

**CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN SAMBURU PASTORALISM  
UNDER COLONIAL RULE, c.1909 - 1963**



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## ABSTRACT

The impact of colonial capitalism on Kenyan precapitalist societies and the transformation of their social, economic and political structures is a polemic that has engaged scholars of political economy since the end of the colonial period. However, the attention of academicians has mainly been focused on agricultural communities whose economies were considered capable of producing a surplus for appropriation by capital. Indeed, colonial administrators and anthropologists viewed pastoralism from a number of perspectives. First, it was seen as a half-way house between foraging and sedentary agriculture, hence backward and inferior to the latter. Secondly, it was considered to lie outside the colonial orbit and having articulatory surfaces that were too weak to permit linkage with colonial capital. The explanation for these handicaps was unfortunately sought *not* in their economic base but in the cultural realm, which was generally depicted as static, self-regulating, and subsequently leading to the rise of conservative societies incapable of responding to colonial capitalism. This study examines continuity and change in Samburu pastoralism during colonial rule from 1909 to 1963. The Samburu reside in the arid and semi-arid north-central Kenya, a region considered by many a scholar as a colonial backyard on account of the minimal role it played in the colonial economy. In the study it is argued that the aspects under examination derived from the social and material conditions obtaining on the eve of colonization and the policies formulated and implemented thereafter by the colonial state. To achieve the set objectives, the study adopted the perspective of articulation of modes of production as its tool of historical analysis. This paradigm can easily be tailored to the research needs of specific colonial enclaves such as Samburuland, as well as other regions that are peripheral to global capitalism. Like the Africanist school, the concept of articulation of modes of production recognizes the resilience and dynamism of local economies in resisting or embracing change wrought by colonial forces. The theory also locates the leverage of history within the colonial societies rather than at the imperial centres as both modernization and underdevelopment theories tend to do. Data from both primary and secondary sources was analyzed, chapter by chapter, within the parameters set by the research problem and the theoretical framework. The study not only historicizes Samburu pastoralism during the colonial period but also challenges and debunks colonial and neo-colonial orthodoxies that portray pastoralism as an irrational economic pursuit and pastoralists as diehard conservatives.

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