

Development and economic anthropology

IKEYA, KAZUNOBU & ELLIOT FRATKIN (eds).
Pastoralists and their neighbors in Asia and Africa. iv, 242 pp., maps, tables, figs, illus., bibliogr. Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 2005. (paper)

This book emerged out of a conference session on 'Socio-economic interaction between pastoralists and other groups' at the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, Tokyo, 2002. It would probably have been improved if the editors had been slightly more rigorous in choosing which papers to select for publication. Although some are fascinating and present intriguing analysis, others are very descriptive and superficial. A third group present incredibly detailed accounts of movements, personal histories, or household-level data but completely fail to analyse these accounts and go beyond them to discuss their implications and interpretations.

The book has the admirable aim of examining the diversity of links between pastoralists and non-pastoralists and doing this in the very diverse contexts of Eastern and Southern Africa and Asia (Mongolia, Siberia, India, and Nepal). Although each chapter is self-contained (a little more cross-referencing would have been helpful), both the introductory chapter by Ikeya and Fratkin and a further

comparative chapter by Fratkin pull together and synthesize many of the emerging issues, demonstrating the critically important roles of political economy and human ecology in shaping pastoralist lives and livelihoods in both continents, despite the apparently very diverse contexts. A common theme is how, under enormously diverse political regimes and economic histories, privatization of common pasture lands is undermining the mobility and flexibility of many pastoralist populations and often forcing the forging of new economic relationships with non-pastoral populations. Here the flexibility of pastoral production systems takes new forms in terms of developing and exploiting these new relationships and finding new ways of using livestock production within viable livelihoods.

Some chapters seriously expand our interpretation of the idea of pastoralism. In other chapters we are introduced to the ready responses of pastoralists to new opportunities and markets. All the pastoralist populations represented in this book have significant economic and social relations with other non-pastoralist groups, however apparently isolated they might at first seem to be, and some chapters demonstrate the dynamism of these old and new relationships, such as those of the Turkaan coming to terms with and exploiting the implantation of a huge refugee camp on their territory (Ohta).

The book never really hangs together. It is marred by very poor translation and proofreading – which at times is merely irritating but sometimes actually impedes understanding. Some consistency about how terms are rendered would have helped the non-specialist. It is hard to work out what sort of readership the book is aimed at. The relatively small number of scholars interested in pastoral production systems will find something of interest, but the wide geographical spread and the diversity of style and subject matter make it little more than a collection of papers with pastoralists as a central theme.

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