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Commission on Nomadic Peoples Session

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Paper Summaries

General Panel.

Convenor: Dr Dawn Chatty

Topic: Justice among Equals: Disdain, inequality, and stratification among egalitarian pastoralists in East Africa

John G Galaty (McGill University, email: john.galaty@mcgill.ca)

Summary

The notions of 'equality' and 'inequality' carry with them semantic traces from diverse bodies of political philosophy when they are imported into empirical disciplines, such as economics, sociology, and anthropology. Nomads have long been known as 'egalitarian', yet many nomadic and pastoral societies are characterized by political hierarchy, racial and ethnic stratification, slavery, and significant economic differentiation. Nonetheless, it has been argued that the growth potential of herds and the intrinsic mobility of livestock capital introduces an intrinsic check on the monopolization of wealth or control of people that marks the creation of extreme social hierarchy and oppression of peoples by States. This paper will examine diverse ways that notions of 'equality' and 'inequality' have been used in Anthropology, distinguishing between culturally-derived constructions of the inherent properties of people or peoples, structural questions about the ordering of society, and empirical questions about how wealth and power are distributed. With reference to cases of nomadic pastoralists, especially in East Africa, the paper will examine how egalitarianism and inequalities can coexist, indeed how in many pastoral societies the two concepts are internally related at the cultural and structural levels, equality among some resting on their inequality vis-à-vis others. The relation of equality to concepts of justice will be explored, as they relate to wealth, power, and honor, regarding the domains of pastoral economy, gender and age.

Topic: Seniority among the Karamojong Cluster

Ben Knighton (Oxford, email: BKnighton@ocms.ac.uk)

Summary

The primary sources for this paper are archival, oral, and observation-participation based on fieldwork in Karamoja (including various contacts with Turkana and Pokot) from 1984-6 with short fieldwork visits in 1998, 2000, and 2002 to an area of chronic insecurity. Previous ethnography provides an important check on ahistorical assumptions. There is a range of levels of equalities and inequalities among the Karamojong. i. Identities and Social Boundaries. Most are 'people of the culture' ie. pastoralists, a few are 'no longer' Karamojong, and some bridge the gap in experimental ways, or cross it perhaps more than once in their lifetime. Their social positioning has various consequences for their standing in society. ii. Livestock Holdings. These are scattered and currently extremely volatile due to an escalation in raiding directly stimulated by a disarmament programme. Cattle-wealth and what is done with it is the visible sign of social inequality. iii. Enmity and Military Imbalances. Inequalities between political units in the Karamojong cluster are always potentially and sometimes actually a major determinant between both their perceived and actual power and wealth. Thus remedies for individual inequality are usually channelled into corporate activity at some level. iv. Formal Seniority. Ceremonial status is not determined firstly either by age or wealth, yet this is no superstructure on detached socio-economic realities, for power is sacramentally constituted in clear politico-religious ways, as defined by the age-class system and its dense moments around the sacrifice of cattle. An unusual measure of egalitarianism might be the result of continued maintenance of formal inequalities even though the system does create some losers. By way of some or all of these various levels, the extent of the penetration of the

colonial and independent state will be investigated. Typically the secular state and the Christian church have tried to foster inequality by the appointment of chiefs and clergy, and by development projects. The consequences of these attempts will have implications for policy.

Topic: Territorial Pasture and Joint Grazing: mobile sheep herders of East Nepal

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Summary

Summer pastures used by sheep herders of East Nepal are legally national forests and customary communal forests of the people along the migration route. However, there is also practical consensus among herders where they graze. This presentation aims to show the herder's internal territorial relationships in using pastures. As a result of this study, the following three points are shown. 1) There are grazing territories and appropriators. 2) However, non-appropriators can use the territory by means of joint grazing with the appropriator. 3) The right of appropriation of grazing territory might be succeeded among users. As a conclusion, sheep-herders' territorial relationships are considered. In spite of appropriation, their grazing territories are basically unequal, and access opportunities are available even to non-appropriators.

Topic: Integrating Pastoralism in Arid Lands Afforestation: a Cost Benefit Analysis of the Interaction Between foresters and Bedouin herders in Israel

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Presented by: **Henri Rueff** (Email: rhenri@bgumail.bgu.ac.il)

Summary

In arid countries where afforestation is used to prevent and combat desertification, pastoralism is often thought to foster land degradation. However, in the planted forests of Israel, researchers have found that grazing considerably reduces understory biomass, enhancing fire control. It was, nevertheless, not known how grazing compared with other fire control methods from the point of view of the forest administration. Nor was it known whether animal owners could derive any appreciable benefit from being allowed to have them graze in the forest. Our research supplied the missing information.

A cost-benefit analysis was conducted in the afforested area of Yatir, in the northern Negev desert of Israel, assessing the profitability of grazing for the Bedouin herders and its usefulness to the Jewish National Fund (JNF), the organization managing the forest. Findings show that the herder's use of the forest pastures reduced their forage costs, especially in times of drought, while the JNF received an inexpensive fire control means. It was also shown that within the framework of the management of the forest rangeland by a parastatal, the JNF, entrusting the handling of that rangeland to a dominant kin group of herders contributed to sustainability. Twelve years of collaboration led the JNF to coopt that kin group, turning it into the forest gatekeeper, to the mutual advantage of both the JNF and the group.

This research suggests that, given the technical, economical and political feasibility of pastoralism in afforested areas, arid countries might benefit from integrating herders in their struggle against desertification.

Topic: Economic change among pastoralists as a consequence of market reforms in Kazakstan and Turkmenistan

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Mathijs, E. - Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Leuven, Belgium

Smailov, A - Institute of Pasture and Fodder, Almaty, Kazakstan

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Presented by: **Carol Kerven** (Macaulay Institute, Aberdeen, UK.

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Summary

Pastoralists in Central Asia are now fully engaged in the market economy, having formerly been organised into state farms in the Soviet period. Privatisation policies have proceeded differently each country. Policy changes in the livestock sector of Turkmenistan have been neither as profound nor as sudden as occurred in Kazakstan, and the results so far are a greater degree of stability in the livelihoods of Turkmen pastoralists. In contrast, pastoralists in Kazakstan have been subjected to radical changes in their production system over a very short period of time. In both countries, the introduction of open markets has altered the goals and methods of livestock production and marketing. As a result, the welfare and income of all producers are affected.

The speed of change and degree of dislocation has left many losers but some winners among the pastoralists. Engagement with the market economy has been neither uniform nor easy. This paper examines growing socio-economic differentiation among pastoralists and seeks to explain how these differences have arisen. Results are analysed from two years of studies and household sample surveys in four pastoral areas of Kazakstan and Turkmenistan. Former social and wealth distinctions among Central Asian pastoralists, divisions that were forcibly eradicated under collectivisation, are re-emerging in the post-communist period in Kazakstan, but are much less visible in Turkmenistan. One of the most pressing questions for the future of the livestock industry in both countries is whether small flock owners will have the resources to continue as livestock keepers.

The revival of a livestock industry that can absorb more people will depend upon the expansion of remunerative markets, both domestically and internationally. The state can play a more positive and enabling role in this effort, but ultimately it will be the commercial sector that takes the lead.

Topic: Property rights and pastoralism in contemporary Kazakstan and Turkmenistan: the role of community-level institutions in sustaining flock mobility

Roy Behnke, Macaulay Institute, Aberdeen, UK
Ilya Ilytch Alimaev, Institute of Pasture and Fodder, Almaty, Kazakstan

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Summary

In the 18th century, Kazaks were among the most mobile pastoralists on earth. Annual migratory circuits of several hundred kilometers were routine, and circuits of several thousand kilometers were not unusual for large herds. By 2000, cultivated fodder and the continuous use of pastures adjacent to villages and water points had replaced extensive mobile pastoralism for all but a minority of livestock owners. By contrast, in Turkmenistan pastoralists have retained the capacity to move seasonally when movement is warranted by the spatial distribution of natural resources.

This paper describes the changes in land tenure and property rights that underpin the differences in mobility in Kazakstan and Turkmenistan. In both countries, major revolutions in property rights occurred at two different times in the 20th century - in the 1930s with the substitution of state ownership for communal kinship-based property systems, and subsequently in the 1990s with the demise of state socialism and the institution of private property. Especially in Kazakstan, both of these revolutions were expensive in terms of the destruction of livestock wealth and loss of human welfare. In Turkmenistan, the disruption and economic costs of the transition to capitalism have been minimized, but there have not been the fundamental changes in land law that occurred in rural Kazakstan.

The paper summarizes preliminary data drawn from a three-year interdisciplinary investigation of pastoralism and environmental degradation at two study sites in Kazakstan and two in Turkmenistan. The paper closes with a discussion of the current policy debate regarding rangeland tenure in Central and Inner Asia.

Topic: Designing a pastoral risk management strategy in Mongolia - applying a sustainable livelihoods perspective

Stephan Baas (Rural Institutions and Participation Service, FAO, Rome. Email: Stephan.Baas@fao.org)

Summary

Background: Socio-economic and vulnerability context

Mongolia spans more than 1.5 million km² but is home to just 2.5 million people which “amounts” to a population density of only 1-2 persons per km². Almost half of Mongolia’s population is rural. Out of these, 60 percent are *transhumant* (mixed species) herders and 40 percent town dwellers. Of the relatively “small” overall population 180.000 households (HH) - 36 percent - are poor with a high concentration in rural areas. The severity and depth of poverty has worsened since the early 1990s, since when Mongolia has been in transition to market economy. The breakdown of centrally-planned economy and consequent loss of formal sector jobs has forced many people to turn to herding, many of them with little experience in livestock rearing. Throughout the decade 1990-2000, the number of herder families more than doubled, from 17 percent of the national population to 35 percent.

At the same time, the decline of collectivized agriculture has placed full economic responsibilities and the burden of risk management with the individual herder - a major

change and crucial issue given the harsh climatic conditions (with long and extremely cold winters) in the country and the high exposure to natural disasters in Mongolia. As a matter of fact, the high risk conditions have been experienced dramatically by the four consecutive years of dry summers/drought and extremely harsh winters (*dzud*) which have killed millions of animals since 1999. In 1999/2000 close to three million animals (around 9 percent of the national herd) were lost. In 2000/2001 over four million animals (approximately 14 percent of the national herd) died. Risk vulnerability has become a priority issue in the country's approach to poverty alleviation.

Herders' main source of food and cash is livestock rearing, whereas rural town dwellers are self-employed, living on pensions or gold washing, producing their own milk and meat. In the cities, people work in the informal sector as there are few formal jobs. Most rural households combine different income sources to protect themselves from external shocks. Many herder households spend winters in town and summers on the grasslands. Herders who lose their animals either herd for kin or grow summer vegetables or move in with town relatives.

The Mongolia Sustainable Livelihoods Project and the key characteristics that makes it different from other projects/approaches

The *Mongolia Sustainable Livelihoods project* is phased over 12 years (3x4) and consists of four components: Pastoral Risk Management (PRM), Rural Microfinance Outreach, Local initiatives Fund, Policy and Institutional Support. It aims at protecting and enhancing household and community assets, by supporting livelihood strategies of the poor; for instance helping herders to cope with severe winters, helping town dwellers to expand and diversify their economic activities, and communities to repair essential infrastructure. It also promotes livelihood diversification to reduce vulnerability to changes in the economy and export markets. The combination of components reflects that the project also targets a broader social spectrum of people - not just people who are already poor but people around the poverty line who are vulnerable to becoming poor.

The project strategy was based on a holistic livelihood systems diagnosis - Participatory Living Standards Assessment. The holistic diagnosis allowed the project to know where and how to intervene and counteract the most important factors explaining poverty and livelihood vulnerability.

The impact on poverty reduction in Mongolia was undermined by the continued economic shocks often caused by natural calamities that made many households in or around the poverty line to fall into poverty. So the total number of poor did not decrease in spite a high number of development programmes. The SLP project explicitly addresses shocks and stresses that cause people to fall into poverty.

The most innovative aspect of the SLP is the addition of a PRM strategy for herders and the integrated combination of PRM with the other (more conventional) components. Pastoral Risk Management focuses on the early stages of the risk cycle, i.e. long term prevention and short term preparedness strategies. It attempts to manage risk through the protection of herders' livelihood assets and the reduction of stock losses. It is not an attempt to manage the whole pastoral sector or to increase livestock production. Also Pastoral Risk Management investments differ from conventional livestock projects in that there is more investment in herders, while less investment in animals and less emphasis on government provided infrastructure and services. The Pastoral Risk Management budgets, for instance, are spent on herder group formation/strengthening, herder-friendly early warning systems, district level contingency plans for bad weather in winter, animal-drawn hay making equipment, water point rehabilitation, and herder self-help initiative funds.

The project implementation strategy reflects sustainable livelihood principles: people-centred, demand-driven, poverty focuses, participatory, based on iterative flexible re-planning, and is concerned with building human and social capital in parallel with technical change.

Lessons learned

Sustainable livelihoods perspectives add value in that they place poverty reduction in a broader macro-economic and policy context whereas earlier projects stopped short of that.

SL is mainly good practice. It does not imply a new type of project. There is no need for "Sustainable Livelihood Projects". The challenge is to make existing development programmes more people-centred, demand driven, participatory, flexible, risk and asset-focused, with better linkages between grassroots experiences and macro-policy.

Poor people's livelihood systems, including herders, combine agriculture and off-farm activities. The cross sectoral nature of SL perspectives is able to respond to that.

SL project designs do not always have to be multi-sectoral. However, in the case of Mongolia it is an advantage: For instance, herders need to protect their animals, but Pastoral Risk Management alone is not enough. Herders who lost their animals need other livelihood alternatives, town dwellers need rural enterprise options, rural infrastructure needs repair and so on.

The use of flexible lending mechanisms (Adaptive Programme Loans) increases the ability of interventions to respond to changing circumstances.

Mobile Pastoralism and Gender Relations: Comparative Perspectives

Topic: Health, Illness And Violence Among Women In The Middle East: The Qarina

Aref Abu-Rabia (Dept. Middle East Studies. Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. E-mail: aref@bgumail.bgu.ac.il)

Summary

In this lecture I will examine and analyze beliefs and traditional medical systems among women in the Middle East. The focus of my lecture will be dealing with the Qarina in the Middle East: Characteristics of Qarina, its reasons and roots, and its effects from the view point of culture and health, systems of preventive and treatments, and methods of coping with it.

The Qarina is a male (jin) or female (jinniya) demon, that attack, take control of woman and settle at her womb. The woman has certain sensitive circumstances that the Qarina can penetrate her body: during cutting the navel cord immediately after giving birth, circumcision, menstruation, splitting hymen, sexual intercourse, and during giving birth.

The Qarina causes the woman, after penetrating her body, one or some of the following phenomena: madness, miscarriage, death to the new born during or nearby birth, crib death, or death during the first five years after birth.

In order to treat the Qarina, first of all we have to examine her gender (male or female). The most difficult Qarina is the female one.

Nomads and Education.

Convenor: Caroline Dyer

Topic: Literacy, schooling and development: views of Rabari pastoralists

Caroline Dyer (School of Education, University of Manchester. Email caroline.dyer@man.ac.uk)

Summary

The Rabaris of Kutch, Gujarat, India, are a caste of transhumant pastoralists who, over the last couple of decades, have been increasingly negatively affected by the state's pattern of development. In this era of increasing pressures which appear to be rendering their traditional way of life unviable, Rabaris are feeling increasingly disempowered, and have started to look for occupational alternatives. Their way of life precludes them from making use of any of the sedentary modes of educational provision offered by the state, yet Rabaris are unanimously in favour of 'literacy'. Ethnographic research over two years attempted to analyse this notion of 'literacy' and its relationship with 'development' from the Rabaris' perspectives. For Rabaris, formal schooling emerged as a key strategy in development, and it was through schools that they expected their children not only to learn to read and write, but also to learn to use the language and behaviour of power. Schools were seen as offering the way into social and economic security in the contemporary context, where the traditional occupation of transhumant pastoralism is seen to have neither value, nor social status. Conversely, Rabaris felt that peripatetic adult literacy, which attempted to validate their traditional occupation but marry it with the literacy skills required in modern times, was tantamount to condemning them to remain 'backward' and 'barbaric'.

Topic: Abstract Boarding schools for mobile people: the Harasiis in the Sultanate of Oman

Dawn Chatty (Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford. Email dawn.chatty@qeh.ox.ac.uk)

Summary

The Harasiis are a small mobile community of about 3,000 people inhabiting the edge of the Empty Quarter in southeastern Arabia. Late in the 1970s, the government of Oman decided to extend educational facilities to this remote, difficult to reach tribe. This paper examines the various options which the government considered in pursuing its goal; bussing children distances to one fixed location; setting up seasonal mobile classrooms; and organizing coeducational education. The paper highlights the interaction between the Ministry of Education, tribal leaders, and prospective parents. It also analyses the negotiations that took place, resulting in a number of compromises during the process of setting up a boarding school for boys, with day facilities for girls at a government regional centre in the middle of the central Oman desert.

Topic: The Politics of Education Provision in Nomadic Communities: Two Cases from Israel and Alaska

Steven Dinero (Philadelphia University. Email: DineroS@philau.edu)

Summary

In this paper, I address the role of primary and secondary educational service provision as a mode of nomad sedentarization and socialization. I argue that while the literature has long argued that educational services provide a crucial component of modernization in mobile communities, this service typically is designed to serve State interests above local interests in post-colonized environments, acting as a primary agent of dominant society conquest and control. Indeed, formal schooling for nomadic children is often seen by policy makers as the most effective mode of encapsulation, implemented with little regard for indigenous interests, values, priorities or concerns.

The role of education provision in two post-colonial case study communities, the Negev bedouin of southern Israel and the Nets'arii Gwich'in Indians of northeast Alaska (USA), is then analyzed and compared. By examining evidence including course curricula, teaching methods and facilities, and data gathered through household surveys in both communities, I argue that educational provision is a highly politicized activity. I show too that as a result, social development in the two communities has been stymied, as neither educational system is fully effective or functioning well.

I conclude the paper with the contention that a culturally appropriate educational environment and curricula - developed with, rather than for, nomadic peoples - is the key to effective provision of this service. Such systems can be implemented which more fully foster communal development thereby furthering, rather than jeopardizing, the State's modernization agenda.

Topic: Educating Drifting Illiterates: Reaching for the 'Invisible' Karretjie People of the South African Karoo

Michael de Jongh (Department of Anthropology, Archaeology, Geography and Environmental Studies, University of South Africa. Email: djongm@unisa.ac.za)

Summary

In a recent speech to parliament the minister of education gave a statistical indication of the millions of South Africans who have never attended school. Disturbing as the implications of such figures are, they are couched in general terms and are not sensitive to the context of some of the truly poorest of the poor South Africans in the central rural areas.

This paper concerns itself with one such 'invisible' community, the peripatetic, sheep-shearing Karretjiemense (Karretjie People/(donkey) Cart People) of the Great Karoo. Statistics, censuses and national policy do not identify these almost totally illiterate people because of their distinctive lifestyle but also because, to outsiders, policy-makers included, they are inconspicuous at best and inconsequential or aberrant at worst.

Although the South African Government has already demonstrated its commitment to education by recognising basic education as a fundamental human right, the instruments the government tend to employ are designed for, and directed at schools and learners as part of a known structure. These instruments are furthermore not calibrated to discern potential learners who have never been in the ambit of a school system conceived in a sedentist paradigm.

This is the core issue which is addressed in this paper, and stemming from this, more specifically:

* the challenge for the national educational system posed by an itinerant lifestyle i.e. how to reconcile a shifting lifestyle and the demands of rural poverty with an inflexible schooling system * considerations and role of values, context and perceptions.

Topic: Wandering Learners: Education and the Peripatetic Karretjie Children of the South African Karoo

Riana Steyn (University of South Africa. Email: SteynSA@unisa.ac.za)

Summary

The educational playing field in South Africa is not a level one mainly because of a historical system of inequity and exclusion of certain communities from mainstream services. Therefore, education for previously disadvantaged groups, including the Karretjie People, should be one of national government's main concerns. For most of the Karretjie children their childhood years entail times of great flux and fragmentation, a ceaseless process of shifting localities and shifting relationships with each other, where factors such as poverty, domestic disruption and personal uncertainty are the reality of their lives. Although they gain educational skills within their families and community, i.e. the Karretjie domestic unit is the primary entity within which they acquire knowledge peculiar to their lifestyle and environment they do not have the same access to formal schooling as children from other ethnic backgrounds.

These are some of the issues which will be explored in this paper.

Topic: Nomadic Groups and Education in the Horn of Africa

Roy Carr-Hill (Email: roy.carr-hill@ioe.ac.uk)

Summary

The level of participation of nomadic groups in formal state education is known to be low. Given the nature of nomadic society - on the move with their assets and their animals - and their settlement in isolated areas, far from infrastructures, it is not surprising that the lowest enrolment rates are among these communities. Many attempts have been made to establish appropriate education services that would meet their learning needs, but they have often failed. This situation poses considerable problems for attaining Education for All in these countries.

Some have argued that state education is inevitably antagonistic to nomadic groups lifestyle. Based on a study in six countries in the Horn of Africa, this paper analyses the views of nomadic groups themselves about whether or not to send their children to school, practical issues of access, reasons for non-attendance, whether or not state education is seen as useful, and their level of participation in adult education

The paper also considers the implication of the fact that Koranic education often flourishes; and whether or not there are any lessons to be learnt for state education.

Economic Change and Social Dynamics in Pastoral, Agro-pastoral and Pasto-forager Societies.

Convenor: Dr Michael Bollig

Topic: The emergence, intensification and decline of specialised mobile livestock husbandry: Economic Change and Social Dynamics among Pokot pastoralists of northwestern Kenya in the 19th and 20th century

Micheal Bollig (Email: Michael.bollig@uni-koeln.de)

Summary

Paper summary not provided.

For context see Dr Bollig's panel summary:

The panel intends to elucidate the complex interrelations between economic change and social dynamics in pastoral, agro-pastoral and pasto-forager societies. Recent anthropological publications highlighted the emergence of pastoral societies in Eastern Africa in the 18th and 19th century and drew the relation between pastoral specialisation and expansion and the emergence of age-set systems. Historians reported that various forms of mixed pastoralism, agro-pastoralism and pasto-foraging were characteristic for the Rift Valley before 1800 and that 'the extreme specialization of the Maasai is both relatively recent and, probably, short lived' (Waller 1988). Similar phases of pastoralisation and depastoralisation have been described for other parts of Africa and central Asia. Today at the turn of the millenium, however, it looks as if specialized pastoralism is on the retreat at least all over Africa. Communal land tenure is dissolving, agriculture and more sedentary lifestyles are being adopted, pauperization of large segments of the population is taking place. In many regions of arid Africa, livestock husbandry is currently accomodated 'as a semi-autonomous fringe activity within an underdeveloped pastoral economy' (Spencer 1998). While peasant herders rely increasingly on the sale of smallstock, on the diversification of productive resources, and on waged shepherding and cash income from labour in non-pastoral contexts, wealthy herders diversify their assets by investing in trade, intensifying livestock production and consolidating their personal claims to the means of production.

Topic: Hunter-gatherer and Agro-pastoralist in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve Issue.

Kazunobu Ikeya (National Museum of Ethnology, Expo Park 10-1, Suita, Osaka, Japan, ikeya@idc.minpaku.ac.jp)

Summary

Recent years are marked by debates (or conflicts) between the Botswana government and NGOs or local people concerning use of Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR) resources. This paper aims to clarify differences of adaptation among the hunter-gatherer San and the agro-pastoralist Kgalagadi under the influence of the Relocation Plan in the CKGR. As a result, differences of the degree of livestock-raising and social unity are important for decisions concerning movement outside the CKGR. Reasons for strong agro-pastoralist resistance against the policy are discussed considering some materials gained by author interviews and observations in the CKGR in March and April of 2002.

Topic: From foraging to herding and back: the west coast of South Africa in the first millennium AD.

Karim Sadr (Archaeology, University of the Witwatersrand. Email: sadrk@geoarc.wits.ac.za)

Summary

Europeans initially occupied the southwestern tip of Africa because the locals, Hottentots as they were then known, were willing to trade their livestock. Ever since, the dominant historical view has been that the Hottentot pastoralists (now known as Khoekhoe) were foreigners who had originally migrated from the north. Recent archaeological research suggests a more complex scenario. Intensive pastoralism on the west coast in the 17th century may itself have been a response to the Europeans' demand for beef and mutton. Before European contact, the local population on the west coast pursued low intensity small stock herding as a supplement to coastal and inland foraging. The exception is a curious episode of intensified pastoral production during the late first millennium AD. We are now trying to gain a better understanding of this episode of economic change and its social and environmental context. This paper presents a summary of our findings to date.

Topic: Mongolia: Sedentarization of Pastoralists in Ger-Settlements of Ulaanbaatar Background and Consequences for the Country's Development

Jörg Janzen (Center for Development Research (CDR), National University of Mongolia (NUM), Ulaanbaatar 210646 / Mongolia. E-Mail: Dr.JoergJanzen@gmx.de)

Summary

1. Introduction and Statement of Problem

The rapid growth of the ger-settlements in the large towns of Mongolia and the national capital of Ulaanbaatar in particular is primarily a consequence of a strong rural-urban migration process.

These ger-settlements are suburban estates at the fringe of the "socialist city". Whereas the city is characterized by multi-storey buildings constructed of bricks and/or concrete, the ger-settlements in contrast are quarters consisting of compounds surrounded by wooden fences (khashaa) mainly containing Mongolian yurts (ger), the traditional felt made nomadic dwelling, as well as other buildings made of different construction materials mainly wood and/or bricks. Migration is a strategy of human existence that is as old as the history of mankind itself and has been practiced through the ages in all parts of the world. In recent times, however, forms and strategies of spatial mobility to secure a living have changed considerably. It is obvious that the changes in migration patterns of the inhabitants of developing countries as well as former socialist states currently in the process of transformation to a market economy stem to a large extent from global interdependence and international influences emanating from the affluent, industrialized countries and spreading into the remotest parts of the world. National governments of economically developing countries concentrate their efforts on the most profitable, mainly export-oriented sectors often neglecting subsistence agriculture and rural infrastructure. This policy deepens already existing socio-economic disparities between rural and urban areas and intensifies the exodus from the countryside. The widening gap between rich and poor within the developing countries and between them and the western industrialized world raises the readiness of the people to migrate on the national level from rural to urban areas and on the international level to move from the poorer to the richer states. In quantity and quality these migration processes have reached a new dimension. The severe economic problems and the "new poverty" in the former socialist countries have similar consequences. A strong international as well as internal migration is typical for all the states of the former eastern bloc. This is also true for Mongolia. As internal migration and rapid urban growth in Mongolia is of major interest and concern for the country's future development in this paper an answer shall be given on the following questions: What is the background for the nationwide process of strong rural-urban migration in Mongolia, which are its major structural elements, which advantages/disadvantages are relevant for the migrants involved, which consequences result from this process on the Mongolian society, economy,

natural environment and culture, and what kind of measures and technical tools for development planning can be derived from the analysis of the ongoing strong process of rural-urban migration and rapid urban growth?

2. Major Reasons for Rural-Urban Migration and Urban Growth

In order to better understand the background of this uncontrolled migration and sedentarization process one has to look back to the country's recent history. The adoption of democracy and market economy has brought about far reaching changes in all parts of Mongolian society and economy. The new Mongolian constitution of 1992 guaranteed the people the right of free choice of their place of residence being the legal basis for the ongoing internal migration process in the country. Some major socio-economic changes being responsible for the rural-urban migration shall be mentioned here: As a consequence of the breakdown of most of the state-owned farms and companies and the privatization of the *negdel* (livestock production cooperatives) the majority of the rural population lost their jobs. Fortunately during the privatization of the former collectively kept livestock most of the rural families got relatively small numbers of animals resulting in nearly a doubling of mobile livestock keeping households in comparison with the socialist time. The majority of those of these "new nomads", who did not sell their animals, started to live a (semi-) nomadic life often concentrating with their animals in the close vicinity of rural settlements. As many families rarely move to different seasonal pastures they cause considerable ecological damage to vegetation and soils. Consequently living and production conditions became worse resulting in a higher vulnerability of man and beast in case of natural hazards.

The present situation in Mongolia is the result of a primarily Ulaanbaatar- as well as Darkhan- and Erdenet-oriented development. The major reason for the severe development problems in rural Mongolia is its neglect by the previous Governments. During the transformation process of the 1990s the Mongolian Governments did not succeed to work out a nationwide homogeneous development program. On the contrary the services provided by the facilities of the social and technical infrastructure in rural Mongolia became worse because the Government stopped most of the subsidies. The population of district centers (*sum* centers) and the mobile livestock keepers in particular had to suffer from shortages in the supply with consumer goods. Insufficient marketing facilities and fluctuating prices for animal products and a strong dependence on migrant traders represent other problems for the herders. Thus the regional disparities between urban and rural settlements as well as between rural centers and their periphery have widened considerably. As a reaction on these aggravating living and production conditions since the mid-nineties an increasing number of rural households, among them a high percentage of livestock keepers with their herds, left for the larger towns and their surroundings, such as provincial centers (*aimag* centers), industrial towns like Darkhan and Erdenet, and the national capital of Ulaanbaatar in particular. The majority of the migrants from the rural areas have left their home-*sums* because of the poor technical and social infrastructure, insufficient medical and educational facilities and services being the major bottlenecks. The migrants' main wish is to facilitate their children a good education in the capital. Another important reason for the enormous increase of rural population coming to Ulaanbaatar is the lack of jobs in the rural areas. Having no additional income opportunities, many livestock keepers have only survived by selling their animals. After all livestock had been sold these people have been forced to move to the large towns and look for work. During the natural hazards (*dzuds*/deep snow and very low temperatures) of the winters of 1999/2000, 2000/2001 and 2001/2002 in combination with droughts (*gan*) in the previous summers millions of livestock were killed resulting in a considerable increase of the number of the rural poor. These disasters caused another rise in the number of rural-urban migrants many of them belonging to the group of the "new nomads".

3. Consequences of the Migration Process for Areas of Origin and Areas of Destination

In this short overview paper only a few major effects of the rural-urban migration process for the areas of origin and the areas of destination can be summarized. The major regions of out-migration in Mongolia are the aimags in the western and northwestern part of the country, with Uvs, Zavkhan, Gobi Altai, Khovd, Khuvsgul and Arkhangai being the main aimags of origin. These provinces are situated far away from the capital and face all the development problems mentioned below.

These population movements have positive effects but also far-reaching negative consequences for both areas of origin and destination. Whereas the positive aspects can mainly be found on the personal/private level of the migrants the negative effects of this migration are primarily of national concern and differ from area of origin to area of destination.

The exodus from the countryside implies a strong skill and brain drain leading to a lack of qualified workers and highly educated specialists in the rural areas. Consequently the lack of well trained manpower will negatively influence the quality of production and services in the rural settlements. Population density in some rural areas has decreased considerably. This is especially true for those sums of Uvs- and Zavkhan-aimag along the border of the Russian Federation where theft of livestock, organized by Tuva-Mongolian gangs, has increased the general insecurity. Therefore a high percentage of the border population has already left for central Mongolia.

The decrease of livestock numbers resulting from herders moving with their animals to ecologically more favorable areas in northern and central Mongolia can be stated as a positive aspect as this destocking process lowers the pressure on the natural pasture lands in western Mongolia. At the same time new problems arise in the destination areas because of ecologically inappropriate and unorganized pasture use.

In the new ger-settlements of Ulaanbaatar, the widely uncontrolled sedentarization process causes a lot of social, economical, ecological, legal as well as infrastructural problems. Only a few aspects of major concern shall be mentioned here:

The rate of unemployment and poverty is very high leading to more alcoholism and criminality. Many families settle illegally and are not officially registered. As many "newcomers" settle on steep mountain slopes the danger of landslides is increasing. Those families settling in the flood plains of rivers and streams risk to be washed away in case of heavy rains which can result in high floods. The extreme concentration of livestock, mainly cattle and small ruminants, in close vicinity of the new ger-settlements leads to heavy overgrazing, vegetation degradation and soil erosion. The urban administration faces great problems in providing sufficient infrastructural services especially enough clean water and electricity. The disposal of waste and excrements is unsolved. The bad hygienic conditions bear a high risk for the health condition of the inhabitants.

Taking into account the wide spectrum of development problems to be solved more scientific research has urgently to be undertaken in and around the ger-settlements of Ulaanbaatar. In-depth studies on the social, economical, ecological, legal and infrastructural circumstances as well as scientific recommendations could assist development planners, administrators, cadastral surveyors and policy makers in finding adequate solutions for sustainable urban development.

This paper is based on research results of the author, who is carrying out development research in Social and Economic Geography of Mongolia since 1996, on the findings of a study done by Mrs B. Enkhtsetseg (IG/MAS) in cooperation with J. Janzen (ZELF/FU Berlin) in three areas of the Ulaanbaatar ger-settlements in the 6th and 8th khoroo (sub-district) of Songino duureg (district) and the 10th khoroo of Bayangol duureg in September/October 2000 as well as the results of a practical fieldwork carried out in the 2nd khoroo of Bayan zurkh duureg within a Master course in research methodology of the Institute of Geography and Tourism at the National University of Mongolia (NUM) under the guidance of Prof. Dr. Jörg Janzen, Center for Development Research (CDR/NUM), in June 2002.

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