

# **PASTORAL TIMES**

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Participatory Conservation in the Himalaya An Interview with Yash Veer EDITORIAL



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# Beyond the meadows:

Changes in transhumant pastoralism in the Gori basin, Kumaon

#### by Emmanuel Theophilus

S mall as it is, barely 120 km long and about 30 km at its widest, the Gori river basin in itself has a remarkable elevational gradient (from 7,400 meters to 590 meters asl). Therefore, it also has climate types that range from Polar to Subtropical, that you would otherwise have to look across continents to find. Such variability yields, among other things, a year-round habitat and vegetation types for forest and grassland ungulates that humans have learned to take advantage of to graze their domestic livestock on.

The settlement of humans in the Himalaya has invariably been associated with and made possible by land-use strategies mediated by livestock, whether it be nutrient-cycling for settled agriculture, as a means of transport and trade of produce in remote and difficult terrain, and for the conversion of vegetation not directly usable by humans into food. The scale, scope and value of transhumant pastoralism has been variable over time, being greatly determined by changes in access and opportunity within changing economic and legal environments. Access (or the lack thereof) to transboundary trade, using sheep and goats as pack animals, or even for the transport of contraband plant and animal parts off-trail, and therefore off the radar of regulation, for instance.

What would be a useful timescale to measure or describe changes in practices and fortunes of transhumant pastoralists? Since most economic occupations and access to wherewithal has in the past been largely determined by caste and ethnicity, perhaps speaking of change over generations may be useful. I attempt to describe, very briefly, rapid and radical changes over two generations, in an occupation that has been otherwise relatively stable for perhaps a thousand years before:

1. The Gori basin, being located at the trijunction of the borders with Tibet and Nepal provided pastoralists the opportunity to engage

in carriage and trade across borders, of products that were particular to either the cis or the trans Himalaya. Salt from the dried lakes of Tibet, food-grain, wool, gold-dust, borax, pelts, musk and so on. Hostilities with China in 1962 led to the closure of borders and trans-Himalayan trade with Tibet.

2. Many transhumant pastoralists, who used to winter in the mid-altitude ranges in neighboring western Nepal, had to use sheep and goats as pack animals in an area with little or no road infrastructure. The Maoist uprising and ensuing civil war for over two decades led to intensive road-building in western Nepal for military movement, and reduced the need for, as well as access by pastoralists from the Gori basin.

3. The ethnic and caste preponderance of people involved in transhumant pastoralism has changed. Two generations ago, it was the Bhotia community that was almost exclusively engaged in keeping sheep and goats, and in the ancillary possibilities such as trade. Due to their dominance in trade, and their being at the apex of the economic and power structure, the Bhotia also owned most of the agricultural land, which was given out on share-cropping.

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## Pastoralist map



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## Healers of Herds





Forest Rights for Van Gujjar Pastoralists

#### ...Continued from page 1

The abolition of Zamindari in 1964 when the land went to the tiller, also greatly altered their economies and fortunes. Being officially accorded tribal status in 1967, and the opening up of opportunity through reservations in Government jobs have resulted in the following two generations increasingly moving away from traditional occupations. Current distribution between Bhotia, thakur, and SC.

4. For the past four decades or so the Government has attempted to breed in Merino and Rambouillet exotics in order to improve wool quality, and has succeeded in altering the genetic mix of sheep in the region. This has not worked well for multiple reasons. The cross-breds are more prone to epidemic disease, to predation, and to grazing on poisonous plants, and therefore experience much higher mortality. Their value for finer wool has also evaporated with the drop in demand due to cheaper imports, and a switch to using synthetics for clothing and blankets. Most shepherds will now shear and discard wool on the alpine meadows itself. The cross-breds are also smaller and sell for a lower price for meat, and the castrated males are not anywhere as sturdy as pack animals, when compared with the indigenous breeds. This has decreased the overall viability of herds.

5. While earlier most herds migrated down to the Terai for winter, there has been a progressive decline in the number of herds continuing to do so. Shepherds report that there are now increased restrictions all along their transhumant route, more particularly in Reserve Forest areas that have increasingly been designated Protected Areas, or where restrictions have been stepped up. Grassland ecosystems are being put under afforestation drives and therefore fenced off, or grazing licenses in traditionally grazed Reserve Forests are not being renewed. As a response, people have decreased their herd size, and have increasingly opted to migrate down from the alpine to the mid-altitude ranges for winter, instead of coming all the way down to the plain. This, in turn, has led to intensive grazing and lopping of trees at the mid-altitudes, in forests on which local communities are themselves dependent, leading to rapid depletion of tree cover as well as increased conflict between pastoralists and resident cultivator communities.

6. Perhaps the most fundamental and far-reaching change has been the incremental whittling down

and dismantling of Commons tenures and arrangements across the state. This has to do with forests, rangelands, and water. Weakening Commons arrangements have led to erosion in almost all aspects of community life. Regulations and rules regarding the local self-governance of village commons have been changed by the government without consultation, rendering communities 'beneficiaries', and not owners of the commons. Coupled with the promise of contracts and funding dished out by the government, has in turn has led to opportunistic seat grabbing of elected posts, and inevitable rent-seeking, and the depletion of collective decision making. An example of this is the auctioning of grazing pastures to the highest bidder, rather than to the shepherd who has long used a particular pasture. Uncertainty of tenure, overstocking of sheep and goats, sub-letting of pastures for continued grazing, grazing horses on fragile alpine herb-meadows, and the extensive depletion of stands of juniper for fuelwood are the readily apparent outcomes.

If these trajectories continue, so will the downward spiral. Pastoralism however, has been and can remain a versatile and stable option for those still dependent on their landscapes for their livelihoods and their well-being.

Transhumant pastoralism has long been and still remains one of the more sustainable foodproduction systems; it has had a lighter tread on rangeland ecosystems precisely because the impact is seasonal, and is spread over a wide geographical area. It ties together landscapes, communities, economies and cultures spread over a larger region, and deserves being valued, if even for its cohesion.

> Emmanuel Theophilus is an environmentalist working in the Munsiyari Himalayas. He started a yak raising and breeding centre under the aegis of the Himal Prakriti. The centre helps the villagers residing in the high altitude region of the Himalayas to earn their livelihood by carrying loads of tourists or raders on yaks.

## Two Norway wind farms lose licence in landmark ruling over indigenous rights

#### By Nora Buli and Terje Solsvik

 ${\bf N}^{\rm orway's}$  supreme court stripped two wind farms of their operating licences on Monday in a case that could boost the legal rights of the country's indigenous Sami people.

Reindeer herders in Norway argue the sight and sound of wind turbines frighten animals grazing nearby and thus jeopardise age-old traditions, and that land should not be expropriated for such projects. The supreme court case centred on whether the construction of turbines at Storheia and Roan in the Fosen region of central Norway, part of a \$1.3 billion development that is Europe's largest onshore wind farm, had interfered with Sami herders' cultural rights under international conventions.

"We are awaiting contact from the owners of the wind farm to see what they have to say about this."

The court's decision came as a surprise, Fosen Vind said in a statement, adding it would await a response from the energy ministry before making further comment. The ministry said it was studying the verdict.

#### BOOK Review

## Livestock for a Small Planet: Review

By Judith Schwartz

### Livestock for a small planet

Ilse Köhler-Rollefson nd Endogenous Livestock De



Tlse Köhler-Rollefson's timely and compelling report is an homage to Frances Moore Lappé's 1971 book Diet for a Small Planet, which places food at the center of social justice and calls attention to the ecological cost of industrial meat production and consumption. In the five decades since that book's publication, the world has gotten yet smaller, thanks to the Internet, more accessible travel, and increasingly opaque global supply chains. In addition, livestock-the heartbeat of traditional cultures throughout the world and integral to the livelihood of a billionplus people-have become vilified and blamed for crises from water shortages to climate change. Köhler-Rollefson's succinct, readable book directly takes on widespread misunderstandings about animal agriculture and shows how nature-aligned livestock stewardship can sustain people and the planet. At a time when anti-livestock rhetoric has reached a treble pitch (to wit: with world leaders at this month's COP26 climate summit urged to forego meat) Köhler-Rollefson's cogent, cleareyed account is a powerful corrective.

Rather than getting mired in welltrodden arguments, the author offers a fresh angle on animal-land dynamics informed by decades of observing pastoral practices. For example, she points out that nature has designed plants to be stationary and animals to be on the move. Under modern, industrial management, however, animals are kept in place while plants are cultivated as commodity feedstock and delivered to livestock, a system that involves shipping goods around the world. The health of the land, the animals, and the people who consume animal products all suffer as a consequence. This plant-animal "role reversal", she writes, transforms a system based on solar energy into one totally dependent on fossil fuels. Highlighting the folly of manipulating nature to conform to markets cuts through squabbles about the need to intensify production in order to feed the world.

to what has become an emotional topic. She points out that rather than undermining food production by "taking up too much land", livestock thrive in landscapes that are unsuited for crop agriculture. At a moment when many in western countries see livestock as climate villains and meat eating as unethical, Köhler-Rollefson makes the distinction between industrial management, which is environmentally destructive and cruel to animals, and pastoral systems, which regenerate dryland environments and afford animals better lives than in the wild.

The author takes on the fraught topic of greenhouse gas emissions, emphasizing the distinction between methane, a short-lived gas generated by the breaking down of plant material, and carbon dioxide, which remains in the atmosphere indefinitely. As she acknowledges, this is a complex matter and the focus of much fuzzy "cows-are-bad" math. She correctly says that regenerative grazing can build carbon in soils, thereby absorbing atmospheric CO2, and mentioned the high-profile example of ranch-owner and one-time US presidential candidate Tom Steyer.

She could have noted, however, that restorative livestock rearing is more than a quirky California trend, as grassland restoration via holistic grazing is a rapidly growing, worldwide movement. For example, Savory Global now has training hubs in twenty countries and has developed land-tomarket meat, dairy, wool, and leather supply chains based on ecological monitoring protocols. This underscores the increased awareness of grazing solutions and the wealth of potential alliances for pastoral communities.

One small quibble is the author's parenthetical remark that grasslands require occasional burning. This is not true of all grassland ecosystems. What is necessary is a means of breaking down senescent vegetation. As Allan Savory points out, this process can occur chemically, through fire, or biologically, via the digestion of ruminant animals. While fire emits particulates and greenhouse gases and leaves bare soil, grazing sustains moisture and promotes more life on the land. It is important to acknowledge that herbivores represent an alternative to fire as well as a factor in fire resilience.

The second part of the book articulates a vision for livestock management that aligns with nature and the needs of herding societies. The author challenges the assumption that we should intensify animal production, saying that what we actually need is to extensify livestock herding so that more plant waste material can be "upcycled" to protein-rich food and more land benefits from regenerative animal impact. She highlights the value of heritage breeds suited to specific locales and the need to empower small-scale farmers and herders. This part, a blueprint for a just, ethical, and regenerative livestock future, is essential reading, a manifesto for human-animal partnership on a resource-stressed planet.

"A grand chamber of the supreme court unanimously found an interference with this right, and ruled the wind power licence and the expropriation decision invalid," the court said in its ruling. It did not say what should happen next to the facilities, but a lawyer representing the herders said the verdict means the 151 wind turbines should be dismantled.

"Our starting point is that these two wind farms are illegal and have to be taken down," Knut Helge Hurum of the Fend law firm told Reuters.

"We'll have to come back to how this case should be handled," an energy ministry spokesperson said.

The verdict could also affect other projects, Hurum of the Fend law firm said.

"It will have quite an impact on later developments inside the Sami reindeer area. It's certainly relevant for other wind farms, but also for mines and other big development projects, big roads for example," he said.

(\$1 = 8.5450 Norwegian crowns)

This article was first published on Reuters.

Köhler-Rollefson brings in the perspective of pastoralists, whose voices are often missing in policy discussions. Conversations about livestock tend to betray Western ethnocentrism, she says. She makes the point that we humans evolved in tandem with the animals we raise, and stresses the deep knowledge that herding cultures have built over time. If we lose these animals and traditional herding ways, she suggests, we lose a part of ourselves.

The book is divided into two distinct sections. The first zeroes in on nine common myths about livestock. This format allows the author to effectively counter misinformation and bring facts

"Livestock for a Small Planet" extends a hand to readers familiar with problems linked to modern animal agriculture but may not be aware of alternatives-or that pastoral cultures have much to teach us. In all, Ilse Köhler-Rollefson does a wonderful job in showing the role livestock play in making our small planet go round.



Judith D. Schwartz is a journalist who focuses on nature-inspired solutions to global crises. Based in Vermont in the United States, she is the author of "Cows Save the Planet", "Water In Plain Sight", and, most recently, "The Reindeer Chronicles and Other Inspiring Stories of Working With Nature to Heal the Earth."

#### EDITORIAL 3

#### The first part of this interview can be found on the ninth edition of Pastoral Times.

 $\mathbf{S}_{\mathrm{prevalence}}$  of livestock grazing in the Himalayas, what do you think is the best way forward? What policies need to be put in place to manage grazing, are protected forests the way to go?

I'm an advocate for not focusing on exclusionary protected areas in these high altitudes, a region with numerous unique characteristics. Instead, there should be various categories of areas comanaged with the community. That is something we have worked on as far as policy is concerned. For example, we have facilitated the formulation and implementation of the Project Snow Leopard (PSL) since 2009. This scheme of the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEFCC) promotes landscape-level, participatory conservation; participation of not just local communities, but all other stakeholders too.

In these high-altitude ecosystems above the tree line and in the Trans Himalaya, pastoralists and agro-pastoralists eke out a living under a severe climate, with sparse production. Wildlife is mostly pervasive, but occurs at low densities. People and wildlife have a large interface where they interact with each other. We cannot have strictly protected

areas where people are excluded from their traditional dependence, especially because there aren't many alternatives for people's livelihoods and in many cases, it may not be needed. In the highly seasonal environment, agricultural land is very sparse, pastures have a generally low productivity, and all these are already divided among communities. Relocating villages also cannot be a strategy for conservation in the mountains.

Livestock and wild herbivores do interact on pastures and other places such as watering points and salt licks. Some studies show that wild herbivores may avoid direct contact with livestock, especially since they are often accompanied with people and ferocious dogs.

As far as the pastoral system is concerned, my worry is about the numbers. I'm concerned that migrant transhumance is something that isn't monitored that well. In Lahaul the Forest Department estimates that there are about five lakh sheep and goats coming with the Gaddis in the three months of summer when they graze their animals on less than 7,000 sq.km of alpine steppe and meadows. Imagine the density! If

## Participatory Conservation in the Himalaya:

An Interview with Yash Veer Bhatnagar (part 2)



Photo Credit: Hashmat Singh

these numbers are true, there is a problem. If, how and why these numbers are increasing, we don't understand very well, but we know that the manner in which pastoralists are using the area is changing - whether it is the Gaddis, Bakkarwals, or the Changpas. Many of these herders no longer come on their own to graze their animals on pastures. They may employ either labourers from poorer sections of their village or even migrant labourers from other parts of the country and Nepal. Then, many transhumants keep adding livestock en

route which are then grazed together on the alpine meadows. I think we need authentic data on livestock numbers, their spatial spread in the summer habitats, the drivers of change and then work on ways to regulate their numbers and bring them down to at least the levels of 2-3 decades ago. We need to engage with the herders and other agencies to add value to produce so that they are able to derive more income from fewer livestock.

Easier said than done, but this is necessary for their own survival as well as the native wildlife. While PSL provides a sound framework for participatory conservation, the alpine tracts need a strong policy for sustainable pastoralism.

Have there been any studies that try to document the carrying capacities of those lands and look at how many livestock and ungulates are grazing in these areas? Especially in comparison to the biomass available to support them?

The carrying capacity of an environment is the maximum population size of a species that can be sustained by that environment, given the food, space, habitat, water, and other available resources. I am not aware about good studies on carrying capacity from the Himalaya. I think carrying capacity is more like an intuitive concept and the numbers don't really say much.

If you imagine a system where you have no green forage five-six winter months in a year, a huge production for two to three, and a sharp decline in the plant biomass again, then the carrying capacity of herbivores it can sustain is always fluctuating. So, carrying capacity cannot be one number for an area. Even if a seasonal figure is obtained, we need to consider the wild herbivores in this calculation. And remember these wild herbivores need to survive in these decimated pastures through the remaining non-growing season, from autumn to next spring, when the livestock descend to the lush forests of the Himalayan foothills.

Can you please tell us about specific interactions between livestock and wild herbivores? For example, are there any instances of livestock passing on diseases to wild ungulates?

Livestock and wild herbivores do interact on pastures and other places such as watering points and salt licks. Some studies show that wild herbivores may avoid direct contact with livestock, especially since they are often accompanied with people and ferocious dogs. They can then be pushed to suboptimal habitats (interference competition). And as mentioned earlier, when there are a very large number of livestock decimating the summer abundance, the wild herbivores still need to sustain themselves through the severe and long non-growing season of winter (exploitative competition).

There can also be transmission of diseases between livestock and wild herbivores. One of the diseases that can cause considerable damage is Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), that commonly comes with livestock. Often, not all the holdings of livestock are vaccinated and since herders may aggregate livestock, even if one family decides not to vaccinate one animal while the others are vaccinated, the wild animals are still exposed to the infection. The resident people in the Trans Himalaya complain as they find that outbreaks often happen right after the pastoralists reach their areas.

On the other hand, wildlife can be reservoirs of some diseases and transfer to livestock. With exceptionally high densities of livestock, some of these diseases can spread rapidly. The 'One Health' concept, with the goal of achieving optimal health outcomes by recognizing the interconnection between people, animals, plants, and their shared environment is a timely international initiative that needs to be developed in the pastoral areas on priority.



Yash Veer Bhatnagar, PhD, has dedicated three decades to understand and help with the conservation of wildlife of the high mountains of the Himalaya using good science and participation of local communities and other stakeholders. He now works for the Mysore based Nature Conservation Foundation, where he has set up a Himalaya Lab to pursue inclusive, landscape-level conservation in the Himalaya

#### on Culture and more.

**Ritual Cemeteries**—For Cows and Then Humans—Plot Pastoralist **Expansion Across Africa** 





Tn the Saharan regions of Africa around the sixth millennium B.C., 2,500 to 3,000 years before the great dynasties of Egypt rose along the Nile, a new way of life spread across the northeastern reaches of the world's second largest continent. While the Sahara Desert was still relatively wet and green, nomads began to cross into the region, possibly from the Middle East, seeking more stable and plentiful lives. The traditional subsistence method of hunting and gathering was slowing, giving way to a more secure practice, keeping a backup supply of food living right next to you through animal domestication and herding. Around this time, some of the earliest ritual monuments to the dead were built by animal herders-only these cemeteries were built for cows, not humans.

"Cattle already, at a very early date, have social and probably symbolic significance in these societies," says Paul Lane, a professor at Cambridge University. It's not hard to see why early herders

worshiped the docile and accompanying animals, which provided a reliable source of food and saved them from the hassle of tracking more elusive and dangerous prey.But the early pastoralists still had their work cut out for them. As they moved into unfamiliar territory, they faced extreme landscapes, hostile neighbors and poorly understood climate patterns. In order to overcome these obstacles, ancient headers must have gathered from time to time to provide breeding opportunities for their animals and replenish lost livestock, not to mention renewing family ties and forging new bonds through the propagation of our own species. At the same time, periodic gatherings allowed the nomads to share advice about good pastures and warnings of danger in unfamiliar lands.

"If you are a lone dude with a herd, as soon as you lose your herd, you are done,"

Khoikhoi of South Africa dismantling their huts, preparing to move to new pastures—aquatint by Samuel Daniell (1805).

says Elizabeth Sawchuk, a postdoctoral archaeological researcher at Stony Brook University. According to new archaeological research led by Sawchuk, early cattle cemeteries may have provided the assembly grounds that cemented networks of herders. These social

gathering points allowed the pastoralists to spread through vast stretches of northern and eastern Africa over the millennia. Along with the bones of livestock, archaeologists have discovered colorful

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stone beads and other artifacts at the burial sites, suggesting the cemeteries played a critical role in early pastoralist life.

"We're dealing with groups that developed sophisticated have social networks that they adapt and modify as they encounter new landscape challenges," Lane says.

"It's about the beginnings of herding," Sawchuk adds. "It's really the thing that kicks off the east African pastoralist tradition."

The beginning of cattle herding in Africa is contentious, but some of the first evidence for pastoralist ritual gathering dates to around 7,500 years ago at a cattle burial site in modern-day Egypt called Nabta Playa. This and other burials in the region, sometimes accompanied by megalithic standing stones, reveal that herders took the time to bury their animals, a significant ritual practice, even before they started burying each other.

But the good times quickly dried up for pastoralists of the Sahara. Desertification and conflicts with hunter-gatherer tribes sent the herders out from Egypt, some moving west as the desert dried, while others followed the lush Nile Valley to the south. At this point, humans start to show up in the huge cemetery mounds attributed to herders.

"We can see that these early pastoralists around the Nile are doing similar things to the people burying cattle were doing," Sawchuk says, adding that these burials sometimes included family groupings. Recently, Sawchuk was involved in a prominent dig at a monumental, roughly

5,000-year-old cemetery called Lothagam North Pillar on the shores of Lake Turkana in Kenya. The site is one of the largest such cemeteries discovered in the region to date, with an estimated 580 burials spanning a period as long as 900 years. It also contains the telltale signs of ancient herders—people who made their way even farther south from the Nile Valley. The dig revealed human remains along with vibrant stone beads, rodent teeth necklaces and other artifacts.

These grand cemeteries have long perplexed archaeologists because they contrast starkly with the burial practices of modern-day African pastoralists, which are influenced by religious conversion to Christianity or Islam. The massive group burials also differ from the customs of African herders encountered by colonial Europeans, who up until the early 20th century often left their dead out in the bush due to a belief that burying them would pollute the earth.

Sawchuk and a team of researchers are attempting to fit Lothagam North into the larger trend of monumental pastoralist cemeteries, spanning roughly 7,500 to 2,000 years ago, when the last pastoral burial sites, which had expanded to the Central Rift Valley by this point, mostly disappeared from the archaeological record of East Africa. The team published a study suggesting the grand cemeteries were among the first things that pastoralists created when they arrived in new territories. After all, one of the first places a culture

on the move needs is a place to bury their dead. Lothagam North shows a high degree of multigenerational planning, with bodies interred in such a way that they rarely overlapped with others. But what's particularly unique about the Lothagam North site is the lack of hierarchy between the buried dead.



Stone pendants and earrings from the communal cemetery of Lothagam North, Kenya, built by eastern Africa's earliest herders ~5000-4300 years ago. PC: Carla Klehm

This egalitarian approach to death separates these cemeteries from the monumental burials of agricultural societies. (Entire pyramids were built for certain pharaohs, while ancient Egyptian commoners were laid to rest in unmarked pits.) "It's really not about one person but about community," Sawchuk says.

This article was first published in the Smithsonian Magazine. You can read the full version here: https://www.smithsonianmag.com/sciencenature/ritual-cemeteries-cows-humanspastoralist-expansion-across-africa-180970683/

# The Blue Men of Sahara

#### By Juan Martinez



animals and textiles. Over the centuries, the trade brought many different groups into Mauritania – including the nomadic Tuareg from the north-east, the Haratin from the south-east and the Haalpulaar from the south. As these different groups settled alongside the Berbers (known locally as Amazigh), who have lived in Mauritania since the 3rd Century, the Muslim faith and Arabic language prevailed, but new cultural traditions emerged. Architectural designs evolved, books from around the Sahara made their way into local libraries, and fashion trends from across North Africa merged to make а new style

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"It is

comfortable,

easy to

clean and

in unclean environments and had to wear the same clothing repeatedly.With the lack of natural colourful dyes around the Sahara, coloured daraas appeared only after the Haalpulaar started trading natural indigo dye and indigo-dyeing techniques became popular. These dark blue-coloured daraas were perfect for people who couldn't afford white daraas, but who also didn't want to wear black ones.

#### The Sahara's "blue men"

While the Haalpulaar might have established the indigo daraas, it was the Tuareg people who adopted and popularised the fashion, and are considered the "blue men of the Sahara" – a name they eventually got because the colour of their clothing rubbed off onto their skin while being under the hot sun.

According to Dr Anja Fischer, researcher of Saharan studies at the University of Vienna, the influence of the Haalpulaar could have led to big changes for Tuareg fashion. "Tuareg

people used to wear leather clothes, and at some point, they switched to the blue fabrics they are mostly known for today."

PC: Juan Martinez.

While the Sahara's captivating blue attire is becoming a relic from the past, in Mauritania, the fashion tradition is still alive and looks like it's here to stay.

The Saharan daraa or boubou, a long and loose gown, and tagelmusts, a cloth veil that is used as a turban, are two key clothing staples for the traditionally nomadic men of the Sahara.

#### Dressed for harsh conditions

The garments' northern African origins can be traced back hundreds of years, as far as the 7th and 8th Centuries, to the early times of the trans-Saharan trade between Sub-Saharan and North Africa. And while some locals will say the clothing symbolises a shyness and modesty of the people, most agree that its basic function is to protect against the sun, as well as the frequent sandstorms of the region.

"The style and shape of our daraa not only allows the right airflow in these difficult environments, but also helps the Saharan men to conserve body water in the middle of the desert," said local Mauritanian guide Dahid Jdeidou (pictured).

Today, with more people settling in larger cities, and fashion styles trending towards those from the West, the attire the Saharan men once wore to traverse the hot desert has largely become a relic from the past. Yet, in Mauritania, where most men wear the daraa and tagelmusts in captivating shades of blue, it's still alive - and it looks like it's here to stay for quite some time.

#### Fashion born from trade

During the trans-Saharan trade era, new commerce hubs sprang up on the outskirts of the desert, and various ethnic groups traded in-demand items across North Africa such as spices, minerals, form of the long, flowing, wide-sleeved tunic.

A melting pot of the Sahara Like other tunic-style clothing such as the kimono from Japan or the kaftan originating looks good" in ancient Mesopotamia, the daraa has found a place in fashion history. The first versions of the clothing are thought to have come from the Haalpulaar, who resided along the Senegal River between modern-day Senegal and Mauritania.

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Eventually, populations from all social statuses wore daraas, but colours depended on one's station in life. Wealthy merchants wore chalk-white daraas and tagelmusts, as they could afford to clean their clothes every day, while enslaved people would typically wear black, as they often worked

The Tuareg, who now inhabit a vast area stretching from Libya to Algeria, Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso, were traditionally one of the largest populations of nomads in the Sahara and were influential in the spreading of Islam in Africa. They were known across the Sahara, and the fashion style they adopted in Mauritania became recognised across North Africa, and later around the world. To this day, their fashion styles express their nomadic culture and traditions.

#### A new standard in blue

In recent decades, with the arrival of chemical dyes from Asia and Europe and low-cost dyeing

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techniques such as bale dyeing (an easy process in which the fabrics are put through a coldwater bath), a variety of blue shades became possible. And with the rise of the middle class in Mauritanian towns and cities, people have been increasingly choosing light blue daraas for their similarity to traditional white daraas and the social status they symbolise.

"A light blue daraa looks like the white one, but it only needs to be cleaned every three to four days," said Jdeidou.

#### A world coloured in blue

The central market in Mauritania's capital, Nouakchott, is truly a blue world. Many sellers offer only blue clothing, and at least one out of every four men wears some shade of a blue daraa. In Mauritania the blue colour extends beyond clothing, and can be found in blankets and stall umbrellas, but also in architectural elements such as doors, ceilings and fences.

Although the colour blue represents the sky and divinity in the Quran, local Mauritanians have a more practical reason to use it: it's the perfect colour for protection from the sun.

#### Dress to impress

The very first daraas were made of silk, but were later considered to be haram, an Arabic term meaning "forbidden" under Muslim law. Today, at shops in Nouakchott, it's common to see daraas made from polyester, muslin and the wool of camels and goats, in addition to silk versions for non-Muslims. Many daraas in Mauritania are also embellished with gold and white embroidery, and some even have several internal and external pockets - details that would have been rare centuries ago but are useful in today's modern, urban world.

There have been attempts to introduce more Western clothing in Mauritania, however, most have failed. According to Hademine Ahmedou, a local guide from the town of Zouérat, teachers there were once told to avoid wearing a daraa while working and to start adopting the smart dress culture from Europe or North America. Nevertheless, many Mauritanians couldn't bear to leave their traditional daraa and its cultural importance behind.

#### Proud of their nomad heritage

While elements of the traditional attire have been lost in most cities across the Sahara, men proudly wear their blue daraas in Nouakchott. They have become such an integral part of Mauritanian culture that even businessmen dressed in smart suits wear a custom daraa instead of a blazer.

"It is comfortable, easy to clean and looks good", said Jdeidou (pictured) with a smile.

#### A trend for generations to come

While most Saharan countries now look to the West for fashion trends, in Mauritania, change seems a long way off. The younger generations are also proud of their traditions and regularly daraas.

#### Photo Essay

## Bowls of Chai in Kachchh-

by Shouryamoy Das



Livestock outnumber humans in Kachchh and the region is known to produce a humongous amount of milk. There is great diversity of produce too. There is milk from cows, buffaloes, goats, camels, sheep, and donkeys! Perhaps unsurprisingly, Kachchhis love their chai, and chai is a constant in the burning heat of the summers as much as the biting cold of the winters!

The Maldharis of Kachchh, while out grazing their animals, carry a matchbox, tea leaves, sugar and a small saucepan without fail! A thirst for chai strikes often and they always manage to milk one of the nursing mothers in the flock, gather twigs, and light a fire to make chai. There are no chats without chai, and it is always offered to anyone who visits them - be it a friend or a bunch of strangers- at their homes or in the grazing lands. In Kachchh, it is an ice breaker like no other! After all, conversations are much better over cups of piping hot chai!









There are also hints of the clothing appearing in the modern fashion world. Recently, versions of Saharan tagelmusts have inspired trendy scarves in Europe. And this year, luxury Italian fashion house Valentino drew inspiration from the traditional Saharan daraa in designing its spring/ summer 2021 collection.

As more and more cultural traditions are becoming endangered in today's fast-paced, ever-changing world, the blue daraa and tagelmusts - and the long-held traditions they represent – still continue to shine from the Sahara to the rest of the world.

An extended version of this article was first published on BBC Travel. You can find the full version here: https://www.bbc.com/travel/ article/20210927-the-blue-men-of-the-sahara





Shouryamoy Das is an engineer and certified financial risk manager by training. He has been working with development organisations on pastoralism and related livelihoods for the last five years.

# Pastoralist map



Paul Mundy, League for Pastoral Peoples and Endogenous Livestock Development

 $\mathbf{P}^{\mathrm{astoralists}}$  are found in all the inhabited continents and in a huge range of climates and landscapes, from the arctic tundra of northern Russia to the hot deserts of Africa, from the mountains of Europe to the rice paddies of southeast Asia. Raising livestock is the only possible way to produce food on most of this land. But pastoralism is under-appreciated and often does not appear in official statistics. We don't even know how many pastoralists there are around the world. And statistics are anyway dry, and the pastoralists are anonymous. Figures on milk production or livestock populations say nothing about the human aspect - how pastoralists manage their animals, how they survive in a harsh environment, and how they have developed rich cultures over centuries and millennia.

The pastoral map being developed by the League for Pastoral Peoples and Endogenous Livestock Development aims to show the range and diversity of pastoralists around the globe. It currently details 495 pastoralist groups, mainly in Asia, Africa and

Europe. Each group is represented by a map pin showing the rough area in which it lives.

Click on the pin, and up pops a sidebar with a short description of the group and its pastoral system, along with a list of the species it keeps, the areas where it raises livestock, and for many groups, a photo. You can zoom into particular areas on the map, and you can select layers to show different species. Links give access to more information about each group.

The map still has some big blank spaces, especially in Pakistan, southwest Asia, the Americas and Australia. And in India too. The map currently shows 43 pastoral groups in India - mainly from the west and north of the country, plus some pig pastoralists in the east. But India has a lot more pastoralist groups than this. Many groups in the east and south are still not represented.

Even though it is incomplete, the map still offers some revealing insights. One is how widespread and diverse pastoralism is. Pastoralism includes

reindeer herding in the Arctic tundra, horseraising in the steppes of central Asia, crofting in the highlands and islands of Scotland, seasonal transhumance in the mountains of Europe, and nomadic herding in the savannahs of east Africa. But despite this diversity, the map also shows many commonalities among pastoralist groups. Peoples throughout the world have found common solutions to similar problems. In arid areas, they move their herds to follow erratic rains, but know they can use certain reliable water points and emergency grazing areas in times of need. In mountain areas, they herd their animals up to higher elevations in the spring and down again to the lowlands in the autumn. In areas with seasonal rains, they practise horizontal transhumance, sometimes herding their stock hundreds of kilometres along fixed routes. The map also reveals the pastoralists' reliance on the natural environment and the knowledge they have accumulated about it, their skill and care in taking care of their animals, and the challenges they face in dealing with a changing and sometimes hostile

A map of pastoralists worldwide

Click on the eye symbols below to show or hide layers Click on the icons in the map to see details of each pastoralist community or organization.

This map is a work in progress. Please contact

world. Pastoralist groups all over the world face similar issues in terms of access to land and water, control over and conservation of natural resources, marketing of products and relationships with farming and urban communities.

Pastoralists are organized in different ways in different parts of the world. In India, caste is important in determining whether someone keeps livestock. In Africa, ethnicity is central. In such places, the way of life is passed down from one generation to the next. While this is true in Europe too, European herders can also learn the skills in college, and the profession is open to outsiders who wish to take up herding for a living. In Europe too, pastoralists are a tiny minority of the population, in contrast to countries like Mongolia and Mauritania, where they form the majority.

#### You can find the map here: www.pastoralpeoples.org/ pastoralist-map/

The League for Pastoral Peoples would be delighted to receive suggestions from readers of the Pastoral Times on which other groups to include, as well as corrections for the information already in the map.

#### How to use the map:

#### Menu at top left

Pan: Press and hold the mouse button and move the mouse

**Zoom:** Use the scroll wheel on your mouse, or click on the + or – button at the top left of the screen.

Layers: Click on the layers icon (looks like a pile of chapattis) on the left side. Click on the eye icons to reveal or hide each layer.

Each livestock species is on a separate layer. If you want to see only the groups that keep goats, hide all the other layers.

#### Мар

Species distribution: The coloured shading shows the approximate world distribution of each species. Click on the shaded area to see details about that species in the sidebar.

Pastoralist groups.:Click on a map pin to see a sidebar with details of that group.

#### Sidebar

At the top of the sidebar, click **See all t**o see a list of all the items on the map. Zoom to item: Click on the magnifying glass next to the item to bring this to the centre of the map.

View item: Click on the item in the list to see the sidebar for that item.

**About:** Click About at the top of the sidebar to see the introductory sidebar (if necessary click See all first). You can also turn particular layers on and off here.



les org with corrections and additions

For usage rights, see Credits at the bottom of this page

#### Pastoralist organizations

🔲 💿 🔎 Alpaca pastoralists

 Bactrian camel pastoralists 

📄 💿 🔎 Buffalo pastoralists

o 🔊 Cattle pastoralists

📄 💿 🔎 Donkey pastoralists

Dromedary camel pastoralists

Duck pastoralists

o 🔎 Llama pastoralists

🔲 💿 🔊 Pig pastoralists

**Credits:** Scroll down to the bottom of the sidebar and click on Credits. Then scroll down again to view the credits and usage rights.

Corrections and additions: Please contact mapping@pastoralpeoples.org



Paul Mundy is a British/German ommunication specialist who has worked on livestock and development issues for over 40 years. He has written and edited numerous publications on livestock in the developing world. He is co-author of a book on sheep in Shetland, a group of islands off the north of Scotland.

## Homes on the Move by Nidhi Pipaliya

In 2018, I embarked on a journey to better understand how the nomadic pastoralists called 'Dhangars' and the 'Dangi' keepers of Maharashtra use spaces and resources to structure their settlements. It was exhilarating to observe how the nomadic pastoralists, whose homes are evershifting, conceived of shelter.

My research started with understanding how the Dhangar tribe and Mahadeo Koli (Dangi keeper) from the Ambi Dumala district of Maharashtra made their dwellings according to the landscape and available resources.

As the nomadic pastoralists are always on the move, the landscapes they encounter also constantly change. Consequently, the materials necessary to construct and maintain their shelter also differ according to the local resources available. These encounters with different landscapes and materials get reflected in the way they build their shelters. Dhangars are primarily pastoralists, and they follow a set migration cycle. Their migratory route brings them to fixed locations every season except for the post monsoons when they move to the lower plains. In these plains, they often move around multiple farms after the crops have been harvested to graze their cattle. This is a symbiotic relationship they have with the farmers as the droppings fertilise the soil and ensure higher

The Dangi migrate through various mountain and valley ranges that provide natural conditions where caves form. These caves have been inhabited by Dangi (cow) herders for many years and they use it for 4-5 months a year to provide shelter to their cattle during the monsoons, after which they return home.

crop yields.

The basic needs of the nomadic pastoralists are healthy pasture, water, and fuel. Settlements



are chosen to optimise these needs. Since the pastoralists practice mobile lifestyles, the two vital factors they consider are the capacity of the carrier animal to transport belongings from one place to another and their sustenance in the different local conditions every time.

The Dhangars transport their building materials by horseback, including bamboo /cane sticks and metal rods for the skeleton of the shelter, tarpaulin sheeting for roofing, and ropes to tie everything up. Thus, they are limited by the carrying capacity of the animals. As the carrier animal is taken to transport belongings from one place to another, they also travel on busy roads, thus the size of the luggage is an important consideration.

The Dangi keepers, on the other hand, do not carry building materials. The rest of their amenities such as flour, grains and pulses, necessary utensils, and clothes are transported manually and by motorcycles. However, they are limited by the large size of their cattle herd, and hence, cannot cover large distances at a time.

As both the tribes herd different animals, their requirements for pasture also vary. Dhangars, who keep small ruminants, can choose a campsite surrounded by limited pasture as compared to the Dangi keepers who keep cows. Therefore, the Dangi must choose to settle in areas with access to large parcels of grazing land.

In both cases, these pastoral communities are adept at dealing with multiple unknowns - such as the health of the cattle, the difficulty of accessing resources or finding a market for their produce. Their nomadic lifestyle is a fundamental strategy that enables them to optimise the use of natural resources and ensure the safety of their tribes

and cattle. It lets them move to easily accessible resources, allowing the previous campsites to regenerate before their next visit, and allowing local farmers and landowners to guarantee grazing lands for a small fee in exchange for manure fertilisation.

As mentioned earlier, the shelters of the two tribes are vastly different. For Dhangars, there is more flexibility of the space so that goats can be accommodated in smaller shelters and the sheep in open grounds. The architecture of their house reflects the temporal nature of their settlement. Their entire settlement pattern and loading/ unloading of their houses revolve around their most prized possession, their cattle. The materials are either easily available on site or produced by their cattle and carried along with them

The Dangi keepers are constrained by the existing structures as their primary objective is to provide shelter for their large herds during the monsoon season. They rely on pre-existing caves in which they build partition walls using stones, bamboo straws, and cow dung, which they prefer over the construction of new structures. Over generations, they have used the same caves where the partition walls have already been built, leaving them with only the tasks of maintenance and renovation.



Nidhi Pipaliya is an architect who graduated from CEPT University. For her keen interest in knowing the settlements of nomads she has documented it extensively for her thesis. After which she started practicing architecture with Sfurna Designs, a firm based in Bharuch, Gujarat.



Healers of Herds

Jogappa with his Bargur cattle herd

highly evolved systems to manage and maintain healthy herds. Management practices include the provision of additional salt in the dry months, not mixing herds with unfamiliar ones, and housing animals well to enhance livestock health and productivity.

In Jogappa's community, certain elders possess this specialised knowledge too. Specific forest leaves, barks and roots are used in a variety of preparations to treat illnesses in cattle such as sores on hooves, lumps on the body, fevers, fractures, and snake bites. In most cases, western medicine is seldom used to treat illnesses as it requires herders to incur a financial cost and, in many cases, veterinary services are inaccessible in remote locations. During a discussion, members of the community reported that their animals fall sick more often

nowadays. The herders reported that the health of their herd depends on the availability



Tuber (ingelkappe gensu) used to cure a throat infection

and have an important role to play in

#### by Priyashri Mani

On a recent visit to the Bargur hills in Tamil Nadu I met Jogappa, a semi-nomadic Lingayat pastoralist who had a herd of 60 animals. A resident of Usimalai, Jogappa and his family, along with their herd, travel across the state border to Karnataka for 8 months of the year in search of greener pastures for their animals. The Kannada speaking Bargur Lingayats are a traditional seminomadic pastoral community living around the Bargur forests of the Western Ghats. They breed the unique Bargur cattle which was registered as a distinct breed by the National Bureau of Animal Genetic Research (NBAGR) in 2018.

A few weeks ago, one of Jogappa's cows was heard lowing in a very deep tone. Jogappa's wife, Bommi, noticed that the cow looked tired and weary. Upon examination, they found that the cow had

Jogappa went into the forest and returned with a tuber (ingelkappe gensu). This was boiled in water, mashed, and kept aside. A mixture of buttermilk, turmeric and pearl onions was prepared, and the boiled tuber was added into the mixture. The cow was fed the concoction, and, in a few days, she was bright and well.

contracted a throat infection. The next morning

Many studies have documented the specialised and technical knowledge of herding communities on livestock management. These studies have recorded the rich animal husbandry and ethnoveterinary knowledge possessed by certain members in the community. For instance, the pastoralists of Banni in Gujarat provide natural nutritional supplements such as mustard oil and jaggery, and eggs and ghee to calves and breeding bulls respectively. In Rajasthan, the Raikas routinely deworm their sheep and goat herds by feeding them dried and powdered pumpkin seeds. In Northeast Africa, pastoralists have

of diverse and good quality fodder found inside the forest. However, their inability to access these grazing lands due to restrictions by forest officials has had an impact on the health of their herd. Erratic rainfall and the widespread use of pesticides and weedicides were also cited as causes for the depletion of certain nutritious grass species.

There is a growing recognition of the wealth of knowledge about livestock possessed by pastoral communities around the world. However, Jogappa claims,

### "We don't know even half of what our ancestors knew."

There is an urgent need to document and safeguard this cultural heritage. These systems of knowledge have supported pastoral livelihoods over centuries modern-day pastoralism.

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#### on NEW/S

## Forest Rights for Van Gujjar Pastoralists



PC: Michael Benanav

While the nation locked itself in during the 2021 Covid lockdown, the nomadic Van Gujjars struggled to access the forests they have called their summer-home for generations. The forest administration of the Govind Pashu Vihar National Park in Uttarkashi, Uttarakhand denied their access to traditional grassland this summer, depriving their Gojri Buffaloes of forage and making them struggle to find camping grounds for their seasonal homes. This also led to livestock losses and sickness. In the past, Gujjars were able to freely move through the forest with permits for which they paid a yearly fee. However, in recent years, even these permits carried little

weight in the face of the Forest Department's whims. They were often treated as trespassers and the pandemic worsened this relationship as the Van Gujjars were restricted from entering the park altogether. Fighting long legal battles to gain access, the Gujjars could finally take a breath of relief on May 25, 2021. The High Court of Uttarakhand ordered the deputy director of the park to allow Covid-

negative families entry into the meadows and also ordered that their rights to access their summer homes be assured.

In September, following the High Court's order and ensuing pressure on the Forest Department, Van Gujjar families from Long Ykullu Fullu Thatch village submitted Community Forest Rights (CFR) claims to use and access forest resources in the Sankari Range of the national park. The process of claim filing was led by the Van Gujjar Tribal Yuva Sangathan (VGTYS), a community-based organisation, and Arjun Kasana, a member of the Think Act Rise Foundation, who acted as the petitioner who

lodged a PIL in the high court advocating for the rights of the pastoral herders. Yakhub Chopra, a Gujjar herder, led the process as a part of VGTYS. Yakub was successful in getting the other village residents to agree to the CfR claim being filed by the Van Gujjars. This was done in the face of the Forest department's efforts to create divides between the pastoral and nonpastoral locals. The process to hand over the rights was implemented by the Uttarakhand Social Welfare Department who acted as the nodal agency. The application process included mapping of migratory routes and procuring evidence that the Van Gujjars had depended on forest resources for at least three generations. Their evidence consisted of Working Plans & gazetteers from as far back as the 1920s. With ample discussions and evidence, they filed a CFR claim.

Three months after the filing of claims, on October 22nd, the pastoralists received entitlements from the District Collector. This gives the community rights over forest use and access to 600 hectares of forest land. They were granted several rights under Section 3 of the FRA:

1. Section 3 (1) (c): Which gives them the rights of ownership, access to collect, use, and dispose of minor forest produce which has been traditionally collected within or outside village boundaries. 2. Section 3 (1) (d): Which gives community rights of uses or entitlements such as fish and other products of water bodies, grazing (both settled or transhumant) and traditional seasonal resource access of nomadic or pastoralist

#### communities;

3. Section 3 (1) (i): Which gives rights to protect, regenerate, conserve, manage any community forest resource which they have been traditionally protecting and conserving for sustainable use.

4. Section 3 (1) (k): Which includes the community right to intellectual property and traditional knowledge related to biodiversity and cultural diversity.

This development is worth celebrating especially because this is the first time the state machinery has recognised Van Gujjars as OTFD (Other Traditional Forest Dwellers). For years the state departments have refused to accept Van Gujjars as OTFD, maintaining that they had come from Jammu. However, it is also only a beginning for the Van Gujjars, a community that has received the short end of the state's inconsiderate policies for decades. The pastoral community and VGTYS, galvanised by this entitlement, is working to advocate for CfR claims in other parts of the state. In particular, FRA claims for the Haridwar district are already in the process of being filed, and the community hopes to have their rights recorded and recognised under FRA soon.

The land title received by the 43 families of Long Ykullu Fullu Thatch village sets the precedent for a hopeful future where pastoral communities both in Uttarakhand and the rest of India can have undisturbed access to their traditional grazing lands and forest resources.

## **Crossword Puzzle:**

Test your knowledge of pastoral communities around the world! Hint: You can use the online interactive map featured on the

previous page to find the answers.



#### Across

- 1. A large Arab tribe of the northern Sahara in Algeria. They keep dromedary camels and goats
- 6. Traditional nomadic reindeer herders and hunters in the Russian Far East
- 7. The first pastoralists in southern Africa who keep goats, cattle and sheep
- 9. Pastoralists with large zebu cattle herds inwestern and northwestern Madagascar
- 10.An indigenous Swedish population with a tradition of thousands of years of reindeer herding

Down

2. Nomadic herders who inhabit the Jiddat al Harasis, a stony desert in central Oman. They keep goats, sheep and

10		

dromedary camels

3.Herders from South America who keep llama, sheep, and vicuna. They can be found in Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Argentina, Chile, and Colombia

4. A semi-nomadic yak-herding community in the northeast Indian Himalayas

5. Shepherds of the Romanian Carpathians

8. A tribe of camel breeders who keep the Kohi camel breed in Pakistan

4. Brokpa ims2.01 7. Khoikhoi 3. Quechua 9. Закаlava 9. Когуак 2. Harasiis imeM.8 5. Cioban 1. Chaamba

**WORD LIST:**