

BOOK REVIEWS

Sun, Xiaogang, Naoki Naito (eds.) (2007) 'Mobility, Flexibility and Potential of Nomadic Pastoralism in Eurasia and Africa.' Kyoto, Japan: Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies (ASAFAS), Special Paper No. 10.

The aim of an international workshop entitled, "Mobility, Flexibility and Potential of Nomadic Pastoralists in Eurasia and Africa" was to examine how pastoralists in a variety of regions have responded to modernization. The volume produced from this workshop includes twelve papers, with six entries on pastoral groups in East Africa, four contributions from Asia and two commentaries as well as a preface. A folio of colour images taken by some of the authors is included. This volume grapples with the question of whether nomadism is an anachronism – particularly amidst rapid socio-economic transformations and climate change – or whether nomads deserve a place at the table of modernity. Thus, the authors all take up different aspects of the questions: "How are pastoral systems functioning? How do development interventions affect pastoral groups? Will nomads be able to successfully adapt in the future?" With these questions in mind, the volume's authors concern themselves with factors currently exerting powerful influences on pastoral societies including: population growth, the encroachment of agriculture and wildlife reserves on grazing land, infiltration of the monetary economy, increasing inequality between rich and poor, rural to urban labour migration; and the insecurity caused by conflicts. While this list is not specific or unique to pastoralists, the volume raises interesting comparative possibilities about nomads' characteristic adaptations to these challenges.

Maria Fernandez-Gimenez and her co-authors explore the effects of climate, economy and land policy on contemporary mobility patterns in Mongolia. Surveys conducted between 1995 and 2006 indicated that mobility is still a key strategy for many Mongolian herders and that several metrics of mobility have actually increased since 1999. Still, this contribution can perhaps be cited for an over-emphasis on mobility as determined by environmental factors (e.g., winter storms) even as economic (e.g., access to markets) and political (e.g., government sedentarization programs) factors impinge strongly upon mobility among pastoralists. This is, in part, a function of the difficulties associated with determining how many households have moved permanently to administrative centers, leaving herding, and how many continue to maintain herds by supporting two households. The authors also note that mobility is linked to socio-economic status with concomitant differentiation among herders resulting in large-scale, specialist 'yield-oriented' pastoral operations which produce for the market, take advantage of economies of scale, sometimes specialize by species and generally move longer distance in contrast to smaller-scale household 'subsistence-oriented'

producers (Sneath 1999). Yet even as climate and environmental conditions remain important drivers of herders' land use and mobility, global forces increasingly influence these patterns today. For instance, herd composition in Mongolia has changed in response to demand for cashmere, while the global market demand for minerals has influenced land use and resource access as a result of increased and unregulated mining. In fact, cashmere has become a key factor in the globalization and regionalization of pastoral economies across Eurasia. Despite these changes, the authors assert the five key strategies – mobility, diversity, flexibility, reciprocity and grazing reserves – traditionally used to manage grazing in Mongolia have remained resilient. Unfortunately, comparative questions about whether or not these strategies are applicable to the other contemporary pastoral systems are insufficiently developed in the volume as a whole.

An obvious strength of this and several other articles in the volume is the inclusion of chronological data on the same pastoral populations. Longer-term data clarifies trends in mobility patterns and the effects of development interventions on pastoral communities. Fernandez-Gimenez and co-authors discuss the current development industry emphasis on user group formation in Mongolia and note the difficulties associated with establishing community-based pastureland management in communities where resource tenure and access rights shift seasonally and are inherently fuzzy. Moreover, pastoral groups are mobile and may not be able to assert or defend rights granted through the incorporation of these groups. In the context of efforts by international development organizations to form pastoral groups in Mongolia, the authors note a surprising lack of trust and social capital among herders though this topic not subjected to detailed treatment here. This portends increasing conflicts and ongoing difficulties in overcoming the lack of strong formal or informal institutions for pasture use. If conflict and unsustainable grazing practices continue to escalate, this will provide further justification to policymakers who favour privatization of pastureland as a strategy to 'rationalize' pasture use and promote development. Unfortunately, such policies would also likely severely limit mobility, constrain flexibility and limit access to pasture resources, thus threatening the long-term sustainability and resilience of pastoral systems.

Contemporary patterns of economic migration may also affect the social quorum needed to maintain common property. Migration for off-range employment is likely to have significant effects on the continuing viability of common property regimes among pastoralists. Such systems, after all, require a certain quorum of locally resident members who monitor the grasslands, maintain the social web, and enforce the rules for a given common pool resource. The shift to wage entails critical transformations in the seasonal availability of labour, particularly among men who typically become economic migrants, relinquishing their duties as monitors and enforcers of community pasture boundaries to pursue capital accumulation through wage labour. With larger numbers of labourers absent from the range (as opposed to monitoring rangelands and moving herds),

pastoral communities may find themselves without a critical mass of locally resident members to enact the social network that maintains resource sharing arrangements and common property consensus. The consequent absence of significant portions of the population due to off-range labour will likely confound the continued viability of these communal systems. If common property boundaries are monitored and defended, communal systems can work more efficiently than private property. However, this assumes that the communal unit is able to enforce boundaries when threatened by outsiders. These conditions are met only when a critical mass participates and abides by collective norms.

Xiaogang Sun's paper examines how Rendille pastoralists have coped with complicated natural and socio-economic changes in northern Kenya. Sun compares results from research conducted in 1970s and 1980s with contemporary trends. Under the influence of development projects and drought relief efforts, most Rendille pastoral settlements have shifted into the vicinities of new towns. Yet, by adapting traditional modes of social organization (i.e., communal resource use, household members living in both settlements and herding camps, seasonal movements, distribution of herding labour according to the age system), the Rendille have successfully maintained high mobility in livestock herding practices. Sun claims that, despite sedentarization, livestock herding camps continue to move frequently throughout a large area. However, he omits to account for whether or not the distances the Rendille travel along with the spatial and temporal patterns of grazing have remained consistent. Moreover, it is difficult to ascertain from the evidence presented how changes in herd structure (i.e., more cattle to meet cash demands) have affected the mobility within the Rendille production system. Sun also contends that state neglect has allowed continuation of communal land use and reciprocal resource sharing arrangements. Furthermore, he asserts that the continuation of the age system and the practice of labour distribution though sex, age and marriage have made it possible for the Rendille to maintain their dual-residential pattern as well as the high mobility of livestock. This line of argument underscores the critical relationship between social organization and pastoral production, particularly with respect to herding labour.

Kazuyuki Watanabe's paper discusses sheepherders in East Nepal. Influenced by the market economy and government development interventions, Watanabe observes that more pastoralists in this region have retired from pastoralism during the past few decades than ever before. Yet the only substantive data provided in the paper suggests that the number of sheepherders changed between 1998 and 2006. Thus, it is difficult to substantiate Watanabe's claim of decline in pastoralists without the inclusion of longer-term data on numbers of individuals involved in this mode of production. A glaring omission in this paper is the absence of any mention of the recently suspended Maoist civil war that claimed the lives of at least 14,000 Nepalese and created economic instability throughout Nepal's rural areas. One assumes that the decisions of herd owners to sell off their

herds – a central concern of this paper – was influenced by this conflict and its concomitant effects on the movement of herds and the perceptions of risk among herd owners.

At one point, Watanabe claims that, 'Even if pastoralism is not essential its role in the economy continues to be important for people inhabiting arid countries.' This assertion is difficult to square on two counts: first, the author is discussing a pastoral population where precipitation is relatively high (at least 400 mm/year); second, in many developing countries, pastoralists contribute significantly to their national economies, although production data is seldom disaggregated, making precise calculations of their economic importance difficult (Davies and Hatfield this volume, Davies et al. forthcoming). Moreover, Watanabe discounts the supplementary socio-economic roles that pastoralism plays, including the facilitation of trade between ecological niches. For example, in the specific context of Nepal, pastoralists annually trade livestock with lowland communities providing meat for the most important Hindu holiday of the year, Dasain. Still, Watanabe seems to acknowledge the economic potential, if not realized contribution, of pastoral production to rural economies like Nepal's. As in case of other groups discussed in the volume, pastoralists in eastern Nepal are increasingly connected to the global economy. Whereas in Mongolia the global connections arise in connection to international demands for precious metals and animal fibre, in Nepal many pastoralists are emigrating to the Middle East for labour to meet cash economy demands including education, urban migration, business capital, and, ironically, the costs associated with foreign employment (paying for visas, flight expenses, permits, bribes, etc). A prominent theme in essays both from Africa and Asia is that pastoralism is increasingly characterized by trans-sectoral mobility. That is, pastoralist production systems are assimilating new jobs (e.g., mining), cash opportunities (e.g., trade in medicinal products) and accelerating transfers of property (i.e., livestock).

Mari Kazato's paper on the management and evaluation of livestock under socialist collectivization in Mongolia focuses on a little studied dimension of pastoralism in Central Asia. At the core of animal husbandry under collectivization was the production and management of common animals. The socialist regime tried to increase the production efficiency of animal husbandry based on the logic of scale economy, by maximizing the number of animals in one herd and promoting specialization and the division of labour. Animals were divided into herds of uniform individuals by categories such as species, sex and age, and the cooperative entrusted the categorized herds to the herders. While public animals were collectively recognized as belonging to several categories, private animals were perceived as individual beings. Although public animals were regarded as commodities, private animals were sometimes 'singularized.' These differences between public and private animals, Kazato argues, arose from the duration of animal-human transactions. Herders always lived with their private animals; the animals therefore became part of their lives. Thus, private animals assumed

multiple meanings, which included being seen as domestic consumption goods, as gifts, as symbols to evoke past memories and as commodities. Intriguing as these observations are, Kazato provides the reader with empirical evidence from only one family of herders! Thus, it is difficult to meaningfully extend these findings. Surprisingly, in her discussions of human-animal relations, Kazato also fails to draw upon major works on the topic, such as those by Tim Ingold (1986, 1988, 2000) or more recent articles such as Beach and Stammer (2006), which appeared in this journal.

Hiroki Takakura's paper analyzes emerging patterns in horse care among Sakha agro-pastoralists in Siberia. Specifically, the focus is on changing practices in the local livestock trust system (through which herders care for villagers' mares in remote pastures and receive a commission in return) as well as the allocation of herding labour. Takakura shows that the present system of managing horses and pastures is quite complex: many individual owners may possess a herd while pastures are owned by legal entities. Yet by relying on their trust system, Sakha agro-pastoralists have adapted horse husbandry to the current market economy.

Martin Falkenstein discusses analyzes the long-term development of ethnicity and inter-ethnic migration among the Ariaal of northern Kenya. Siding with theorists who view ethnicity as the result of historical processes, Falkenstein views Ariaal identity as a social formation that has changed considerably over time. In this context, ethnic identity among the Ariaal continues to change and adapt to political and economic exigencies. Like other pastoralist groups, the Ariaal are creating new networks and relationships with other ethnic or pastoral groups to access resources, for example through church membership or schools. However, the omission of methods and data sources attenuates the strength of this paper's findings.

To its credit, this is the only paper on African pastoralists in the volume that considers colonialism's impacts. Unfortunately, the paper mixes details about the colonial past and post-colonial present of the Ariaal, which becomes confusing for any layman who is not an Africanist. Falkenstein asserts that colonial policies actually expanded the economies of pastoral societies in Africa. More broadly, the author asserts that economic exchange across ethnic boundaries intensified rather than diminished during the colonial period. The diversification and the advancement of exchange among pastoral economies was an unintended consequence of colonial policy rather than a planned outcome. Still, Falkenstein undermines his own argument by not including data to back up these economic claims and by quoting instead pastoralist informants who 'declare that their economic orientation was mainly camel-based throughout the pre-colonial period.' Without substantiating or questioning such claims, it is difficult to give them much credence, despite the plausibility of the author's views.

Gen Tagawa writes about transformations within the age system of the Borana-Oromo of southern Ethiopia. As in other papers, Tagawa is concerned with social changes in a pastoral society that is being incorporated into a modern state. As in

the case of the Rendille pastoralists described in Xiaogang Sun's paper, Tagawa argues that the age system of the Borana-Oromo has not been significantly altered by 'modernization.' Instead, Tagawa contends, the Borana have remained peripheral to the modern state and have been able to maintain their complicated age system. One is left wondering whether the resilience of the Borana age system is not just a function of marginality but perhaps speaks equally to the adaptability of Borana social systems with respect to modernity, including their interactions with the state. Likewise, Jon Holtzman discusses the integration of Samburu pastoralists into the Kenyan nation-state. He argues that this process has created far-reaching changes in spatial practices as well as in pastoralists' cultural constructions of space. Within the volume, it is interesting to note divergent observations of the same ethnic groups, which suggests either divergence in evidence, intra-group diversity, methodological differences or, perhaps most interestingly, the possibility that our models of pastoralism still need to be expanded.

Sun and Naito's volume has assembled useful empirical studies of pastoral populations. Most of the papers are purely descriptive with fewer taking on wider historical, geographic contexts; still fewer aspire to making a theoretical contribution to pastoral studies. The volume points to some intriguing similarities and contrasts between pastoral populations in Central Asia and Africa, particularly with respect to state-society interactions, though these potentially fertile comparative aspects are not well developed in the editors' essays and missing almost entirely in the contributors' papers. Based on the contributions in this volume, a number of themes in contemporary pastoralism emerge: the persistence of mobility as an adaptive strategy; widespread sedentarization, with differential impacts on mobility; the impacts of changing social capital and tenure patterns as a result of development interventions; and the challenges of restocking after livestock losses, among others. The editors of the volume are to be commended for assembling a geographically and topically diverse set of papers on critical issues affecting pastoralists today. Though by no means complete, the volume offers a number of promising leads to follow as we ponder the possible futures of pastoralism.

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