nairobi in Kenya, the Center for African Area Studies of Kyoto University in Japan, and the Nairobi Research Station of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, supported by the G-COE Program "In Search of Sustainable Humanosphere in Asia and Africa," held an international workshop: *Pastoral Societies in Africa: New Possibilities for Sustainable Development through the Interaction of Scientific Researchers and Development Workers*, on 4th September 2008 in Nairobi, Kenya. This workshop was aimed at achieving tangible results around sustainable development for pastoral communities, by encouraging dialogue between scientists and development workers in pastoral societies in Africa.

The Nairobi workshop was attended by specialists in African nomadic pastoral so-

cieties, including scholars from Africa, Europe, and Japan, a member of the Kenyan parliament, staff from the Ministry of Agriculture in Kenya, delegates from African Union and World Vision, among others. The workshop consisted of three sessions. In the first session, four speakers presented both the possibilities and the problems that African pastoral communities are facing from a political, economic, social welfare, and security perspectives. In the second session, three speakers presented detailed anthropological studies on pastoral societies in East Africa with particular emphasis on local practices and possibilities, continuity and change in pastoral subsistence, and how pastoral societies experience "modern development." In the last general discussion session, speakers and delegates came together to discuss feasible plans for the development of pastoral societies. They reached the consensus that African pastoral societies should have their own process of development, and more opportunities might be created through integrating scientific technologies with local knowledge and practice. Based on its results, this volume was published in order to address new possibilities for sustainable development of pastoral societies.

Western experts on Africa, especially social scientists, have expressed pessimistic views on the future of pastoral societies over the last thirty years. However, Japanese researchers who attended the Nairobi workshop described the strength of African ways of life despite its hardships. Since the 1960s, Japanese anthropologists have established the fundamentals of East African pastoral societies, which include access to and distribution of ecological and sociological resources, livelihood strategies maintained by indigenous knowledge and local practices, customary regulations of the use and management of resources, socio-economic systems based on reciprocal support for one another, and a flexible attitude toward disasters. They also have examined disease coping mechanisms

and how pastoral societies represent their own culture. Overall, such researches suggested that many development projects were unsuccessful because of short-sighted and "biased" development initiatives that failed to understand that pastoral societies adapt flexibly to the natural environment; instead, these projects concentrated solely on economic and technical aspects, without considering the socio-cultural values and practices of pastoral societies.

The Nairobi workshop was been inspired by a particular research project entitled "New horizons of development studies among African pastoral societies: Re-evaluation and utilization of local practices" led by Prof. Itaru Ohta, which has a clear focus to overcome the conventional views on African pastoral societies by re-conceptualising and demonstrating the numerous vibrant practices of local peoples. This research project also explores how these local practices can be utilized in planning and implementing development programs. This volume focuses on local practices that were recorded over many years of anthropological fieldwork. Each chapter explores the possibilities of estab-

lishing universal ideas, sharing the objective of addressing critical issues that pastoral communities are facing, and determining workable solutions that can shape sustainable development, and with the ultimate goal of moving toward more holistic and effective development policies for African pastoral societies based on local practices.

This anthology has been designed with the intention of stimulating dialogue between anthropologists, scholars of development studies, and development practitioners, and has been written with the earlier points in mind so that readers may find themselves able to revise "traditional" and one-sided understandings of East African pastoral society as a passive recipient of developmental aid and relief, or as a mere supplier of natural resources. Furthermore, "sustainable development" explored in this volume does not mean a particular form of development that is dependent on the will of the donors, but definitely indicates those practices that the present generation adopt when they utilise their local environment in such a way that future generations can also continue to satisfy their demands and interests.

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