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Technical Note No 13

A PROFILE OF CATTLE SALES IN THE SHOSHONG AREA

by

LUCY SYSON
Research Assistant

February, 1971.

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Government of the Republic of Botswana

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A PROFILE OF STOCK SALES IN THE SHOSHONG AREA

by: Lucy Syson
Research Assistant.

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A PROFILE OF STOCK SALES IN THE
SHOSHONG AREA.

1. INTRODUCTION

An enquiry, part of which concerned the characteristics of cattle sales, was held in the Shoshong study area in December 1970. 240 households had been selected randomly from those whose lands are within ten miles of the villages for a year long household survey (limited in this way for ease of enumeration), and the heads of 220 of these households were interviewed. Attempts to interview the other twenty failed mainly because they had gone to distant cattle posts where it was impossible, because of transport problems, to follow them. The results were coded by hand and an analysis is now possible.

2. THE QUESTIONS

Each head was asked to describe the last three stock sales he (or she) had made. The questions were in Setswana. The date of sale (month and year), type and numbers of animals sold, person or agency to whom sold, where sold, why sold, then the reasons for choosing the particular beasts that were sold, and the purpose to which the money received was put were all asked.

3. THE ANALYSIS

3.1 GENERAL POINTS:

The answers were of varying quality, being more complete for some villages than others. It is difficult to say whether this is the result of enumerator bias or response bias but it is noticeable that the information is least good for the two small hamlets where the educational levels are lower than average.

3.2 Information was recorded for 377 individual transactions. 59 households had had no sales (or none recent enough to be remembered) but some households recorded sales which took place when they owned stock, even though they are now found to own none. Three transactions, those of a storekeeper who was clearly acting as an agent (accounting for 232 cattle) have been excluded from the analysis, leaving a total of 374.

It should be pointed out that not all the transactions took place in the same year. 0.4% were in 1962 and 1966 respectively; 2.4% in 1968; 15.1% in 1969 and the remainder, 81.7%, in 1970.

TABLE 1: NUMBERS OF OWNERS, TRANSACTIONS AND BEASTS SOLD BY VILLAGE.

Place	Owners		No. of Transactions	Nos. of Stock Sold	
	Type	No.		Cattle	Small Stock
Ikongwe (Total pop: 68 house- holds)	No cattle	3	38 (5 people made no sales)	21	46
	Smallstock only	4			
	< 20 head cattle	15			
	> 20 head	2	4	3	4
	Total	24	42	24	50
Tobela (Total pop: 87 house- holds)	No cattle	10	18 (13 people made no sales)	22	23
	Smallstock only	3			
	< 20 head	7			
	> 20 head	4	8	14	0
	Total	24	26	36	23
Shoshong (Total pop: 767 house- holds)	No cattle	9	50 (12 people made no sales)	47	29
	Smallstock only	4			
	< 20 head	17			
	20-49 head	16	44 (1 no sale)	48	46
	50+ head	11	33	101	4
	Total	57	127	196	79
Mosolotshane (Total pop: 191 house- holds)	No stock	12	44 (12 people made no sales)	40	29
	Smallstock only	4			
	< 20 head	18			
	20+ head	13	32 (1 person made no sale)	56	21
	Total	47	76	96	50

Place	Owners		No. of Transactions	Nos. of Stock Sold	
	Type	No.		Cattle	Small Stock
Kalamare (Total pop: 272 house- holds)	No stock	12	28 (12+ people made no sale)	17	40
	Smallstock only < 20 head	2 17			
	20-49	6			
	50 +	6	14	20	5
	Total	43	11	73	2
			53	110	47
Mmutlane (Total pop: 124 house- holds)	No stock	5	41 (3 people made no sale)	35	11
	Smallstock only < 20 head	0 16			
	20+head	3	9	18	8
	Total	24	50	53	19
+ These 12 people were not necessarily those with no stock: 6 of these did make one or more sales recently (presumably the last of their stock)					
Whole Area (Total pop: 1509 house- holds)	No cattle	51	219	182	178
	Smallstock only Less than 20 head cattle	17 90			
	More than 20 head	61			
	Total	219+	374	515	268
+ Dennison excluded.					
<u>PERCENTAGES/</u>					
	No cattle	23.3	58.6	35.3	66.4
	Smallstock only Less than 20 head	7.8 41.1			
	20 head or more	27.8			
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

3.3 OWNERSHIP AND SALES OF STOCK

3.3.1 Of the 219 households for whom information is recorded, 51 (23.3%) said that they owned no stock (but they are often looking after stock, usually under the mafisa system which does not give the right to sell.) A further 17 (7.8%) possessed smallstock only, 90 (41.1%) owned less than 20 head and the rest, 61 households (27.8%) owned 20 head or more. Of the latter group, 21 owned 50 head or more (the maximum was 440).

Not all owners could give an account of each of the last three sales of stock they had made and 374 transactions were recorded for those who had made any sales at all, i.e. an average of 2.35 each.

From Table 1 above it can be seen that the largest stockholders accounted for the greatest number of beasts sold: 192 cattle were sold in 227 transactions (Average: 0.84 cattle per transaction) by owners of 20 head or less (i.e. many of these transactions related to smallstock only), whereas 323 cattle were sold by 61 people owning 20 or more cattle in 150 transactions (Average: 2.1 cattle per transaction).

If transactions concerned with cattle alone are taken, the figures are as follows:

TABLE 2: CATTLE: NUMBER OF TRANSACTIONS AND SALES

	Owners of less than 20 head	Owners of 20 head or more	Total
Transactions	141	137	278
Cattle sold	182	333	515
Average number of cattle per transaction	1.3	2.4	1.5

3.4 SELLING SEASONS

71.4% of all transactions (for cattle and smallstock) in the four main villages of Shoshong, Kalamare, Mosolotshane and Mmutlane took place in the months of June to November. Those with more cattle (20 head or more) spread their sales slightly more evenly through the year - 64.1% of all their transactions were in those six months.

TABLE 3 (a) Numbers.

CATTLE TRANSACTIONS AND SALES BY MONTH BY SIZE OF OWNER AND SALES TO B.M.C.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Total month known	Month not known	Total
Owners of less than 20 Head	6	4	2	3	8	14	4	15	16	14	10	6	102	39	141
Owners of 20 Head or more	8	4	2	4	8	18	4	22	17	14	11	8	120	62	182
Total	14	8	4	7	16	32	8	37	33	28	21	14	222	101	323
Sales to PMC (all owners)	1	0	2	4	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	12	14	26
	2	0	8	36	14	30	5	0	0	0	4	0	99	63	162

TABLE 3(d) Percentages.

CATTLE TRANSACTIONS AND SALES BY MONTH BY SIZE OF OWNER AND SALES TO B.M.C.

Owners of less than 20 head	Transactions Sales	%	Month												Total month known	% transactions etc. June to Nov.
			J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D		
Owners of 20 head or more	Transactions Sales	%	5.0	1.0	6.1	2.0	11.1	8.1	10.1	10.1	12.1	18.2	11.1	6.1	100.0	69.7
		%	2.6	0.4	5.2	1.3	21.0	10.9	17.9	12.7	7.0	11.3	7.0	2.6	100.0	66.8
Total	Transactions Sales	%	5.5	2.5	3.9	2.5	9.4	10.9	6.9	12.4	13.9	15.9	10.4	6.0	100.0	70.4
		%	4.0	1.4	4.0	2.0	16.0	12.3	12.9	14.6	9.4	11.4	7.7	4.0	100.0	68.3

If transactions concerning cattle alone are examined, the same trend is clear: a distinct concentration in the drier months of the year, with a peak in September and October when it might reasonably be speculated that any harvest that was reaped (and that was not much in 1969 and 1970) had been finished, cash was desperately needed and the veldt in very poor condition.

Although it is not possible to relate the sales to local price fluctuations, it is possible to say that the BMC pricing policy (highest prices in the summer months) has, at least so far, had little general effect on selling patterns in the area concerned. There seems to be no appreciable difference between large and small holders here (see Table 3), although it is of course the large holders (20 head plus) who are more likely to be selling to BMC. (Nor is it possible to discern any particular increase in January, when it might be expected that the need for school fees might provoke some quick selling.)

Unfortunately, the figures for sales to BMC are too small to be conclusive, though it may be significant that of the 99 cattle thus sold in known months, 80 (80.8%) were sold in 7 transactions in March, April and May, the months when only 11.7% of the small-holders' cattle were sold and 27.5% of the largeholders' (to all agencies).

3.5 TYPES OF ANIMALS SOLD

The total of animals sold in the 374 transactions was made up as shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4: ANIMALS SOLD BY VILLAGE

	Ox	Cow	Tollie	Heifer	Male Calf	Female Calf	Total Cattle	Goat	Sheep
Ikongwe	9	9	3	-	1	2	24	36	14
Tobela	22	7	6	-	1	-	36	18	5
Shoshong	147	35	7	5	1	1	196	66	13
Mosolotshane	47	35	9	5	-	-	96	46	4
Kalamare	103	4	2	1	-	-	110	46	1
Mmutlane	30	9	14	-	-	-	53	17	2
TOTAL NO.	358	99	41	11	3	3	515	229	39
%	69.5	19.2	8.0	2.1	0.6	0.6	100.0		

There were thus 515 cattle sold, of which 69.5% were oxen. Of the 99 cows sold, only 10 were specifically stated to have been sold because they were barren.

The small stock, as can be seen from Table 1, were mostly sold by the smallowners. Could it be that the large owners, more preoccupied with remembering their main source of income, cattle, forgot to mention the smallstock that they sold? Or do they rely less on smallstock for income and in fact sell fewer?

3.6 REASONS FOR SALE.

407 responses were received for reasons for selling: on 52 occasions two reasons were given, e.g. "best prices" and "no water", or "best prices" and "needed money", and in some cases this section was not properly completed. 67.1% of the reasons were "no water", 14.2% said "best prices" and 18.4% said that they sold then because they "needed money". The point to notice on this table, however, is that in four out of the six places enumerated (all by different enumerators), similar reasons were given within that place. Thus Tobela and Ikongwe, both poor hamlets on the lands with very few large cattle owners, stressed the need for money, whereas Mmutlane, a Batalaote village in the Shoshong hills with a serious water problem, and Shoshong itself, which depends on cattle posts up to 50 miles away, stressed the lack of water. The perhaps curious consistency for separate villages need not necessarily, therefore, be suspected for enumerator bias, although this too may have crept in.

In Mosolotshane, where cattle "auctions" are held about once a week (although perhaps surprisingly, this method of sale was not recorded among the sample there (see below para. 3.7)), "best prices" were mentioned most frequently by the larger holders - 21 times by owners of 14 or more stock, only 6 times by those with less. A similar cut-off point is discernible in Kalamare, where those with 14 or more stock mentioned it 22 times as against 6, again, by those with less.

TABLE 5: REASONS FOR SALE BY VILLAGE⁺

	Best prices	No grazing	No water	Needed money	Total
Ikongwe	0	0	0	40	40
Tobela	0	0	0	25	25
Shoshong	3	0	115	8	126
Mosolotshane	27	1	63	1	92
Kalamare	28	0	45	1	74
Mmutlane	0	0	50	0	50
TOTAL	58 (14.2%)	1 (0.2%)	273 (67.1%)	75(18.4%)	407 (100%)
All sales to BMC	6 (22.2%)	0	15 (55.5%)	6(22.2%)	27 (100%)

⁺ A space for "other reasons" was included in the questionnaire but this was never completed.

3.7 TO WHOM SOLD AND WHERE SOLD

TABLE 6: TO WHOM SOLD BY VILLAGE (NOS. OF STOCK).

	Store		Cattle Agent		BMC		Auction		Private Person		Other		Total	
	C	S	C	S	C	S	C	S	C	S	C	S	C	S
Ikongwe	16	41	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	5	19	47
Tobela	20	19	2	-	13	4	1	-	-	-	-	-	36	23
Shoshong	61	54	58	3	72	13	-	3	1	-	-	5	192	78
Mosolotshane	2	46	91	-	-	-	-	-	3	4	-	-	96	50
Kalamare	31	36	9	11	70	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	110	47
Mmutlane	11	8	24	11	-	-	-	-	18	-	-	-	53	19
TOTAL NO.	141	204	185	25	156	17	1	3	22	5	1	10	506	264*
%	27.9	77.3	36.6	9.5	30.8	6.4	0.2	1.1	4.3	1.9	0.4	3.8	100	100

C = Cattle : S = Smallstock.

One figure stands out clearly from the above table: that of 91 cattle sold to cattle agents (perhaps more properly called "traders") at Mosolotshane: this clearly explains why auctions, although they are frequently held there, are never mentioned. The auctions are run solely by cattle agents and people therefore regard themselves primarily as selling to these agents. There is obviously, however, a keen interest in prices: as was seen in Table 5, "best prices" were recorded 27 times as the reason for selling at that time.

The other factor that emerges from Table 6 is the relative importance of the cattle agent for cattle sales (accounting for 36.6% of the total), compared with that of the storekeeper for small stock (77.3% of the total). The store does, however, also play an important part in cattle sales, particularly, it seems, in Shoshong (which accounts also for Tobela and Ikongwe, for whom it is the "shopping centre"). Further research is clearly necessary into the work of the cattle agents in the whole area: how do they operate (through auctions, private transactions, regular quotas etc.), how much credit do they give and what commission do they deduct? How does a cattle "agent" differ from a cattle "trader"?

*These totals differ from those in Tables 1,2, 3&4 because responses were not given for each transaction.

TABLE 7: WHERE SOLD BY VILLAGE

	Here (i.e. village of enumeration)		B.M.C.		Elsewhere		Total	
	C	S	C	S	C	S	C	S
Ikongwe ⁺	22	49	1	-	1	-	24	49
Tobela ⁺	23	19	13	4	-	-	36	23
Shoshong	91	52	72	13	33	14	196	79
Mosolotshane	93	50	-	-	3	-	96	50
Kalamare	38	31	70	-	2	16	110	47
Mmutlane	1	2	-	-	52	17	53	19
total No.	268	203	156	17	91	47	515	267
%	52.0	76.0	30.3	6.4	17.7	17.6	100.0	100.0

⁺ "Here" in these cases is Shoshong, the nearest village.

C = Cattle : S = Smallstock.

People are clearly prepared to travel, presumably because they think they will get better prices elsewhere, although in one case, Mmutlane, it is probably more simply that there are no marketing facilities in the village itself. From Shoshong, people mostly went to Mosolotshane, but some went to Mahalapye; from Kalamare they went to Mosolotshane and Shoshong but seemed more oriented towards Mahalapye; and in Mmutlane they went about equally to Shoshong and Kalamare, with some going to Mahalapye and one as far as Mosolotshane.

Here again further research is necessary to discover how the trekking is organised and what factors stimulate the choice of one place rather than another.

3.8 HOW WERE THE ANIMALS SOLD CHOSEN?

This was perhaps the least satisfactory question of this part of the questionnaire and it is hardly worth analysing. The uniformity of the answers is staggering, particularly when the other answers (e.g. to the question "why sold at that time") are taken into account. 91.8% of the answers were that the animals were "fat". Perhaps the explanation is not so much that the animals were fat in the sense that they would be highly graded by a butcher, but that, of the herd from which a choice was being made, they were the fattest.

Note has already been taken (see para. 3.5 above) of the small number of "barren cows" that were sold, but this writer cannot comment.

TABLE 8: HOW WERE THE ANIMALS CHOSEN?

	Too old	Too weak	Barren Cow	Fat	Other
Ikongwe	-	1	-	32	-
Tobela	1	-	1	20	-
Shoshong	4	1	2	121	-
Mosolotshane	5	1	6	60	-
Kalamare	-	-	-	43	3
Mmutlane	3	-	1	47	-
TOTAL	13	3	10	323	3

3.9 HOW WAS THE MONEY RECEIVED FROM THE SALES USED?

This was perhaps the most illuminating question of all. It seems fairly clear from the answers that most of the money from sales was used simply to keep the household going (55.0% of the time the money was used for food), although there were some specific stimuli to selling, such as the need to pay school fees or taxes. It should, however be remembered that this survey took place after the bad crop seasons. Will the picture be different next year?

TABLE 9: USE OF MONEY FROM SALES, BY VILLAGE

	Food	Taxes	School Fees	Other social expenses	Cultivation Capital	Cultivation Running	Live-stock Capital	Live-stock Running	Savings	Total
Ikongwe	35	4	1	5	-	-	1	-	-	46
Tobela	22	3	1	3	3	-	3	-	1	36
Shoshong	111	18	12	16	13	1	1	2	-	164
Mosolotshane	63	32	22	46	5	2	4	1	-	175
Kalamare	37	7	4	14	-	1	-	1	1	65
Mmutlane	48	3	19	12	1	4	-	1	-	88
TOTAL	316	67	59	97	12	8	9	5	2	575
%	55.0	11.6	10.3	16.9	2.1	1.4	1.6	0.9	0.3	100.0

Thus 575 responses were made, showing how the money had been used: only 6.0% were agricultural. The money received could, of course, be divided among several possibilities, and this is frequently recorded, but it is impossible to say in what proportion the money was allocated, particularly since we were not on this occasion asking the amounts of money received from the sales. "Cultivation : capital" included such things as ploughs and fencing; "cultivation : running" included seed and labour; "livestock : capital" means new livestock, while "livestock : running" included the repair of a borehole engine or payment for water. On the non-agricultural side, such items as hospital fees, clothing, relatives' weddings, loan repayments, house repair, a coffin, were included in "other social expenses", the first two items predominating.

There seems to be no particular pattern (though with such small figures, it is difficult to be precise) in the agricultural expenditure as far as size of holding is concerned; the man with four cows seems just as likely as the one with fifty to buy a plough or another beast with the proceeds of his sale.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Although it is not possible from these results to calculate a take-off rate, it does not seem, in view of the large numbers of stock sold by the large-holders, that there is any social or customary inhibition on selling cattle, such as is known to exist elsewhere in Africa and has sometimes been alleged to exist in Botswana.
- 4.2 People sell because they need the money and especially because of poor crop seasons, not primarily because they are culling the herd. This can be deduced from the reasons given for selling, the main selling season and, more particularly, from the uses to which the money is put: the main reasons for selling were the lack of water and the need for money, the main selling season was the dry winter and the main use to which the money was put was food. The money is not generally put back into improving the herd, but is more often used to meet short-term, domestic needs.
- 4.3 Although sales seem generally to be made in response to short-term needs and environmental factors (e.g. lack of water) quite a lot of people are willing to trek their cattle considerable distances, although the local store is still an extremely important market. From this it can be deduced that many people, particularly those with more than about 14 head, (see para. 3.6) are price-conscious to the extent of taking action to take advantage of prices. This may be borne out by the figures for sales to the BMC, although these were particularly unsatisfactory when trying to pinpoint the months of the year when the sales took place. But for those few that can be identified, the figures for the "peak" months of June to November, both in terms of transactions and for actual numbers of cattle sold, are considerably lower than average, thus perhaps showing some response to the B.M.C's pricing policy?

4.4 The rôle of smallstock is shown to be important, particularly for the smallholders.

4.5 Auctions, if the figures from Mosolotshane are meaningful, seem to be a popular method of selling, but further investigation is necessary to discover who takes part, how they are advertised, whether the prices received are indeed better than those obtained elsewhere or whether this is a popular illusion on which the cattle agents thrive. We also need to know more about the organisation of these "auctions": how much true competition is there and how far is it simply a "ring"?

FINAL COMMENT.

While the Project's long-term enquiries should reveal in detail how much income is received over the year from livestock sales, this enquiry was concerned with finding out the characteristics, or "profile", of cattle sales. We wanted to discover the motivation behind sales which could be shown not only through the ostensible reasons for sale given by the respondents, but also by an analysis of the uses to which the money was finally put. A sidelight on these findings is that, in this sample at least, more than 20% of households cannot hope to make an income out of livestock sales simply because they own no livestock. The present analysis of the much larger Agricultural Survey carried out in the same area at the beginning of 1970 is likely to reveal similar findings.

Lucy Syson.
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