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*Sedentarization among Nomadic Peoples in Asia and Africa.* Kazunobu Ikeya, ed. Senri Ethnological Series 95. Osaka, Japan: National Museum of Ethnology, 2017, 344 pp. No price, paper. ISBN 978-4-906962-58-7.

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Previously, all people were mobile, but now most are sedentary. The implications of semi-sedentarization for once-nomadic lives and livelihoods were explored in cases presented at an inter-congress meeting of the Commission on Nomadic Peoples held in Japan in 2014. Together they provide a global perspective on nomadic-sedentary

dynamics. Surprisingly, as illustrated by Levantine, Japanese, and Mesoamerican findings, prehistoric sedentism most often preceded domestication of crops and animals, with sedentary farming, nomadic herding, and continuing hunting-gathering coexisting, as they do today.

Despite advantages gained by mobility, semisedentism increases livelihood diversity. Southeast Asian “sea nomads” combine fishing, inter-island trade, and commercial pursuit of sea turtles, turtle shells, and tropical sea cucumbers. Sheep herders in East Nepal practice transhumant mountain pastoralism while sedentary family members engage in agriculture, crafts, and trade and enhance incomes to pay for education by serving as soldiers, agricultural laborers, or travelers abroad. French Gypsies (Roma) experience “forced sedentarization” and assimilation when provided caravan “hosting areas” where casual work can be found, but they perpetuate the culture of mobility by visiting friends, seeking seasonal harvest labor, going on pilgrimages to Lourdes or Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, or pursuing regional trade.

Settling results in demographic increase, less strain on women, lifting restraints on sexual relations, greater access to foods, and weight gain. Sedentary communities have greater access to education, trade, health services, and administration, opportunities that nomads may access through settled family members or periodic visits. The Agta of the Philippines use kin relations to combine customary and regional livelihoods, moving to hunt deer, macaques, lizards, and birds; to fish on intertidal reefs for octopus, squid, and crab; but also moving to trade or gather rattan. Their sedentism is promoted by both evangelical missions and the government to pursue development programs. Similar factors also impact the hunting-gathering Mlabri of Thailand (electrification, Buddhist institutions, Thai education, travel, television); some will never return to full nomadism but may maintain a kind of nomadic lifestyle while engaged in modern life.

Thus, many mobile peoples accommodate to settled life while maintaining economic and cultural ties to resources and environments accessed through nomadism. The Majangir of lowland Ethiopia practice shifting cultivation; honey collection; hunting hogs, bushbucks and duikers, and (previously) elephants; plant food gathering; and logging. Given forced villagization during the socialist revolution, the Majangir accepted educational, medical, and administrative services while retaining sustainable “forest tactics” so children could maintain identities as “forest people.” Some Omaheke Ju|’hoansi of Namibia experienced resettlement but, being targets of disparaging stereotypes, most live in Herero-dominated communal areas, practicing “piecework” for other groups, receiving social welfare, or working as agricultural laborers on commercial farms while maintaining familial networks and continuing marginal hunting and foraging. The Orang Rimba of Sumatra depend on forests less for subsistence, undermined by uncontrolled land clearing, industrial logging, and oil palm plantations, than as symbols of their culture, which the declaration of a national park as a conservation area affirms.

Between nomadism and sedentism, pastoralists in East Africa have seen forms of “spatiality” change, showing that “sedentarization is not a unilinear or irreversible process, but rather is multilinear and reversible.” Although seminomadic pastoralists in

northern Kenya neither are completely settled in towns and settlements nor have exclusive rights to natural resources that sedentarization implies, mobile phones and assault rifles have transformed “fixed” to “flexible” forms of spatiality. Mobile phones expand arenas of conflict since combatants are more easily coordinated, even as information about attacks is shared with opposing groups to avoid expansion of skirmishes into full-scale battles. Forced sedentarization of Eritrean Saho pastoralists expanded their economic activities, shifting dependence from primary local foods to secondary nonlocal foods, from sorghum porridge to market foods such as teff *injera* (flatbread). The shift of Penan of Sarawak from nomadic to sedentarized lifeways was supported by missionaries and the government’s “modernization” program—to their dismay, changing lives based on nomadic hunting and gathering to settled farming.

The transition from nomadic to sedentary practices is not unilinear; mobility may be reestablished for adaptive or political strategies. Indeed, semisedentary living by formerly mobile communities provides semi-urban opportunities, even as they retain forest or savannah “tactics” as strategies of land-use and cultural affirmation. This indigenization of sedentism sharpens our awareness of how marginalized people today respond to the forces of modernity by practicing persistent mobility within the context of an increasingly sedentarized world.

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