

Preface

Large parts of the world, and particularly the arid belt stretching from the northern parts of Africa to the Central Asian steppe zones, are distinguished by the co-existence of nomad and sedentary peoples. They have intermingled in many fields of social activity since ancient times, and continue to do so. This interaction has given shape to specific institutions, models of social, military and juridical organization, to artefacts, especially of weaponry, and distinct identities and practices. The complex nature, as well as the impact of these interrelations has increasingly attracted the interest mainly of anthropologists and historians during the past few decades. Their approach has somewhat disqualified traditional attitudes of perceiving nomadic life as a singular and separate social phenomenon.¹ In the meantime, nomad-sedentary relations have become an important issue for the historian's study of these areas, and this undertaking obviously requires further exploration. This perspective also has significant consequences with respect to practical needs. The ecological and economic potentials, as well as social benefits of mobile pastoralist live-stock keeping have become more important for development planning in recent years.² Attempts to sustain nomadic life-styles in a context of nomad-sedentary relations, however, require a thorough understanding of the tensions, boundaries and exchanges between nomadic customary attitudes, interests and value systems and their sedentary surroundings.

The framework of nomad-sedentary interrelation is fluid. On the one hand, nomadic economy and social organization are characterized by great diversity and enormous flexibility. They respond to environmental settings, and result from constant communication with sedentary social surroundings. These conditions are further illuminated by the case studies in this book, as they deal with different regions and époques, including Ancient Egypt, North Africa in Roman antiquity, Near and Middle East from Late Antiquity to modern times, East Africa, Iran and Central Asia, as well as Gypsy groups in Turkey and in the Black Sea area.

¹ See, for instance: Wolfgang Weissleder (ed.): *The Nomadic Alternative. Modes and models of Interaction in the African Asian Deserts and Steppes*. The Hague, Paris 1978; Ugo Fabietti/Philip Carl Salzman (eds.): *The Anthropology of Tribal and Peasant Pastoral Societies. The Dialectics of Social Cohesion and Fragmentation*. Pavia 1996; Joseph Ginat/Anatoly M. Khazanov: *Changing Nomads in a Changing World*. Brighton 1998; Martha Mundy/Basim Musallam (eds.): *The Transformation of Nomadic Society in the Arab East*. Cambridge 2000; Anatoly M. Khazanov/André Wink: *Nomads in the Sedentary World*. Richmond 2001.

² Cf. Gideon Kressel: *Let Shepherding Endure: Applied Anthropology and the Preservation of a Cultural Tradition*. Albany, NY 2003.

On the other hand, the policies applied by states or state-like organizations and their capacities of controlling nomad mobility, balancing conflicting interests and warding off their intrusions differ greatly. In the long run of history, therefore, we observe continuous shifts of power and agency between nomads, especially mounted and militarily skilled nomads, and the political administration of sedentary societies. These dynamics have brought about various constellations, such as nomad rule over sedentary territories, or – much more common – indirect rule of state administrations in the steppes. Quite often, nomad and sedentary elements merged into societies characterized by their own particular idiosyncrasy.

These trends, however, changed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as political autonomy of nomadic populations gradually decreased, and the crucial importance of nomads in securing transport diminished. The prevailing current of international development favoured the expansion of a centralized state controlling and suppressing nomad mobility, and thus replacing the fragile balances characteristic of former times. However, nomads have not died out in all parts of the world, and the revaluation of modern applications of mobile pastoralist stock-holding even seems to nourish counter-tendencies. In addition, we witness the longevity, even revival, of nomad identities, which nowadays are mobilised, recalled and constructed in predominantly sedentary contexts, when these have maintained ties with a nomadic past. Similarly, we can observe (within a historical setting) that the assertion and assignment of nomad identities by nomads and sedentary people appear as a self-regulating social reality, tending to be rather disconnected from the mobile pastoral existence. Just as in other domains of activity, the exchange of different points of view between nomads and sedentary peoples has contributed to the interrelatedness of concepts and perceptions in both worlds.

The modern world, as it is driven forward by rapid technological and cultural changes, appears to drift away from the pastoralist nomadic life within its traditional confines. We may state, however, that this movement is neither as constant nor homogenous as it might appear. Counter-tendencies and resilient cultural traditions blend with this general process and thus create new constellations drifting into unforeseen innovations.

Most of the contributions to this volume are the results of interdisciplinary research conducted in the framework of a Collaborative Research Centre at the Universities of Halle and Leipzig.³ Archaeologists, historians, anthropologists and geographers, as well as specialists of oriental literatures, cooperate in the exploration of causes, circumstantial settings and effects of nomad-sedentary relations from the past to the present. This volume also includes contributions of scholars

³ Collaborative Research Centre at the Universities of Halle and Leipzig, “Difference and Integration – Interaction between nomadic and settled forms of life in civilizations of the Ancient World.”

who presented their work in the framework of colloquia and workshops, particularly during a meeting held at Wittenberg in November 2003.

Collaborative research between disciplines based upon the empirical study of contemporary societies and the history of ancient or medieval times remains a challenging and rewarding undertaking. The quest for comparable structures, which is a main justification for interdisciplinary research, not only reveals the many differences and discontinuities within nomad-sedentary relations; interdisciplinary discussion also demonstrates the discrepancies of discursive traditions and methods of verification which distinguish these disciplines. Historical research, especially when dealing with remote periods often can not match the density of data gained from anthropological field work, but tends to invest much methodological care and scrutiny of every tiny piece of information in order gain maximum benefit from it.

The volume is divided into three sections. The first part, dealing with the diversity and the constants of nomadic existence, is meant to encourage the development of a deeper understanding for the systematic aspects of nomadic life. The papers include discussions of general rules of nomadic economy and organisation but at the same time endorse the idea of the mutability of 'pastoral society'. Nomadism and mobility endure as part of the mental, economic and social repertoire, and yet vary widely in their pragmatic applications.⁴

The sequence of historical case studies in part two detects nomad-sedentary relations in several fields, such as military organisations, administration and political institutions. The analysis correlates historical events to circumstantial and recurrent conditions and thus presents evidence of the interrelatedness of political, economic and administrative spheres where both groups intermingle.

Part three is dedicated to conceptions related to nomadic life, as they are asserted and professed, or assigned and allotted. The study of stereotypical images, explanations and associated ideas demonstrates that representations of the "nomad alternative" convey values and perceptions which are often used for identity constructions in specific historical and social contexts.

The dynamics of nomad-sedentary relations cause boundaries to move between both groups, and entail overlapping and intersection. Fluctuation to and fro between people who regard the stability of their dwellings as a standard principle of organizing their lives, and others who favour mobility for economic and other practical as well as ideological motives, is a phenomenon of *longue durée*. Yet we do not want to foster any ideas of anthropologically defined dichotomies; rather, we propose to put this concept into question by giving attention to the com-

⁴ Cf. Philip C. Salzman: "Introduction", in: Ugo Fabietti/id. (eds.): *The Anthropology of Tribal and Peasant Pastoral Societies* (op. cit.), p. 34.

plementary character of both forms of life. Their interrelation gives rise to constant transitions which affect the constitution of nomad and sedentary societies.

Emmanuel Marx begins by demonstrating how the Bedouin of Sinai develop a diversified economy which in fact parallels and adopts the urban social texture of their surroundings and copes with the changing demands of the market. From a somewhat opposite position, Günther Schlee explains determinants, both environmental and social, of the mobile pastoralist economy as it unfolds in different patterns of movements of pastoralists in time and space. Descent, interrelated with locality, is shown to be one of the major social instruments employed for the management of limited territorial resources. A systematic approach to the diversity of resources exploited by nomads under quite different natural conditions is also the concern of Kurt Franz. His analysis points to organisational power as particularly enabling nomads to make use of multiple resources. The camel herding Bedouin society which binds together pastoralist and agriculturalist elements serves as a starting point for Michael Meeker's inspiring re-examination of the concept of the segmentary lineage system. As suggested here, this Bedouin representation of social order, which had been seen as an adequate description of social realities in modern research, should rather be seen as the ideology of Bedouin nomadic society. Katharina Lange explores the recent history of the Welde, sheep holders in Syria, and explains the complex difference between *shāwīyah* shepherds and camel herding Bedouin. Her report discloses changing perceptions and contradictory assertions which respond to varying needs and social strategies. Further examples of particular idiosyncrasies between nomad and sedentary patterns are presented by two studies of Gypsies living a semi settled life. Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov describe features and proceedings of Gypsy courts in South-eastern Europe and explains the significance of juridical autonomy for Gypsy identity. Udo Mischek develops a peculiar social morphology which allows him to qualify Turkish Gypsies as nomadic groups in an urban context and at the same time as part of the rural population in the Turkish countryside.

The sequence of historical case studies includes three particular regional clusters, Central Asia, North Africa and the Near/Middle East. Anatoly Khazanov opens this section with a detailed study of a nomadic presence in cities and the presence of urban centres in steppes. The data collected suggest that intense contact between nomad and sedentary peoples was often accompanied by the preservation of their respective life styles. Just as nomad settlement in cities remained peripheral and cursory, the steppe-city depended on nomad patronage, but was not characterized by a substantial nomadic presence. The precarious nature of nomad-sedentary power balancing is demonstrated by Wolfgang Holzwarth, who shows how relations were destabilized in Uzbekistan during the first half of the 18th century relations. Due to changes in the regional political framework, polarization replaced the established order. Charlotte Schubert recounts an example of the specific adaptation of Roman provincial law – and Roman *coloni* – to the indigenous population

and their mobile pastoralist ways of life. Thomas Brüggemann deals with the late period of Roman and Vandal rule in North Africa giving emphasis to the integrative role of Latin as *lingua franca*. Nomad activity, essential for the history of North Africa, and yet so distant from our Classical source materials, comes into sharper focus in the studies dealing with the Near East. Oliver Schmitt analyses the extent of military capacities and political ambitions of Arab nomad confederates who served and challenged Roman rule in that region. Stefan Heidemann exemplifies the “dimorphic” structure of society and military organization in the late Seljūq period. An enduring characteristic of nomad agency is to draw some advantage from conflicts between hegemonic powers and their military situations. An example of the role of nomads as mediators and auxiliary force to both parties is presented by Rhoads Murphey with his study of the Kurdish nomads’ affairs during the Ottoman-Safavid conflict.

The ages-old history of stereotypes produced to express sedentary peoples’ distrust of nomads, who contrast and implicitly contest the conventions of sedentary societies, is discussed by Hans-Werner Fischer-Elfert. He shows that clichés in common use in Ancient Egypt, partly similar to those in modern times, scorned non-sedentary Nubians, Libyans and others in order to maintain the common standards of the majority society. Gundula Mehnert convincingly argues that the suggestive force of traditional images about nomadic invasions has led modern research to interpret archaeological data on Cimmerians and Scythians in Transcaucasia much too categorically as traces of nomadic invaders, thus neglecting the many facets of exchange and cohabitation that have or may have existed. Saad Sawayan constructs a careful critique of the Ibn Khaldunian scheme of nomad-sedentary oppositions based on the realities of a close coexistence between various nomadic ways of life and sedentary farmers in the Saudi society, where they share common values and identity-structures. Urban Arab authors tended to perceive the representative of a non-urban society, unfamiliar with the sophistication of educated people, as a stranger within their own culture, as Thomas Bauer proposes in his contribution. Stefan Leder argues that the variety of perceptions and ideas related to the Bedouin shows inclusive and exclusive patterns of representation. They give witness to the significance of Bedouin heritage for the shaping of thought and identities according to changing purposes. The myth of the Bedouin as it was cultivated in images of noble chivalry and terrible violence is studied by Thomas Herzog in the late medieval popular Arab romance. Birgit Schäbler pursues the transition of the Bedouin’s image from a representative of primitive man in Ottoman urban culture to a hero, agent and token of Arabness and national character. Resilient concepts of being Bedouin-Arab in the contemporary megacity of Cairo are analysed by Barbara Drieskens. Her case also demonstrates how collective identification with a rather remote social concept is pragmatic and conditioned by situational utilities.

The central questions of the Collaborative Research Centre “Difference and Integration” can not definitely be answered with this collection of papers. By also presenting results from the first research period, it has become evident that more work with source material is necessary. These papers also raise new questions challenging the usual paradigms or requiring new hypotheses. The volume “Shifts and Drifts in Nomadic-Sedentary Relations” represents a midpoint, justifying a certain sense of accomplishment, but also pointing toward the necessity for further collaborative work.

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