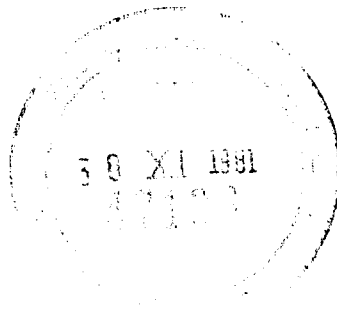


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**the future of pastoral peoples**

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# the future of pastoral peoples

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4–8 august 1980**

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## theoretical implications of pastoral development strategies in east africa

Peter Rigby, *Temple University, Philadelphia, USA*

The issues in this paper outline a comprehensive theoretical and comparative study. My setting them out in this abbreviated and preliminary fashion will be justified if it illuminates the core questions that are of concern to this conference: What is the relevance of research in pastoral social formations to the practical issues of their inevitable transformation? And how can the theoretical underpinnings of such research be made more relevant?

Rather than attempting to evaluate the consequences and achievements of livestock sector interventions in semi-arid regions — a task that has been admirably addressed in a number of recent discussions and publications — I shall take a much more reflexive approach, exploring not only the principal social, economic, environmental, and other assumptions that implicitly or explicitly underlie these interventions but also the very nature of the research process itself, its theoretical problems, and its relevance to the historical processes manifested in specific pastoral social formations. Brief examples of this approach have been presented by Dahl and Hjort (1980) and Salzman (1980) in recent discussions of the concepts of pastoralism and nomadism.

Clearly, my task demands extensive analysis of the relations between specific data, theory, and praxis — my final intention. My present evasion of this demand may be excused, if not justified, by the relevance of the issues and the fact that this version of them was at least partially formulated while I was resident in an Ilparakuyo pastoral homestead with little access to the documentary materials I have gathered for the wider task.

Basic to my argument is a central element in the problematic of historical materialism: there is a dialectic relation between theory and praxis in any social science that has any historic significance.

My discussion is limited to the pastoral social formations of East Africa. There are both theoretical and practical reasons for this. The preliminary point I wish to make is that historically the pastoral formations have not been part of, or linked to, precapitalist state structures (with the exception of the pastoral elements of the interlacustrine states, which form a special case and are not subject to the generalizations advanced here).

Although the pastoral social formations of East Africa have been interdependent with nonpastoral neighbouring peoples, they have an historic specificity that distinguishes them from many of the pastoral societies of West and North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia (Lefebure 1979; Rigby 1979b). I am not putting forward an argument for historical particularism, which, as Salzman argues (1980), may exclude theoretical formulations; in fact, both

Salzman's concern over the "materialist dilemma" and Asad's (1978) application of the mode of production concept are inadequate. The issue is the nature of the historic specificity of the East African pastoral formations and the consequences of this specificity for the mode of production concept and the development strategies that have intervened to transform them, and vice versa.

The second central issue encompasses the following elements: the pastoral peoples' precolonial transformations in relation to their nonpastoral neighbours, their articulation with peripheral capitalism in the colonial state, and their continuing and increasing articulation with unique forms of capitalist exploitation through the national state structures of East Africa. One manifestation of penetration by peripheral capitalism is the loss of pastures and water resources because of the encroachment of government-sponsored cultivation (and other activities, such as creation of wildlife and tourist sites); this is still a burning issue.<sup>1</sup> It has resulted almost universally in increasing interdependence between pastoral formations and their cultivating neighbours. Sometimes, this interdependence is accompanied by at least minimal engagement in agricultural production by formerly "purely" pastoral formations such as the Barabaig, Ilparakuyo, pastoral Maasai, and Borana (Kjaerby 1980; Rigby 1979a, 1980; Parkipuny 1975; Ole Saibull 1974; Dahl 1979).

The implications of the trend toward agricultural production, which has been (and still is) encouraged or actively enforced by both colonial and national governments, are particularly manifested in changes in the pastoralists' returns on labour commitment, a major problem examined in detail for the Barabaig by Kjaerby in a seminal paper (1980). Two major problems that require detailed and intensive research in probably all pastoral areas arise from Kjaerby's findings for the Barabaig: pastoral production requires a much heavier commitment of labour on a 365-day basis than does cultivation, but even with this high labour commitment and its consequent implications for development strategies (for example, education), Kjaerby's work clearly indicates: "the productivity of labour in cattle production is generally higher than for maize production." Kjaerby rightly concluded (1980:103–104):

The general superiority of labor productivity in cattle production over that in maize production is basically related to environmental and climatic conditions which are more suitable for cattle production. . . . In contrast to agricultural societies, where the labor power of school-aged children is more marginal and temporary to agricultural activities, children in pastoral societies are heavily and continuously engaged in herding, day in and day out, and this explains the reluctance of pastoralists to send their children to school. It thus has to be made clear that this reluctance is not due to conservatism or ignorance as maintained by some government officials, but due to the problem of having to carry out a lot of labor tasks.

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<sup>1</sup> A contemporary example of immediate importance is the resurgence of the debate on the exclusion of the pastoral Maasai from the Ngorogoro crater in Tanzania, in which almost all the demonstrated facts of pastoral production and appropriation of the environment have been inverted to justify the position taken by agencies of development in the area.

This statement applies equally well to the Iparakuyo whose elders and *ilmurran* (young initiated men, "junior warriors") are taking an increasing load of day-to-day herding so that young boys (*ilaiyok*) can go to school. I suspect that this situation is almost universal in the pastoral areas of East Africa. There is an urgent need to understand its full and long-term consequences.

Iparakuyo and Barabaig are fully aware that labour returns are much higher for pastoral than for agricultural activities, despite the fact that many Iparakuyo live in areas relatively well suited to cultivation. As Kjaerby succinctly noted for the Barabaig (1980:46):

From the point of view of pastoral land-use we have a contradictory situation. Land alienation [and for Iparakuyo I would add villagization] and alien agro-pastoral encroachment has led to an increase in stocking densities. The Barabaig are fully aware of the problem but, willingly or unwillingly, contribute to this trend by adopting cultivation. The historical conditions influencing national agricultural policies have imposed an untenable situation upon the Barabaig [and, I would add, Iparakuyo, pastoral Maasai, and others]. They are forced to undermine the environmental basis for their preferred way of life.

The Iparakuyo differ from the Barabaig in that most of the labour involved in their maize and food-crop production is supplied by their cultivator neighbours, in return for cash or pastoral products, usually both, with increasing interdependence between the two groups (Rigby 1979a, 1980). At any rate, a major question to be answered for each pastoral area undergoing these pressures and trends, then, is why do pastoralists begin to cultivate or aid and abet the encroachment of cultivation upon their own environmental base.

This question has deep theoretical implications that need to be explored. But first, I must return to the question of the nature of pastoralist production in relation to the concept of modes of production and these historically specific social formations.

I commence by reaffirming Asad's position (1978:61) that theoretical development cannot take place without "the adoption of a problematic based on a coherent concept of mode of production." But Salzman's worry over Asad's formulation is very real, for the latter, although rightly eschewing a "pastoral mode of production," fails to develop two aspects of the argument essential to the historical materialist problematic, thus leaving himself open to what Salzman identifies as the "materialist dilemma." One may uncover these two aspects by examining this false dilemma.

The development of the mode of production concept in general, and in relation to East African pastoral formations in particular, does not depend upon a choice "between a reductionist position which does not seem to be able to work in practice and a permissive position [attributed by Salzman to Godelier] in which mode of production accommodates so much that it means little more than way of life" (Salzman 1980:4). Although a mode of production is a unique articulation of the forces and relations of production, it is also a unique articulation of the economic, juridicopolitical, and ideologic instances of that social formation. These two forms of articulation are indissolubly linked in any particular mode of production, and one cannot be discussed without the other. Thus the question of a "choice" between a "hard" position in which "social organization, kinship, political structure,



ideology, and other idea systems are determined superstructures" (Salzman 1980:4), on the one hand, and a "soft" position in which all these represent a random hodge-podge or a "way of life," on the other does not arise. The concept of mode of production enables precise theorizing about the role of the instances in any social formation in relation to their dominant or nondominant position within it and the nature of their articulation with each other. Let me illustrate this in relation to East African pastoral formations.

It is generally recognized in historical materialist analysis that only in the capitalist mode of production does the economic instance determine its own dominance. In all other known precapitalist modes of production, the economic instance determines the dominance of either the juridicopolitical or the ideological (or both) instances. In the Germanic mode of production,<sup>2</sup> which admirably characterizes the basic articulation of forces and relations of production in East African pastoral (as well as agricultural) social formations, the ideological instance is dominant. But it is at this point that one must turn to the nature of theories about a mode of production.

A mode of production is a theoretical construct that *does* imply generalization, as Salzman asserts (1980:4), but theorizing about a mode of production cannot proceed without reference to the historical social formations in which it occurs, whatever the opinions of Hindess and Hirst (1975) to the contrary. The successful application of the concept of Germanic mode of production to East African pastoral formations (as well as to their cultivating neighbours) thus entails specifying the real nature of the dominance of the ideologic instance in them.

Both descent and kinship organizations and age-set systems emanate from the ideological domain, representing arbitrary categorizations of relations referring to biologically assumed characteristics and functioning, on occasion, as relations of production. I have suggested elsewhere (Rigby 1980) that there is a correlation between the relative dominance of one or other of these principles of organization and the relative emphasis upon pastoral-versus-agricultural activities. There is no need to repeat those arguments here. But the age-set organization is ideologically dominant and functions as a relation of production in pastoral formations such as the Ilparakuyo (Rigby 1979a); furthermore, it is elaborated in other ideological constructs relating to the nature of *pastoral appropriation of the environment*, as opposed to the agropastoral or agricultural formations within the Germanic mode of production. This thesis can best be elaborated by a comparison between the pastoral and agricultural instances of the Germanic mode of production.

Lefebure (1979) has shown clearly the crucial role of descent ideology in the reproduction of social formations using the Germanic mode of production. I have extended this argument to the role of age-set organizations in specific East African pastoral formations, in comparison with those in which descent ideology is dominant (Rigby 1979a, 1980). But one crucial element has been missing from my earlier formulations, and this concerns the

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<sup>2</sup> I am somewhat puzzled by Salzman's dismissal of the concept of the Germanic mode of production as "anachronistic," because he gives no reasons for his epithet nor any critique of its extensive use in the analysis of pastoral social formations. Using Salzman's logic, can one dismiss in similar fashion such "anachronistic" ideas as that of kinship system and political organization?

nature of pastoral appropriation of the environment and the central role of ideology in this most basic of "economic" processes.

Most cultivating communities in East Africa represent the Germanic mode of production in which the domestic group is the major unit of production and reproduction, both social and biological, linked in wider community relations of production by some form of lineal-descent ideology, kinship, and affinal organization. Appropriation of the major means of production (land) is ideologically based upon communal tenure of areas in which descent-group members and their associated kin and affinal links establish rights of usufruct. The exercise of the rights of usufruct, however temporary, is based upon the domestic group, its head, and the matricentral units of married women within it and represents a direct and exclusive appropriation of land; legal mechanisms exist in the juridicopolitical domain to order and maintain the rights of exclusion. In agricultural formations, the cultivators objectify nature (land) in two ways: ideologically as communal property and actually, through appropriation, as an exclusive possession, albeit temporary and subject to a number of community strictures. In a materialist sense, the core notion of a proprietary right in nature is established and maintained through the right of exclusion (Marx 1973). Cultivator is "subject"; nature is "object." The apparent but not serious contradiction in this form of the appropriation of nature is resolved by ideological elaborations upon the mystical relationship between lineal ancestors and areas or objects in the physical environment.

In contrast, the East African pastoral formations, which also represent the Germanic mode of production, rely on the herds, not the land, as their major means of production, although there are elements of differential control over certain natural or artificial resources (such as wells) by descent groups. This control, however, is never exclusive. Community relations of production among, for example, Ilparakuyo and pastoral Maasai, are based upon age-set as well as kinship relationships.

The main point here is that, whatever the nature of control over the herd and its products (and there is some theoretical controversy on this question), the control that the domestic group has in the herd as the major means of production is not a proprietary right in nature, as in land, but in a *product of social labour itself* in the context of a generally accessible nature. Thus nature is not apprehended as object in which pastoralist as subject establishes rights of exclusion. This basic economic fact is elaborated in the social formations in terms of the identification of land and its flora and fauna generally as a "gift from God" (Nkai for Ilparakuyo and pastoral Maasai) and an ideological stricture upon digging it up (and hence destroying it) or killing the fauna that occupy it (as in hunting).

Here, then, are a number of issues of major theoretical and practical significance. Although both cultivator and pastoralist in East Africa represent the Germanic mode of production, the differences in the major means of production result in distinct manifestations of this mode of production in historically specific types of social formation with distinct dominant ideologies, as well as distinct emphases upon organizational features, such as age-sets and descent groups.

The historic uniqueness of the East African pastoral formations is radically affected in a most fundamental sense by any trend toward cultivation, although this does not represent a transformation of the mode of production. Not only is there a shift in emphasis from one means of

production to another (the herd to the land, the factor of labour being constant but differing in productivity), but there is also a drastic change in the form of objectification and appropriation of nature and its dominant ideological underpinnings. This in turn involves a revaluation of the constitution of the subject and the objectification of the other, a fact that threatens the foundations of the social formation itself and the ideological conditions of its reproduction. Hence, the pastoral groups are reluctant to adopt cultivation, despite the mounting pressures at all levels for them to do so, and are searching for other methods of "dealing with" the encroachment of commoditization and the penetration of peripheral capitalism. To elucidate further, I turn briefly to my research among the Ilparakuyo of Tanzania.

Ilparakuyo, like all other pastoralists, have long been faced with diminishing resources of suitable grazing and water facilities. As a result, herd size has decreased, and there is a consequent increase in dependence upon agricultural products. This trend has been accelerated in recent years by such government policies as villagization. In the Ilparakuyo area of West Bagamoyo District in which I work, the herders' village (*kijiji cha wafugaji*) — allocated to the villagization of the whole Ilparakuyo community in the area — is only 90 000 acres (~36 000 ha), much of which is still tsetse-infested, although clearing is continuing.

There have been several responses by the Ilparakuyo to the increasingly untenable conditions. Some homestead groups and clusters (*ikang'itie*) have opted for the age-old solution of moving from the congested areas to new rangelands where herd size can be increased again and a largely pastoral mode of existence be reestablished. Such areas still exist in parts of east-central and southern Tanzania such as in the Morogoro and Mbeya regions, and my recent visit has verified the continuation of such moves. However, this is obviously a short-term solution.

Others have increased their interdependence with their immediate cultivating neighbours by exchanging pastoral products or cash from pastoral products for labour in the cultivation of crops, or the direct purchase of grain from them. Still others have entered into largely illegal trade in beef cattle and veterinary medicines, both of these activities reinforcing the crucial role of the junior (and senior) warriors (*ilmurran*) in the social reproduction of their society (Rigby 1979a, 1980), through the rebuilding of the homestead herd. All of these are attempts to deal with peripheral capitalism without capitulation to the relatively poorer status of cultivators or being swamped by commoditization with its end not only of "peasantization" of the pastoralist but also of the ultimate "proletarianization" and "marginalization" and the formation of classes in previously classless social formations.

For the time being, some of these are solutions for Ilparakuyo, leaving intact the ideological conditions for the reproduction of their pastoral social formation. But even if the cultivators and not the Ilparakuyo are actually digging the soil and cultivating the fields, the Ilparakuyo are being inevitably drawn into forms of objectification of their environment that compete with their cultivating neighbours and that ultimately deny and destroy their own mode of existence.

In conclusion, it is imperative that research be concentrated upon some of the processes briefly identified here; at the same time, theory must constantly be modified and strengthened if the depth of consequences is to be understood and, perhaps, averted. From the evidence increasingly available, to avert the dissolution of the foundations of the East African

pastoral formations would benefit not only them and the nation-states of which they are a part but also ultimately all human beings. Any attempt to achieve this entails a constant revision of the theory that guides research in the light of evidence revealed in the historic transformation taking place, partly as a result of policy interventions that have occurred and are occurring in the formations.

The research tasks are to differentiate in terms of labour allocation the ways in which pastoral formations handle the encroachment of commoditization and peripheral capitalism; to determine the relations between changes in the major means of production and class formation and the continuing ability of some production units to commit themselves to the pastoral mode of existence; and to examine the functional transformation of such structures as age-sets and descent groups as a critical aspect of the overall transformation of the relations of production in the continuing attempts by pastoralists to order their involvement with changes engendered by forces outside their direct control.

## discussion

*van Drunen:* Your paper is entitled *theoretical* implications; yet it sounds as if you speak from evidence. Can you explain? Polarization is artificial and not a good approach; the groups are not either "pure" pastoralists (in fact nomads) or "pure" cultivators.

*Rigby:* I merely appeal for a better theorization of the nature of pastoral production, so that we can understand better the way in which the pastoralists are theoretically transformed. Pastoralists can become agriculturalists; however it is not simply a matter of shifting economic forms and retaining the same societies but a matter of fundamental alteration, not just of the means of production but of ideology as well.

*Mpaayei:* People between pastoralism and agriculture become part of the stress within the pastoral society. There is a struggle between the two for grazing and water. They compete for areas that are good for both. The changes of control over land have political implications, for pastoral peoples have little control over change, having no long-term planning.

*Migot-Adholla:* What is the role of the anthropologist in such planning systems? The findings among the Baraguyu, reported in Rigby's paper, that pastoralism represents the most efficient use of labour, suggest minimal government intervention. But suppose, as Croze and Gwynne indicate, that the most efficient use of land in most of Narok is for wheat production. How would the anthropologist advise the Kenyan government, which at the time may be faced with a national grain shortage?

*Rigby:* The point is well taken, but in my paper I do urge study of how pastoral peoples handle commodity relations and peripheral capitalism. I do not advocate leaving them alone, because history has not left them alone. But we must also understand how their unique social foundations allow them to apprehend and deal with the new relationships.

What are the implications of change? Pastoral labour, if of higher efficiency than cultivation, should be encouraged. Even though available land is becoming scarce, labour is the crucial shortage. Why not increase the productivity of labour rather than diverting it?

*Bourgeot:* Peter Rigby's theoretical perspective has a link to Marxism. However, there are a number of misunderstandings, notably with respect to the Germanic mode of production. Peter uses the concept in the spirit of Marxist analysis bound to the social formation that he has studied. It appears that it is not in this sense that the criticisms and divergencies previously expressed are founded. In effect, I ask whether the interveners have not unconsciously considered the mode-of-production concept to be like a simple sociologic category, emptied of its Marxian content. This lack of comprehension prevents use of the concept in the study of social evolution.

*Salzman:* The notion of the Germanic mode of production is anachronistic because of its crudeness, which ignores all the subtleties we now grasp. After all, virtually nothing was known at the time Marx devised the concept about pastoral systems, and our knowledge has vastly increased since that time.

*Rigby:* The concept is useful because it includes larger units and the role of ideology, whereas Sahlins, for instance, focuses on a domestic mode of production, which lacks these elements.

*Awogbade:* The mode-of-production notion is quite confusing. On another topic, the traditional mode of pastoral production cannot possibly supply enough protein.

*Rigby:* The concept of a mode of production is not descriptive but analytic. It deals with the role of class interests, for instance, which can be seen in the promotion of ranches in Kenya and Uganda (and at the state level in Tanzania). The pastoral system may well be the most effective way of using range resources. The productivity of pastoral labour is much higher than that involved in maize production, for instance. Cultivation is now on the increase, and we find a decrease in the productivity of labour. This is a process not of development, but of the reverse.