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Cattle Economies and Social Reconfigurations in the Urban Space. Pastoralist and Capitalist Entrepreneurship in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

eDiss of the Göttingen State and University Library (SUB Göttingen), 2025

doi:10.53846/goediss-11020

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### **Abstract**

Pastoralism in the Sahel region, anthropologically well-researched, is commonly associated with Fulani economies in rural areas. Although studies on urban Fulani often recognize cities as site for alternative income sources for pastoralists, the role of the city and its periphery as site for cattle raising has largely been overlooked. Likewise, anthropological research has not recognized that the Mossi ethnic group, which – unlike the Fulani – is not historically or culturally linked to cattle husbandry, has built successful cattle enterprises by acquiring formal knowledge on breeding practices. In fact, since the 1980s, innovative, market-oriented cattle farming systems have developed in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, which have so far remained unexplored in anthropological research – a gap this dissertation addresses.

The practices of inner-city backyard cattle farming among the Fulani and peri-urban stall-based cattle farming among the Mossi are analyzed from a comparative perspective. Both systems are influenced by urbanization and capitalist market mechanisms, which drive profound economic, societal, and cultural transformations. The analysis is based on participant observation,

interviews, conversations, and a qualitative survey conducted over three phases of anthropological fieldwork (2013–2016). The economic practices of dairy farming are understood as social actions and analyzed using theoretical concepts from economic sociology, anthropology and their related sub-disciplines. Extended case studies are combined with concepts such as the Schumpeterian entrepreneur and patron-client relationships to examine the social and economic aspects of urban dairy production in their complexity.

The dissertation traces the development of urban cattle farming in Ouagadougou since the 1980s, including feed production, breeding technologies, and political measures and development projects aimed at modernizing national cattle production. In three empirical chapters, the interplay between economic practices and social institutions regulating access to resources (feed, labor, livestock, milk) is analyzed through thick description of social relationships. Central is the empirical distinction between two production systems and their associated actor groups. The Mossi, as ‘capitalist entrepreneurs’, pursue capital- and technology-intensive dairy production. The Fulani, who also produce market-oriented, are characterized as ‘pastoralist entrepreneurs’, reflecting both an emic perspective and structural conditions that constrain their adoption of a production based on capitalist logics.

The analysis of social relationships between cattle owners and Fulani hired herders pinpoints intra-ethnic Fulani networks that ensure cost-efficient labor but reinforce social stratification. Furthermore, labor relations on peri-urban Mossi farms are examined, particularly conflicts between pastoral labor logics and capitalist optimization strategies. A case study illustrates how the Mossi engage in patron-client bonds to secure Fulani labor and avoid conflicts over production logics, indicating the economic objective of social investments. Gender relations in the production process are explored at the household level. The cost and efficiency pressures of capitalist market orders in the city influence the sociocultural norms of the Fulani, particularly regarding access rights to livestock and milk, resulting in economic competition between spouses. Three case studies show how women respond to economic pressures and reshape cultural norms. This leads to an unprecedented transformation in the significance of milk for the identity of Fulani women and livestock as a male domain.

The study provides new insights into adaptation strategies and the diversity of West African livestock systems. It demonstrates that cattle husbandry, under changing market conditions, is no longer an exclusively Fulani-dominated practice but is increasingly pursued as capitalist enterprise by other ethnic groups. It also highlights how sociocultural norms shape economic transformation and how pastoral societies develop new identities and economic logics. Pastoralism and its associated knowledge itself undergo profound changes due to climate

change, dwindling resources, and urban influences. The dissertation precisely documents the directions that West African livestock systems may take in the 21st century. Against the backdrop of related questions of food security, it also emphasizes the relevance of urban spaces in livestock research.

**Keywords:** Pastoralism, capitalism, entrepreneurship, urban cattle husbandry, Burkina Faso, Mossi, Fulani, Social and Economic Anthropology