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“Sedentarization” of Transhumant Herders: A Case of Sheep Herders of East Nepal

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ABSTRACT

Recently, many residents of East Nepal have retired from pastoralism as a result of rapid increase in the number of individuals working abroad. However, ‘sedentarization’ is not only the result of the influence of external society, but is also a product of the flexibility of pastoralists, because some herders have accumulated property from pastoralism.

The objective of the research reported here was to elucidate changes in continuity of pastoralism, which is influenced by the market economy, focusing in particular on changes among individual herders. The consequences of the retirement from herding and the use of income from livestock were examined and how the herders contribute to their household economy considered. Fieldwork was conducted for two years, from 1996 to 1998, and one month in 2006, and the data were compared to ascertain changes that had taken place over the intervening eight years. The change process of is complex; whereas many herders retired, some were newly employed as herders and returned to herding after several years of absence.

Thus, although pastoralism is decreasing, it still continues. Retired herders invested the products of their labor into family property, including land, houses, and more recently, either the education of their children or foreign travel. Such transfers of property are evident in their life histories.

INTRODUCTION

Transhumance is a form of mountain pastoralism; the herders who are family members engage in pastoralism away from their sedentary village. Thus transhumance can be distinguished from nomadic pastoralism based on the existence of a sedentary house regardless of whether the herders move over long distances with their flocks. In societies of transhumant herders, pastoralism is one of their complex economies. Family members of the migratory herders engage in various jobs, for example, agriculture, craft work, animal husbandry, or trading

both within and outside their sedentary village.

Yet transhumant herders give up their migratory lives at some point. Older herders retire from pastoralism and spend the rest of their life in their village. Younger herders also may change jobs if they can find an occupation outside of pastoralism. The later case has increased recently as a result of economic changes among societies of pastoralists. As a result of their personal sedentarization herders, shift the location of their lives from pastoral camp to sedentary village. This occurs among societies of nomadic pastoralists as well as in societies of transhumant herders.

Sedentarization of pastoralists is not a new phenomenon. In the past, pastoralists have switched to practicing agriculture in settled villages or moving to urban areas (Barth 1964). The removal of pastoral elites was mentioned also by the medieval historian Ibn Khaldun (Gellner 1981). Today, even as many pastoralists settle in cities or take up agriculture, not all of them abandon pastoralism. Even if pastoralism is not essential, its role in the economies continues to be important for people inhabiting arid lands (Fratkin 1997: 254; 2005: 26). So sedentarization is not only the result of external social influences, but also a product of the flexibility and potential of pastoralists themselves.

In South Asia, pastoralists have faced the decrease and enclosure of pasture, commoditization of livestock products, and increased expenditures. However, they continued in pastoralism by surviving government interventions (Kavoori 1999), and sometimes by resisting agencies (Agrawal 1999; Saberwal 1999) and negotiating with their neighbors (Watanabe 2005). Recently, in Nepal, in addition to the increasing number of jobs available outside of agriculture and pastoralism, the availability of funds obtained from foreign countries has created an innovation of pastoralism (Bishop 1998). The decrease of pastoralism has promoted the employment of agricultural labor from outside the village, people dislike relinquishing their work of grazing (Kano 2001). However, the economic basis of pastoralism among social changes has not been discussed based on empirical evidence. The influence of the market economy will not reduce the importance of the pastoral economy for pastoralists.

The objective of this paper is to elucidate the following two points. First, by focusing on changes of the membership of pastoralists to demonstrate the process of change. The second, is to examine how job selection contributes to the household economy of pastoralists. This article focuses on the household economy, and its primary issue is job selection. Analysis of income-deficit is taken up next. In particular, this article analyzes eight years of change from 1998 to 2006 and supplements family history of herders in order to consider the role of pastoralism within the household economy.

Fieldwork was conducted for a total 2 years during the period 1994 to 1998, and for one month in 2006.

RESEARCH AREA AND THE PEOPLE

1) The Village of Herders

The village of Rumjatar is located 200km east of Kathmandu and 100km south of Mt. Everest (Figure 1). Topographically, the altitude of the village is 1,300m and it is situated in the Midlands, mountain area between the Great Himalaya and the Mahabharat Range. The climate is monsoonal with an annual precipitation of about 1,800mm. Maize and millet are cultivated in dry fields and wet rice fields occur in irrigable locations. Administratively, the village belongs to the Okhaldhunga District. The village area is approximately equivalent to that of the

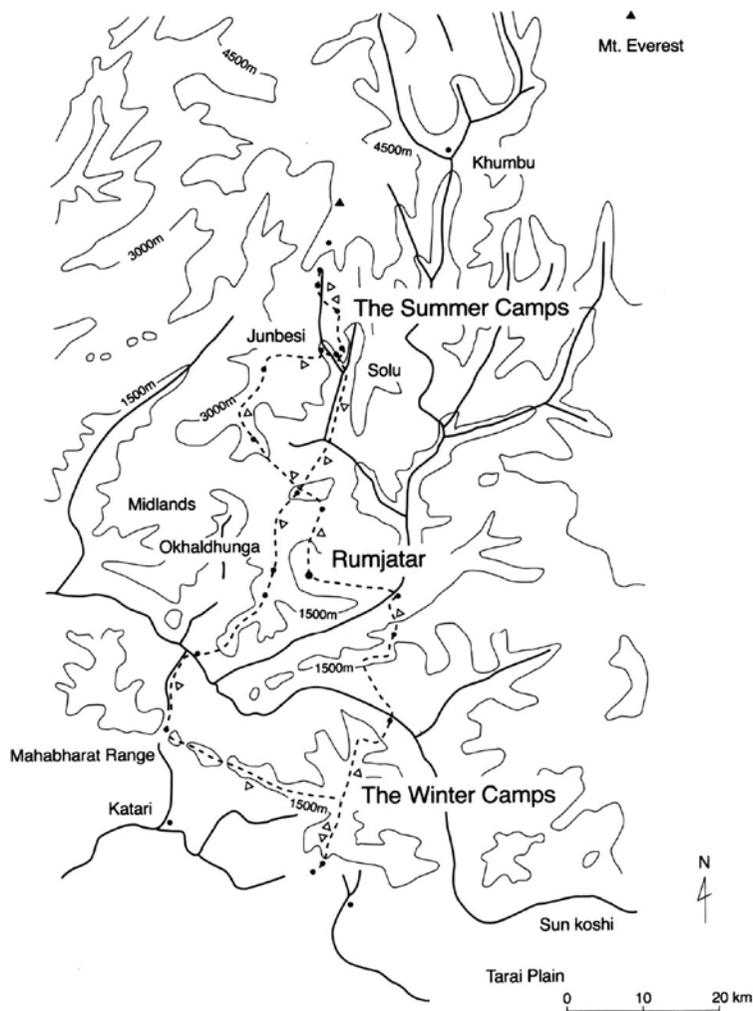


Figure 1 Migration route of the sheep herders (Watanabe 2005: 155)

Rumjatar Village Development Committee (VDC), the administrative body governing the village. The VDC consists of nine wards. The total number of household in the VDC is 566, and the population was estimated at more than 3000 persons (in 1998). The dominant ethnic group of the villager is the Gurung, who comprise more than half the village household. The Gurung belong to the Tibet-Burman language group, but they speak only Nepali as their mother tongue. Even elderly people cannot speak the Gurung language.

Rumjatar is known among its neighbors as the “village of sheep herders” (Photo 1). However, in 1998, only 26 households (4.59%) in the entire village and 6 households (6.98%) within Ward No.5, where the author lived, raised sheep. Few households raise sheep, although according to the sheep herders, herders were more numerous in the past. The author asked several villagers if their households contained a herder and found that two-thirds of households within Ward No 5 had one. (However, this estimate is likely inflated because there is a chance that the same person in some households was counted more than once.)

Employment opportunities for the villagers have expanded. Many Gurkha soldiers live in this village¹⁾, and their incomes and pensions have a considerably affect. For example, those receiving a pension invest in houses and land. Retired soldiers tend to hire agriculture laborers and support their childrens’ education. In the case of Ward No.5, all retired Gurkha soldiers younger than 40 live in Kathmandu. Enrollment in the Gurkha Brigade has been decreasing since the late-1980s because only a few individuals are able to pass the entrance examination. Since 1990, labor migration to either the Middle East or Southeast Asian countries has increased. In addition, many students attend universities of Kathmandu and remain in the city after the graduation. In these cases, village youth, including the



Photo 1 A family of sheep herders (Photograph by the author)

sons of sheep herders, dislike the job of herding because of its physical difficulty (*dukha*). This is also true of herders themselves, who want their children go to school and acquire better jobs.

2) Members of a Camp in 1998

Sheep herders migrate with their flock during most of the year. The migration route extends from high alpine meadows (Photo 2) to just above the Tarai plain (Photo 3). They migrate 4000m vertically and over 100km in distance (Figure 1).



Photo 2 The summer pasture (Photograph by the author)



Photo 3 The winter pasture (Photograph by the author)

However, they are not considered mountain nomads, but transhumant herders because they are associated with a sedentary village and engage in agriculture. The herders are almost exclusively male, and their wives and children stay in the village and perform agricultural tasks.

The unit of migration is the camp (*goth*), which is flexible whose membership can change either seasonally or annually. The membership of a camp can also change depending on interpersonal relationships. Sometimes herders either divide their camps or join together to form a camp. In June 1998, the herders were divided among 11 camps, one of which is described in Table 2. The members of the same camp intermingled their flock and share grazing work, food, and expenditures. The camp is composed of sheep owners (*sāhū*) and hired shepherds (*gothāla*). The owner is an independent herder who sometimes also employs hired laborers (Table 1). In the case of G, A, and B are owners. G hired KB and S. And A hired TP. Although B did not employ a hired shepherd, he was nevertheless considered an owner because he was not hired by another owner²⁾.

The home villages and ethnic group of sheep herders vary. For example, among the owners, G and B are from Rumjatar and their ethnic group is Gurung. A is from Chipchipe in the same district, Okhaldhunga, and his ethnic group is Tamang. Among the hired shepherds, S and TP are from a village in the Udaipur District, a winter pasture of herders. They are the children of farmers and were hired when the owners visited their village during a seasonal migration. Among hired shepherds, the chief-hired shepherd (*mūlī gothāla*) must manage all the work when the owner returns to the village. In this camp, KB is the chief hired

Table 1 A migration camp and flock composition in July 1998.

Owner	H. Shepherd	Name	Age	Home village	Ethnic group	Sheep (♀)	Sheep (♂)	Goat	Total
●		G	60	Rumjatar	Gurung	127	11	8	146
	○	KB	50	Rumjatar	Tamang	20	0	0	20
	○	S	17	Udaipur District	Tamang	7	0	0	7
●		A	50	Udaipur District	Tamang	110	5	0	115
	○	TP	18	Udaipur District	Rai	4	0	0	4
●		B	59	Rumjatar	Gurung	44	1	2	47
Total						312	17	10	339

Source: Author's field study

Table 2 Changing Numbers of Herders

Type of herders	1998	2006	Deficit
Owners	29	20	-9
Hired Shepherds	30	19	-11
Total	59	39	-20

Source: Author's field study

shepherd under G. He is Tamang and was born in the Udayapur District, although his family now lives in Rumjatar.

The number of animals differs by owners. Herders tend to possess flocks of 200 to 500 animals, and herders with small flocks tend to join each other to form camps. In such cases, some owners migrate with kin or affinal relations, although joining with friends or fellow herders is also common (Table 1).

Owners tend to hire one shepherd per 100 head of sheep. There are three types of contract between owners and hired shepherds: Salary (*jāgīr*), consignment (*thekhaune*), and debt without interest (*nirbyāj*). In terms of salary, the amount for work is paid either in cash or sheep. For newly employed shepherd, three to five sheep are paid per year, corresponding to about 2,400 to 4,000 Rs (34 to 57 US\$). In addition, food, clothes, and blankets are provided by the owner. The second type is consignment, whereby hired shepherds are paid with livestock products (such as wool or lambs). However, if a hired shepherd loses a sheep, he must compensate for it. The third contract type indebtedness. Hired shepherd are given an interest-free loan from the owner and must work for the owner until the principal has been repaid.

The herders use livestock products, such as milk, wool, meat, and male lambs for their own consumption, as well as for cash income. The income of herders varies, but the author did not collect data on actual incomes. For example, B, who owned 47 sheep, earned 42,200 Rs (603 US\$) of income from the livestock products in 1997 (Watanabe 2005). Depending on the cost of grazing, he earned approximately 1,000 to 1,500 Rs (14.3 to 21.4 US\$ in 1998) per month³. The salary of a herder is less than that of a primary school teacher (2,400 Rs in 1997, although it was only 1,200 Rs in 1996), and is thus considered modest by village standards⁴. Moreover, if a herder carries debt from purchasing sheep, must repay the debt from his income. At 36.5 percent a year, interest on debt is very high. Consequently, the real income is even lower.

That was the situation in 1998. In the next section, 1998 data is compared to data from 2006 and the changes discussed.

CHANGES AMONG HERDERS

1) Flexibility of Pastoralism in 2006

The number of sheep herders changed between 1998 and 2006; the numbers of both owners and hired shepherds decreased by one-third (Table 2). The number of the owners decreased from 29 to 20, and that of hired shepherds from 30 to 19. The number of camps decreased from 11 to 8, and the number of livestock also decreased. In 1998, there was a total 4183 sheep and goats; this decreased to 2681 in 2006 (-36%).

The total number of herders decreased by one-third, both for owners and hired shepherds. Considering individual herders, however, these changes are more complicated (Table 3). Of the 29 owners of 1998, 10 continued herding; among

Table 3 Causes of change in the number of each owners

	Owners	Hired shepherds	Total
Number of 1998	29	30	59
Dead	-2	-1	-3
Retired	-16	-24	-40
Jointed from other camps	4	0	4
Returned to herding	1	0	1
Hired shepherds to owners	4	-4	0
Newly employed	0	18	18
Number of 2006	20	19	39
Deficit	-9	-11	-20
Continue	10	1	11

Source: Interview by the author, 2006

the remaining 19 owners, two died and 17 retired from herding. Thus, the number of herders that retired was about twice the number that continued herding. In contrast, 10 new owners were added. All these persons had prior experience as sheep herders. There were three types of herders among these new owners: those who joined from other camps (four); those who returned to herding after some time of being retired (two); and those who gained independence after having been employed as hired shepherds (four).

Of the herders who joined from other camps, all four had grazed their livestock in other areas with herders from other villages in 1998, and then joined with the camp of herders of Rumjatar. RW (in his 50s) is a herder of the village of Rawa in the Okhaldhunga District. In 1998, he grazed in another area with his fellow villagers. In 2006, he had been herding with KM and TL, two herders of Rumjatar, during the summer months for three or four years. The situation was similar for RB, PR, and KY. The author was unable to determine why these herders changed grazing locations. However, they sometimes change partners because of mismatched flock size or social relations. Such situations reflect the flexibility of camp members, and there is a possibility of adding new members in some camps.

Some new herders had been herders prior to 1998. KM (age 50) retired in the winter of 1998 because he had problem with his employees, in that year, his hired shepherds retired in succession (Photo 4). He then sold his entire flock and grazing equipment in the winter pasture and retired from herding. KM indicated that he thought this would be less expensive. Therefore, he retired, although he intended to return to herding eventually. However, he was able to buy sheep only after two or three years and gradually increased his flock by buying sheep from retiring herders. In 2006, KM grazes 300 head of sheep and managed four hired shepherds. He migrates with TL throughout the year and joins RW during the summer months.



Photo 4 KM retired from sheep herder in 1998 and returned to herding after few years later (Photograph by the author)

CT (age 35), another returning herder, had worked for KM as chief hired shepherd before 1997. He retired from herding in an attempt to find work abroad. However, he was unable to leave Nepal and subsequently returned to herding after several years. In 2006, he grazed 15 sheep and migrated with H, a brother of KM, his former employer. Currently, however, CT has no employment relationship with H and indicated that he is grazing by himself and not as a hired shepherd.

As is evident from these cases, some retired herders return to herding when they lose hired shepherds or after failing to find employment abroad. When herders suffer accidents, or they cannot find other employment, they sometimes try herding again. However, once they sell all their sheep, it is difficult to recover the same flock size as before. The case of KM suggests difficulty in finding someone who is willing to sell sheep immediately. The case of CT indicates the potential for the independence of hired shepherds. CT became an owner after he returned to herding. Similar cases were apparent with KB, NB, LG, and CP. KB (aged 64) was a chief hired shepherd for G in 1998. KB was born in a village in the Udayapur District and had worked for G for a long time. He retired from herding after getting married, and then engaged in agricultural work with his family at Rumjatar. In 1997, he returned to herding. He became a hired shepherd for G because G's chief hired shepherd, T, retired to travel abroad. In 2006 KB owned 50 head of sheep. He is currently grazing with his former owner, but there is no employment relationship between KB and G.

NB (aged 35) worked with his brother in 1998. At that time, they owned 30 sheep and also worked as hired shepherds for G. In 2006, they migrated with RW or KM, but there was no employment relationship. They bought about 80 head of sheep from retired herder A. Now, they have 100 head of sheep.

As seen from cases of CT and NB, some hired shepherds became owners by clearing their debts or employment relationships, and some hired shepherds increase their flock size after they gain independence. Some hired shepherds engage in sheep herding as a family business, such that they work not only for the owners, but also for their families. Thus, hired herders can also own private sheep. The origins of such flocks vary. They can be inherited from a father, accumulated as salary, or purchased. In contrast, some hired herders were owners in the past. Thus, the distinction between owners and hired shepherds is flexible. This distinction can change over time because some herders switch between being hired and being owners.

Only one person has continued as a hired shepherd among those who were hired shepherds in 1998. C1 (aged 19 in 2006), a herder shepherd, is the only herder who has worked for eight years. In 1998, he was hired by BB of Rumjatar, who at that time spent more time in the village than in the camp. Recently, C1 transferred from BB to TD because he has stopped going to the camp. In 2006, BB asked TD to graze sheep with him. Including 4 individuals who became owners, only five of 30 individuals work as herders. Of the remaining 25, one person died and 24 retired. Eighteen are newly employed; thus, the labor of hired herders is more flexible than that of owners.

2) The situation of retired herders

Among the 59 herders in 1998, 41 herders (17 owners and 24 hired shepherds) were retired by 2006, and more detail data were collected for 19 persons (12 owners and 7 hired shepherds). For owners, the data show that years between age 40 and 50 is a crossroads. In contrast to herders in their 50s or older ones living in the village, herders moving to Kathmandu (one person) or abroad (one person) were in their 40s or younger.

UM (aged 46) the wealthiest owner among the herders, owned over 500 sheep in 1998 and claimed that he had owned 900 sheep at a maximum. In 1997, he sold 300 sheep and bought land in Kathmandu. In 1998, he indicated that he would build a house on that land and live there with family. In 2000, he sold all his sheep and migrated to Kathmandu with his family. According to the villager, however, he did not build a house there, but lives in a rented room.

For hired shepherds, the situation is similar. A herder in his 60s is living in the village. Younger herders in their 40s or younger have moved abroad or to Kathmandu. The destinations of those herders who moved abroad were Malaysia (two persons), Qatar (one person), Dubai (one person), and Saudi Arabia (one person). These numbers include both owners and hired shepherds.

T (aged 35) was the chief hired shepherd under G in 1997. His father had

also worked as chief hired shepherd for G; thus, they have worked for G for two generations. In 1997, T retired from herding to emigrate to Saudi Arabia. He borrowed most of the required funds from G, which according to G, amounted to 90,000 Rs (1,285 US\$). G provided the fund at a lower rate of interest (24% per year) than the village standard (36.5%). G also offered his daughter to take care of T in Kathmandu, where he stayed for 6 months while waiting for his visa. T explained to me “G is like a god”. Since that time, T has returned to his village twice and has gone back to Saudi Arabia. According to G, T paid back all of his debt.

NC (35) was chief hired shepherd of BT in 1998. However, BT went to Qatar and sold the sheep; therefore, NC became chief hired shepherd for KL, who had lost his chief hired shepherd that year. In 2001–2002, however, KL retired from herding. NC, then joined with G, who was a grazing partner of KL (the author found no information regarding whether NC had become an owner). In 2006, NC retired from herding in order to go abroad. According to a friend, he went to Iraq, but was forced to return at the Kuwait-Iraq border. He came back to Nepal, but could not return to his village. In 2006, he lived in Kathmandu.

It is not new phenomenon for herders to go abroad; prior to 1998, it was a common practice among both owners and hired shepherds, although the trend has increased over the last 8 years. As in the case of T, the herders often borrow money from their employers. T borrowed 90,000 Rs (1,285 US\$) from G., which was equivalent of 112.5 sheep in 1997 (1 sheep = 800 Rs). It is therefore remarkable that T was able to return the money with interest (24% a year) within only two or three years. Thus, it is not unreasonable for herders to wish to work abroad. The author was unable to obtain information regarding how NC acquired the money needed to travel abroad, although it was suggested that he took out several loans. This is supported by his inability to return to the village. Herders can obtain large amounts of money from village creditors because the creditors expect high returns if the herders succeed abroad.

However, working abroad is not without risks. Both T and NC went to foreign countries without being literate. They did not complete primary school, and they cannot read and write either Nepali or English. The author could not understand why NC intended to go to Iraq. It is likely that he could not understand world news report. Also he would have had engage in physical labor in a hot climate had he found a job. However, despite risks, many people come back with money. Therefore, herders will very likely continue to seek employment abroad.

3) Retired herders who live in the village

Retired herders can contribute to their household economy without going abroad. The author asked seven herders living in their village in 2006 about how they used the funds obtained from selling sheep. Herders in their 60s and 50s indicated that they used the money to support their childrens’ education or desire to go

abroad. Herders in their 50s also used the money to purchase land or a house; and among those in their 40s, some also purchased shops.

KC (63) had grazed his sheep with his brother when they were young. In 1998, they had some 50 sheep and asked O, a herder of the same village, to graze them. The brothers live in the village for most of the year and engage in agriculture. They sent their hired shepherd to O's camp on their behalf. In 1999, they sold all their sheep and retired from herding. In 2006, several goats remained in the camp, which was taken over by TL after O retired. KC used the profit from the sheep towards his children's education. His first daughter (aged 35) and first son (aged 33) graduated from university in Kathmandu with a Bachelors of Arts. The daughter is now married and lives in Hong Kong, whereas the son first lived in Kathmandu and then moved to Qatar two years ago. The second daughter (aged 30) and third daughter (aged 28) were educated in the private school of the village and passed the high school graduation examination (SLC: School Leaving Certificate). Both live in Kathmandu. The husband of the second daughter is an officer in the Nepalese army and will receive a pension from 2007. The third daughter lives with her mother in the house of first daughter. Only KC lived in the village and engaged in agriculture in 2006.

O (aged 57) built a new house, which cost approximately 200,000 Rs (2,857 US\$) in 1998. At that time, he grazed 250 sheep and sold 100 to make the money. This was equivalent to 80,000 Rs (1,142 US\$). He sold his sheep for several years and eventually sold them all and retired in 2002. O also used his profit toward his children's education. His daughter (aged 30) graduated from Intermediate of Arts (IA) college in Kathmandu and was married. His son (aged 28) graduated from high school (SLC) and passed the examination to join the British army (Gurkha Brigade). He married and built a house in Kathmandu. Only O and his wife now live in the house in the village, and they employ agriculture laborers because to do agricultural works is "too hard".

B (aged 65) grazed 48 sheep in 1998. He then increased his flock to 150 head and employed a hired shepherd. In 2005, he learned that his son planned to go abroad; consequently, he sold all his sheep and retired from herding. His 150 sheep were sold to another herder for 187,500 Rs (one sheep was worth 1,250 Rs in 2005). However, this was not enough to support his son, who subsequently borrowed 80,000 Rs (1,142 US\$) from a villager in Kathmandu. Despite the interest of 24 percent a year, the son sent money from Qatar and paid back the principal within six months. In 2006, B remained at his house and he had no job except for watering and feeding grass for his water buffaloes. However, he intends to buy sheep again. He told the author that herding was easier for him than doing agricultural work. One of his daughters passed the high school graduate examination (SLC) and enrolled at the campus (IA) in the village, in 2006. If his other daughters pass the exam, B will need money. Fortunately, G offered him a loan to buy sheep. G intended to increase his sheep, but he is short of labor and an experienced man. Recently, G began living in the village throughout the year



Photo 5 The son of retired herder VB. He went to Malaysia for labor migration (Photograph by the author)

and no longer goes to the camp himself. Therefore, he is eager for B to return to herding and join to his camp, as before. However B said he is considering whether he will return to herding because he is too old to graze the sheep and his family objects to buying sheep and incurring debt.

VB (aged 60), lives in the village of Garma in the Solu-Khumbu District, manages a tea shop and engages in agriculture. Because he was a herder when he was young, all herders visit his shop when they return to their village from the summer pasture. In 1997, VB bought 60 sheep from a retired herder (T) and returned to herding. However, the grazing activity was engaged in by his two sons, who retired from being herders in 2003 and went to Malaysia with their sister’s husband (Photo 5). In 2006, the younger son returned whereas the older son remained in Malaysia. According to the younger son, he worked at a chicken farm near Penang for three years and the “work was very hard.” His salary was only about 12,000 Rs (171 US\$) a month, which did not include room and board. Nevertheless, the son used his income to purchase 30 donkeys, one horse, and a 20-inch Television. In 2006, he sold 10 donkeys and used the other 20 for transportation business between Okhaldhunga, a final stop, and Salleri, the central town in the Solu-Khumbu District.

TM (aged 47) lives in the village of Thumrin in Solu-Khumbu District. In 1998, he owned 60 sheep, which he grazed with his brother TJ, and returned to the village alternately with him. By 2003, when he retired from herding, he owned 240 sheep and goats and managed two hired shepherds. He indicated that he had given the hired shepherds four sheep as salary (*jāgīr*), 15 as consignment (*thekhaune*), and 15,000 Rs in cash, as a debt without interest (*nirbiyāi*) for one

year per person. According to TM, he retired because he lost his hired shepherds: one retired within 1.5 years and the other ran away after six months. In 2003, he sold 205 sheep to KL and 35 goats to VB. Assuming that one sheep sold for 1,250 Rs, he earned 300,000 Rs (4,285 US\$). TM then began to manage a shop on the main road, which he had bought previously with profits from sheep and had rented to another in the past. After he retired from herding, he rebuilt the shop and began managing it himself. In addition to the shop, he owns 20 *ropānī* (about 1 ha) of fields that he inherited from his father and a small, irrigated field that he purchased. He claimed that the size of the fields is enough to feed his family for six months.

TJ (aged 57), a brother of TM, also lives in the village of Thumrin. In 1998, TJ owned 60 sheep. He continued to graze his flock for a while after his brother retired, and he bought sheep from TM and O. TJ then sold all the sheep to RW, but bought sheep from another herder, and sold them again. He said he sold the sheep because of the shortage of hired shepherds. In 2004, he retired from herding. Now he spends much of his time doing agriculture with his family. He also bought lands along the road and has built a new house there.

These cases illustrate that retired herders who returned to the village sold their sheep to either finance their children's education or to send their children abroad. Some bought land and build a new house, whereas others started small businesses. Because these herders are too old to go abroad themselves, they used the products of their labor to support the next generation. Their sheep was thus transferred to family property.

Herders sometimes claim that they “become big by sheep (*bheḍāle ṭhūlo bhayo*)” or acquire property with sheep (*bheḍāle sampatti kamāyo*). They often take pride in how much their flock sizes have increased within their generation. Acquiring a large a large flock is an admirable accomplishment among herders. In autumn, sheep herders celebrate the Hindu festival of *Dasain* in their village. On the 10th day of the festival, an auspicious mark called a *Tika* is given by the head of the family to his family and kinsmen. As he was administering the *Tika* during this ritual, one retired herder said to children; “If you join the army, go to British Army (the Gurkhas). If you work at office, become a government employee. If you graze sheep, graze many sheep.”

These words should not be misinterpreted as the nostalgia of a retired herder reminiscing about the “good old days.” A large number of sheep can earn substantial amounts of money. Although herding is not necessarily more lucrative than joining the Gurkhas or working abroad, it is not a bad source of income for villagers even by today's standards. In 1998, 500 sheep sold for 400,000 Rs (5,714 US\$). For villagers, the word 100,000 is used conversationally to represent a unit of property. Thus, if herder earns 400,000 Rs, he can build a large house (Photo 6). One hundred sheep were sold for 80,000 Rs (1,142 US\$) in 1998 and 125,000 Rs (1,785 US\$) in 2006. The amount required to travel to Arabian Gulf countries was about 100,000 Rs in 2006. So herders can finance a child with only 100 head



Photo 6 House is most popular item as the transfer of property (Photograph by the author)

of sheep, provided they carry no debt.

DECISION MAKING OF HERDERS AND FAMILY HISTORY

Diachronically, the transfer of sheep to family property can be understood from the family history of some herders.

Some herders say that they have herded sheep since the generation of their fathers (or grandfathers). This should not be understood that “sheep herding has been a long-standing tradition” in their families. In reality, there are some cases in which herders have begun sheep herding only recently, *i.e.* during the generation of their fathers (or grandfathers).

Figure 2 shows the family tree of G. According to the sheep herders, the father of G was called as “*Acchame*” because he was come from “Assam”. Regardless of whether this is true, it was assumed that he came from some place else, and after herding his sheep, he settled in the village (Photo 7). “*Acchame*” was unusual in that he had second wife in another village. It was claimed that he had built her house and kept some horses to support her. This suggests that he was a considerably wealthy herder. Consequently, his son, G, can read and write, and he completed junior high school (through seventh grade). As the second generation, G had an economical advantage: he employed a chief hired shepherd who had worked for his family from his father’s generation. As a result, it was not necessary for G to engage in herding for the entire year; instead, he could concentrate on his efforts to increase his family estates. Therefore, by the third generation, G’s son KG has no experience of sheep herding. After graduating from high school, KG managed agricultural laborers, and he became vice chairman of the Village Council in 1996. Now, his sisters all live in Kathmandu.

Herders who came from the other villages are also seen in other families’ histories (Figure 3). The father of B was a sheep herder from Rawa in the Okhaldhunga District who came to Rumjatar after B was born. The father built a house and bought land there. Among the father’s property, sheep were inherited by B, his first son, when he was in his 20s. The house and family estate were inherited by the second son, who lived with the parents (the inheritance was implemented after the father’s death). The third son graduated junior high school and became a Gurkha soldier in the British Army. After retirement, he built a large house in Kathmandu and now manages a carpet factory there. A similar process occurred in the case of O, whose father was also a sheep herder from

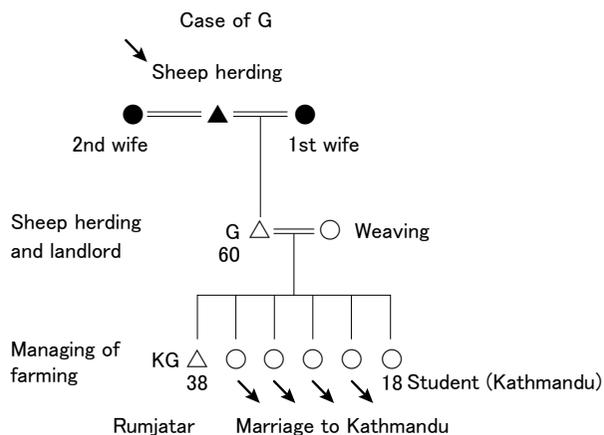


Figure 2 The herders who came to the village
 ▲●: Dead persons The age is counted in 2006.
 Source: Interview by the author, 2006

Rawa. However, the father’s sheep were distributed equally among the brothers. Whereas O has been herding sheep since then, his younger brother sold his share to become a wool contractor (Photo 8). O’s daughter lives in Kathmandu and his son is employed by the British Army.



Photo 7 Sedentarized sheep herder G (Photograph by the author)

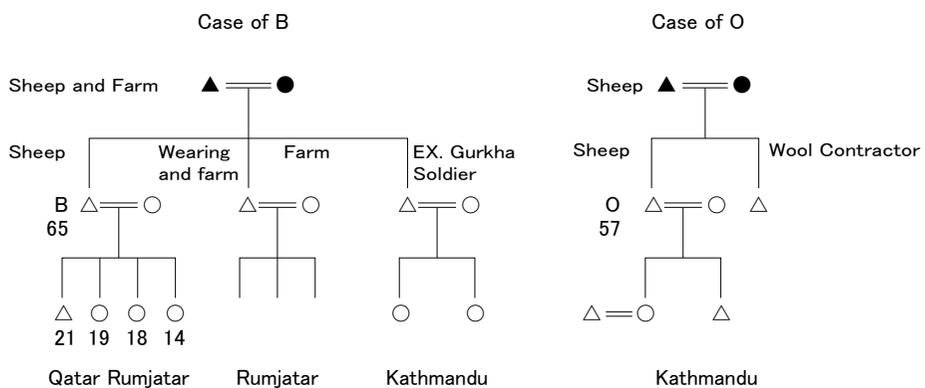


Figure 3 The herders who came to the village
 ▲●: Dead persons The age is counted in 2006.
 Source: Interview by the author, 2006

Herders who came from other villages may become a hired shepherd (Figure 4). The father of T, who was a hired shepherd of G, came to Rumjatar from a winter pasture village in the Udayapur District. This is similar to the case of KB, who



Photo 8 TK retired from sheep herder (left), and younger brother of O become wool contractor (right) (Photograph by the author)

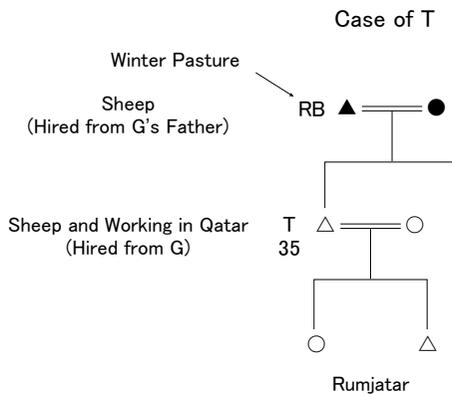


Figure 4 Hired shepherds who came to the village
 ▲●: Dead persons The age is counted in 2006.
 Source: Interview by the author, 2006

also came from a winter pasture village and migrated to Rumjatar after marriage. He returned to herding when the hired shepherd, T, retired. According to G, they were able to buy their house, *i.e.* they earned enough money through herding.

SEDENTARIZATION AND TRANSFER OF PROPERTY

The cases of these herders are reminiscent of the Basseri, who transfer their property outside pastoralism. As Fredrik Barth reported, some Basseri herders purchase land, which is particularly common among owners of large flocks. He explained the transfer of property promotes removal from the ‘tribe’ (pastoralists)⁵. Among these owners, some who own lands along their migration route and employ agricultural laborers will become landowners and retire when they lose their animals. In contrast, for small herders the loss of animals promotes indebtedness to merchants and their removal from the ‘tribe’ (pastoralists) to become agricultural laborers. Thus, only owners of medium sized flocks remain in the ‘tribe’ (pastoralists) (Barth 1964) (emphasis and words in parentheses added by author).

Transfer of property is deemed to be easier for transhumant pastoralists than for nomadic pastoralists. Transhumance implies division of labor, agriculture, sedentary houses and villages (Braudel 1985: 78). Therefore, the transfer of property from sheep to house or land in the village is thought to have occurred more frequently among transhumant pastoralists than nomadic pastoralists.

A similar case has been observed in India. Kavoori reported a case of Rajasthan herders who never returned to their village. They fled into forest area in a drought year and remained there when other herders returned to their village. According to Kavoori, this phenomenon is not new and has occurred for over 50 years. Their size of flock is medium to large, and they tended to graze more than 200 sheep in average (Kavoori 1999: 76–77). Further, he explains this phenomenon as pattern of pastoralism that is changing from transhumance to nomadism. Although he does not explain whether the herders settled in the forest area, this case is important because it suggests that models based on static data will change over time.

CONCLUSION

The process of change is not simple. The number of herders who retire does not solely determine the future of pastoralism. Over the eight years examined, many herders retired from sheep herding. However, some people newly engaged in or returned to pastoralism. Thus, change occurs in two directions; pastoralism is not only decreasing but is also continued.

The transfer of property is expected to be more frequent among sedentarized transhumant pastoralists than nomadic pastoralists. In Nepal, objects of investment are seen among land and houses. Recently this has expanded to include providing

funds for children's education or to enable them to work abroad. Labor products are transferred to new family properties. Tracing herders' life histories will be a linked focus reconsidering the place of pastoralism within their family history.

Tracing the process of sedentarization of transhumant pastoralists will be related to a reexamination of history. The role of pastoralism will need to be reconsidered among regional economies or societies. There are also retired herders who invested their property. Transhumant pastoralism bridges the two worlds. Pastoralism is a means to expand their lives not only within the world of pastoralism, but also the outside of it (Photo 9).

And more importantly, transhumant pastoralism is a kind of safety net. Some herders who wished for success outside of pastoralism and failed in the occupation, can return to pastoralism in order to reconstruct their lives. Today, even though pastoralism is not a better source of income than oversea migration, it provides the herders a means to make some family properties.

Sedentarization does not mean to the end of pastoralism. Some herders retire in a few generation, whereas some herders continue or join pastoralism. The latter can increase their livestock when they buy the former's. Although, the future of pastoralism is uncertain, it will continue into the future when people find a more stable safety net than pastoralism.



Photo 9 Herders who continue sheep herders (Photograph by the author)

NOTES

- 1) The Gurkha is a brigade of Nepali soldiers within the British army. After the independence of India, their base moved to Hong Kong, Singapore, Brunei, and the UK.
- 2) Division of ‘owners’ and ‘hired shepherd’ is variable. Sometimes, it changes over time. Here, the author has divided them based on whether the herders were employed by others. This definition is also used by the herders. The term “sheep herder” includes both owners and hired shepherds. In Nepali, ‘the herder’ corresponds to the word *bhedā goṭhāla*.
- 3) Expenditures were estimated by calculating expenses for items such as salt, food, grazing charges of pastures, transportation of wool, clothes, shoes, and equipment such as flashlight or batteries, and so on. Expenses required for trips between village and the camp, such as for meals and accommodation, were not included in the estimation.
- 4) Teachers’ salary in Rumjatar doubled in 1997.
- 5) The word ‘tribe’ is not appropriate for use in current anthropology. As evident from the context, it is used as an equivalent to ‘nomad’ or ‘pastoralist’.

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