

# **PASTORALISTS' POTENTIAL AND CHALLENGE TO DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF THE RENDILLE IN NORTHERN KENYA**

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Based on a case study of the Rendille pastoralists of Kenya, this study examines how nomadic pastoralists in arid regions of East Africa have coped with complex natural and socio-economic changes and have improved their lives under the development pressures. Data collected during 20 months of fieldwork were analyzed and compared with previous studies from ecological and anthropological perspectives.

The Rendille inhabit a semi-desert region characterized by high temperatures, low annual rainfall, and frequent drought. For centuries, by raising camels, goats, and sheep, and moving frequently for pastures and water, the Rendille have maintained subsistence pastoralism. However, in the last two to three decades, the social and economic situation of northern Kenya has rapidly changed. Following a severe drought in 1982-1984, global famine relief efforts triggered development projects by both international development agencies and national governments. On the Rendille land, fast-growing towns materialized inside the range area as centers for relief and development projects. Under the influence of the development projects and drought relief efforts, most pastoral settlements moved into the vicinities of the new towns. This change of residential pattern is one of the biggest transformations to occur in Rendille society in recent years.

However, by maintaining their communal use of rangeland and water resources, reorganizing the dual residential system of settlement and herding camps, continuing high mobility of livestock at herding camps, and continuing the age system and distribution of labor in herding tasks, the Rendille have successfully maintained high mobility in their livestock herding practices. On the other hand, challenging new opportunities, such as developing new wells near permanent settlements, and passing animals through settlements for water, have provided people of settlements with greater access to livestock products and improved the conditions for raising cattle. Furthermore, cattle sales have allowed pastoralists to engage in the growing cash economy in recent years.

The success of the Rendille's new pastoral practices demonstrates that pastoralists have the ability to sustain their pastoral subsistence and the potential to improve their lives, and the ways in which they are challenging and developing new economic opportunities illustrate the changing dynamics of nomadic pastoralism in East Africa today.

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