

Kazunobu Ikeya (ed.), *Sedentarization among Nomadic Peoples in Asia and Africa*

Senri Ethnological Studies 95, 2017. Publications Unit, National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, Japan. Free download from <https://minpaku.repo.nii.ac.jp>

This volume, based on papers presented at the July 2014 IUAES Inter-Congress held in Chiba Japan, looks at formerly nomadic populations in South-east Asia and Africa who have settled down on farms and government resettlement villages. This collection looks at a variety of societies including hunter-gatherers, fishing communities, shifting cultivators, pastoralists and 'economic nomads' (European Roma). In his Introduction, Kazunobu asks how *do* we define nomadism and nomadic peoples, how does sedentarisation proceed and what factors engender it, and how does sedentism affect different types of nomadic peoples.

Following Ikeya's introduction, archeologist Hiroo Nasu's 'Prehistoric Transitions to Sedentarization and Agriculture in Temperate and Tropical Regions' compares transitions to agriculture between 8,000 and 2,000 years ago in the Near East, Mesoamerica and Japan. He cites climate change and population growth as factors in this transition, and argues that the degree of sedentism was higher in resource-rich regions with favourable climates.

Kazufumi Nagatsu's 'Maritime Diaspora and Creolization' describes how Sama-Bajau people (Sea Nomads) of Malay peninsula migrated to coastal Borneo and the southern Philippines, creating settled communities dependent on coastal reef resources. This paper discusses sedentism and diasporic ethnogenesis.

Kazuyuki Watanabe's "'Sedentarization" of Transhumant Herders (of Nepal)' describes changes in household economies – including property ownership, land transfers and wage labour – and their effects on household structure and decision making. The author argues the sedentism and market economy did not reduce dependence on sheep but did affect daily household labour needs.

Ryoko Sachi-Noro presents the interesting case of European Romani in 'Decline and Restructuring of Gypsies' Nomadism in France: Beyond the Nomadic/Sedentary Binary'. Gypsies (also known as Romani or travellers) number 300,000 people in France. Local

governments encouraged voluntary settlement by creating official campgrounds, often in unpleasant industrial zones. Some families gained access to subsidised housing, which they used as a base for themselves and other family members while maintaining regular forays into distant areas to sell wares, repair appliances or engage in farm labour. Kinship ties allowed these home owners to invite other families to camp on their property, but local laws continue to present risks for travellers.

Tessa Minter's 'Mobility and Sedentarization among the Philippine Agta' describes tropical horticulturalists and wild food gatherers who traditionally moved to join kin and family in distant areas. Mobility is encouraged to share the wisdom of older people and provide young people with spouses. The past several decades have seen efforts by the Philippine government, international NGOs and Christian evangelical missions to encourage the Agta to settle. The author offers several case studies describing families settling and cultivating while continuing to travel for social reasons. Both activities are now threatened by environmental degradation and commercial claims to coastal resources.

Shingo Odani's 'Population Dynamics among the Orang Asli of Peninsular Malaysia' describes the surprisingly high fertility rates and population growth of this hunter-gatherer population. They settled in response to government pressures and permanent houses, and their economy shifted from subsistence hunting to cultivation and 'commercial foraging', selling forest products including agar wood and rattan. The author concludes that settling has accelerated declines in forest resources which, combined with increasing population, will necessarily lead to changes in their economy.

Kazunobu Ikeya and Shinsuke Nakai's 'Sedentarization and Landscape Change among the Mlabri of Thailand' discusses transitions to this foraging population. Beginning in 1980, foreign NGOs and local governments introduced cultivation and rearing of rabbits, pigs and water buffaloes, all with poor results. Following a visit in 2007 by the Royal Princess, new development policies were implemented, including fixed villages and housing, schools teaching in the Thai language and encouragement of religious conversion to Buddhism. As in other case studies in this volume, government representatives, made up of people from rice growing backgrounds, had little understanding of foraging or shifting cultivation. The author concludes that it is unlikely that the Mlabri will return to their former lives as nomadic hunter-gatherers.

Ren'ya Sato's 'Sedentarization of Nomadic Shifting Cultivators: The Majangir of Lowland Ethiopia' traces their transition from nomadic shifting cultivators to a more settled lifestyle. Their previous mobility was in response to ethnic fighting and 'blood' revenge attacks. The Majangir initially moved into permanent settlements during Mengistu's villagisation programme in the 1970s. Following the fall of the socialist regime, the Majangir began to settle former areas in response to availability of medical care, markets for their products, and the spread of evangelising Christianity. They continue practising shifting cultivation and 'forest tactics' of honey collecting, hunting and logging.

Velina Ninkova in 'Not Foragers, Not Not-foragers: The Case of the Omaheke Ju!'hoansi' reviews the complicated story of Ju!'hoansi Bushmen who lost traditional hunting lands during the apartheid regime of the Namibian state, Bantu farmers and white commercial ranchers. Following independence in 1990, the Namibian government offered resettlement and access to lands to former farmworkers, including Ju!'hoansi, who were expected take up agriculture in resettlement areas. While larger societies including Herero agro- pastoralists were able to regain traditional lands, this was not possible for Ju!'hoansi who were prohibited from hunting. Instead they had to live in remote settlements too dry for farming and where government implemented 'food for work' programmes to avoid starvation. The author concludes that the Ju!'hoansi live under insecure economic and social conditions of dependency. The only institution that has survived is their kinship networks which provide some access to resources, information and employment.

Adi Prasetijo 'Living Without the Forest: Adaptive Strategy of Orang Rimba' describes one of the few remaining foraging groups in Sumatra. The Orang Rimba settled in response to the expansion of oil palm tree plantations which threatened Rimba livelihoods. A national park (Bukit 12) was created which allowed the Orang Rimba to continue hunting, but wild game had declined due to loss of forest habitat. The Bukit 12 Reserve continues to face encroachments by oil palm farmers, eroding what security and resources the Orang Rimba formerly had. In a sadly recurring story, the national government sees the lifestyle of this small foraging population as impoverished, with cultural values detrimental to their own welfare, and continues to resettle them in new communities.

Shinya Konaka's 'Reconsidering the Spatiality of Nomadic Pastoralists in East African Pastoral Society' describes conflict among East African pastoralists as a factor in settling and argues that the sedentarisation process is neither unilinear nor irreversible. The chapter makes a significant contribution by its discussion of the impact of assault rifles and telephones on the lives and economy of the region: both have been used to organise attacks on neighboring peoples. I found it unhelpful and confusing that the author referred to these populations as 'Ethnic Group A' or 'Ethnic Group B' rather than identifying who they are. While his goal was to preserve the anonymity of these pastoralists, ethnic conflict in Northeast Africa is widely known and reported on by many researchers, including those cited in this article.

Robel Haile's 'Sedentarization and the Creation of Alternative Livelihood among Saho Pastoralists in the Qohaito Plateau of Eritrea' presents another interesting case from East Africa, particularly from a region where ethnographic research has been difficult under the ruling regime. The author discusses the impact of the Eritrean War of Independence (1961–1991) on Saho and how this conflict led to reorganisation of settlement patterns including sedentarisation.

The final chapter, 'Sedentarization and Nomadism among the Penan of Sarawak' by Kentaro Kanazawa, describes Penan hunter-gathers of north-western Borneo in Malaysia. While famous as an 'anthropological' population, Penan hunter-gathers have not been widely researched. The author describes the transition from nomadism to sedentism over the past fifty years, brought by pressures from expanding agricultural communities, contact with foreign missionaries, commercial logging and the policies of the Sarawak state government. Although the government did create a conservation area for the Penan, this space could not be protected from logging interests and in time the planned reserve was completely deforested. In the 1980s the government responded with planned settlements to encourage agriculture and provide social services for the Penan.

In summary, this volume makes an important contribution to the sedentarisation literature by including nomadic fishing, horticultural and hunting/gathering populations into a wider literature describing nomadic pastoralists. Although the volume could have expanded to include Arctic, Central Asian, and Amazonian populations, it nevertheless makes an important contribution to our understanding of

various processes contributing to sedentarisation. Several important processes are explored, including forced versus voluntary settlement, changes in population, effects on health and diet and changes in traditional livelihoods. Many of these transitions have led these populations to greater vulnerability – as with loss of forest or marine resources – but the volume also demonstrates that recently settled populations can show adaptability and resilience to the changes they face.

*Elliot Fratkin*

*Department of Anthropology*

*Smith College*

*Northampton MA 01063*

*Email: [efratkin@smith.edu](mailto:efratkin@smith.edu)*