

## *Preface and Acknowledgments*

I begin this book by recalling a memory that will be forever etched in my mind. It is March 1980, and I am making my first journey into Turkana District in northwest Kenya. I had read all of Philip Gulliver's work on the Turkana and was struck by how much difficulty he had in working with this group of pastoral people. In addition, while I was in Nairobi waiting for research permission and purchasing equipment, a story appeared in the *Daily Nation* about a group making a circumnavigation of Lake Turkana. When they were in southern Turkana, the place where I was to conduct my research, the headline read: "The Suguta Valley—A land where even the flies have fled." The article described the extremely harsh climate and the dangers posed by intertribal raiding and bandits. To say I was apprehensive is certainly an understatement.

I encountered no Turkana people as I was driving down the sand road between Lokichar and Lokori that day, and I stopped and looked out over the sand and gravel plains to the distant mountains. I remember thinking, Somewhere out there are Turkana families. Somehow I have to meet them and convince them that I should be allowed to live with them and to study their livestock management practices. This was how I began a period of sixteen years of research as part of the South Turkana Ecosystem Project.

Being part of the South Turkana Ecosystem Project allowed me to work closely with some of the most respected ecologists and anthropologists specializing in the study of pastoralist peoples and arid lands. It also allowed me to come to know and become friends with many Turkana people, especially the members of four families, upon which much of my research is based. All have influenced the way that I think about human ecology and the way I have conducted my work. I hope that in some small way this book will make a contribution to the study of human-environmental relations, and a contribution to the literature on pastoral peoples.

It is impossible to thank all the people who contributed to the production of this book over the last twenty-three years. Hundreds, if not thousands, of people during this time have helped me refine my thoughts, debated issues, offered hospitality, taken care of me when I was sick, fixed my vehicle, and so on. I cannot list them all. Please forgive any omissions and realize that this is only a partial list of those who should be acknowledged.

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Of course the people who really made this work possible were the Turkana people who let me into their lives and shared their joys and tragedies with me—made me feel welcome, and, at least to some extent, a part of their families. I cannot thank enough Angorot, Lorimet, Atot, Lopericho, and their families. It is also impossible to think of field research in Ngisonyoka without the help of Elliud Achwe and Lopeyon.

All members of the South Turkana Ecosystem Project contributed in some way to my research. Neville Dyson-Hudson helped conceptualize the project and included me in the early funding cycles. Both Neville and Rada Dyson-Hudson shared their wealth of knowledge of East African pastoralist people with me, and Rada and I shared research results and coauthored a book published by the Human Area Research Files in 1985. Mike Little provided intellectual and emotional support at times when I most needed it. Paul Leslie became a friend, colleague, and mentor in such diverse fields as human demography and behavioral ecology, as well as in motorcycle riding and repair. Layne Coppock, Kathy Galvin, Robin Reid, and Jan Wienpahl shared camp life, good conversation, and the trials and tribulations of conducting dissertation research with me. Jan Wienpahl shared the early days in South Turkana, as well as our breaks away from the field. The

list of friends and colleagues who offered friendship and hospitality over the years is long, but Peggy Fry, Trevor Dixon, Peter Little, Dave Caddis, Diane Perlove, Randy Lintz, Jeanine Finnell, and the ever-changing complement of characters at Kuny Kastle stand out.

The late Jim Ellis was a friend and mentor in the field of arid land and range ecology. He influenced much of my thinking, and we continued to work together until his untimely death in 2002. Other ecologists, in particular Dave Swift and Mike Coughenour, shared time in the field and their understanding of ecosystem ecology and modeling.

Finally, I have to thank my family. My daughter, Kate, has had to accept that her father was often "in Africa." She has done this graciously and on two recent trips to Tanzania has become somewhat of a field-worker herself. Last, but certainly not least, I want to thank my wife, Judith. She is my emotional and intellectual partner. She has encouraged and shared aspects of my field research, and contributed in more ways than I can name in the production of this book.