CONTINUITY AND TRANSFORMATION OF PASTORALISM AMONG THE MAASAI OF NAROK COUNTY, KENYA (1850 - 2002)

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF LAW, ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES FOR FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS (HISTORY) OF KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

MAY, 2025

DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has never been presented for the award of any degree in any other University.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my loved ones, whose constant encouragement, support, and love gave me the strength to pursue this venture. To my parents, who instilled in me the values of education, perseverance, and integrity, your sacrifices and trust in my potential have guided me. I also dedicate it to my mentors and teachers who encouraged me to think critically and pursue knowledge passionately and purposefully, and to the Maasai people who allowed this research to shed a better understanding of their heritage and resilience.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ASALS	Arid and Semi-arid Lands
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CPRS	Common-Pool Resources
CTOT	Caloric Terms of Trade
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NACOSTI	National Commission of Science, Technology, And Innovation
NAFCO	National Agriculture and Food Corporation
NGOS	Non-Governmental Organizations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Climate change	The long shift in a location's temperatures and regular weather systems
Globalization	The increasing interconnectedness of the world's economies, cultures, and people because of cross-border trade in goods and services, technology, and investment, as well as people and information movements
Pastoralism	The tradition of animal husbandry as a major economic activity in a community

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ABSTRACT

The Maasai pastoralism economy in Narok, (present day Narok County) has experienced continuity and transformation accounting for changes in pastoralists' livelihoods influenced by economic adaptation and outside influences on the Maasai from 1850 to 2002.This study as an analytical product of archival, oral and library research sought to investigate the pre-colonial traditional practices and the socio-economic, cultural and leadership frameworks that facilitated pastoralism as a major livelihood in Narok County (1850-1899), analyzes the effects of land alienation and settlement policies on Maasai pastoral nomadism and grazing patterns in Narok County, during the colonial period (1900-1963) and lastly examines how the reforms in land tenure, adjudication of land, expansion of agriculture, and policies of sedentariness during the Kenyatta and Moi regimes affected Maasai access to pastoral lands and viability of traditional pastoralism in Narok county, Kenya (1964-2002). The research relied on the resilience theory, which explains how the Maasai have in the past coped with challenges like loss of land and policy shifts while attempting to sustain their pastoral identity and the articulation of modes of production theory, which explains how Maasai pastoralism came to be articulated with and subordinated to capitalism which did not suppress pastoralism but reorganized it in a manner that made it unsustainable. The research took an exploratory approach and applied purposive sampling technique. Oral interviews, archival research, and a review of primary and secondary documents were used for data collection which was analyzed through inferences, comparisons, logical historical explanations, and narrative synthesis. Evidence indicates that between 1850 and 1899, the Maasai pastoralist economy was characterized by extensive livestock keeping, a strong communal land tenure system, and an extensive trade network. Between 1900 and 1963, colonial policies, alienation of land, and economic change caused tremendous dislocations, which reformed pastoralist customary ways. Between 1964 and 2002, the Maasai pastoralist economy declined due to increased land fragmentation, government-initiated decentralization and market-driven economic changes. The study discovers that while pastoralism remains a significant economic activity for the Maasai, historical and current forces have undermined its historical foundation. The study adds to the overall discourse on African pastoralist economies and provides insights into pastoralist communities' adaptive strategies to contemporary socio-economic challenges.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

This chapter examines the study's background, research objectives, justification and significance, scope and limitations, literature review, theoretical framework, pastoralism during pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods, and research methodology.

1.1 Background of the study

Natural resources are a source of livelihood for numerous people in developing nations, where agriculture is the backbone of the economy. In East Africa, pastoralism is one of the most practiced economic activities by the Maasai, Turkana, Samburu, Pokot, and Somali. They derive their livelihood and social unity primarily from their herds. Anderson and Broch-Due (1999) note that most African nations, particularly those from the Horn of Africa, comprise huge ASAL areas Characterized by environmental issues, such as drought and low rainfall, that complicate crop cultivation. Thus, livestock keeping has remained a primary economic activity, with pastoralism adapted to these areas' geographical and climatic constraints. However, pastoralists' livelihoods are increasingly exposed to various socio-economic and environmental changes.

Pastoralism, as described by Scoones et al. (2013), can be divided into two general types. The first is pastoral nomadism, where groups do not practice agriculture but move with their animals across long distances in pursuit of pasture and water. Such mobility is necessary for survival in the often hostile environment of ASALs, and pastoralists have no fixed settlements. The second form, transhumance pastoralism, involves some integration of agriculture, typically small-scale farming in conjunction with livestock keeping. This practice is more marked in areas where the seasonal movements are not so severe, and small-scale vegetable farming can supplement the herding economy (Odhiambo, 2002). Despite being a basic source of

livelihood, pastoralism in Kenya has undergone tremendous transformation in the past few decades. According to Nyamwamu (2009), land and water conflicts have escalated, and in most instances, political, social, and economic factors have been the drivers. These have led to low productivity and fragmentation of the grazing lands. Furthermore, population growth has placed additional pressures on pastoral groups that need intensive management systems, with some embracing new livestock-keeping forms. Ellis (2000) avers that the Maasai pastoralists have been forced to flexibly modify their practices by employing more varied herd management tactics, such as herd splitting or new types of mobility, to cope with these evolving circumstances.

Livestock have been at the heart of the Maasai and other pastoral communities, not just as a source of economic livelihood but also as representations of wealth, status, and social unity. Lane (1996) explains that livestock forms part of the pastoralists' social structure, facilitates the construction and maintenance of relationships via bride price, inheritance, and rituals, is a source of security and stability in the community, guarantees social bonds and provides some degree of social prestige. However, the shifting weather patterns, land degradation, and a growing population are continuously pushing for the reexamination of the Maasai pastoralism. In support, Umar (1994) explains that shifting ecological conditions, such as land erosion and agricultural expansion, have dealt a blow to conventional cattle husbandry and that such pressures caused transformations in livestock management systems, with an emphasis on adjustment to unpredictable climatic conditions.

Moreover, the development of pastoralist economies has also been driven by government policies and interventions aimed at modernizing cattle production. Throughout history, land tenure reforms, commercial ranch promotion, and sedentariness programs have sought to mainstream pastoralism in national economies. However, such interventions have

disempowered customary pastoralist institutions leading to land loss, reduced mobility, and increased vulnerability to climate variability. Fratkin (2001) notes that while some pastoralists reacted by engaging in agro-pastoralism or other off-farm livelihood activities, others have been economically pushed to the fringes because they cannot compete in market-oriented livestock production. These changes have profound effects on pastoralist resilience since there must be a balance between the process of modernization and maintaining traditional indigenous knowledge systems that have, so far, supported pastoral livelihoods.

Significantly, too, commercialization cannot be overlooked in pastoralist economics. With increased linkage to regional and international markets, pastoral communities had to navigate the advantages and disadvantages of commercialization. The livestock product market created new economic opportunities and exposed pastoralists to market volatility, monopolies, and exploitative trade (Kimaren et al., 2014). Moreover, the incursion of external factors, such as large-scale investors and conservation organizations, made land use patterns more complex and in some cases restricted access to key grazing lands. This research adds to the broader literature on pastoralism by tracing the continuity and transformation of the pastoralist economy in Narok County, Kenya, during the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-independence eras.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The Maasai traditional pastoralist economy during the pre-colonial period adapted to the arid and semi-arid environments of Narok County by utilizing long-distance grazing and mobility. However, pastoralism witnessed extensive change driven by colonialism and post-independence policies. With the advent of colonialism, state actions like land alienation, reserve establishment, and imposition of new administration disrupted the habitual grazing patterns, resulting in decreased resource access. Although studies on Kenyan pastoralism have increased in the last three decades, there remains a significant knowledge gap in analyzing the

continuity and transformation of the pastoralist economy in Narok County. Most literature on Narok, as well as that on the economy of the Maasai specifically, has utilized primarily anthropological and sociological approaches (Kituyi, 1990; Kipury, 1983), whose focus leaned more towards the social and cultural rather than the economic shift in pastoralism. This research took a historical-based approach, investigating Maasai pastoralism through pre-colonial, colonial, and post-independence periods. Hence, this research seeks to bridge the gap by investigating the historical forces that have conditioned the change and transformation of the pastoralist economy of the Maasai of Narok County between 1850 and 2002, as it considers external interventions and environmental pressures that have influenced pastoralist economic systems.

1.3 Research Objectives

a) To investigate the pre-colonial traditional practices of the Maasai and the socio-economic, cultural, and leadership structures that facilitated pastoralism as a primary livelihood in Narok County, Kenya (1850-1899).

b) To analyze the effect of land alienation and settlement policies on Maasai pastoral mobility and grazing patterns in Narok County, Kenya, during the colonial period (1900-1963).

c) To examine how reforms in land tenure, adjudication of land, expansion of agriculture, and policies of sedentariness during the Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel Moi regimes affected Maasai access to pastoral lands and the viability of traditional pastoralism in Narok County, Kenya (1964-2002).

1.4 Research Questions

a) What were the traditional pastoral practices, socio-economic structures, and leadership systems of the Maasai in Narok County, Kenya, during the pre-colonial period (1850-1899) that sustained pastoralism as a primary livelihood?

b) In what ways did land alienation and settlement policies affect Maasai pastoral mobility and grazing patterns in Narok County, Kenya, during the colonial period between 1900 and 1963?

c) How did the post-independence reforms in land tenures, agricultural expansion, and the policies of sedentariness adopted by the Kenyatta and Moi regimes affect access to grazing lands and in Narok County, Kenya, between 1964 and 2002?

1.5 Research Premises

a) Well-established traditional practices, communal use of land, and social-culture institutions that encouraged flexibility maintained the viability of Maasai pastoralism in pre-colonial Narok County.

b) Colonial settlement and land alienation policies disrupted Maasai pastoral systems by breaking up communal grazing lands and limiting mobility, thus destabilizing traditional pastoralism.

c) Land reforms, adjudication, expansion of agriculture, and sedentariness policies by the Kenyatta and Moi regimes limited access to a range of lands, leading to the decline of traditional Maasai pastoralism.

1.6 Justification and Significance of the Study

The history of the pastoralist economy of the Maasai people of Narok County from 1850 to 2002 is characterized by socio-economic, political, and environmental transformations such as colonialism, post-independence, state-building, and land reforms. These changes provide a greater understanding of how historical forces influenced Maasai pastoralism. Although numerous works have explored the Maasai, there is little chronological analysis of the evolution of their economy throughout the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-independence periods. Various authors such as Nyamwamu (2013), Homewood (2009), Fratkin (2001), Anderson (1995), and Kitui (1990) have written on Narok's Maasai pastoralism using anthropological and sociological viewpoints without looking at the history of the pastoralist economy over the decades and Kipury (1983) and Ochieng (1995) have provided some information about the social structure of Maasai society.

In addition, knowing the historical trajectory of the pastoralist economy can assist with current policy formulation around land rights, climate resilience, livestock development, and resource management of arid and semi-arid regions. Siyabona (2021) notes that the Maasai people are internationally recognized for their unique culture, much of which is interwoven with their pastoralist lifestyle. Studying the evolution of this economy is key to preserving indigenous knowledge and practices in the face of modernization and external pressures.

The study highlights how the Maasai adopted their economic practices in response to internal and external pressures, contributing to broader discussions on the resilience and sustainability of pastoralist systems. Moreover, by examining the effects of land alienation, conservation efforts, and land subdivision, the study provides critical insights into contemporary debates around land tenure and environmental conservation. As Narok County is a primary livestock-producing region and home to the world-famous Maasai Mara, the findings of this research

have implications not just for local development but also national planning in Kenya's livestock sector.

Historical analysis of pastoralism, and indeed for the lengthy span of 1850-2002, has been under-explored. This research thus bridges this gap by critically analyzing how the Maasai pastoralist economy evolved, emphasizing trends through history, socio-economic transformation, and drivers such as colonialism and post-colonial regimes. In doing so, the research contributes to a better understanding of pastoralism in the historical patterns of the area, and relevant information is presented on socio-political and economic changes that have affected pastoral livelihoods in Narok County.

1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study focuses on Narok County, Kenya, which is occupied by the Maasai community, who rely on livestock production as their primary source of livelihood. Narok County occupies a key place in the history of Maasai pastoralism as a traditional stronghold where pastoral practices were deeply established and perpetuated well into the contemporary era. Historically, the county witnessed extensive colonial land alienation, especially for settler farming and the establishment of conservation units such as the Maasai Mara. These disturbances were followed in the post-colonial era by land adjudication and privatization during the Jomo Kenyatta and Moi regimes. Although other counties like Kajiado, Laikipia, or Samburu have pastoralists, Narok County is characterized by the tenacity of traditional Maasai pastoralism and the deep-seated transformation brought about by external powers therefore, providing the ideal location to examine the continuity and transformation of pastoralism.

The study spans between 1850 and 2002, providing the opportunity to discuss pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial developments. By concentrating on this specific area and time, the study aims to give a detailed account of how political and historical factors have influenced

Maasai pastoral practices, making it distinct from other pastoral economies in other Kenyan ASAL regions.

The study was not without limitations, the most obvious being the language barrier in conducting oral interviews. A Maasai-speaking research assistant was employed to act as an interpreter, hence breaking communication barriers. Gender bias, especially among older adults, was another issue to deal with since cultural norms restricted open communication between a male elder and a female researcher and this was mitigated by the researcher dressing in Maasai attire and reclining in a culturally acceptable manner, an act that enhanced trust among the participants.

1.8 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

1.8.1 Pastoralism during the pre-colonial period

Eliot et al. (1994) states that in the 1800s, pastoralism was a highly regarded and lucrative profession and herds of pastoralists were widely recognized as a source of long-term, alternative investments and income. Cattle were not only used as symbols of power by household heads but also ensured the continuance of their genealogies by depositing capital in marriage.

According to Ellis (2000), Pastoralists control more than 70% of Kenya's total area and 50% of the total area of Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. The pastoral groups are diverse in terms of the cattle they rear. The Somali clans of Afar, Beja, Rendille, and Gabra, for example, keep camels and goats; the Nuer, Dinka, and Toposa of Sudan keep sheep and goats; the Dasenech, Mursi, and Oromo of Southwestern Ethiopia; the Karamojong, Jie, and Teso of Uganda, and the Paraku of Paraguay keep cattle, and the Turkana, Pokot, Maasai, and Samburu are the principal pastoral communities, which have traditionally raised goats, sheep and cattle (Ellis, 2000).

Pastoralists have distinct aspects of culture: beliefs, values, language, symbols, rituals and norms, but their dependence on animals for survival gives them a unifying factor. Competition over animal watering points and grazing lands have been a major source of conflicts, costing the government a substantial amount of human and monetary resources, which are directed towards conflict resolution and provision of security. Pastoralism has served as a potential investment area for many countries as it is a fallback resource in which other sectors exchange business (Scoones, 2003).

Scoones further observes that pastoralists are perceived to be a distinct community in most East African countries, Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, due to their unique culture, which is so intact, and their geographical distribution. Environmental conditions have always defined the nature of pastoral livelihoods; for instance, high temperatures have lowered crop production and have enhanced livestock keeping in many areas in Kenya.

According to Scoones (2003), nomadic pastoralists move from location to location with their herds in pursuit of grass and water for their animals. To spread risk, some pastoral households have adopted keeping large herds that would cushion them against disasters such as drought and diseases since the traditional practices of rangeland management involved free grazing of livestock. Plenty of grazing fields, and conflicts over grazing and water points were minimal.

The growing population of pastoral communities brought the multiplier effect of keeping more livestock, which put pressure on land and water points. Communal conflicts became frequent, in which people lost their lives. According to Scoones and Adwera (2009), with the growing population of people and livestock, administrative interventions interpreted locally as an attempt to confine people within delimited blocks were put in place. For example, mobility was minimized, and split-herd management was employed.

Waller (1983) states that Maasai pastoralists had well-defined seasonal grazing patterns that allowed them to use rangeland resources sustainably. The patterns were informed by indigenous knowledge systems, which provided checks on herds' movement to prevent environmental degradation. Pastoralism was deeply ingrained in the socio-economic and cultural institutions of Maasai society. It was built on communal land tenure, which ensured that the grazing resources were shared equally between clans. Livestock was a source of economic wealth, a reflection of social status, and a tool of exchange and inter-community relations. Inter-group clashes, however, occasionally arose due to competition for pasture and water, but they were commonly resolved by customary institutions of conflict resolution like negotiation by the elders (Galaty, 1999).

Pastoralism was also characterized by a flexible and adaptive structure that enabled pastoralists' resilience to environmental vagaries. Maasai herders maintained a portfolio of livestock species, cattle, sheep, and goats to diversify the risk of drought and disease epidemics (McCabe et al., 2004). Finally, kinship networks were significant components of pastoralist resilience, given that livestock circulation and mutual grazing arrangements helped to cushion against economic shock. Imposing colonial policies such as land alienation and restrictions on mobility eroded these customary practices. It forced the pastoralists to pursue more sedentary lifestyles, resulting in resource pressure and increased conflicts (Hughes, 2006). The study contributed to existing knowledge on the transition from pre-colonial pastoralism to the present-day challenges of pastoralists in Narok County.

1.8.2 Pastoral economy during the colonial period

The British were primarily focused on developing agriculturally high-potential areas for growing cash crops for the export market. For ease of management, they divided Kenya into three regions namely the fast-changing European highlands, the less developed indigenous

lands, which provided low pay, and the frontier/pastoral regions, which were off-limits. The pastoral lands were locked off, and access required a license and pastoralists who were abandoned struggled from neglect and inattention (Haugerud A 1989).

The British government's programs attempted to establish solid administrative institutions for easy rule of the natives, who they used to intensify cash crop farming in the highlands to increase agricultural yields solely for export. However, the pastoral areas and pastoral communities received very little attention or none. Bonfiglioli and Watson (1992) observed that pastoralists were viewed as politically unpredictable and challenging for governments to manage, thus threatening the ‘forced’ calm that the colonizers wanted.

Hendricks et al. (1998) add that due to their cross-border migrations, pastoralists were seen as barbaric, aggressive, and reluctant to change. They lacked national loyalty and had less to give the state, save for commodities to be shipped, and therefore had little political influence in both colonial and independent Kenyan governments. This laid the foundation for the slow growth of the Maasai pastoralist economy and as a result, it was assumed that pastoral groups were reluctant and incapable of developing, had an intimate bond with their animals, lacked legislation and rules to control their resources, and were devoted to their native culture. Many of these attitudes about pastoral societies remained for long, resulting in institutional inefficiencies on several occasions. (Hendricks et al., 1998).

Taylor & Francis (1984) aver that pastoralism’s historical evolution in Kenya may be traced back to the colonial regime when the Swynnerton Plan of 1954 acknowledged that dryland required specific care. Overstocking and unrestricted grazing were the problems in dry areas because there was a risk of converting semi-arid portions of Kenya into deserts.

According to Oucho (2002), the Swynnerton Plan paved the way for an upcoming land reform initiative to legitimize more African involvement in agriculture. Pastoralism in Narok County during the colonial period was examined in this study to fill this lacuna.

1.8.3 Pastoral Economy in the Post-Independence Period

Pastoralist groups in Kenya have received immense pressure on their lifestyle during the post-independence period than they did during the pre-colonial and colonial eras. Population growth, the loss of grazing pasture to farmers, ranchers, and wildlife parks, as well as urbanization, contribute to the scarcity of the pastoral business. These issues are exacerbated by global projects that promote the privatization and alienation of previously collectively owned assets as advanced by Spencer (2008).

The Maasai, Boran, and Rendile of Kenya show how East African pastoralists adjust to social, political, and economic crises by diversifying their economies through agri-business, labor exploitation, and higher market penetration. Accelerating economic inequality, urban migration, and poor nutrition for women and children are all consequences of these transitions. Despite all odds, pastoralism has proven to be highly robust, with pastoralists coping with change in several ways, including periodic movement between pastoralism and farming, hunting and gathering, and, more lately, labor exploitation (Spencer, 2008).

Following independence, the government implemented land and economic policies through multiple ministries, including the Ministry of Tourism, which transformed huge pasture lands into national parks and wildlife reserves. Maasai pastoralists were restricted from entering pasture fields and water supplies in these designated zones. Grassland was also used for commercial exploitation, individual ranching, and agribusiness farming.

The change toward private enterprise and land title deeds has significantly impacted Maasai cattle production practices. Environmental change has many negative repercussions for the Maasai economy. Low rainfall and frequent drought cycles have resulted in stock reductions and cattle loss. These variables have combined to produce competitive pressure for grazing pastures, resulting in overexploitation. As a result, most pastoralists have reverted to stock lessening, causing economic upheaval for livestock keeping (Ole Saitabau, 2014).

Kenyan post-independence pastoral economies have also been significantly strained because government policies, environmental degradation, and economic transformations have put massive pressure on traditional livelihoods. The transition from communal land tenure to individualized land tenure was a state-induced process precipitated by foreign economic interests, significantly affecting pastoralists (Hughes, 2006; Waller, 2012).

Privatization of the common lands, once open to grazing, has led to overgrazing, fragmentation, and eventual pasture degradation (Galaty, 1999). Land privatization, driven by state policies and external investors, has also introduced formal land markets, forcing many pastoralists to sell their land and, in effect, their production source. As a result, most pastoralist households have had no option other than to abandon animal production and engage in other livelihood activities, such as casual labor, small-scale cultivation, and urban migration (Fratkin, 2001).

Environmental degradation and climatic uncertainty have also emerged as difficulties for the sustainability of pastoral economies. Intermittent rain regimes extended dry seasons, and desertification has reduced water and pasture resource availability to levels that have made pastoral people highly vulnerable (Homewood, 2008). Increased drought frequency has led to excessive livestock deaths, deepening poverty, and food insecurity (McPeak, Little, & Doss, 2012). Pastoralists have adapted to these challenges by diversifying their economic activities through commercial livestock marketing, wage labor, and cross-border trade networks to

reproduce their livelihoods (Fratkin & Roth, 2005). However, these adaptation processes have generated emergent social and economic inequalities because wealthier pastoralists are more capable of adapting because they can invest in other income sources, thereby further marginalizing the poor.

Apart from that, the socio-political context has influenced pastoral economies since independence. Government policies promoting large-scale agriculture, conservation, and tourism, have displaced many pastoral communities from their ancestral lands (Hogg, 1987). Enclosure of rangelands for conservation as game reserves and national parks has also denied pastoralists access to critical grazing fields, resulting in heightened conflict between conservation authorities and pastoralists (Brockington, 2002).

1.8.4 Theoretical Framework

1.8.4.1 The Resilience Theory

The Resilience Theory was introduced by C.S. (Buzz) Holling, a Canadian ecologist, in 1973. Since Holling's early work, other researchers like Brian Walker (1999) and Lance Gunderson (2014) have made contributions to the theory. Resilience Theory refers to a conceptual model that describes how persons, groups, or systems can resist, recover from, and adapt to adversity, shocks, or stress and sustain or change their fundamental functions, identity, and arrangements. The theory focuses on how change is frequently nonlinear and multi-variable in the context of interacting factors across time. It views the dynamic interaction between disturbance and response as the precondition to continuity and innovation. This research employed Resilience Theory to understand the continuity and transformation of Maasai pastoralism in Narok County during three significant periods of history: pre-colonial (1850–1899), colonial (1900–1963), and post-independence (1964–2002). The theory offered a framework to observe how Maasai pastoralists have accommodated or changed in reaction to

significant political and economic alterations. During the pre-colonial era, the theory illustrates how pastoralism was sustained by customary systems with space for mobility, flexible land usage, and high absorptive and adaptability capacities. The research examines how pastoralism was negatively affected by land alienation, forced borders, and state intervention during the colonial period, yet remained resilient.

During the post-independence era, Resilience Theory allows us to critically evaluate how state actions like land adjudication, decentralization, and the expansion of agriculture pushed more profound structural shifts. The Maasai reaction in this context is examined in the transformative capacity lens, whether in land leasing, participation in tourism, or partial sedentarisation.

Using Resilience Theory, the research aims to explain the transformation in Maasai pastoralism over the three periods. The framework enables us to examine how pastoralism faced challenges and evolved across generations among the Maasai in Narok County.

1.8.4.2 Articulation of Modes of Production Theory

The theory describes how different modes of production exist and interact within a society, often within a dominant capitalist mode. It suggests that various social formations like feudalism, pre-capitalist modes or even aspects of socialism can coexist and influence each other rather than being neatly replaced. This theory is particularly useful for understanding how capitalist systems can incorporate or exploit pre-existing modes of production, leading to complex social and economic structures. It eradicates undesirable components while preserving the good ones. As Kiruthu (1997) demonstrates, capitalism did not revolutionize third-world countries' production relations like in Europe. The articulation process illustrates how the capitalist and non-capitalist modes of production have interacted historically, with the former reshaping, conserving, and coexisting with the latter (Zeleza, 1985).

The main argument made in this collection of experiences is that when the capitalistic production method is adopted, it does not wholly and immediately replace the pre-capitalist production method; rather, it strengthens it.

The capitalist and pre-capitalist production methods eventually converge in a challenging and occasionally antagonistic fight. According to Zeleza, (1985) The capitalist mode of production gradually modifies, undervalues, or subordinates the pre-capitalist modes of production, but it does so by utilizing them rather than discarding them. The pre-capitalist production technique continues to exist and reproduce, but in a new way, under the capitalistic production system. It was used to evaluate the individualized capitalistic land tenure penetration and how it altered the land tenure relations when the two kinds of ownership interacted in society (Zeleza, 1985).

The Maasai community views the communal land tenure system as a pre-capitalist form of production. Long before the arrival of the capitalists, this was the case, and intricate systems based on ancient or customary laws were in place. The superstructures on which African production methods were based, including property rights and the division of labor, were transformed by capitalism (Zeleza, 1985).

The articulation of modes of production theory provides a critical basis for explaining the transformation of indigenous economic systems under capitalism. This study established how pre-capitalist modes of production did not cease to exist upon the advent of capitalist economic systems. Instead, the prevailing systems were reorganized, subordinated, and absorbed into the ruling capitalist system (Meillassoux, 1972; Wolpe, 1980). This transformation led to reorganizing traditional production relations rather than their complete substitution. The interplay between communal land ownership and individualized, capitalistic land ownership in Narok is an area of interest in this study. The incremental dissolution of communal land ownership has had far-reaching impacts on Maasai livelihoods, reshaping social organization,

economic practice, and resource access. Capitalist penetration of these pre-capitalist economies, rather than yielding complete transformation, has achieved only hybrid economic forms in which both systems coexist, often in contradiction (Mafeje, 2003).

Additionally, modes of production articulation assist in elucidating the broader socio-economic and political implications of capitalist expansion. Since capitalism is founded upon pre-existing structures, it reconfigures power relations, economic stratification, and resource allocation (Frank, 1967). The Maasai, like other indigenous peoples, have been confronted with the option of maintaining their pre-capitalist economic formations or conforming to exogenous capitalist forces. This has primarily resulted in economic marginalization, whereby communal land tenure is substituted with private land tenure, resulting in land alienation and displacement (Shivji, 1998). Thus, the study investigates how capitalism transforms pre-capitalist economies and how such local structures survive and adapt to such transformations.

1.9 Research Methodology

This section discusses how the research was conducted. It consists of the research design, location of the study, study population, instrument validity, and instrument reliability. This section also discusses the data collection and analysis techniques used as well as the logistical and ethical issues observed in the study.

1.9.1 Research design

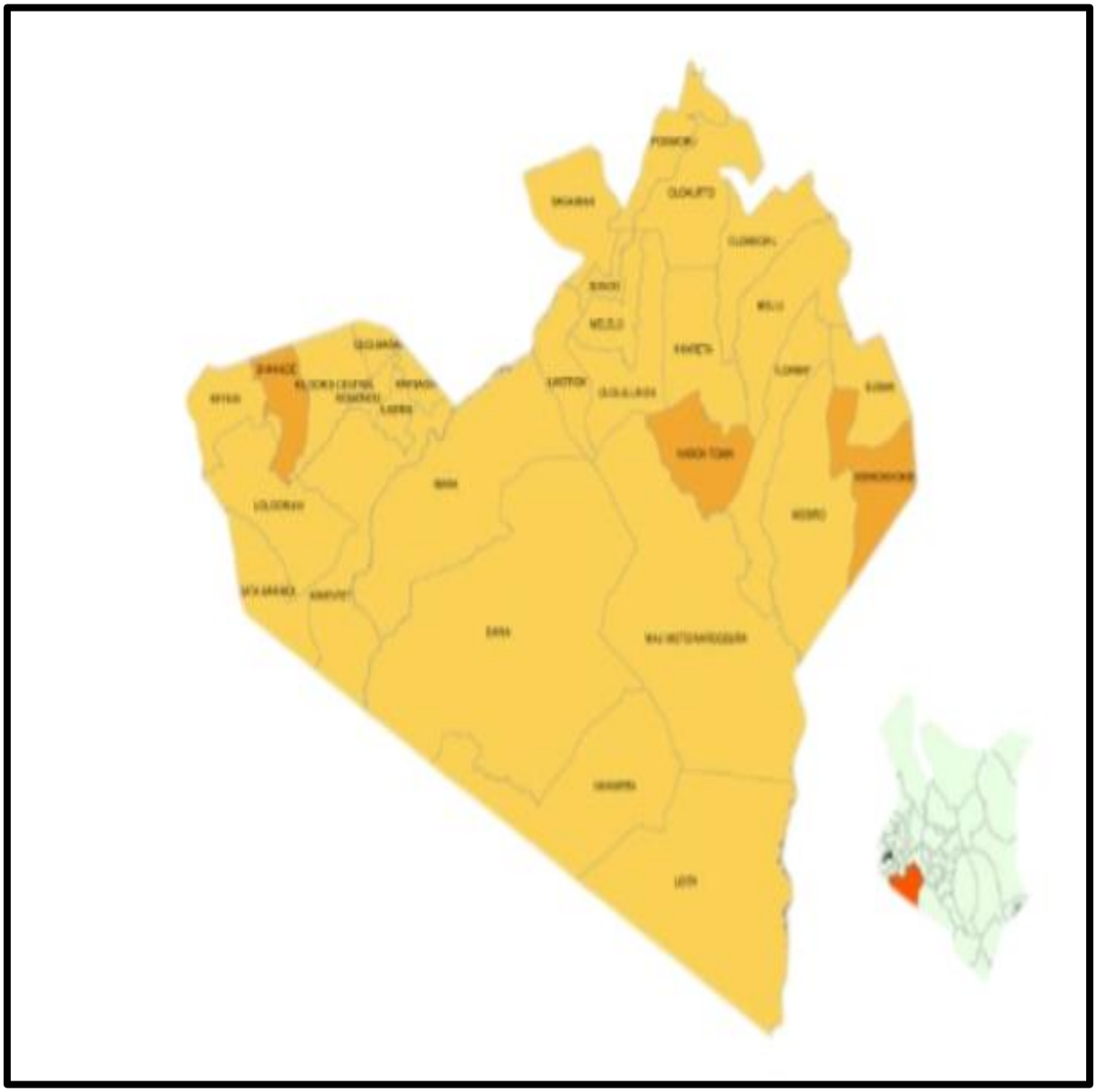
An exploratory research design was employed in this study. It is a means of gathering data from thoughts, attitudes, values, and norms that generate qualitative data. This approach was beneficial since the investigator could use different data collection methods and instruments. It is also deemed relevant as it depicts a sequence of events in Narok County's development of pastoralism.

1.9.2 Area of the study

The study was conducted in Narok County, Kenya, home to the Maasai, whose main economic activity is pastoralism. Their historical settlement, cultural practices, and economic life are deeply rooted in the region, making it a natural focal point for studying pastoralism. This region has a long-standing record of livestock rearing as the primary means of earning a livelihood; that provides valuable insight into how pastoralism has changed over time in the social, economic, and environmental aspects under colonial and post-colonial rule.

Narok County was significantly affected by colonial land policies such as land alienation and forced settlement, which disrupted traditional Maasai pastoral systems. It offers a concrete case for analyzing the effect of such policies on pastoral livelihoods. Understanding its historical development can inform current and future policies, especially in the face of climate change, land pressure, and modernization (Figure 1 shows the map of Narok County).

Figure 1:Map of Narok County



Source (GIS Data)

1.9.3 Target population

A population is the totality of humans, events, or things with observable characteristics. This study targeted elderly Maasai community members, middle-aged Maasai livestock keepers, local leaders and chiefs, government officers in the Ministry of Agriculture, officials in the County government of Narok, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The study

covered all six sub-counties: Narok West, Narok North, Narok South, Trans Mara East, and Trans Mara West.

1.9.4 Sampling procedure and sample size

According to Kombo and Tromp (2006), a sample is a cluster of selected respondents from a broader population to conduct a study. Sampling is a procedure of choosing a population subset so that the selected sample has items representing the whole group's attributes (Orodho & Kombo, 2002). It targeted adults aged above 65 years from each sub-county, middle-aged Maasai raising livestock as their primary economic activity, government and administrative officials, and Manyoito Pastoralist Integrated Development Organization representatives.

1.9.4.1 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents. One hundred and eight respondents from the six sub-counties were selected to participate in this study, as illustrated in Table 1. The sample comprised sixty elderly Maasai pastoralists, twenty four middle-aged pastoralists, twelve administrative officers, and twelve Manyoito Pastoralist Integrated Development Organization representatives.

Table 1: Sample Distribution

Sub-county	Elderly Men/women	Middle-aged Men/women	Government/administrative officials	Representatives of the Manyoito organization	Total
Narok West	10	4	2	2	18
Narok East	10	4	2	2	18
Narok South	10	4	2	2	18
Narok North	10	4	2	2	18
Transmara East	10	4	2	2	18
Transmara West	10	4	2	2	18

(Source: Author)

1.9.5 Data collection procedures

The process of data collection started with the researcher getting approval for the data collection instruments by the university supervisors. The data collection methods used were interviews and focus group discussions. Interview guides were the data collections instruments. The study collected both primary and secondary data. Primary data was sourced from the respondents in the field using interview guides. The researcher also visited the Kenya National Archives to get primary data. KNA provided important information on the early years of colonial rule in Rift Valley province. Information obtained from the archives complemented

secondary sources and oral interviews. Oral data was recorded on tape with permission from interviewees and then transcribed before analysis.

The researcher obtained secondary data from journal articles, books and online sources that investigated and discussed Maasai pastoralism and how it changed through the years. These sources also investigated the livelihoods of the Maasai in Kenya, land tenure shifts, and socio-economic change. For instance, works published by scholars, including (Homewood et al. 2009) and (Galvin K 2009), offered important insights into the diversification of livelihood and evolving property rights.

1.9.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis began immediately after data collection to avoid the loss of important information. The collected data was analyzed thematically. Data recorded using a voice recorder was transcribed and segmented into various themes. Secondary sources were critically evaluated with primary data to ensure the authenticity of the information.

1.9.7 Ethical Considerations

The researcher obtained a permit from the National Commission of Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) and Kenyatta University's Graduate School. The researcher complied with the ethical guidelines and standards while undertaking the field study. Informed Consent and voluntary participation, were adhered to throughout the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, procedures, and expected benefits and they were assured of their anonymity and confidentiality of the information they provided.

Cultural sensitivity and respect were also observed. Being aware of the Maasai's rich cultural heritage and social organization, the researcher observed cultural humility, respect for tradition, and social expectations. Invoking the assistance of local elders and leaders in the research

ensured seamless communication and trust from the respondents. Secure data collection, storage, and dissemination practices were ensured to safeguard the participants' confidentiality and to respect the community's preferences. This aligns with ethical guidelines emphasizing respect for confidentiality in data handling. The researcher was careful not to exploit the community by being cautious of the potential effects of the research on the Maasai population. This level of awareness is important because ethical research must not unfairly burden or take advantage of participants or communities. The next chapter examines pastoralism during the pre-colonial period.

CHAPTER TWO

FEATURES OF MAASAI PASTORALISM IN THE PRE-COLONIAL PERIOD: 1850-1899

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the features of nomadic pastoralism, focusing on the socio-economic and political organization of Maasai pastoralists in the pre-colonial period. It examines the migration and settlement of Maasai pastoralists, the political, social, and economic organization of the Maasai, and the features of pastoralism during the pre-colonial period.

2.2 The Maasai

The Maasai are a Nilo-Hamitic people who form one of the several Maa-speakers that inhabit parts of Kenya and Tanzania (Hughes, 2002). An oral informant noted that the Maasai are a pastoral group that herds large herds of stock and keeps moving from one place to another in search of pasture and water. The informant had the following to say: -

> *"We occupy Kenya and Tanzania, where sometimes we cross over to Tanzania, and our Tanzania brothers cross over to Kenya during the dry season" (Leshan, O.I.,28/5/2021).*

The Maa languages are a group of closely related Eastern Nilotic dialects spoken in parts of Kenya and Tanzania. According to Kipury (1983), the other Maa-speaking ethnic communities in Kenya include the Samburu, Njemps, and groups of the Dorobo and the ancestors of the Maasai are believed to have come from Southern Sudan before settling in Kenya. Navaya Ole (2006) notes that the term 'Maasai' describes people who speak the Maa dialect. They are a Nilotic-speaking group in Southern Kenya and Northern Tanzania in arid and semi-arid regions around the Great Rift Valley and are primarily found in Kenya's Narok, Laikipia, and Kajiado counties.

Waller, (1983) explains that small groups like the Ilchamus (Njemps who live around Lake Baringo) and Samburu have standard cultural practices with the Maasai. He says that they are semi-nomadic people who live on communal land and have historically lived off animals. He adds that each Maasai group oversaw its territory, and the boundaries between them were scrupulously observed unless the dry season was very severe. In the nineteenth Century, Pastoralism was a dormant form of land use among the Maasai (Waller, 1983) and Maasais mainly in the Rift Valley moved from one place to another without consideration of other communities land especially during the dry seasons. The driving motive of expansion was to secure access to scarce natural resources such as water and grazing pastures (Galaty, 1999).

Patterson (1951), writing about the Maasai, noted that, formerly (before the establishment of colonial rule in Kenya),

> *"The Maasai were by far the most powerful native race in East Africa, and when on the warpath, they were the terror of the whole country from the furthest limits of Uganda to Mombasa".*

Nairobi, Kenya's capital city, was in Maasai territory as they used to water their livestock in the Nairobi River (Hardy, 1965). Thus, being militaristic and feared by other Kenyan ethnic communities, Maasai pastoralists were left to command ownership of an expansive tract of land upon which they practiced nomadic pastoralism. Even though the Maasai are mainly found in Kajiado and Narok Counties today, they occupied various parts of Kenya in the pre-colonial period, and as a result, the livestock did not lack pasture or water because they freely moved from place to place in search of water and pasture for their animals, (Patterson 1951).

The Maasai were "not an agricultural people, and their wealth consisted of herds of cattle, sheep, and goats" (Patterson, 1951). Ndege (1992) identifies two sets of pastoralism namely pure and mixed. According to him, pure nomadic pastoralists depend mainly, though not

wholly, on livestock. Pastoralists who practiced mixed pastoralism ensured an equitable balance between livestock and crops. The Maasai of Narok County practiced pure pastoralism in the pre-colonial period. They depended on livestock for milk, meat, ghee, butter, and blood (Kipury, 1983) and Skins and hides from livestock were used to make cloth, whips, bags, and bedding (Ndege, 1992).

An Oral interviewee had this to say during an oral interview session:

> *"Traditionally, we, the Maasai, never used to cultivate any crops, but we were purely pastoralists who kept livestock as a source of livelihood. We kept cattle, goats, sheep, and donkeys. However, as time keeps changing, we have also been changing. Now, we supplement the animal products by eating vegetables and wild mushrooms, which, as a community, was not part of our diet" (Kerieny, O.I., 18/5/2021).*

The Maasai believed in owning large herds of cattle, as this was a status symbol because a large herd came with higher respect by the community members. Also, men married many wives depending on their ability to pay dowry. Large herds of livestock were like bank savings for the Maasai. Ndege (1992) asserts that the "larger the herd one possessed, the more he was able to cope with emergencies without seriously depleting the size of the herd." Emergencies were experienced during prolonged and severe droughts and disease outbreaks. The social-cultural life of the Maasai was mainstreamed to conform and support nomadic pastoralism. Their initiation rites prepared young men to be warriors and were considered adults who were ready to marry after initiation.

Marriage involved the payment of large herds of cattle. This meant that the Maasai would raid other communities to obtain livestock. They did not build permanent settlements because they

moved from place to place. Because of their militaristic nature, they owned much land, enabling them to drive away other communities.

Ndege (1992) has correctly stated that pre-colonial forms of production were primarily a function of the ecology. Thus, Maasai pastoralism was very much practiced in the arid and semi-arid areas of the country. The Maasai preferred to practice nomadic pastoralism on the plains and for this reason, they are referred to as plain notes (Lynch, 1979). This enabled them to see potential cattle raiders from far away and, prepare to tackle them. They did not depend on pastoralism alone. Even though the Maasai practiced pure pastoralism, they had commercial exchange arrangements with other crop-farming communities. This was especially the case during droughts and disease outbreaks, which sometimes wiped out large herds of cattle, and the Maasai resorted to heavy cereal consumption. Droughts and diseases were not the only causes of commercial exchanges between the Maasai and crop-farming communities. Even in normal conditions, cereal consumption constituted a considerable part of the Maasai diet (Kipury, 1983).

2.3 Migration and settlement of Maasai pastoralists

Like the Nandi, Maasai pastoralists, a Nilo-Hamitic people, are said to have migrated from Southern Sudan (Hughes 2002 and Kipury 1983). From Southern Sudan, the Maasai entered Kenya "through Turkana" (KNA, MSS/106/1 Papers of L.E. Whitehouse). While this is one of the explanations about how the Maasai found themselves in Kenya and Tanzania, Maasai pastoralists have their own stories about their origin and settlement in their present localities.

Sokoine (1981) believes that no narrative tells the exact place where the Maasai originated before settling in their present localities in Kenya and Tanzania. However, despite the various stories accounting for the Maasai migration and settlement, there appears to be a commonality

in all the stories: they came from the north, migrated southwards, and settled in Kenya and Tanzania. The details are consistent with the findings from a respondent, who noted that:

> *"Our forefathers used to tell us that our original home was in the Nile Valley, and it is from that Nile Valley that we migrated and settled in Kenya and Tanzania" Leshan, O.I, 18/5/2021).*

According to Kipury (1983), the Maasai originated from Ende-e-kerio (the scarp of Kerio) in the north. Although many scholars have referred to this place as the southeastern region of present-day Lake Turkana (Lake Rudolf), some oral sources suggest that it may have been somewhere further north, in present-day Sudan, at the Bahr-El-Ghazel Valley.

Scholars have also provided reasons why Maasai pastoralists moved from the north to the south. According to Kipury (1983) and Bentsen (1989), drought caused their migration. This is because the Maasai, being pastoralists, had to look for pasture for their livestock. Being fierce fighters, the Maasai displaced other communities which they came into contact with and as a result, they managed to secure a large tract of land. It is said that they occupied the region from near Mt. Marsabit in Northern Kenya to Kiteto in Central Tanzania, about 700 miles from North to South and about 200 miles from East to West. Others state that, at the height of their power in the 19th Century, Maasai pastoralists lived on either side of the Rift, occupying an area stretching from Lake Baringo in the North to Central Tanzania in the south (Homewood & Rodgers, 1991).

Most stories about the migration and settlement of Maasai pastoralists agree on one thing: The Maasai migrated from the north and moved southwards (KNA, MSS/106/1 Papers of L.E. Whitehouse). The migration and settlement of Maasai pastoralists in Kenya is estimated to have occurred in the 17th or 18th centuries (Morner, 2006). Most historians have settled on the narrative that the Maasai came from the north.

The Maasai also have myths about their origin, migration, and settlement (Spear 1993 and Bentsen 1989). According to these scholars, one myth of the origin of Maasai pastoralists holds the view that the Maasai descended from two equal and complementary groups, one consisting strictly of females and the other of males. According to this myth, the Maasai women reared antelopes as their livestock before they started rearing cattle, donkeys, sheep, and goats. It also emphasizes the good relationship that existed between Maasai women and wildlife during the period of their Migration and settlement. Zebras transported their goods during migrations, and elephants were their devoted friends, tearing down branches and bringing them to the women who used them to build homes and corrals. The myth states that the animals disappeared and left the women because they were being overworked since Maasai pastoralists do not hunt wild animals or eat wildlife meat (Patterson,); this myth would, perhaps, explain how wildlife played an important role in the migration and settlement of Maasai women.

According to the same myth, the men's groups (Morwak) kept cattle, sheep, and goats. Men and women would meet occasionally in the forest, and children born from these unions were put into the custody of their mothers. The boys would join their fathers when they grew up. It was not until the women lost their herds that they went to live with men, giving up their freedom and equal status and becoming subject to men's authority.

The Maasai community was the most powerful in Kenya during the pre-colonial period. They had the best army/military composed of Maasai warriors (Elmorani). Young men became warriors after circumcision (Eunoto) and were mandated to protect their community against enemies and were heavily involved in raiding other communities to steal livestock (Patterson, 1951). Their power waned gradually due to two reasons. The first was caused by internal feuds between the Maasai sub-groups (the Purko and the Kwavi), drought, and famine. The Purko were pastoralists, while the Kwavi practiced crop farming (Homewood & Rodgers, 1991).

2.4 Maasai Demographic Dynamics and Their Impact on Pastoralism during the pre-colonial period

The Maasai population in Narok County was made up of clans and age-set systems, which were organized into territorial sections named ILOSHON. The low-density population allowed extensive grazing practices across the large tracts of land without strain on the resources. As the herd size and population grew, the Maasai adopted and embraced seasonal rotational grazing and made communal decisions to prevent overgrazing. Conflict and disease in the late 19th Century led to decreased livestock and population. For instance, between 1880 and 1890, the rinderpest epidemic significantly reduced herds, while smallpox outbreaks and intercommunity conflicts reduced the human population. These events saw temporary depopulation in the area, weakening traditional structures. The age-set system managed pastoralists' access to water, pasture, and movement patterns. Elders coordinated access to pasture, ensuring the warriors respected grazing boundaries and seasonal pasture access regulations (Naserian, O.I, 23/05/2021).

2.5 Social Organization of the Maasai

The Maasai live in their unique form of village known as an Enkang, which consists of 10-20 small dwellings known as Enkajis. The settlement has a round fence of sharp acacia branches, keeping wild animals and competing groups at bay. The ladies construct the round-shaped enkajis from branches, grass, and fresh cattle excrement. They set a fire place inside the kaji for cooking and to keep warm at night, keeping insects at bay. There are no windows or chimneys in these houses, but there is often a little hole in the ceiling that lets a little light in and the smoke from the fire out (Hodgson, 2001).

In the pre-colonial period, the nuclear family (Olmarei) was the lowest social unit in the Maasai social organization. Men were predominantly polygamous. A married man had a gate used by

his wives and those who depended on him. The gate carried a man's name, symbolizing his autonomy as a cattle owner and the founder of a family. It was each wife's responsibility to look after her children's welfare. Fathers assumed the care of the children when they grew up towards becoming adults (Kipury, 1983). The family, being the smallest social unit, shaped the child's character a great deal, and it was the first learning institution of the child. Children were taught indigenous knowledge, which developed and crystallized over time. Thus, children went through informal schooling where they were taught indigenous knowledge that mostly revolved around the pastoralists way of life.

The goal of Maasai informal education revolved around the maintenance of a cohesive society and the survival of their migratory lifestyle. Infants and young boys and girls were brought up by women (mothers and older sisters) inside the homestead. This was done at a young age when children could help their mothers look after lambs or goat kids close to the boma fence. Children mostly lived in a female setting and had limited relationships with men. As they grew up, boys walked a few miles with the adult male herders to start learning pastoral skills, while girls remained within the homestead. According to an oral informant,

> *"The Maasai community's gender roles were instilled in the children early. For instance, when a boy reaches about 5 years old, the father starts to socialize him to cattle keeping while the girls are socialized by their mothers. At age 10, the boy primarily cares for the livestock. At puberty, both boys and girls undergo circumcision as a mark of transition from childhood to adulthood. Age-group boys undergo circumcision during the same season, after which the boys move away from their houses to a place where they will erect a temporary house known as a manyatta" (Naserian, O.I, 30/05/2021).*

Maasai elders were responsible for socializing children to bring them up in tune with Maasai cultural values, emphasizing collective ideology, tribal cohesion, positive relations with others, respect for elders, and conformity to tribal norms and rituals. As a result, the children connected their identities to the context of their family or clan. Collective ideology and tribal cohesion

emphasized teaching practical skills for effectively contributing to a group. For example, children learned about cattle tending, health care, and the defense of their clan and how these roles were interdependent. Again, essentials that guided Maasai Pastoralism, such as tending cattle, were incorporated into the indigenous education system of the Maasai (Brett, 1995).

Maasai culture was very much reflected in the goals of their education system, which emphasizes collectivity and focuses on what is in the best interests of the family, clan, groups, religion, and tradition (Raju, 1973). Elders frequently employed a rich oral tradition, which included personal narratives, oral history, folktales, songs, parables, riddles, and rhymes to transmit cultural values, beliefs, and history.

Looking beyond the family setup, several related Maasai families formed a clan. The Maasai were divided into clans called inchomoto. The inchomoto were further subdivided into subclans called Olgilata. An important function of the clan system was to regulate marriage. Talle (1987) stated that the Maasai households lived together in large compounds called Enkang (homestead). Homewood and Rodgers (1991) describe the ranking as the Maasai ideal, allowing for cooperation overgrazing and herding decisions. Several families, usually 6 to 12, joined together based on shared interests in economically exploiting their immediate vicinity (Jacobs, 1965).

Several bomas were grouped into larger units called neighborhoods (elatia), which controlled local resources such as watering facilities and grazing land. A neighborhood comprised a cluster of bomas, usually a kilometer away from each other. Each neighborhood was centered around a permanent water point, and although membership varied over time, it comprised people who resided there (Grandin, 1991).

Several neighborhoods were grouped into Enkutoto localities in the Maasai language, which controlled enough wet and dry season grazing and water resources to support their population (Jacobs, 1965). According to Kipury (1983), each neighborhood had a local governance structure composed of elders' councils. Each male Maasai belonged to an area where he had a right to reside. This focused on men as women moved to their husbands' homes upon marriage and had no right to cattle ownership.

According to Grandin (1991), localities were further enlarged to form territorially based sections (Iloshon). Spencer (1990) described sections as self-contained ecological units, and Kipury referred to them as natural communities. Grandin (1991) noted that these were subgroups of the Maasai with a unified political and administrative structure. The territories include the Purko, Matapato, Kankere, Keekonyokie, Loodokilani, Ildamat, Dal el Kutuk, and Kaptiei. Each section comprised several families and had a fixed territory that belonged to members collectively. The territory of each section was large enough to provide adequate grazing in regular and dry seasons but not during extreme droughts.

The Maasai formed a distinctive social unit sharing a culture, language, and social structure. The freedom of movement of a producer and his household declined with the increasing size of the administrative unit. While crossing from one boma to another was easy, sectional boundaries were difficult to cross even in drought times. If allowed to cross into another section, one would remain there for as long as possible (Jacobs, 1965).

The Maasai are composed of various sub-sections. Those who are still surviving today are IlPurko, ISalei, IlKisonko, ILumbwa, ISikirari, IlKaputie, ILoodokilani, ILarusa, IlDamat, IlMatapato, ILaitayiok, IlLoitai, ISiria, IlUasin Nkishu, IlDalalekutuk, IlKeekonyokie, IlKankere, and the IlMoitanik, among others. Some Maasai sub-sections have become extinct due to tribal conflicts, while others have become amalgamated with other sub-sections

(Hughes, 2002). According to Kulet (1972), the subsections that have become extinct include the Ildikiri, Ilkoli, Iloogol-ala, Ilaikipiak, and Ilosekelai sub-sections (Kulet, 1972).

The Maasai are generally grouped into two clans. One clan is called Oodo Mong'i, meaning Red Cow; the other is Orok Kiten, meaning Black Cow. Again, as emphasized earlier, the cow symbolizes identity in Maasai society. Within each clan, there were sub-clans (ilpaasheta). Sub-clans in the Oodo Mong'i clan are Ilmolelian, Ilmakese, and Iltaroser, while Ilaiser and Ilukumai are the sub-clans in the Orok Kiteng clan. Notably, members of the same clan respected one another brotherly. Inter-clan marriage was prohibited among the Maasai pastoralists. A man who married within his clan was considered to have married his sister, and this was frowned upon.

Being a pastoral community, the Maasai rely heavily and mainly on a diet of milk and blood. The warriors consume these foods extensively, and the meat is eaten at the festivals held in special camps (ilpuli). Elders, women, and young folks eat crops such as cereals, beans, and bananas. The Maasai obtained these from the hill dwellers at barter markets at numerous points in the foothills where highlands and plains meet (Hollis, 1905).

2.6 Political organization of the Maasai in the pre-colonial period

In contemporary times, Maasai pastoralists have chiefs and sub-chiefs. This was not the case in the pre-colonial period. The authority among the Maasai 'traditionally' lay with age-set spokesmen elected for their leadership qualities. Women and girls did not belong to age sets, though they passed through rites of passage that parallel those of men and boys. Councils of elders constituted the central decision-making bodies, even though younger men were also central to decision-making processes. On the other hand, spiritual authority was wielded by prophets, who were then referred to as Laibon or Oloibon. Mbatian and his son, Lenana, are the most remembered spiritual leaders (Laibons) of the Maasai in pre-colonial days.

Laibons confine themselves to divination, rainmaking, and medicine. They could make sufficient incense as 'directors of raids and rainfall' without reverting to other methods. However, there is no doubt that a woman or a cow they coveted would be handed over without question in exchange for the statutory dowry or a less favored cow (KNA, DC/NRK/1/1/2 Narok District Annual Report 1925, p.2).

Even though the Maasai had spiritual leaders, their political organization was primarily based on a series of age sets. In most cases, young men who were circumcised at the same time constituted an age-set. Young men, who were more or less of the same age, were circumcised together, and they, thus, constituted an age-set (Radcliffe-Brown, 1929). The age-set structure was the fundamental organizing principle of Maasai society, and this institution was used to instill values of egalitarianism, sharing, and respect (Hughes, 2002).

Age sets formed just part of the political structure of the Maasai political system because other clan systems were involved in the political structure of this nomadic pastoralist community. When each boy was circumcised, he was incorporated into a generational category or age set. He and his cohorts passed through the stages of warriorhood (Moran), junior elder, senior elder, and retired elder, each lasting about 15 years. The senior elder age set was primarily responsible for the traditional administration in the Maasai land. Junior elders carried out the instructions of the senior elders. The warriors, on the other hand, provided security for the community.

Every section of the Maasai (Oloshon) had its system of decentralized government. Within this system of governance, the age set of every section had its own elected political and ritual leaders. According to Grandin (1991), a Maasai section is a subgroup of the Maasai with a unified political, social, and cultural identity. While the political leaders presided over meetings and secular functions, ritual leaders (prophets) officiated at religious rituals. All these leaders were elected during the Moran hood stage and retained their positions throughout their lives.

Thus, for the Maasai, just like many other communities in Kenya, there was not a single 'chief' of the Maasai residing at the apex of the political pyramid (Parkipuny, 1975). The Maasai did not have rulers, but there were leaders. For every subgroup, each age group had a leader, olaigwanan, plural ilaigwana, who was 'elected' or chosen by the largest possible assembly of the group members. There was also a deputy leader, Engopiro, who is Engopir. Such leaders were 'elected' and functioned only in and through the youth age of the group, Murano. Besides youth leaders, some sub-tribal leaders were not rulers but spokesmen. The leadership functions of these spokespersons and their deputies transcended the age group segmentation.

Neither Ilaigwanak nor any other person could enforce a judgment or order. The weight of public opinion compelled the individuals to act as required (Kulet, 1972). Though the medicine man position enjoyed prestige and influence in society, they could not claim any resemblance to tradition in wielding executive authority. The Maasai insisted that the medicine men keep out of political authority and far away from leadership (Parkipuny, 1975).

Thus, the Maasai political system was based on age sets (olporo). Under this system, all the boys, on attaining the age of sixteen or thereabouts, are circumcised and accepted into a particular age set, a unit possessing a single name and a sense of unity. According to Patterson (1951), the Maasai had "a well-organized military system" comprised of warriors (elmorani). Boys graduated to become warriors (elmorani) after being circumcised. The Maasai circumcision ceremony was called Eunoto and was highly valued among Maasai pastoralists of Narok County.

Briefly, the Eunoto, the most important of the Maasai ceremonies, is the turning point in the life of the Maasai warrior. After the Eunoto, the warriors may "drink milk," marry, and settle down as old men (KNA, DC/NRK/1/1/2 Narok District Annual Report 1928).

A Maasai warrior (elmorani) was not only expected to express the best of human virtues but also to feel that he was superior to everyone. The warriors were dedicated to the security of their community. They always carried spears, bows, arrows, and "a sword suspended from a rawhide waist-belt and looked ferocious in their weird-looking headdress on the warpath. Warriors were an important ingredient in the practice of Maasai pastoralism. Apart from protecting their livestock, they raided and stole livestock from other communities (Patterson, 1951).

2.7 Becoming a Moran among the Maasai of Narok County

In an interview with a key informant, Ole Shani noted that social roles are at the center of the age-set system among the Maasai. An age-set system is composed of contemporaries united by communal circumcision. This social group provides the Maasai man with a network of social and political allies.

> *"Becoming a Maasai starts at a very tender age of about four years. At this age, the Maasai child is socialized into herding. His socialization into herding increases with age" (Ole shani, O.I, 01/05/2021).*

According to Allegretti (2018), "morans" refers to young Maasai men who have reached a certain age and have undergone specific cultural rites of passage. Typically, the Maasai boys between 15 and 20 undergo a series of rituals and teachings to transition into becoming morans. This includes circumcision, warrior training, and instruction on the responsibilities, customs, and traditions of Maasai culture. These initiation ceremonies mark the transition from boyhood to warriorhood, and morans are expected to display courage, strength, and leadership qualities. The role of morans has evolved, but their significance in upholding Maasai traditions and safeguarding their community remains important (Fratkin, 1979).

During moralism, young Maasai males leave their villages and undergo rigorous training and education in bush camps. They learn various skills necessary for their future roles as community protectors, such as hunting, spear-throwing, tracking, and traditional warrior skills. It is considered a crucial personal and social development phase for Maasai males. During circumcision, boys undergo circumcision, which marks their transition into adulthood. This rite of passage is a symbolic rebirth accompanied by various rituals and ceremonies. After circumcision, the young men enter a period of seclusion in a manyatta (a traditional Maasai village), where they receive education and training from older warriors (Pesambili, 2020).

Another important feature of Morans is the dress code and adornment. Morans are known for their unique attire, which includes wearing brightly colored shukas (blankets), beaded jewelry, and headdresses, as well as carrying ceremonial weapons like spears and swords. These adornments symbolize their warrior status, bravery, and strength (Tignor, 1972).

Eunoto is the final ceremony of the warriorhood initiation. It marks the transition from warrior to senior elder. During this elaborate ceremony, the Morans shed their long hair, which is typically shaved. They are anointed with red ochre and given new roles and responsibilities within the community. Morans are responsible for protecting their communities, livestock, and territory from external threats like predators or raiders. As warriors, they learn hunting, combat skills, herding, and leadership abilities (Spencer & Waller, 2017).

Among the Maasai community, Morans hold important responsibilities and play a significant role in society. They learn combat skills such as spear-throwing and fighting techniques and develop physical endurance. This training prepares them for their next role as defenders of the community. Additionally, morans are responsible for herding and protecting livestock, which is vital to the Maasai's economy and livelihood. They ensure the safety of cattle, sheep, and goats from theft and attacks by wild animals. On the same note, morans are often involved in

maintaining order and security during social gatherings, ceremonies, and coming-of-age rituals. They maintain discipline and ensure the well-being of the community members during these events (Spencer & Waller, 2017).

In addition to the above roles, morans may be called upon to mediate disputes and conflicts within the community. They use their respective position to reconcile differences and promote harmony, preserving the social fabric of the Maasai society. Morans are crucial in passing down cultural traditions, rituals, and oral history to younger generations. They embody and promote Maasai cultural values, ensuring the continuity of their heritage. After the warrior phase, Morans eventually become respected elders within the community. They provide wisdom and guidance and contribute to decision-making processes affecting the Maasai community (Bonini, 2006).

2.8 Economic Organization of the Maasai

Livestock was at the center of the Maasai economy. Every household had livestock in the pre-colonial Period (Grandin,1991), who described the household as the primary production unit. It was the center of livestock ownership and was essentially autonomous in its decision-making. The Maasai lived a pastoral life and traded their cattle for the fruit and grains from their agricultural neighbors, the Gusii. They had a well-designed grazing arrangement whereby each il-oshon enjoyed grazing rights in a particular area, with sections subdivided further into localities. To the Maasai, cattle were more than just a source of food. It also acted as a mobile form of wealth, a medium of exchange and marriage, a source of food, a symbol of relationships, and for its sacred significance (Hughes, 2002).

While livestock was owned individually, the land upon which they grazed their livestock was traditionally viewed as a community resource (Hughes, 2002). The Maasai had certain areas preserved for dry-season grazing. Their nomadic lifestyle also ensured that they could not

overgraze in one area. Movement ensured pasture regeneration, which was beneficial to environmental conservation. The Maasai moved their livestock seasonally from highland to lowland pastures, allowing grazing to regenerate.

Livestock was also used for prestige; for instance, one commanded high respect in the community if he owned more cattle than anyone else. The Maasai were regarded as poor when they owned less than 100 cattle, medium when they owned between 100 and 500 cattle, and rich when they owned more than 500 cattle (Anderson, 1995).

The Maasai had a tradition of supporting each other. The livelihood of a poor household was supported through a culturally determined coping mechanism locally known as Awolowo. This is a socially designed subsistence strategy based on a mutual support system. Under this system, low-income families were granted cattle or paid in kind after having herded cattle from other households. There were also instances where such families were given cattle to look after and use their milk. Traditionally, the Maasai diet consisted of six basic foods: meat, blood, milk, fat, honey, and tree bark (Fosbrook, 1948).

2.9 Features of Maasai Pastoralism in the pre-colonial period

This section examines the key features or characteristics of Maasai pastoralism in Narok County in the pre-colonial period. Some features have changed, while others have remained resilient until contemporary times.

Maasai Pastoralists were accustomed to seasonal movement or migration in the pre-colonial days and they moved with the livestock (cattle, goats, sheep, and donkeys) from one place to another in search of pasture and water. They were pure pastoralists because they raised livestock for food consumption and exchange and did not do crop farming. This is what pure or nomadic pastoralism refers to (Ndege, 1992).

Mixing livestock keeping and crop farming is referred to as transhumant pastoralism. In transhumance pastoralism, people depend less on their animals for food and often do small-scale vegetable farming in summer pastures.

Livestock was the Maasai's principal source of income and played an essential role in their economy. Cattle, goats, and sheep formed the foundation of their economic and social systems. Conversely, cattle were the primary source of income, and their significance rested not only in food production but also in social and ritual roles. This is because livestock provide milk, meat, fat, and blood for human use. Cow excrement was used to plaster their huts, while leather was utilized to make clothing and bedding.

In addition, livestock provided an indirect source of revenue through the sale or barter of animals and their byproducts, such as hides and skins, horns, and wool. They also exchanged cattle for fruits and grains from their agricultural neighbors. Ownership of animals symbolized prosperity and social prestige because the more one had, the greater one's social standing. Livestock were obtained through inheritance, raids from surrounding groups, purchases, loans, and gifts (Spear, 1999).

The land was crucial for nourishment and supplied grass to the cattle. The demands of the animals, such as pasture, water, and salt licks, governed the movement of the inhabitants. The proximity of these needs impacted how long people stayed in one location. Mobility was thus a critical management approach for maximizing forage and ecological productivity. Periodic pasture burning ensured illnesses were controlled and animals could access fresh, lush grass. The presence of wildlife grazing alongside livestock improved grassland composition and variation. The blend of grazers and browsers, including domestic animals and wildlife, exchanged nutrients. This mode of land use was the most sustainable, and the Maasai were aware of this advantage (Campbell et al., 1998).

2.10 Pastoralism in the Plain Lands

The kind of pastoralism that the Maasai practiced in the pre-colonial period led them to be called plain nilotes. They occupied most of the plain lands (arid and semi-arid). This does not mean that they did not graze in other areas. Plain lands enabled Maasai pastoralists to spot their enemies from afar and prepare themselves for combat. Apart from human enemies, Maasai pastoralists chose plain lands because they would spot wild animals and prevent them from attacking their livestock. They also chose areas that were free from tsetse flies. This explains why pastoralists in Kenya are primarily found in arid and semi-arid lands, including savannah grasslands and semi-desert conditions. These areas allowed grass to sprout during the rains; hence, grass was always available. The gentle or flat terrain allowed animals to move from one place to another, sometimes covering long distances (Lynch, 1979).

2.11 Seasonal Migration, Herd-diversification, and Herd Separation in the Pre-Colonial Period

Maasai pastoralism survived seasonal migration, herd diversification, and herd separation in the pre-colonial period, and this indigenous knowledge allowed grass to regenerate. During the rainy seasons, the Maasai would have plenty of grass for their animals and preserve certain areas for dry-season grazing (Patterson,1951).

However, livestock keeping has changed dramatically, with uncertain and flexible methods such as mobility, common landlordism, highly diversified herd numbers, and herd separation and splitting causing significant disruption (Ellis, 2000).

According to Scoones (2003), Nomadic pastoralists move from location to location with their herds in pursuit of grass and water for their animals. To spread risk, some pastoral households have adopted keeping large herds that would cushion them against disasters such as drought

and diseases. The Maasai hardly ever slaughter a cow. It only happens when a cow is sick or has nothing to eat.

Other animals in a Maasai family include goats, sheep, and occasionally donkeys. The donkey is very important to women because it helps them carry water long distances and transport commodities to the market as explained by Igoe (2004). Colaborating the importance of donkeys, an oral interview with Jane Olelempe revealed that donkeys played an irreplaceable role in the Maasai community as noted below: -

> *"Donkeys play a central role in the homestead because we fetch water from a long distance, about 10km from here, and we cannot carry it on our heads. So, the donkeys help us bring the water into the homestead and carry loads to the market. We can send these little girls with the donkeys to the river to bring water for us" (Olelempe J, OI.12/5/2021).*

On the eve of colonialism, livestock keeping was the cornerstone of the Maasai economy. The Maasai's livelihood revolved around livestock, especially cattle, which were part of their diet, a symbol of social status, and facilitated cultural practices. Cattle were a source of milk and meat used in trade, dowry payment, and ritual performance. The Maasai practiced nomadic pastoralism across the savanna and highlands, with huge grazing land and water sources. This mobility ensured the sustainable use of resources and the health of their herds. The land was communally owned, and the council of elders and age-sets oversaw its use; therefore, communal access to water and pasture was ensured. The Maasai were organized into clans and age sets. The Morans were responsible for herding and protecting livestock, while the elders resolved conflicts over resources and made decisions regarding grazing rights. However, the Maasai faced challenges during this period. The iloikop wars and conflicts with their neighbors over resources limited access to pasture and water. Moreover, environmental pressures such as drought and livestock diseases like rinderpest began to impact their herds (Spear, 1993).

2.12 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter discussed the socio-cultural, economic, and political organization of the Maasai and examines the key features of Maasai Pastoralism in the pre-colonial period. The Maasai depended on livestock as their main economic activity, and they moved from place to place in search of pasture and water; thus, they were referred to as nomadic pastoralists. They used their livestock as a currency, which they exchanged for other basic needs, such as cereals/grains, which they used as food. They had a steady supply of warriors they depended on to raid other communities and protect themselves from outside attacks. The land was communally owned and regulated to ensure Maasai nomadic pastoralism's sustainability. The next chapter will examine some colonial policies and legislation that led to the decline of Maasai pastoralism in Narok County between 1900 and 1963.

CHAPTER THREE

IMPACT OF COLONIALISM ON MAASAI PASTORALISM IN NAROK COUNTY (1895-1963)

3.0 Introduction

This chapter examines the impact of colonial rule in Kenya on Maasai pastoralism in Narok County. The key areas of concern were colonial rule's establishment, restriction of access to the Mau Forest, and how colonial policies affected pastoralism.

3.1 Establishment of colonial rule in Kenya

Two competing but interrelated theories explain the process that led to establishing colonial rule in Kenya. One theory is economic, and the other is humanitarian. According to the humanitarian theory, the British turned their attention to East Africa, Kenya's part, in the eighteenth century. The reason for this attention was to launch a crusade against the slave trade. The British, who had abolished the slave trade in 1807 in their country and slavery in 1833 in their plantation colonies, preached 'legitimate commerce in natural and manufactured goods and forced Seyyid Said to sign several anti-slavery treaties (in 1822, 1845, and 1873) which at first circumscribed and finally abolished slave trade altogether in East Africa.

To compensate Seyyid Said for his loss of revenue in the slave trade, the British persuaded him to enter into agreements in legitimate commerce with Western powers. Britain signed a trade treaty with Zanzibar in 1839. It was their crusade to end the slave trade that led the British to become heavily involved in Zanzibar affairs and, eventually, as the dominant European power in East Africa in general and Kenya in particular (Ochieng', 1992).

It is disputed that Britain became interested in East Africa because it was against the slave trade. According to Ochieng (1992), "There is substantial controversy among historians over

causes of the abolition of the slave trade and the relationship between abolitionist movements and the broader trends within the world economy and capitalist society.

The economic theory explains that Kenya was expected to provide raw materials for industrial Britain while affording a captive market for the latter's manufactured goods (Ndege, 1992). Ndege stated that:

> *British colonial policies actively reshaped Kenya's agricultural economy. Large tracts of fertile land were taken from African communities and allocated to British settlers, who established vast plantations for cash crops like tea and coffee. Meanwhile, local labor policies ensured that African workers remained dependent on colonial employers, reinforcing an exploitative economic system that primarily benefited Britain.*

After the Berlin Treaty and Kenya having been assigned to Britain, Britain sent the Imperial British East African Company to secure and administer Kenya and Uganda on its behalf (KNA, MSS/10/5 a history of East Africa by A.T. Matson). The Company, which had been formed in 1887, began administering Kenya and Uganda in 1888 after signing a treaty with Zanzibar (Foran, 1962). The Company began its mission to develop trade in the interior of Kenya and the Uganda kingdom and by 1989 it had expanded its influence in Uganda. However, its success was short-lived because the operating costs were far beyond its ability and was forced to ask for assistance from the foreign office in London. The Foreign Office agreed to take over Uganda in 1893 and, in 1895, took charge of East Africa, Kenya included and became the administrator of the East Africa protectorates (Foran, 1962).

With the declaration of Protectorate over Kenya in 1895, the lobbyists for European settlements in the country stepped up their propaganda. They were informed that Kenya did not have minerals and had to depend on the colonial foreign office in London for administrative costs.

Sir Charles Elliot (the Governor of Kenya) devised a solution to prevent the colony's heavy dependence on the colonial office and he promoted export-oriented agriculture. According to him (Sir Elliott), Kenya had a lot of "uninhabited lands" that European settlers would put to economic use. Thus, Sir Charles Elliott offered huge chunks of Kenyans' land to allow Europeans to come and exploit. The land was offered for a long lease period (99 years) and at very low prices. This lured many Europeans to come and settle in Kenya. In addition, European settlers were promised a steady supply of cheap African labor (Kenyanchui, 1992).

3.2 Maasai Pastoralists Encounter with Colonial Administration

With the establishment of colonial rule in Kenya, Maasai pastoralists encountered colonial rule from several fronts. The first was the building of the Uganda Railway. Upon establishing colonial rule in Uganda and Kenya, a railway line was built from Mombasa to Uganda (KNA: AWS/1/934, History of the railway Part III). The building of the Uganda Railway was an imperialist strategy of integrating Kenya, Uganda, India, and Egypt into the British Empire (Kenyanchui, 1992). Prior to the construction of the Uganda Railway, transporting goods from the Kenyan coast to Uganda took much time as it was done by people walking on foot, which was slow, costly and risky. Thus, the railway was constructed to speed up the transportation of goods from the Kenyan coast to Uganda while lowering costs and security risks.

The construction of the Uganda Railway cost huge amounts of money (Kenyanchui, 1992). In addition, the colonial government relied on funding from the colonial office in London. The colonial administration felt that it had to make considerable investments in farming to recoup the money consumed during the construction of the Uganda Railway and get revenue to cater for administrative costs. Kenya did not have minerals like South Africa buy there were vast arable lands, much of which Maasai pastoralists used but considered 'uninhabited. Kenyanchui (1992) notes that "after 1901, it was argued that since Kenya had no valuable natural resources

to exploit to repay the investment made on the railway, European settlers would farm the idle land along the railway to repay the investment".

Export-oriented farming was the only way the colonial government in Kenya would exploit to get the necessary funding. However, Maasai Pastoralists hindered the implementation of this venture because they occupied much of Kenya. Thus, Maasai pastoralists became a community of interest to the colonial administration in Kenya because of the land factor. The colonial government had no choice but to create a narrative to help annex land from Maasai pastoralists and make it available for European settlement. On one hand, the colonial government argued that much of the fertile land in Kenya was uninhabited. Secondly, it was argued that nomadic pastoralism was not the best economic activity. These narratives were directed at Maasai pastoralists since the community controlled much of the land. This being the case, the colonial administration embarked on setting apart large tracts of land for European farmers (Ndege, 1992). Talbott (1992,) has observed that:

> *To recover the costs of the Uganda Railway and sustain colonial administration, the British government implemented a land alienation policy, granting vast tracts of fertile land to European settlers, particularly in the 'White Highlands.' These settlers introduced large-scale commercial agriculture, primarily growing coffee, tea, and wheat for export. African communities, including the Maasai and the Kikuyu, were systematically displaced, leading to landlessness and economic dependency on the colonial labor market. This shift from indigenous land ownership to European-controlled agribusiness laid the foundation for deep-rooted inequalities in Kenya's financial structure, many of which persist.*

Throughout the entire period of colonial rule in Kenya, Nomadic Pastoralism was considered an unproductive land use. Kenyanchui (1992) observes, *"Sir Elliot believed Africans were backward and were of interest only to anthropologists."* To him, the nomadic pastoralism to which the Maasai were accustomed was an unproductive use of large tracts of fertile land. This

discourse was intended to justify the colonial administration's intended land alienation away from the Maasai pastoralists. Ndege (992) has observed that the "Maasai were the first to feel the pinch of land alienation" in colonial Kenya.

The colonial government wanted to secure peace for all the ethnic communities in Kenya. Thus, militaristic communities like the Maasai were to be brought under proper colonial law and order. The Masai of Narok, for example, were in the habit of raiding the Gusii and stealing their livestock as pointed out by Ochieng, (1974) and as a result the Gusii constantly migrated in search of safe havens (Aberi, 2009). To bring the Maasai under colonial law and order, it was felt that all the Maasai should be moved to one area (Southern Maasai Reserve) from where they would be effectively governed. Once in the Reserve, they would be brought under the watchful eye of colonial administrators (District Commissioner, District officers, chiefs, and headmen). All other ethnic communities were put into their respective areas for easy administration.

Simel (2003) argued that the colonial government moved the Maasai from other areas and heaped them into two native reserves (Kajiado and Narok). European farmers did not want to be neighbors to the Maasai owing to their cattle-raiding habits. Before moving into the Southern Maasai Reserve, the colonial government entered treaties with the Maasai which provided the legal justification for land alienation from Maasai pastoralists. Although the colonial government signed treaties with Maasai pastoralists and vowed to respect the Maasai Reserve, Maasai land continued to be invaded and encroached upon, as discussed in the next section.

3.3 The Anglo-Maasai 1904 and 1911 Treaties

The first Anglo-Maasai agreement happened in 1904 and led to 1.5 to 2 million acres of Maasai land being surrendered to the British to expand European settlements. The Maasai were

transported to two tiny reserves in Kajiado and Laikipia counties. The second Anglo-Maasai agreement, which was reached in 1911, transferred the Maasai from the Northern Reserve to an expanded Southern Reserve. This entailed an agreement in which the Ilpurko Maasai would leave the Laikipia reserve in exchange for a larger region in the south as explained by Meitamei Dapash & Poole (2025).

The Maasai were immediately restricted to the lands set aside as reserves because of the two Anglo-Maasai treaties of 1904 and 1911. The reserves included the area that is now Kajiado and Narok counties. This significantly restricted the amount of land accessible for Maasai livestock grazing. It is believed that these two accords reduced Maasai land by more than half (MIRMD, 1948). As a result, they moved to a new area, where they encountered limited permanent water sources and grass for their animals and were subjected to more severe droughts. Increased confinement, overcrowding, and limited seasonal movement resulted in overgrazing and overstocking; hence, conflicts between Maasai groups were unavoidable (Meitamei & Poole, 2025).

Other people who had lost their land to Europeans moved to Maasai-inhabited places. For example, beginning in 1913, the Kikuyu, who had been evicted from their agricultural grounds in the highlands by Europeans, sought alternate locations to cultivate. They moved to Maasai Reserves in the "Mau escarpment, Ngong Hills, Ngurman Hills in Magadi, and the slopes of Mt Kilimanjaro and Ol Doinyo Orok near Namanga" (Campbell et al., 1998).

The Kamba, who were also displaced from Machakos, Mbooni, and Kikumbuliu, relocated near Loitoktok. These were the areas that could be cultivated. Farmers' possession of these areas resulted in recurring clashes with the Maasai over cattle theft and grazing rights. (Campbell et al., 1998).

Even though Nyamwamu (2009) has observed that livestock keeping has generated rampant conflicts over grazing land and water points, Maasai pastoralists fought off other ethnic communities and stole their livestock. Communities living near the Maasai occupied highlands and valleys and such areas provided hiding places and protected them from Maasai attacks. Owing to livestock raids by the Maasai, some ethnic communities had to abandon livestock-keeping altogether. The Gusii, for example, were livestock keepers, but owing to Maasai cattle raids, they had to turn to crop farming (Ochieng', 1974). Another factor that made the Gusii abandon livestock-keeping was the areas where they settled. Due to Maasai attacks, the Gusii ran into the highlands, which were unsuitable for keeping large herds of Livestock (Ocheng', 1974).

The two treaties that were signed between Maasai pastoralists and the colonial government in 1904 and 1911 were intended to secure the land rights of the Maasai in Narok and Kajiado Counties but the colonial government did not fully enforce the treaties hence Maasai pastoralists did not benefit. A few examples will help underscore this point. Even though the agreements of 1904 and 1911 spelled out, in vivid terms, the boundaries of the Maasai Reserve, some European farms were right inside the Maasai Reserve. There were five European farms in the Reserve, yet only "two farms under the terms of the treaties fell within the Reserve" (KNA, BN/81/114). In particular, "there had been substantial encroachments over the boundary line of the Reserve in the area North East of Mount Suswa (KNA, BN/81/114).

During the colonial period, an improper survey and demarcation of boundaries of the Maasai reserve existed, especially where the Reserve bordered the farm of a European named "Mr. E. Poys Cobb on Mau end of the North by the Southern and Eastern boundaries." (KNA, BN/81/114). In 1948, the "Olpusimoru forest within the Mau Forest and unquestionably within

the Treaty area was taken from the Maasai." (KNA, BN/81/114; KNA, DC/NRK/1/1/3 Narok District Annual Report for 1948).

In addition, the Maasai had continuously laid claim to land in Kinangop, which, according to the "1911 Treaty, guaranteed the Maasai the land on the slopes of Kinangop," but which rights had not been surrendered (KNA, BN/81/114). Thus, while the 1904 and 1911 Treaties were meant to secure Maasai land in Narok and Kajiado, as time went by, the colonial government continued to entertain activities that either took away Maasai land or encouraged encroachment on Maasai lands. The colonial government regarded Maasai pastoralism as an uneconomic use of land and wanted to create land scarcity to kill Maasai traditional forms of livelihood. This is where the Maasai found themselves during the first World War.

More land in Narok was set aside for the settlement of non-Maasai ethnic communities, that is, the Luo, in contravention of the 1904 Treaty (also repeated in the 1911 Treaty), which guaranteed that the community had been settled in areas "A" and "B" in Kilgoris-Trans Mara on a leasehold basis. The leasehold states, "European and other settlers shall not be allowed to take up land in the settlements. The Luo period was supposed to expire in 1959, but the Luo continued to reside in these areas without paying fees beyond 1959 (KNA, BN/81/114). Their continued residence on this land had generated tensions so much so that:

> *The Minister for Lands and Settlement visited the district twice. The first visit was to inform the Narok County Council of the government's decision about compensation for areas A and B, which have since been occupied by the South Nyanza people (District Commissioner, Narok District Annual Report 1966:2).*

3.4 Maasai pastoralism during the interwar period

The onset of the first World War came as a shock to the world and the disruptions that accompanied it affected the world economy leading to an economic depression. When the war came to an end, the colonial government wanted to revive the economy and this led to an

increased demand for African labor. The Maasai were not willing to provide wage labor and this affected their relationship with the colonial government which felt that Maasai pastoralists refused to seek paid work because of their livelihood system.

To counter the Maasai's 'pride' and have them seek paid work the colonial government starved them of land and livestock. Unfortunately, Maasai pastoralism appeared resilient, not pleasing the colonial administrators and European farmers. By the end of WWI, the Maasai still had enough livestock to cater to their needs (see table below).

Table 2: Livestock held by the Maasai pastoralists in Narok, 1920-1921

Livestock	**Approximate Number**
Cattle	800,000
Sheep	1,000,000
Goats	121,000

Livestock Approximate Number (*Source: KNA, DC/NRK/1/1/1 Narok District Annual Report 1920-1921*)

With adequate numbers of livestock in their custody, the Maasai had a steady supply of meat, milk, and blood as part of their food. They did not need money from paid work as they would sell part of their livestock and obtain tax money. They also did not need to buy imported European products as they led a simple life and utilized locally available resources.

Their clothes were made of animal skins and they moved from place to place on foot. Colonial accounts, as cited within the Kenya Land Commission Report of 1934, retrospectively identify land limitations set under the 1904 and 1911 Maasai agreements, which relegated communities

to reserves like Narok, undermining customary grazing and potentially reducing herd sizes in the long term.

Anthropologist Dorothy Hodgson writes that livestock was at the heart of Maasai's economic and social life. Nevertheless, under-reporting and evasive measures ensued under colonial attempts to tax and regulate herds (Once Intrepid Warriors, 2001), while veterinary records analyzed by John Lamphear demonstrate outbreaks like rinderpest further reduced livestock numbers (The Scattering Time, 1992). Anthropologist Paul Spencer estimates that pre-colonial herds were extensive but diminished under colonial measures.

Heavy collective fines were imposed on the Maasai as punishment for cattle raids, which were to be paid in terms of livestock. In 1922, for example, His Excellency Sir Edward Northey approved a "collective fine of 10,000 heads of stock on the Purko in respect of the offense (KNA, DC/NRK/1/1/1 Narok District Annual Report 1922). From the foregoing, one gets the impression that all attempts were made to starve Maasai pastoralists of livestock.

The colonial government was keen on introducing other livestock-related economies to the Maasai pastoralists of Narok County. This was in the hope that the Maasai would transform from purely nomadic pastoralists to settled life. The introduction of ghee-making was one such venture (KNA, DC/NRK/1/1/2 Narok District Annual Report 1925).

The imposition of ghee (clarified butter) production by colonial officials in Narok was an attempt as part of an overall effort to control Maasai pastoralism. The Maasai traditionally used a subsistence system in which cattle were used for their milk, blood, and meat, playing an essential role in social, economic, and spiritual affairs. The British colonial government perceived the system as being economically inefficient and environmentally unsustainable. As such, they imposed ghee production to modify pastoral resources and induce the conversion of

traditional livestock use patterns towards market-oriented activities. The colonial government supported ghee production as an avenue for Maasai families to process excess milk for more extended storage and sale.

Traditionally in charge of handling dairy, women were trained in large-scale ghee production for sale to Indian traders and settler markets. The step was presented as an avenue for increased family incomes and Maasai integration into the colonial cash economy. Underlying its purpose, though, was the goal of discouraging cattle expansion by leading Maasai families away from depending entirely on pastoralism.

With the introduction of ghee-making, colonial governments sought to change the pastoral value system, where the size of the herd represented wealth, status, and protection. The reasoning was that if the Maasai could make money from ghee, they could be induced to have fewer cattle, thereby easing pressure on land for grazing and supporting colonial land conservation efforts. The policy found limited success, though, as the Maasai were deeply attached to their cattle and considered milk mostly as a subsistence item instead of a commercial item.

The program sometimes created confusion and opposition with traditional norms, particularly when changing women's roles from domestic milk consumption to commercial production. Lastly, promoting ghee production belonged to the larger colonial project of changing Maasai livelihoods, subverting their pastoral resilience, and introducing sedentary, market-oriented practices instead of communal, mobile pastoralism.

Although definite figures for Narok County are limited, colonial accounts suggest that in 1931, the animal numbers in some Kenyan districts were estimated at around 320,000 animals. This approximates the larger stock holdings in areas occupied by pastoral populations (Anon, 2025).

There was a reduction in livestock numbers in the 1940s because of several issues, including colonial policies and environmental conditions. Particularly, colonial leaders enforced destocking policies to alleviate overgrazing as well as provide meat in support of the war effort.

Destocking policies in some regions resulted in considerable reductions in the number of livestock. For example, in some districts, the number of livestock fell from 320,000 in 1931 to roughly 120,000 in 1952 (Anon, 2025). During the 1950s, the Swynnerton Plan 1954 emphasized grazing control and limiting livestock numbers to the land's capacity. This policy aimed to enhance land use and agricultural productivity, which affected traditional pastoralism. Although figures for specific livestock numbers in Narok County in the 1950s are not found, such policies must have affected Maasai livestock holdings (Anon, 2025).

3.5 Kikuyu Settlement in Narok County and the Land Question

As stated earlier, the colonial government was keen on settling the Kikuyu in Narok County. This solved some problems the colonial government felt were affecting the Maasai farmers. The government facilitated the settlement of the Kikuyu, so they introduced crop cultivation to change the Maasai's pastoral economy. Colonial leaders considered pastoralism both economically inefficient and environmentally degenerative, so they sought to "modernize" the Maasai by promoting agriculture. The government hoped that settling the Kikuyu agriculturalists, who were already crop producers, in Maasai land would make them role models or change agents for the Maasai, prompting them to take up cultivation techniques. The policy negatively affected traditional pastoralism by disrupting communal grazing areas, interfering with traditional livestock migration patterns, and decreasing the land used for seasonal pastures. It also entrenched the displacement of their pastoralists and the Maasai's long-term socioeconomic marginalization. The problem, according to the Maasai themselves, was not pastoralism but a lack of adequate land on which to practice pastoralism. Thus, the

Maasai continued to hold the colonial government responsible for their problems because most of their land was alienated from European settlement. Also, the colonial government refused to acknowledge that most of Narok County was not suited to crop-farming due to its climatic conditions, which were an arid and semi-arid area" (KNA, DC/NRK/1/1/2 Narok District Annual Report 1928).

Another policy was the introduction of trade, where physical goods such as hides and skins came to be traded between the Maasai of Narok County and Indian merchants. This was a colonial effort to incorporate indigenous pastoral societies into the cash-based economy. Historically, the Maasai prized cattle for subsistence use and social reasons, but colonial authorities stimulated the commodification of animal hide and skin products, which had a European market. From the 1920s to the 1930s, trade networks developed around market centers such as Narok, where Indian merchants, African intermediaries, and European purchasers maintained reception centers.

The colonial government also facilitated trade through dipping policies and centralized markets for cattle, from which they could gather and tax hide and skin supplies. Demand skyrocketed during the Second World War, when demands for the military raised the value of leather, encouraging increased Maasai involvement in the business. With time, fiscal pressure from taxation induced some Maasai to consider hides and skins as sources of income, though not all elderly Maasai shed their attachment to the cultural worth of live cattle. Challenges such as low earnings, market variability, and preservation methods undermined the hide-and-skin business. However, the business represented an important, albeit limited, change in the Maasai economy in colonial times.

The hides and skins trade was so lucrative that it led to the opening of the Old East African Trading Company in Ewaso Nyiro, and "over 90 % of the hides exported passed through their

hands" (KNA, DC/NRK/1/1/2 Narok District Annual Report 1928). In 1828, 374 tons of hides were exported to Kijabe from Narok District" (*ibid*). The Company did not deal directly with the Maasai but relied on Indian traders who bought the hides from the Maasai. Thus, much concern was directed at improving methods of flaying and curing hides in Narok County. This was because traders complained about the poor methods of the Maasai of flaying and curing hides (KNA, DC/NRK/1/1/2 Narok District Annual Report 1928).

To increase the number of hides exported, the colonial government tended to bend towards encouraging the Maasai to sell their livestock by subjecting Maasai pastoralists to perennial starvation through policies that led to food shortages and loss of autonomy. Taxation and labor policies, such as hut and poll taxes, forced the Maasai men to seek wage labor, disrupting pastoral practices and weakening their ability to support their communities through livestock keeping. Furthermore, the forced settlement policy undermined the Maasai traditional nomadic lifestyle because the settlements lacked adequate pasture or resources, leading to food insecurity. The colonial government always blamed the Maasai for overstocking and not selling their livestock during drought seasons.

In most cases, the colonial government expected the Maasai to supply cheap beef during drought seasons, but there was no provision for slaughter markets. The District Commissioner once lamented that the Maasai were not being supplied with access to slaughter markets. This resonates with a response from a respondent who reported that: -

> *"Folks may talk of the useless Maasai. However, the fact is that they are forbidden to help the prosperity of the Colony in the way that they best could, that is, by supplying cheap beef (KNA, DC/NRK/1/1/2 Narok District Annual Report 1925*).

The colonial government failed to provide water development schemes and veterinary services, which would have aided in minimizing livestock deaths from animal diseases, especially between 1930 and 1934, when the Maasai experienced a severe, prolonged drought that killed most of their livestock (KNA, DC/NRK/1/1/2 Narok District Annual Report 1934).

3.6 Further alienation of Maasai land during World War II and its impact on Maasai pastoralism

European farmers continued to use Maasai land in breach of the 1904 and 1911 Treaties, for instance, by establishing a settlement scheme for the Dorobo people who lived in Laikipia and were moved because of pressure from European settlers. The three reasons that led to their movement are documented as follows: One was that the European farmers feared that livestock diseases would be transferred from Dorobo-owned cattle to European-owned cattle. This was bearing in mind the fact that Dorobo livestock owners were nomadic. Secondly, European farmers in Laikipia disliked the Dorobo because they were in the habit of stealing their livestock. Lastly, European farmers in Laikipia disliked the Dorobo people because they were unwilling to supply labor on their farms. Overall, the settlement of Dorobo in the Olenguruone Settlement Scheme served to take away more land from the Maasai pastoralists. Apart from the Olenguruone Settlement Scheme, Luo people were settled in Kilgoris-TransMara Division, Narok County (KNA, DC/NRK/1/1/1 and KNA /DC/NRK/1/1/2).

Following World War II, the settlement of other communities on Maasai pastoral land in Narok County profoundly impacted traditional pastoralism. It resulted in encroachment on key grazing areas, diminishing rangeland for Maasai livestock, and hindering seasonal mobility, vital for pastoralism. Consequently, pastoralists were compelled to concentrate their herds within limited areas, resulting in overgrazing, land degradation, and increased exposure to drought and livestock diseases. This change paved the way for increased sedentarisation of the

Maasai, eroding traditional cultural practices and social structures like the age-set system. Land clashes also deepened as rivalry over diminishing resources triggered clashes between the Maasai and newly settled communities. The decline of pastoralism created economic marginalization as Maasai families lost their livestock-based riches and relied heavily on wage employment.

3.7 Restriction of Mau Forest access and its impact on Maasai pastoralism in Narok County

One of Kenya's most significant remaining indigenous forest systems, the Mau Forest, was of great ecological and socioeconomic value for Maasai pastoralists in Narok County. Historically, the forest was an important dry-season grazing reserve with water sources, salt licks, and pasture during the dry season. The rivers and springs of the forest, several of which originated in the Mau, supplied animals and human settlements. The forest also functioned as a climatic stabilizer, controlling rain patterns critical for maintaining the grasslands upon which pastoralism is based. During extended droughts or conflicts, Maasai pastoralists went to the forest for the safety of their livestock (Elena, 2025).

However, the gradual closure of Maasai access to the Mau Forest through state-driven conservation, reforestation, and protection campaigns negatively impacted pastoralism. The declaration of large tracts of the forest as protected areas made traditional grazing illegal, detaching pastoralists from important dry-season resources. This compelled herders to use already degraded, dwindling grazing areas, inducing overgrazing, smaller herd sizes, and increased livestock mortality. Restricted access also imposed longer journeys for searching for pasture and water on pastoralists, adding extra stress on pastoralists and animals. Additionally, exclusion from the forest undermined the resilience of the pastoral system, the long-established adaptation strategies of the Maasai having weathered multiple generations of climate

variability. Over the long term, this generated livelihood insecurity, poverty, and cultural displacement among the Maasai in Narok County (Elena, 2025).

This study has previously observed that Maasai pastoralism was informed by indigenous knowledge, whereby certain areas were preserved for dry-season grazing only. Thus, Maasai indigenous knowledge enabled them to conserve their environment against degradation. In addition, the Maasai were good forest conservators as far as their indigenous knowledge allowed them. Reports from the colonial government attested to this. Writing in his report of 1914-1915, the District Commissioner for Narok District noted that:

> *There are no forest reserves in this district, although there are hundreds of acres of forest. There is a great deal of good cedar. The Maasai, as far as I know, do not damage the forest (KNA, DC/NRK/1/1/1 Annual Report of Narok District for the year ending 31 March 1915, p. 30).*

From 1915 until the Second World War in 1939, the Maasai had not changed their attitude about how they related to their forests. Writing about this, the DC Narok noted that "the Maasai do not damage their forests" (KNA, DC/NRK/1/1/3 Narok District Annual Report 1939, p. 23). However, after 1939, the government wanted the forest to be brought under the Government Conservator of Forests, and the Maasai were opposed to that. As such:

> *Undoubtedly, the Maasai do not want their forests to be looked after by the Conservator of Forests. Their argument is logical: they contend they do not harm their forests, so why should the government want to look after them for the Maasai? (KNA, DC/NRK/1/1/3 Narok District Annual Report 1939, p. 23)*

If anything, the greatest threat to the Maasai Mau Forest was Kikuyu sawmill workers, and "measures were taken in the latter part of the year to put a stop to the unauthorized cutting of forest timber by Kikuyu pit sawyers" (KNA, DC/NRK/1/1/3 Narok District Annual Report

1940, p. 6). Come 1941, the Maasai Local Native Council based in Narok "remained adamant in a determination not to hand over the Mau Forest for inclusion in the Native Forest Reserve Areas" and "discussion of the problem at various times achieved no noticeable results" (KNA, DC/NRK/1/1/3 Narok District Annual report 1941, p. 10). Faced with resistance from the Maasai community against gazetting their forest areas as government forest reserves, the government changed its narrative. It started accusing the Maasai of destroying the Mau Forest. In fact, in 1941, the blame game started:

> *It is difficult to resist the idea that certain council members make political capital from advising an obstructionist attitude. There are signs that these areas are being subjected to gradual reduction by grass fires, which annually sweep and eat into their margins. This is due partly to accident and possibly to a deliberate policy of forest destruction designed to procure more grazing" (KNA, DC/NRK/1/1/3 Narok District Annual Report 1941, p. 10).*

However, owing to WWII, nothing was done about a change in forest conservation from the Maasai to the central government. The narrative was rekindled in 1946. Apart from the forest fires, which the Maasai had been blamed for igniting, they were also accused in 1946 of removing barks from trees. It emerged that:

> *The District Commissioner was then worried about the frequent fires causing damage to the forest; in addition, "barking" had killed many cedar trees (KNA, DC/NRK/1/1/3 Narok District Annual report 1946, p. 10).*

This narrative was pushed through and forced on the Maasai elders, who then convened "the Joint Local Native Council meeting held in February 1946 to consider approving the handing over of the Mau Forest to the Forest Department for exploitation on behalf of the L.N.C." (KNA, DC/NRK/1/1/3 Narok District Annual Report 1946, p. 10). The colonial government

had yet another strategy of changing forest conservation from the Maasai to the Forest Department. This other option existed in the law.

> *The law provides for the Forest Department to take over the forests on behalf of the L.N. Cs regardless of the councils' opposition, and this must unquestionably be done in the case of Mau Forests (KNA, DC/NRK/1/1/3 Narok).*

Progress was being made in placing the Mau Forests under the protection of the forest department for administration on behalf of the L.N.C. (KNA, DC/NRK/1/1/3 Narok District Annual report 1947, p. 9). In 1949, His Excellency the Governor referred to the necessity of protecting the Maasai forests" (KNA, DC/NRK/1/1/3 Narok District Annual Report 1948, p. 14). Towards the end of 1948, the "Forest Boundary Commission began to turn their attention to the Maasai Forest, and a visit of inspection was arranged for early in the New Year" (KNA, DC/NRK/1/1/3 Narok District Annual report 1948, p.15).

To prevent the Maasai from making the "wrong" interpretation about the government's intention to take over the control of Maasai Mau Forest, the government prevailed over the Maasai elders whose support it sought vigorously to allay fears "that the government's proposals for forest protection may not be just an attempt to take the land" (KNA, DC/NRK/1/1/3 Narok District Annual report 1948, p.15). The government narrative, which justified taking away the control of Mau Forest, assumed immense strength in 1949 because "fires in the forest were widespread" and a considerable "loss of valuable timber and destruction of the forest" was realized (KNA, DC/NRK/1/1/3 Narok District Annual Report 1949, p. 15). The forest fires, which were caused mainly by a prolonged drought, were a blessing in disguise for the colonial government. The government capitalized on the fire incidents to push through its agenda of placing the forest under government control and protection. Eventually, "members of the Forest Boundary Commission visited Narok, and

eventually, they submitted their recommendations that the Mau Forest should be taken over by the Forest department for administration as a Native Forest Area" (KNA, DC/NRK/1/1/3 Narok District Annual Report 1949, p. 15).

3.8 Chapter Conclusion

The argument put forward by the colonial government when they annexed the Maasai land for European settlement was that there was much-uninhabited land in Kenya, which would be put to proper use by European farmers. What was referred to as uninhabited lands was African land. Crop farmers were accustomed to shifting cultivation, which allowed the soil to regain fertility. On the other hand, pastoralists recognized the importance of nomadism, which enabled them to oscillate between rainy and dry seasons. By confining the Maasai in Reserves (Native land units), they prevented pastoralists from moving from place to place in search of pasture and water. Thus, pastoralism was subjected to harsh conditions. The next chapter will examine the decline of the Maasai pastoralist economy in the post-colonial period during President Jomo Kenyatta and President Moi's regimes.

CHAPTER FOUR

DECLINE OF MAASAI PASTORALIST ECONOMY IN NAROK COUNTY IN POST-COLONIAL PERIOD (1964-2002)

4.0 Introduction

This chapter discussed the decline of Maasai Pastoralism in Narok County during the post-colonial period, emphasizing regime change. It explores the impact of post-independence land reforms and development policies implemented during the Kenyatta and Moi regimes on Maasai access to pastoral lands and the overall viability of traditional pastoralism in Narok County. Building on the legacy of colonial land alienation, the chapter analyzes how the introduction of individual land tenure systems, land adjudication processes, and expanding commercial agriculture further eroded communal grazing rights and pastoral mobility. State-led policies of sedentariness that encouraged crop cultivation and permanent settlement as part of a broader agenda to modernize rural economies is also investigated.

These transformations profoundly altered the socio-ecological dynamics of pastoralism, leading to the fragmentation of rangelands, increased land sales, and rising land conflicts. The chapter further examines how these reforms contributed to the marginalization of the Maasai from decision-making processes over land and how elite capture and speculative land deals reshaped land ownership patterns in the region. Using archival data, policy documents, and oral accounts, the chapter comprehensively assesses how state policies between 1964 and 2002 contributed to the transformation of Maasai pastoralism in Narok.

4.1 Decline of Pastoralism in Narok during the Kenyatta Presidency

The Kenyatta administration (1963-1978) pursued policies that further undermined the Maasai pastoralist economy in Narok. These included the Land Adjudication Act of 1968 and the

Registered Land Act (Cap 300), encouraging sedentarisation and crop cultivation, promotion and leasing of land to wealthy individuals, and neglect of pastoral development in national policy and public investment as discussed below.

4.1.1 The Impact of Post-Independence Land Adjudication Policies on Pastoralism in Narok County, Kenya

The Land Adjudication Act of 1968 and the Registered Land Act (Cap 300) presumed individual ownership would create increased economic productivity and development incentives. In Narok County, where the Maasai traditionally used communal grazing techniques with seasonal mobility, the adjudication process conflicted with traditional pastoral systems. Subdivision of large rangeland areas with fencing disrupted migration trails and fragmented the lands used for sustainable animal husbandry.

There was no legal protection of communal rights and the Maasai lost their land through sale or leases by wealthier individuals, including non-Maasai settlers. The process created internal inequality, and land allocation favored politically well-placed elites. Overgrazing in small areas, environmental degradation, and loss of animals were the results. Aside from ecological destruction, the policy diminished the cultural values of the Maasai and their social cohesion, replacing reciprocity with individualism and competition. While presented as development, the adjudication policy eventually undermined the sustainability of pastoralism in the county of Narok and created long-term socioeconomic and cultural dislocation (Okoth Ongendo, 1991).

4.1.2 The policy of encouraging sedentarisation and crop cultivation and its impact on Pastoralism in Narok County, Kenya

Underpinned by the colonialist conviction that pastoralism was an inefficient and old-fashioned practice, the state induced the Maasai to forego livestock mobility for fixed agriculture, especially in the fertile highland areas around Mau Forest and Loita Hills. State agencies

provided plowing, seeds, and agricultural extension services to promote the cultivation of maize, wheat, and barley, while agricultural training in schools helped reinforce the transition.

The expansion of crop cultivation resulted in the loss of strategic dry-season pasture grounds, disturbed traditional migration routes, and undermined the ecological rationale of pastoralism based on mobility and adaptability in semi-arid ranges. State resources and attention are skewed towards farm development over livestock development, further marginalizing pastoral economies. The introduction of fixed agriculture also involved cultural displacement, undermined social cohesion, and created land and water access conflicts between pastoralists and the settling farmers. Ultimately, the policy, couched as development, undermined the sustainability of traditional Pastoralism in Narok and had long-term socio-ecological tensions as its outcome. (Homewood & Rodgers, 1991).

4.1.3 Promotion and Leasing and its impact on Pastoralism in Narok County

After land adjudication and registration in the 1970s, the Kenyatta government incentivized the Maasai of Narok County to enter the formal land market by promoting land sale and leasing as mechanisms for realizing the economic potential of the land. Based on a capitalist philosophy, such a policy treated land as a commodity, not a communal resource, aiming to integrate pastoralists into the national economy through private land ownership and commercial farm use (Galaty, 1999).

Practically, many Maasai landowners, with no previous experience of individual title ownership, were induced, or misled, to sell or lease land to non-Maasai elites, government officers, and affluent agricultural investors, mainly Kikuyu and Kalenjin settlers (Rutten, 1992). The process was facilitated by land control boards and political favoritism, leading to the large-scale alienation of Maasai rangelands. Leased and sold lands were commonly fenced off and cropped, rendering them inaccessible for animals, thus inhibiting seasonal migration as

well as dry-season grazing. This resulted in the dispersal of grazing areas and undermined the environmental resilience central to sustainable Pastoralism (Mwangi E, 2007).

Over time, the commodification of land triggered increasing inequality in the Maasai community, dispossession of poor households, and heightened conflict over pasture and access to water (Galaty, 1999). Eventually, such a policy undermined the sustainability of traditional pastoralism, undermined communal land management institutions, and left permanent socioeconomic legacies in Narok County**.**

4.1.4 Neglect of Pastoral Development in National Policy and Public Investment and its impact on Pastoralism in Narok County

The longest-lasting and worst policies that weaken Pastoralism in Narok County are the chronic neglect of pastoral development in national policy and public investment. The Kenyatta and Moi governments prioritized potential agricultural zones, like the Central Highlands and Rift Valley Highlands, while ignoring arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL) where most pastoralist communities like the Maasai live. The neglect manifested in budget priorities, infrastructure development, services rendered, and agricultural research, significantly favoring sedentary crop cultivation.

Pastoral regions like Narok County received limited public investment in markets, veterinary services, roads, water infrastructure, or education, even though they contribute heavily towards national livestock production. Development plans such as Kenya's Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965, generally regarded as a blueprint for post-independence plans for development, specifically labeled pastoral areas as "economically unproductive" and hence not worthy of large-scale investment (Republic of Kenya, 1965). This further supported the notion of pastoralism as outdated, inefficient, and incommensurate with modern development, legitimizing its Neglect.

The outcome was the absence of institutional support for pastoralists, who were facing mounting challenges from climate variability, pressure from populations, and land alienation. While large-scale infrastructure in areas of settlement and agriculture emerged, pastoralists were left with no markets, storage facilities, livestock insurance, or drought-mitigating support (Kimaren et al., 2014). Extension services did not reach the herders, and policies for livestock development were weakly constructed, not being compatible with the mobile nature of pastoral production systems (Fratkin, 1979). Moreover, with most research and innovation being directed toward crops and systems of sedentary livestock, pastoral knowledge systems and concerns were sidelined.

This extended period of neglect undermined pastoralists' resilience and productivity, exposed them to greater risks of drought and disease, and entrenched poverty and marginalization in Maasai households. It also facilitated the easier encroachment of elites and external groups on pastoral lands under the pretext of development, wildlife conservation, or private commercial farm expansion.

4.2 Decline of Pastoralism during the Moi Presidency

Under Daniel Arap Moi's regime in Kenya (1978-2002), several government policies and measures directly and indirectly eroded Maasai pastoralism.

4.2.1 Establishment of Commercial Ranches

The government created policies that encouraged the move towards commercial ranching to modernize Maasai pastoralism in Kenya's Narok County. The policy stimulated the Maasai pastoralists' adoption of a sedentary lifestyle as their communal lands were subdivided into privately owned group ranches to promote modern stock management. The policy resulted in extensive land fragmentation, which constrained the Maasai's capacity for traditional mobility and access to vital grazing grounds, paramount for cattle survival in drought. With the

privatization of land came the inability of the majority of Maasai to effectively manage their commercial ranches in the absence of capital and technical knowledge, leading to overgrazing and consequently land degradation.

Group ranches were established in the 1970s and 1980s. A group ranch is a system where a group of individuals collectively owns land and manages their livestock within a defined area, often for grazing purposes. This contrasts with individual land ownership where each person owns and manages their land and livestock separately. The expansion and continuation of the group ranch system was established by the first president in the late 1960s, but President Moi enlarged it in the early years of his regime. More than 50 ranches were established by 1987. This forced the Maasai to sell their land to outsiders and wealthy people, some of whom were politicians not from the area.

The establishment of ranches in Narok County primarily disadvantaged pastoralists due to a combination of factors, including unequal resource access and fragmentation of traditional grazing lands. The group ranch system was based on a livestock quota system, but this was not consistently implemented, leading to disparities in access to resources and benefits. Individual members' benefits were often tied to herd size, potentially disadvantaging those with smaller herds who had a small influence on decision-making. (Fratkin, 1979).

The policy also limited stakeholders' access to shared resources, historically belonging to the Maasai, thereby increasing land disputes. Moreover, the emphasis on commercial ranching prioritized livestock production for exports over subsistence pastoralism, leading to environmental degradation and increased sensitivity in the economy (Fratkin, 1979).

4.2.2 Extension and Deepening of Land Adjudication and Privatization Policies and their impact on Pastoralism in Narok County

The policy had significant influence on Narok County pastoralism in Kenya. It destabilized traditional Maasai communal land tenure and led to land subdivision, decreased grazing land, and socioeconomic vulnerability of the pastoralist populations. Land adjudication, which started in the colonial period and was carried forward after independence, was meant to transform communal lands into individual titles.

Under the Moi regime, the process was formalized so that the state encouraged individual land ownership as the key to modernizing agriculture and increasing economic growth. However, the Maasai pastoralists, sustained by communal grazing practices and seasonal migratory regimes, suffered through the transition. The apportionment of communal land into smaller units destroyed grazing land, leading to the disorganization of the migratory grounds integral to sustained pastoralism. In areas such as the Kimana Ranch, the households were allocated about 60 acres, which was insufficient to accommodate the livestock herd. The result was that most households had to cut the size of the herd or opt for other ways to survive, which eroded the sustainability of pastoralism as an occupation (Homewood & Rodgers, 1991).

Additionally, the commodification of land ownership allowed land to be sold to non-members at prices below its value, displacing the Maasai people and destabilizing the base of their economy and culture. The absence of proper institutions and laws to safeguard communal land rights enhanced the tendency, exposing the pastoralists to land loss. Therefore, Moi's presidencies' land adjudication and privatization procedures deeply impacted Pastoralism within Narok County. By abolishing communal land tenure and favoring ownership at the household level, the policies disrupted traditional modes of pastoralism, resulting in land

fragmentation, decreases in grazing land, and socioeconomic marginalization of the Maasai pastoralist society (Galvin K A, 2008).

The government encouraged crop cultivation by providing extension services and aid schemes in the pastoralist regions. The land that had been reserved for pasture was turned into farms. Apart from barley and wheat, the other crops cultivated in Narok during the Moi era were pyrethrum, onions, maize, potatoes, and beans. (District Commissioner, Narok District Annual Report 1983). Determined to encourage crop farming, the Moi administration also encouraged practices that saw a land change from Maasai pastoralism to crop farming. This was through land adjudication. Individualizing land ownership made it easy for crop farmers to buy land from the Maasai or for the Maasai to lead a settled life. Land adjudication was encouraged during the Moi era because it was intended to change the Maasai from nomadic pastoralism to a settled people.

Writing about this in 1983, the District Commissioner noted:

> *The indigenous people of Narok are the Maasai, most of whom still lead a pastoral life. Nevertheless, permanent settlement of the Maasai is being encouraged for the rapid development of the district (District Commissioner, Narok District Annual Report 1983:1)*

By encouraging the Maasai to be a permanently settled community, the Moi administration was similar to either the colonial government or the Kenyatta administration; this was considered more modern than nomadism. (Homewood & Rodgers, 1991).

4.2.3 Wildlife Conservation and Tourism Policies in the 1980s and 1990s and its impact on Pastoralism

These policies led to the protection of some areas and tourism development at the expense of pastoralism. More areas around Maasai Mara were allocated to tourism leading to the loss of pasture and water, especially during dry weather. The revenue from tourism was not well distributed, and there was little compensation for the Maasai people.

The Moi regime extended and deepened land tenure reform that got underway both during the Colonial and early independence eras. This reform encouraged private land ownership and individual title deeds at the expense of communal land systems that support pastoralist communities. Privatization increased the large-scale purchase of land by the educated and foreigners and investors excluded pastoralists from their grazing areas. Moreover, this shift disrupted traditional pastoralist mobility patterns, and their ability to negotiate access to land based on social relationships and customary practices restricted their ability to follow the seasonal movement of livestock and find suitable grazing areas. The uneven distribution of land deepened social inequalities within the community, with some pastoralists gaining more access to essential water and pasture for humans and livestock (Lamprey & Reid, 2004).

In Narok County, Kenya, approximately 741,000–865,000 acres (15–20% of the country's 4.43 million) are dedicated to wildlife conservation and tourism (Ogutu et al., 2016). This consists of the Maasai Mara National Reserve, a government-protected area of about 373,000 acres (1,510 km²) governed by the Kenya Wildlife Service (Kenya Wildlife Service, 2021). On the perimeter of the Reserve are community conservancies like Mara Naboisho (50,000 acres) and Olare Motorogi (35,000 acres), which are part of a larger network of 370,000–494,000 acres of conservancies. These conservancies work through land leases agreed upon by Maasai landowners and tourism operators, shifting land from pastoralism and agriculture to

conservation. As much as it has supported wildlife protection and tourism income, it has curtailed access to grazing land for local communities, fueling tensions around livelihood and unfair revenue sharing.

Land-use changes in the Greater Mara Ecosystem revealed through spatial analysis, have made the land harder to manage and have escalated human-wildlife conflicts (Bedelian & Ogutu, 2017). Conservancy boundaries and agreements remain shaky and poorly recorded. As such, the concept of "lost land" captures the dissent from the communities about conservation-induced displacement, with scholars criticizing the projects as advancing systemic dispossession under the veneer of environment protection (Benjaminsen & Bryceson, 2012).

4.2.4 Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) and Globalization and their impact on Pastoralism in Narok County

Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) and globalization seriously disturbed pastoralism in Narok County, heightening Maasai pastoralist vulnerability through land privatization, diminished state support, and integration into unstable global marketplaces. SAPs, which the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) imposed during the 1980s–1990s, compelled Kenya to reduce government expenditures, disassemble veterinary and drought-relief schemes, and privatize common land. This diminished pastoralists' access to fundamental assets such as grazing land and livestock healthcare, compelling many to fall into poverty (Fratkin, 2001). Accelerated land commodification during globalization resulted from foreign entrepreneurs and elites purchasing former common land for tourism development (e.g., Maasai Mara Game Reserve) and commercial farming, displacing pastoralists and rangelands, fragmenting into units (Kenya Land Alliance, 2006; Galaty, 1999).

Market liberalization under SAPs also exposed pastoralists to uncertainty in livestock prices and imported goods due to competition, jeopardizing pastoralists' customary barter economy

(Kimaren et al., 2014). At the same time, cultural globalization and state-promoted sedentarization schemes compelled Maasai to renounce mobility pastoralism, compelling many to shift to marginal wage jobs (Hodgson, 2001). All these pressures intensified poverty and degradation of the environment, as intensified overgrazing took hold in diminishing land space (Mwangi, 2007).

4.3 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter concludes that even though the Maasai expected a lot from post-colonial governments in supporting pastoralism, the policies of the successive post-colonial governments did not deviate much from the colonial policies, which downgraded pastoralism as a way of life and livelihood. Policies such as land adjudication, encouraging crop cultivation, promotion or leasing, and wildlife conservation undermined pastoralism. The next chapter summarizes the study, draws a conclusion and provides recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter summarizes the study and provides a conclusion as well as the study recommendations. The chapter helps to show how the study met its goals and points out areas for further research.

5.1 Objective One: Pre-Colonial Traditional Practices of the Maasai in Narok County

The findings based on the first objective describe the traditional mechanisms of the Maasai people in Narok County, Kenya, for the period 1850-1899. It examines how the Maasai structured their socioeconomic, cultural, and leadership systems to support and maintain pastoralism as a primary livelihood. Analyzing oral histories, archival materials, and available literature, the study uncovers ways in which indigenous systems of governance, age-set systems, communal land management, and cultural values supported resilience and sustainability in Maasai pastoralism. The work offers critical insight into adaptive mechanisms and social cohesion that facilitated the Maasai's adaptability in pre-colonial Kenya's arid and semi-arid areas and contributes to the broader discussion of indigenous knowledge and sustainable land management practices.

5.2 Objective Two: Effect of Land Alienation and Settlement Policies on Maasai Pastoral Mobility and Grazing Patterns

The second objective focused on the effect of colonial land settlement policies and land alienation on Maasai pastoral movement and grazing patterns in Kenya's Narok County between 1900 and 1963. It considered how the Maasai displacement from their original lands and the imposition of exclusionary settlement plans disrupted traditional grazing and seasonal

pastoralist movement routes. Utilizing colonial administrative documents, oral testimonies, and secondary sources, the work revealed that such policies drastically affected the pastoral economy of the Maasai through decreased areas of grazing as well as overgrazing in limited areas.

5.3 Objective Three: Reforms in Land Tenure, Adjudication of Land, Expansion of Agriculture, and Policies of Sedentariness

This objective examined the impact of post-independence land reforms, adjudication procedures, agricultural encroachment, and sedentarization policies on Maasai access to pastoral land and the sustainability of traditional pastoralism in Kenya's Narok County from 1964 to 2002. With particular attention given to the Jomo Kenyatta and Moi regimes, the work explored how transformations in land tenure systems, such as individualization and land privatization, changed communal land ownership and pastoral mobility. Drawing from government documents, interviews, and archival materials, the study concluded that these reforms created land fragmentation, loss of grazing grounds, and increased land dispossession of the Maasai. The development of sedentary agriculture and commercial land use led to the marginalization of pastoral livelihoods.

5.4 Conclusion

This study found that the Maasai pastoralist economy did not disappear but evolved in response to internal and external pressures. Its transformation has been marked by both resilience and vulnerability. The study explains how land alienation, forced settlement during the colonial period, and post-independence government policies transformed pastoralism. Understanding the historical path is important for shaping future policies that support sustainable pastoralism, secure land rights, and enhance the adaptive capacities of pastoralist communities in the face of modern challenges.

5.5 Recommendations

The following recommendations were proposed based on the findings to support the sustainability and resilience of the Maasai pastoralist economy in Narok County.

1. The County Government of Narok should reorient investment into sectors that support sustainable development and respect traditional livelihoods such as meat and dairy processing.

2. The National Land Commission should support community land management committees, which would manage and oversee the use of communal lands, ensuring decisions are made in the community.

5.6 Areas for Further Research

This study looked at the continuity and transformation of pastoralism among the Maasai of Narok. However, the role played by various Maasai groups especially women, was not explored. Therefore, further research can be carried out on the role of women in traditional pastoralist societies: A case study of the Maasai community; and the impact of climate change on pastoralism: A case study of the Maasai community in Narok County, Kenya.

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5.	Lesham Liaram	6.	Noolarami Siligi
7.	Lekishon Letoluo.	8.	Kisaru Kishau
9.	Leyian Nkurumwa	10.	Noorkisaruni Letoluo
11.	Saningo Kinyarkuo	12.	Moolairetu Dapash
13.	Kayioni Nchoko	14.	Kibelekenya Lepore
15.	Lerionka Kasoe	16.	Tishika Nchoko
17.	Tipapa Kiswah	18.	Kilokunye Luai
19.	Tianta Parken	20.	Naatana Letina
21.	Rokonka Sadera	22.	Sitayo Sidai
23.	Semeyian Lepore	24.	Leseiyo Kayiah
25.	Timoi Pakwan	26.	Nolari Sadera
27.	Lesiamon Karia	28.	Noolamala Nchoe
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Introductory Note

I am a Master's degree student at Kenyatta University. I am conducting research on **Continuity and Transformation of Pastoralist Economy among the Maasai of Narok County, Kenya (1850-2002).**

Therefore, I respectfully request your permission to ask a few questions to collect data on the above topic. The information will be used solely for academic research purposes and will be kept in strict confidence. Respondents will not be required to present any identity on the questionnaire.

Your efforts are highly appreciated.

Caren C Keter.

The student/researcher

Department of History, Archaeology, and Political Science Studies

Kenyatta University

Appendix 2: Interview Guide

1.Personal information

Name of respondent

Sex

Age

Ethnic group

Address and location

Occupation

B. Pastoralism during the precolonial period

1. How did Your people practice pastoralism?

2. Were herds used to ensure the continuation of the Maasai lineages?

3. Was there periodic movement of people and Livestock?

4. How did pastoralists spread risk to cushion themselves against disasters such as drought and diseases?

5. What was the cause of communal conflicts?

6. How were land and watering points owned?

C. **Influence of colonial policies on Pastoralism**

1. What made Pastoralism lose its hold in the economic, social, and political system**?**

2. How did colonial policies affect Pastoralism?

3. Why did the colonial government see pastoralists as politically unreliable?

D. Pastoralism during the post-independence period

1. How did post-independence policies affect Pastoralism?

2. How has population growth affected pastoralism?

3. How have globalization and capitalism affected Pastoralism?

4. How has climate change affected pastoralism?

5. What adaptations are implemented by pastoralists in response to challenges?