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Abstract

This study examines the newly emerging and vibrant camel marketing processes in northern Kenya/southern Ethiopia borderlands. This trade has become an attractive economic activity only in the past few years. Pastoralist innovation is key to risk mitigation and survival in an uncertain environment and most importantly to livelihood improvement. The emergence of new camel markets and the overwhelming response from pastoral communities in the wider region to participate in the trade supports the premise of an on-going pastoral innovation. Although camels have not been prominent market commodity in pastoral Horn until fairly recently, this activity is a good example of a promising enterprise with potential to transform the livestock-based economy with direct benefits to local herders. Unlike cattle marketing, studies on camel marketing are just beginning to emerge in the region. This is partly because camels have not been offered competitive prices as they have low demand in the market place in the Horn of Africa. Focusing on the Moyale market on the Ethiopia/Kenya border and through extensive fieldwork and the use of secondary data the study seeks to understand this dynamic and innovative enterprise and the ways in which herders and traders respond to emerging market opportunities.

Introduction

The newly emerging and lucrative camel market at Moyale, Ethiopia has been the big story in the northern and northeastern pastoral province and beyond. The pastoral province is best known for droughts, destitution, and death. For once, people are talking about hope and the new prospects of an economic linkage to the Middle East through the booming camel trade. Risks, such as severe droughts and floods, political instability, poor infrastructure, food insecurity, and harsh livestock marketing policies impact negatively on the ways in which pastoral communities in the Horn of Africa access markets. One of the ways through which pastoral communities evade these risks to improve market access and increase benefits is through innovation. Pastoral innovations in resource access and livelihood support generally and livestock marketing in particular are critical to their survival in the arid and semi arid lands of the Horn of Africa. There is a growing interest in pastoral innovation systems and a lot of new ideas are being generated from among pastoral communities (see Scoones, I. and Adwera, A. 2009).

Cattle marketing has been studied quite extensively in the Horn of Africa (e.g. Aklilu 2002; Little 2003; Mahmoud 2008) whereas camel marketing has not been studied adequately in the past. However, camel husbandry and camel milk production has been the focus of a few research work in the Horn and Eastern Africa (e.g. Bollig 1992; Getahun and Belay 2002; Simpkin 1996). While camels, sheep, and goats are also traded in both smaller and larger livestock markets in the region, cattle dominate almost all the markets and lead by many folds in sales volume. In deed, camels have not been prominent market commodity in pastoral Horn until fairly recently. Camel production in the Horn of Africa has mainly been for milk and meat and largely used as pack animals although sales for the local market has existed in the pastoral system. This is partly because camels have not been offered competitive prices as a result of low demand in the market place in the Horn. Camel meat is the cheapest among beef, mutton, and goat meat. Its consumption is mainly limited to southern Ethiopia, northern and northeastern Kenya, and among Somali populations in Nairobi, Mombasa, and Nakuru. While cattle have largely remained a commodity for local and national consumption, camels are being exported to the Middle Eastern countries in large numbers in recent years. In fact, the news of lucrative camel prices at the Moyale, Ethiopia livestock market yard has been and continues to elate many pastoralists and residents of northern and northeastern Kenya and in other pastoral areas of the country. The goods news carries with it hopes for a struggling pastoral economy in the northern peripheral regions.

This study examines camel marketing in northern Kenya/southern Ethiopia borderlands. This trade has suddenly become an attractive economic activity in the past few years. Focusing on the Moyale market on the Ethiopia/Kenya border, the study seeks to understand marketing channels and strategies that herders, traders, brokers, and other market actors use in the newly emerging camel marketing niche in the area. Specifically, the study addresses the following broad issues: 1) Why is there an increased camel sales in southern Ethiopia?; 2) Who are the main actors in this trade and where are they?; 3) Is this innovation beneficial to herders, traders, brokers, and other market actors? 4) What are the constraints to camel marketing processes and how can they be overcome? 5) What are the ways in which the Ethiopian and Kenyan policies (as source countries) and camel exporters and Middle East countries (destination countries) support/constrain marketing activities? Through the use of fieldwork and secondary data, the study seeks to understand these processes and the general trend of herder and trader responses to emerging market opportunities.

Moyale's rising fortunes as livestock trading directions change

Moyale is the second largest cattle market in northern and northeastern Kenya after Garissa. The Moyale market handles about half what the Garissa market controls for cattle, but is becoming the largest camel market in the region and does not cease to be at the center of prominence for livestock trade. Moyale was prominent as a conduit for southern Ethiopia cattle to Moyale, but a more prominent role has emerged in recent years – as one of the leading channels for camel exports to the Middle East.

In southern Ethiopia, all southbound livestock are trekked from villages and primary markets to the secondary market of Moyale. The northbound livestock from these areas are trucked to markets, such as Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia, and other major consumption areas. The volume of cattle trekked is much larger to secondary markets than between the smaller routes. Since southern Ethiopia is an important cattle production area in the region and camels trading in recent years, trekking livestock from numerous smaller villages and markets is more cost efficient than trucking.

Livestock trade on the Kenya-Ethiopia-Somalia borderlands has endured the changing economic and political fortunes of the area and the direction of the trade has been changing depending on the market and political circumstances on the border areas in the past one century or so. For example, between 1890 and 1920 dominance in commercial activities shifted from the Southern Ethiopia-Upper Juba-Benaadir Coast axis to Northern Kenya-Upper Juba sphere. This change is attributable to environmental factors and political circumstances. Consequently, northern Kenya had become part of the growing Boran-Lugh-Benaadir trading corridor as early as the late 19th century and early 20th century leading to Lugh, Bardera and Mandera becoming leading commercial centers in the region. Three factors contributed to the changing trading patterns, participants and movement of goods. These were 1) escalating hostilities between the Boran and Somalis, 2) hostilities between Somali groups and 3) the British colonial administration. While group hostilities affected the movement of goods, the colonial administration disrupted trading patterns and the involvement of Somalis in commercial activities (Dalleo 1975).

Restrictive policies were not uncommon regarding pastoral livestock trading in the colonial era. For example, the British and Italian colonial administrations were instrumental in regulating livestock movements, prices and sales and unnecessary imposition of quarantines (Dalleo 1975). While the administration has changed from colonial regime to postcolonial independent state, a shift in these archaic restrictions has not been instituted yet more than four and a half decades after independence.

The Italo-Ethiopian war produced an enormous demand of livestock by Italian troops based in Somaliland and Ethiopia. This demand was at its peak between 1934 and 1936 and was promptly met by Somali traders. Quoting colonial records, Dalleo states that the Italians purchased 6,616 head of cattle and 25,357 sheep and goats from Wajir District alone in northeastern Kenya in a relatively short span of time between November 1935 and July 1936 (Dalleo 1975). This was a major boom in livestock trade because of the high prices paid. The vast geographical region covered involved sourcing livestock from Garissa, Mandera, Moyale and Wajir and as far as from European ranches in the Rift Valley. This provided the trade an international dimension.

Prior to the collapse of the Somali state in 1991 livestock trade flow was from Kenya and Ethiopia into Somalia for exports to the Middle East principally through the port of Mogadishu. The Somali state collapse instigated a reverse in the direction of livestock trade leading to increased flow of livestock to Kenyan markets. Cattle from southern Ethiopia have regularly been moving to Kenyan markets while camels and the small stock have been heading toward Somali ports for exports (see Little 2003; Mahmoud 2010). This is reiterated by a camel trader in Moyale who states that he used to trade in camels from southern Ethiopia to Mogadishu and has now changed the direction by sourcing camels from southern Somalia, northeastern Kenya, and southeastern Ethiopia to supply the Moyale market.

Why the change of direction to Moyale, Ethiopia?

To reiterate, the push behind the current expansion of camel trading on the Kenya/Ethiopia border is the growing demand for camels in the Middle East. One explanation for the expanded camel market to Egypt from this region is that it used to purchase from unstable countries, such as Somalia and the Sudan, particular from Darfur area. These countries cannot supply adequate camels now because of insecurity, which has prompted Egypt to seek alternative sources of camels. Other Middle Eastern countries also used to depend, to some extent, on the Somalia and Sudan sources, which have now turned to Ethiopia for their supplies. It is important to note that not all camels being sold and transported to the Middle East through Ethiopian markets and territories are Ethiopian animals as many are trekked to the Moyale market from as far as southern Somalia and northeastern Kenya as mentioned earlier.

When Egyptians used to purchase from Somalia some of the current Somali camel traders in Moyale used to supply camels from southern Ethiopia and trek them to Mogadishu for onward shipment to Egypt. Traders state that there may be several factors that have reversed the new direction of camel trade in favor of southern Ethiopia, include 1) the widespread piracy activities along the Somalia coast and 2) increased insecurity in Somalia. It should be noted that commercial livestock treks from southern Ethiopia to Mogadishu did not halt after the 1991 Somali government collapse, but the political situation is complex and security is desperate at the moment.

In addition to those regional factors, another explanation regards Kenya's corrupt and unnecessary bureaucratic system in all the sectors of the economy that keeps away investors in the pastoral livestock marketing sector. In February 2003 a group of pastoralist livestock traders exported 750 camels to Egypt. It was reported that the Egyptian importer was extremely upset for unnecessary harassment and delays from the Kenya livestock officials (Mahmoud 2006). The disappearance of the camel importer from the Kenyan scene led to his and fellow importers' appearance in Ethiopia.

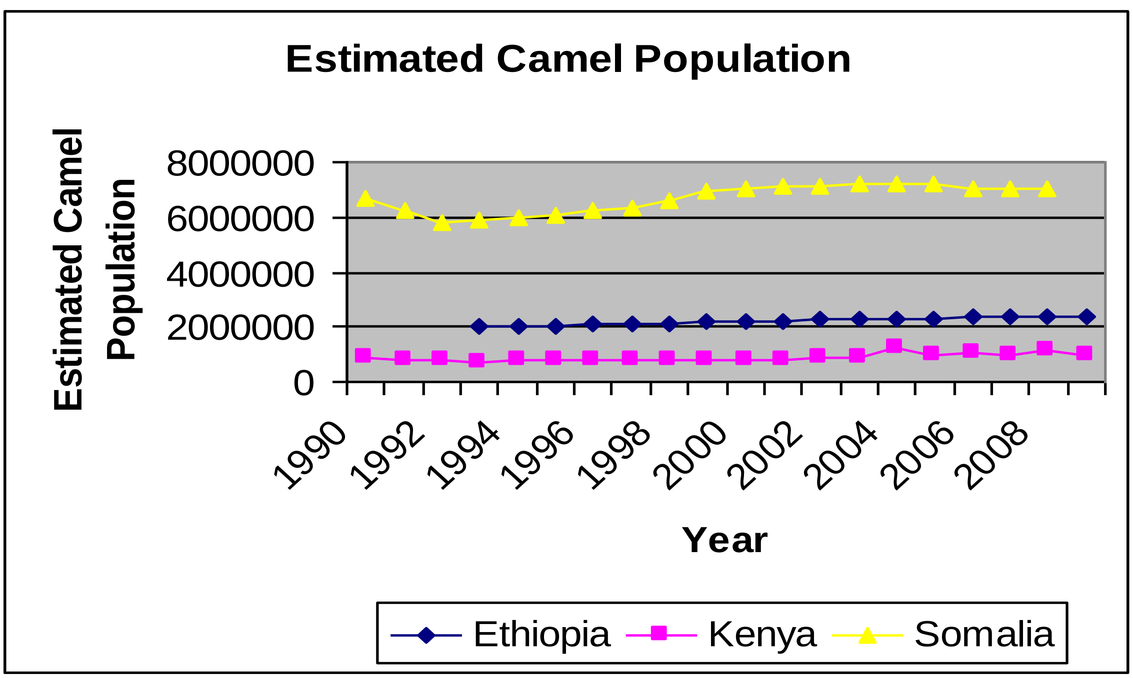
The Moyale, Ethiopia camel market

The Moyale, Ethiopia livestock market has three major divisions, each for camels, cattle, and the small stock (sheep and goats), but the camel market is the most active of all. It is a modern facility constructed by an international NGO supported through USAID funds. The superior design and gratifying facilities available at the Ethiopian market contrast sharply with those that exist on the Kenya side of Moyale, that can best be described as appealing. Trading activities begin early in the morning and end before noon each day, except when it is closed on Sundays. There are several tea kiosks in the market area, mostly operated by women – one of the key groups that indirectly benefits from camel trade. Also, the tea kiosks are meeting places used for negotiations and information sharing among the various market actors. Police officers watch over the market to maintain order and ensure the safety of all participants. The officers may also be called upon to mediate between disputing parties.

Camel statistics in the region

The Horn of Africa is endowed with the largest concentration of camel herds in the world with Somalia leading the pack globally. Large camel populations are found in eastern lowlands of Ethiopia, northern, western, and northeastern Kenya, and in most parts of Somalia. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the UN, Somalia had an estimated seven million head of camels in 2008, while Ethiopia and Kenya had about 2.4 and 0.95 million camels in 2009, respectively (see Figure 1). Indeed, the combined estimated camel population of Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia is slightly over 10 million head, which is a substantial population. Somalia alone holds more than twice the combined camel populations of Ethiopia and Kenya.

Figure 1: Estimated camel population for Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia, 1990-2009



Source: data were obtained from www.fao.org, the author did the analysis

The significance of camel trade to herders and traders

Camel trading at the Moyale, Ethiopia market is a good example of an emerging enterprise with potential to transform the livestock-based economy with direct and improved benefits to local herders. Numerous factors explain the significance of this growing trade. First, the response of camel herders to the demands for camels is overwhelming. Herders are supplying camels to Moyale from as far as Rendille, Tana River, and Chalbi areas in Kenya as well as from southern Somalia. For example, during a field visit in Moyale market in June 2010 one of my key informants stated that about 70 camels were being expected from Tana River District in Coast Province, which is about 700km south of Moyale. This shows the regional dimension of the trade. As mentioned earlier, camels are sourced from numerous places, but traders assert that the best camels come from Garri-inhabited areas, such as Banissa, Mandera, and El-Waq, which are bigger than those that come from Gabra/Boran and Rendille territories. In their assessment of camel production in the Somali region of Ethiopia, Getahun and Belay (2002) state that the Somali camels are larger in size than the Afar and Gabra/Boran camels.

Such an overwhelming response is driven by the high prices offered at the market place in Moyale. Table 2 shows camel prices at the Moyale, Ethiopia livestock market. Grading is based on body size and general body condition and this assessment is done by herders and traders to determine the worth of the camels that are brought to the market for sale.

Table 2: Grades, body description and prices in Moyale, Ethiopia market

Grade 1	Adults of 8-9 year old, large in body size	Ksh80–120,000
Grade 2	Immature camels, medium in body size	Ksh50–60,000
Grade 3	Immature camels, small in body size	Ksh25–40,000

Source: author’s fieldnotes

Second, it has been observed that the number of camel herders and traders going for hajj in Saudi Arabia has increased dramatically in recent years. One of my key informants stated that he can now afford to go for hajj. He says four years ago only eight people could afford to go for hajj from Moyale yearly, but now over 100 people are making the trip annually. It is overtly admitted that more people can now go for hajj because they are making good money from camel sales to enable them perform the costly, once-in-a-lifetime journey. Third, camel trade is becoming a mechanism that is facilitating restocking and herd building among pastoral communities that are participating in the trade. For example, a herder sells an adult camel for Ksh.80,000 and immediately purchases two or three immature camels from the same market for about

Ksh.20,000 each. After these purchases the herder remains with about Ksh.20-40,000 to buy foodstuffs and meet other obligations.

Fourth, the Moyale camel trade is an activity of both regional and international dimension attracting participants from various places in the region and also from abroad. Indeed, in mid 2010 there were four Sudanese traders in the Moyale market purchasing camels. Trader AU is one of the four Sudanese camel traders currently based in Moyale, Ethiopia hauling camels to the Sudan and Egypt through Ethiopia. Trader AU states that Egypt is the largest consumer of camel meat from the Horn of Africa. This trader has been in camel business for 28 years, a level of experience that is evident through the confidence with which he maneuvers through the market and interacts with traders and transporters. The Sudanese traders purchase camels through Ethiopian facilitators who act as their agents and also oversee payment processes. Camel agents have offices in Moyale, Ethiopia, which makes it easy to interact more with herders and traders and be aware of the market conditions on a continuous basis **(need more info/a section on agents)**. Trader AU states that camel prices have increased tremendously in the region in the past few years. He says that it is no different in the Sudan.

Finally, one of my key informants during my cattle marketing research in 2001-02 in the Moyale, Kenya was a cattle trader selling to Kenyan traders on the Kenyan side of the border. He is now a prominent camel trader in Moyale, Ethiopia supplying a large number of camels to exporters. The switch from cattle trade directed to the Nairobi market to camel trade aimed for the Middle East on the same border market is an indication of the prominence of the latter and its growing popularity with established traders like HY. His title has since changed to Haji because he too has made the trip to Saudi Arabia to perform the hajj. While how much camel herders and traders are making from the trade remains an individual's secret, positive comments of market actors is an indication that people are extremely delighted and optimistic about the new market opportunity. Indeed, his riches have grown as a camel trader dealing with fellow Ethiopian traders and exporters than being a cattle trader dealing with Kenyan cattle traders. Nine years down the line trader HY has grown to be an influential livestock trader on a dynamic border market.

His big business is depicted in the volume of sales that he deals with. For example, he recently sent 350 camels to his trading counterparts based in Matara, Ethiopia. Since he specializes in purchasing immature camels of about four years, this consignment alone had a market value of about Birr 1.4million at Birr 4,000 per head of camel, which is equivalent to about (US$ 83,482).[1] These camels are loaded on trucks with carrying capacities of six (smaller trucks) or nine (larger trucks).[2] Once trader HY loads the camels on Isuzu trucks, they are trusted to the driver of the truck until they reach their destination. He says "I trust the driver and only give him my mobile phone number and the mobile phone number of the receiver of the animals at Matara."

I have argued elsewhere on the significance of trust in livestock trading in the pastoral areas of northern Kenya and southern Ethiopia (see Mahmoud 2008; 2008). Trust plays a significant role in minimizing risks for traders. The higher the level of trust between livestock market actors, such as herders, traders, brokers, and transporters the less stressful the trading process becomes. Large volumes of livestock can then be entrusted to, for example, a transporter without fear of loss of the animals. Lack of trust between cattle traders and wholesalers in the Nairobi market led to the loss of millions of Kenya Shillings leading to some traders abandoning the trade altogether. Although trader HY argues that the cattle trade with Kenyan traders was remarkably profitable, "we used to lose a lot of money due to unpaid debts. In the current camel trade, we also give animals on credit, but we get paid everything eventually, and most importantly, the Ethiopian government helps us in recovering our money."

One of the things that this trader is happy about in the Ethiopian-based livestock trade is the ways in which Ethiopian authorities are keen on the trade and, for example, take action against scrupulous traders who refuse to pay livestock traders and herders. A story is told of an Ethiopian trader who purchased camels worth huge sum of money over the years from Moyale traders on credit and refused to pay them. The traders reported the matter to Ethiopian authorities who reportedly auctioned his house to pay the traders. Trader HY has had a few bad experiences on payment with Kenyan traders in the past, but such problems were resolved amicably. He states that in the camel trade payments are prompt or are made after a few days.

This raises the question about the role of the state in livestock trade support and facilitation, which has been lacking on the Kenyan side, but being acknowledged with the growing trade on the Ethiopian side. It appears that livestock traders switch markets and even cross international borders on the basis of profitability and also on the basis of support they receive from the state. While Ethiopian traders now praise their government for showing increasing support for cross-order livestock trade, their Kenyan counterparts continue to castigate their government for neglecting them and the livestock trading sector generally.

The government of Ethiopia has always been resisting the informal movement of livestock through its leaky, long, and largely unpatrolled borders with neighboring countries, especially with Kenya and Somalia. The Derg period (1974-91) embodies the darkest days for cross-border livestock trade in Ethiopia. The trade was considered illegal in government quarters, which led to confiscation of livestock and severe harassment of livestock traders. The Meles Zenawi regime (1991-) came with drastic policy changes in livestock production and marketing, which led to relaxation of stringent restrictions on the informal cross-border livestock trade, particularly in the southern parts of the country. The Zenawi regime disliked the manner in which livestock were transacted and moved to Kenyan markets, but refrained from inhibiting the trade (Mahmoud 2010). Generally, the Zenawi regime seems to be supportive of the current camel trade at the export level as well as at the lower level of the trading chain. Trader perceptions also support this observation. Trader perception is one of optimism and hope as elaborately explained to me by a government official-turned-camel trader in Moyale recently.

Market brokers

As is the case with all pastoral livestock markets in the Horn of Africa, the pricing, sales, and other activities of the camel market in Moyale, Ethiopia is heavily dependent on brokers. Sudanese traders in Moyale praise the role of their brokers for helping them in the market place and reward them with some payment. Brokers are an invaluable link between Sudanese exporters and local traders and herders and sometimes act as guarantors for both sides. Brokers are paid between Ksh200-500 per head of animal. Livestock brokers are so influential that they can determine livestock prices in the market on a daily basis, sometimes keeping it high and other times low.

Different market actors forge relationships that are based on such factors as kinship, ethnicity, patron-clientelism, and livestock loaning. Ethnicity in southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya borderlands plays important roles in social networks. It is an important factor in assuring the legitimacy of business dealings in contexts of economic uncertainty. Relationships between different market actors can influence how much one asks or pays for an animal, or whether to give credit or ask for it.[3] Ethnicity is important in camel marketing in the Moyale market as herders tend to trust brokers from their own ethnic groups. Thus, the general trend is that most brokers sell for herders and traders of their ethnic groups.

However, not all brokers are honest with herders, especially if those herders have very little experience with the market prices and transactions. Some brokers are said to be extremely greedy and rip off traders and herders. While brokers receive between Ksh200-500 from both a seller and a buyer as has been mentioned earlier, some ask for higher fees. Incidences are common in which, for example, a broker would sell a young camel for Ksh25,000 and give the herder only Ksh20,000 and keep Ksh5,000 for himself. When challenged about the high fees, the broker would not hesitate to threaten the trader that he would sell the animals to other traders. Most brokers in the Moyale market are from Boran, Garri, Gabra, Ajuran, and Degodia.

The impact of the Moyale camel market on camel trade in Kenya

The Moyale camel trade undoubtedly has a significant effect on household incomes, regional livestock markets, such as Garissa, in terms of the effect on camel movement to other destinations in Kenya, availability of camel meat locally, and probably on the future of camel production in the region.

Increased camel sales, increased incomes

The turnover of sales at the market is significant, which may be an indicator that herders are earning increased incomes from the sale of their camels **(may need to do some analysis on trickle down effects on herder incomes)**. For example, daily camel sales at the Moyale market fluctuate depending on the demand for camels on the Ethiopian side and a host of factors on the supply side in the countries and regions that deliver the camels. General estimates indicate daily sales of some 100-300 head of camels at the market, which opens everyday except on Sundays. Working with a sales figure of 100 camels daily sold at an average price of Ksh50,000 for six days a week, four weeks a month and 12 months a year, the following is an estimate value of the trade (see Table 1).

Table 1: estimating the value of camel sales at Moyale, Ethiopia market[4]

100 camel sales at Ksh50,000	Value (Ksh)	Value (ET Birr)	Value (US$)
Daily	5,000,000	977,271	58,275
Weekly	30,000,000	5,863,626	349,650
Monthly	120,000,000	23,454,504	1,398,600
Annually	1,440,000,000	281,454,048	16,783,200

Source: author's fieldnotes

Table 1 shows a colossal amount of money injected into a small border economy in a short period of time. For example, daily sales of Ksh five million (US$ 58,275) of camel alone in Moyale, Ethiopia is substantial.

Also, the market generates incomes for the local administration. The Moyale, Ethiopia local authority collects taxes on each camel sold from both the buyer and the seller. The current amount of market taxation is ET Birr 13 charged on both the buyer and the seller. Thus, one camel generates ET Birr 26 (US$1.55). For an annual turnover of about 30,000 camels, the total tax collected would amount to ET Birr 780,000 (US$46,512).

The phenomenon of moving in the opposite direction: the case of Garissa

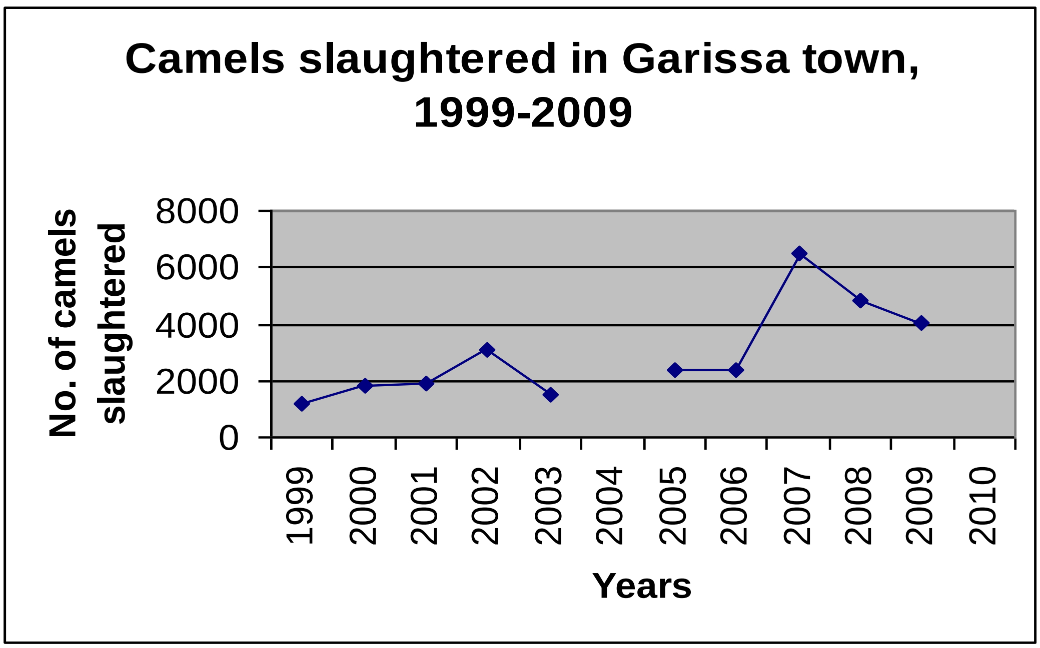
The Moyale camel market is believed to have an effect on regional livestock markets. It appears that a large number of camels normally destined for Kenyan urban market of Nairobi and Mombasa is being diverted to meet the burgeoning Ethiopian demand for camels. Consequently, the Garissa regional market has been affected through reduced camel sales in the market. According to official records, no camel movements were recorded to major Garissa livestock clients, such as Nairobi, Mombasa, Thika, and Mwingi towns while several thousand cattle and sheep and goats were moved to these and other towns during 2007-09. There could be unrecorded or "unofficial" movement of camels to these destinations, but the impact may be considerable.

Livestock destined for Kenyan markets for immediate slaughter or fattening must be recorded by the relevant authorities issuing movement permits. When livestock move in the opposite direction, as is the case with camels trekking from Tana River and Garissa to Moyale, no permission or recording of the movements are necessary. These movements are similar to seasonal migrations that pastoralists usually undertake in search of crucial range resources in the region, including crossing into neighboring countries. As more camels are destined for the Moyale market for export to the Middle East, regional markets, such as Garissa are deprived of their share of camels. This has serious implications for camel meat demands and consumption in Kenya's major urban centers as illustrated in the following section.

Camel meat consumption: the case of Garissa

Garissa is one of the fastest growing towns in Kenya, principally from livestock wealth (see Little 2003), the presence of UN missions in refugee camps in the area, and the Somali diaspora investments. Garissa residents consume a lot of camel meat and mutton. Figure 2 show the camel slaughter trend in Garissa town during the period 1999-2009. Although the 2004 estimates are missing, there is a gradual increase in the amount of camel meat consumed in the town. However, after reaching its peak in 2007, the trend seems to slow down up until 2009.

Figure 2: camels slaughtered in Garissa town, 1999-2009



The perceived effects of shipping out the "desert ship"

One of the pastoralist participants at the "University of the Bush" conference held at Kinna, near Isiolo, Kenya in November 2010 asked me about the future of camel populations in the Horn of Africa and implications for pastoralism generally and if this trade would threaten the herd after I had presented my preliminary findings on camel marketing in on the Kenya/Ethiopia border. Another pastoralist commented "this is good news indeed, don't spill the beans." A colleague on this research project would like the study to do a complete value chain analysis to uncover who benefits where, by how much, and why.

Such may be concerns and reassuring comments being expressed amid escalating shipment of camels to Arab countries in recent years. Generally, camel herders and traders are responding overwhelmingly to the new market forces to meet the ever increasing demand for camels in the Middle East channeled through Ethiopian markets. The camel is the “desert ship” helping desperate pastoral populations to move away from drought-stricken areas, slaughtered for sacrifices during rituals, and most importantly to provide the much needed milk and meat for family sustenance. The newly emerging use of the camel in the Horn of Africa now is its exchange for cash, taking advantage of the best market price ever offered for camels in the region.

Concerns of cross-border camel trade

While camel traders are generally contented with the business, there are a few, but significant concerns regarding the trade. Indeed, some of these concerns touch on the general trickle-down effect of the trade and raises the question of who benefits more from the trade and what herders supposed to gain from the trade. A major concern shared across the pastoralist and trader community is summed up in this trader’s statement:

> “These are our livestock, but a larger portion of the profits go to others while we just remain as brokers. At the feedlots on the highlands they have feed and water for the animals so those traders have become millionaires through value addition on our camels. As primary producers we would like to fatten the camels here and sell them directly to the Middle East. In that way we shall reap the full benefits of our produce. But this is not the case at the present. Although we can buy the feed, we have no adequate water sources here in the lowlands and there is no much help from the government in this regard. We really need the exporters to come and buy directly from us, only then we can gain maximum benefits from our livestock.”

Conclusions and policy implications – opportunities for pro-pastoralist policies

While the pastoral areas of the Horn of Africa are endowed with animal resources, several factors have influenced full realization from market access and livestock sales. These include poor policies, poor infrastructure, stringent regulatory mechanisms, insecurity emanating from communal conflicts and political instability, state failure, livestock diseases, poor prices, and market place exploitation. However, pastoral livestock trading has grown tremendously in recent years as a result of expanding markets and networks. Sales volume of key pastoral livestock species of camels, cattle, sheep, and goats have soared as regional markets have grown to accommodate the rising sales. For example, the rapid growth of Garissa in northeastern Kenya near the border with Somalia and

Moyale on the Kenya/Ethiopia border is largely attributed to expanding cattle sales since the 1990s (Little 2003; Mahmoud 2010).

While the Ethiopian government seems to show interest in the emerging camel trading in its southern region, Kenyan policy makers appear to be indifferent to the new developments on the northern border areas. The lack of access to information regarding pastoral trading activities and the general apathy towards the pastoral sector could be depriving the Kenyan economy of the immense economic potential of the pastoral sector and the surge in the value of camels in the country’s northern borderlands.

In its policy statement, the government of Kenya acknowledges that it hosts a sizable population of camels and that the animals are suited to the fragile environment of pastoral territories of the country. It also recognizes the important role of camels in pastoral food security. Currently, Kenya government’s priority is to popularize camel milk and meat consumption in the rest of the country. It argues that a lot of camel milk is wasted because of lack of market and poor connections between camel milk production areas and urban centers. It stresses the need to invest in dairy milk processing facilities. While these are positive steps, it is important to recognize that the camel marketing industry is becoming a multi-million dollar business and camels are increasingly becoming an international commodity. A refocus of policies in the light of new developments are not only timely, but crucial as Kenya is certainly losing on this channel of trade to Ethiopia.

This paper has demonstrated that an increasing number of camels are being sold in Moyale market for onward shipment to Middle Eastern countries. Pastoralists in the region have responded to the growing markets by diverting camels from other markets to the new destination. A lot has been written about pastoral marginalization at the hands of the pro-farmer Ethiopian and Kenyan regimes. The long-held premises of anti-pastoralist policies including low productivity of the pastoral sector and unresponsiveness to markets have been challenged for a long time. The arguments of the new directions for pastoral development include promoting pastoral livestock marketing (Little 2002; Scoones 1994). Each of the countries that provides and facilitates the camel trade has different policy regimes which need to be examined with respect to the new ideas that are being developed in the trading network. Generally, this is an excellent opportunity for the Ethiopian and Kenyan governments to review their anti-pastoralist policies and embark on a strong pro-pastoralist policy path to support pastoral involvement and innovations in the emerging market opportunities.

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Footnotes

[1] A conversion rate of $1 = Birr 16.77 was used. This is the exchange rate obtained on March 15, 2011 from www.finance.yahoo.com

[2] These trucks are popularly known in Ethiopia as "Isuzu trucks" because they are manufactured by Isuzu Company.

[3] The importance of kinship and ethnic relationships have been studied extensively among cattle traders in northern Kenya, southern Ethiopia, and southern Somalia (e.g. see Little 2003, Mahmoud 2008).

[4] The price of camels in the Moyale market have remained almost the same in the past six months or so, but the dollar has gained substantially against the Ethiopian Birr and Kenya Shillings. The currency conversation rates are as of March 16, 2011, 1US$ = ET Birr 16.77; 1US$ = Ksh85.8; 1ET Birr = Ksh5.12 obtained from www.finance.yahoo.com