

Contesting the Commons: Privatizing Pastoral Lands in Kenya  
Carolyn K. Lesorogol  
<http://www.press.umich.edu/titleDetailDesc.do?id=300488>  
The University of Michigan Press

*Contesting the Commons*

*Contesting*  
— *THE* —  
*Commons*

Privatizing Pastoral  
Lands in Kenya

CAROLYN K. LESOROGOL

The University of Michigan Press  
— Ann Arbor —

Copyright © by the University of Michigan 2008

All rights reserved

Published in the United States of America by

The University of Michigan Press

Manufactured in the United States of America

⊗ Printed on acid-free paper

2011 2010 2009 2008 4 3 2 1

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, or otherwise, without the written permission of the publisher.

*A CIP catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.*

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Lesorogol, Carolyn K., 1965–

Contesting the commons : privatizing pastoral lands in Kenya / Carolyn K. Lesorogol.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-472-07024-4 (cloth : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-472-07024-X (cloth : alk. paper)

ISBN-13: 978-0-472-05024-6 (pbk. : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-472-05024-9 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Commons—Kenya—Samburu District.
2. Land tenure—Social aspects—Kenya—Samburu District.
3. Privatization—Social aspects—Kenya—Samburu District.
4. Samburu District (Kenya)—Social conditions.
5. Samburu District (Kenya)—Economic conditions.

I. Title.

HD1289.K42S265 2008

333.3'167627—dc22 2007040369

## *Figures*

1. Map of Kenya	18
2. Stages in the Land Adjudication Process	47
3. Tropical Livestock Units per Capita in 1978	153
4. Tropical Livestock Units per Capita in 2000–2001	155
5. Percentage of Total Income by Source	167
6. Income by Source, Mbaringon	168
7. Income by Source, Siambu	168
8. Percentage of Household Income by Source and Quintile	173
9. Distribution of Offers in the Dictator Game	204
10. Distribution of Offers in the Punishment Game	207
11. Distribution of Offers and Returns in the Trust Game, Mbaringon	210
12. Distribution of Offers and Returns in the Trust Game, Siambu	211
13. Distribution of Offers in the Public Goods Game	212
14. Distribution of Offers in the Dictator Game with Norm	215

## *Tables*

1. Characteristics of Sample Population	151
2. Livestock Holdings in Siambu and Mbaringon, 2000–2001	155
3. Household Tropical Livestock Units Taking into Account Drought Losses	156
4. Polygynous Households by Wealth Category	158
5. Wealth Distribution Shown in Quintiles	159
6. Children’s Educational Attainment	162
7. Adult Educational Attainment	163
8. Average Years of Education Completed by Male Age Groups	163
9. Total Income, Per Capita Income, and Sources of Income	166
10. Households Participating in Wage Labor by Type of Job	170
11. Average Cash Value of Home Consumption, Siambu	180
12. Households Leasing Out Land in Siambu by Wealth and Income Quintiles	181
13. Land Sales in Siambu	184
14. Siambu Land Sales by Wealth and Income Categories	186
15. Siambu Land Sales by Year	187

## *Acknowledgments*

I am grateful for the support and encouragement of many teachers, colleagues, friends, and family who have contributed in many ways to bringing this book to fruition. I have benefited tremendously from the intellectual environment at Washington University, both as a graduate student in anthropology and a faculty member in social work. Here, interdisciplinary study and a focus on institutions and social change are valued, and rigorous empirical research is encouraged and expected. The ideas explored here owe much to the work of Jean Ensminger, mentor and friend, whose pathbreaking research among Orma pastoralists represents a new direction in the study of pastoralism and economic anthropology. Douglass North's theory of institutions and economic development is fundamental to this study, and Jack Knight's intellectual input was pivotal to developing an explanation of the privatization process centered on bargaining power. John Bowen challenged me to think deeply about both theoretical and empirical questions, and I have gained tremendously from my interactions with him over the years. Pascal Boyer provided detailed comments on drafts and reminded me that not everyone knows the Samburu. I have enjoyed many discussions with Fiona Marshall about Kenya and pastoralism, both of which we have in common. Gautam Yadama and I share interests in the commons and real-world development issues, and I appreciate his input on this project. Thanks also to Edward Lawlor for his useful advice and continuing support. I would like to thank my colleagues in the George Warren Brown School of Social Work for providing a great atmosphere for productive research that engages critical social issues.

This study was generously funded by a dissertation improvement grant from the National Science Foundation, a Fulbright-Hays grant from the U.S.

Department of Education, a grant from the Center for New Institutional Social Sciences at Washington University, and a predissertation grant from the International Studies program at Washington University. I thank the Kenyan Ministry for Education Science and Technology for research permission and the Institute for Development Studies at the University of Nairobi for research affiliation.

Portions of chapters have appeared in earlier published works: chapter 5, "Transforming Institutions among Pastoralists: Inequality and Land Privatization," *American Anthropologist* 105, no. 3 (2003): 531–42; chapter 7, "Privatizing Pastoral Lands: Economic and Normative Outcomes in Kenya," *World Development* 33, no. 11 (2005): 1959–78; and chapter 8, "Experiments and Ethnography: Combining Methods for Better Understanding of Behavior and Change," *Current Anthropology* 46, no. 1 (2005): 129–36.

There are many people to thank in Kenya. My two research assistants, Prame Lesorogol and Jonathan Lekerio, did an incredible amount of work conducting household surveys, monitoring games, and helping with interviews. Their companionship was always enjoyable and their insights about many issues were useful. Others provided various types of research assistance on a part-time basis, and I would like to thank them: Anthony Letirok, Francis Lempushuna, Jeremiah Lekariki, Simon Letambul, and Simon Lenolkulal. I truly appreciate the cooperation of all the Samburu families that were involved in any part of the research. Even in a difficult year when people were coping with a severe drought, I was invariably welcomed into people's homes, and my questions were patiently and respectfully answered. I particularly want to thank Saddam Lelesiit and Anna Kanai Lelesiit for providing housing in Siambu and the Lenolkulal family for their hospitality. I had many interesting discussions with Loraine and Michael Wexler and their family in Poro. I also thank the Dolifkas in Maralal for sharing their views about land with me. The staff at Ministry of Lands and Settlements in Maralal graciously allowed me to read files in their office and clarified the policies and procedures of land adjudication. I thank Mwenda Ntarangwi and his family for hospitality in Nairobi. Special thanks are due to Susan Epem and Sarais Lolngojine who helped care for my children while I was out doing research.

Family and friends have provided tremendous support throughout this process, and I would like to thank my parents, Stuart and Rosalind Kornfeld, my sister, Kathy Kornfeld, and my brother, Kerry Kornfeld. In Kenya, my in-laws Noosoroitare, Letampon, and Mpapa Lesorogol, Naisia Leseewa, Arno

and Naina Lekuraa, Kondelia and Menye Mike Leirana, and the whole Lesorogol family have been good friends and companions. Bilinda Straight read and commented on early drafts, and I value her as a colleague and friend. I am thankful to Sarah Klein, Vanessa Hildebrand, and Erin Stiles. Finally, I thank my daughters, Sarah, Jennifer, and Emily, whose presence keeps me grounded in the real world, and my husband, Leretin, for everything.