THE SEDIMENT OF NOMADISM

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And the grass dried up. And without grass their flocks and herds must die. And upon these animals depended both the shelter and food of the race—life itself.[1]

Nomadism is a category imagined by outsiders and it brings with it many suppositions about pastoral life. . . .[2]

I

This essay began as a footnote in which I construed "cactus pastoralism" as an anomaly in the pastoralist literature.[3] I had found that the raising of zebu cattle in southern Madagascar on mixed diets of grass and prickly pear cactus of the genus *Opuntia* did not fit the standard definition of pastoralism as "the raising of livestock on 'natural' pasture unimproved by human intervention."[4] By that definition the Mahafale herders whom I had observed striving to keep their zebu cattle alive in the arid environment by "improving" their pastures with cactus "water-food" appeared not to be pastoralists at all.

I attributed the problem to a stifling typology giving precedence to "natural" grasslands that rendered invisible human agency in the making of such landscapes.[5] I singled out the problematic concept of "pure" or "true"

[1]Merian C. Cooper, *Grass* (New York, 1925), 3.
[2]Caroline Humphrey and David Sneath, *The End of Nomadism? Society, State and the Environment in Inner Asia* (Durham, 1999), 1.
[3]Footnote 19 in the manuscript, which became footnote 13 in Jeffrey C. Kaufmann, "The Non-Modern Constitution of Famines in Madagascar's Spiny Forests: 'Water-Food' Plants, Cattle, and Mahafale Landscape Praxis," *Environmental Science* 5(2008), 73–89.
[4]Philip Carl Salzman, *Pastoralists: Equality, Hierarchy, and the State* (Boulder, 2004), 1.
[5]Besides Madagascar, stock breeders have used cactus fodder in Australia (Jodi Frawley, "Prickly Pear Land: Transnational Networks in Settler Australia," *Australian Historical*

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nomads, in which their "life itself"—as Merian Cooper wrote at the beginning of *Grass*, and which I quoted above—depended entirely on their keeping livestock mobile. In the footnote I reasoned that "Western scholars of pastoralist societies rely on a typology or terminology that defines the form of pastoralism in relation to whether they are close or far from pure nomadism. Pastoralist studies have flirted with the modern constitution. As Latour wrote, 'hybrids are indeed accepted, but solely as mixtures of pure forms in equal proportion.'"[6]

Bruno Latour's explorations into the ways that nature and culture combine in technology provided a perspective that resonated with my skepticism about pure nomadism. Where scientists refer to "pure" as a sign of "modernity," Latour found the lack of pure objects—*vis-à-vis* expanding hybridity due to human agency—as a sign that "we have never been modern." The more that scientists tout "pure" forms of technology, Latour argued, the more "hybrid" (part human, part nature) they are. The concept of "pure" in this context, Latour explained, comes from the culture of science and its way of making an arbitrary human construction seem natural and real.

Latour's argument reminded me of an important theme in Anatoly Khazanov's remarkable book about nomads.[7] A similar oppositional exchange on the order of a zero-sum game—where more of one thing brings on less of another—occurs as his central argument about nomads.[8] Khazanov demonstrated that the more pastoral nomads turned their subsistence economies

Studies 130[2007], 323–38); in Sicily (Giuseppe Barbera, Paolo Inglese, and Eulogio Pimienta-Barrios, eds. *Agro-Ecology, Cultivation and Uses of Cactus Pear* [Rome, 1995], 18); in South Africa (Lance van Sittert, "'Our Irrepressible Fellow Colonist': the Biological Invasion of Prickly Pear (*Opuntia ficus-indica*) in the Eastern Cape, *c.*1890–*c.*1910," in Stephen Dovers, Ruth Edgecombe, and Bill Guest, eds. *South Africa's Environmental History: Cases and Comparisons* [Athens, 2003], 139–59); in Tunisia (Brian N. Meyer and Jerry L. McLaughlin, "Economic Uses of Opuntia," *Succulent Journal* 53[1981], 107–12; A. Monjauze and H.N. Le Houérou, "Le rôle des Opuntia dans l'économie agricole Nord Africaine," *Bulletin de l'Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Agriculture de Tunis* 8/9[1965], 85–164); and in the United States (Walter R. Houston, "Plains Pricklypear, Weather, and Grazing in the Northern Great Plains," *Ecology* 44[1963], 569–74; Charles Russell and Peter Felker, "The Prickly-Pears (*Opuntia* spp., Cactacae): a Source of Human and Animal Food in Semiarid Regions," *Economic Botany* 41[1987], 433–45; Noel D. Vietmeyer, "Lesser-Known Plants of Potential Use in Agriculture and Forestry," *Science* 232[1986], 1379–84).

[6]Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, 1993), 56.

[7]Anatoly M. Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World* (2d ed., Madison, 1994).

[8]I am in no way implying that my mentor in pastoralist studies, with whom I studied at Wisconsin, adheres to Latour's argument about modernity. I suspect he does not; I am simply pointing out a similarity in the structure of their arguments.

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into specialized or "pure" mobile pastoralism, the less autarky they had.[9] In other words, the more livestock herders become specialized in moving their larder on the hoof across the landscape, "the more dependent they become, in turn, on the outside, non-pastoralist, mainly sedentary world."[10] Their need to trade or to find some other way of acquiring materials and dietary supplements useful to them in their mobile lives, which they themselves as mobile livestock specialists do not produce, causes them to engage with neighboring farmers, professional traders, and urban dwellers, and to participate in broader political economic relationships.[11]

Putting Khazanov's thesis into Latour's idiom, we get: the more that scholars claim nomadic peoples to be engaged in "pure" nomadism, the less pure and the more "hybrid" (not independent, not self-sufficient, non-autarky) their way of life is at the wider scale. Might this push-pull tension—where the more one pushes for or insists on a concept, the more it pulls away and the less of it one has—of aiming for the pure and narrow, and hitting the hybrid and broad, also have parallels in how scholars of nomadic and pastoralist peoples conceive them as close or far from being modern? This was my question when I started to look at cactus pastoralism through the lens of Latour's critique of modernity.

Though cryptic, the footnote and its compressed points served a purpose. It provoked comment from an anonymous reviewer who found it a "fascinating glimpse of a critique of nomadism studies and its inherent problematic modernism" and recommended that I expand it into an essay-length argument.[12] The reviewer cautioned me, however, against perpetrating a straw man argument since

[9]The use of the past tense is appropriate here in bringing out the fact that Khazanov considers pure pastoral nomads, or those who most closely approached pure nomadism, to belong to history and no longer part of the contemporary world.

[10]Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*, xxxi.

[11]Kroeber made a similar argument about "true pastoral nomads," which he defined as "peoples making their living wholly off their flocks without settling down to plant" (A.L. Kroeber, *Anthropology* [New York, 1948], 277). Rather than using the term non-autarky, as Khazanov did, Kroeber used the term "half-culture"—which unfortunately conjures up notions of "half-breed"—to represent their dependency upon farmers and townspeople to satisfy their dietary and material needs. Kroeber's point was that pure pastoral nomads are self-sufficient in only a "half-culture" way: they could not survive if not for what they get from trading and sometimes raiding sedentary people, townspeople, farmers. He describes "pure pastoralism as a specialty secondarily segregated out of a more balanced economy by accentuation of one part" (277–78). He made the point that Khazanov developed brilliantly: pastoral nomads "would not have been able to specialize to the same degree if they were wholly isolated and independent. They exist in some degree of cultural and social symbiosis" (278). He also noted that scholars at the time uncritically thought of them as static, when in fact pastoral nomads are dynamic and changing all the time. He seems to have recognized the hybrid nature of nomadism.

[12]I wish to thank the reviewer for urging me to develop the argument, though I doubt this essay resembles remotely the expected direction that the argument would take.

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> the weight of cultural ecology in the 1960s and 1970 [*sic*] (let alone more recent political ecology) dispelled the discursive "typology or terminology that defines the form of pastoralism in relation to whether they are close or far from pure nomadism." This characterizes some, not all of nomadic research. I think a stronger literature review would reveal that the debate within the field has always hinged on precisely this question—yes, even before Bruno Latour piped in. Many nomadic studies people threw this conceptualization our [*sic*] decades ago [followed by eleven citations and their full references[13]].

The purpose of this essay is, first, to clarify that, even after scholars of nomadic peoples—such as the eleven offered by the reviewer—have seemingly "thrown out" the reified ideal type of "pure nomadism" and replaced it with a continuum of herding variations, there remains a reference to a

[13]The eleven references: Akbar S. Ahmed, "Nomadism as Ideological Expression: the Case of the Gomal Nomads," *Nomadic Peoples* 9(1981), 3–15; Neville Dyson-Hudson, "The Study of Nomads," in William Irons and Neville Dyson-Hudson, eds. *Perspectives on Nomadism* (Leiden, 1972), 2–29; John G. Galaty and Douglas L. Johnson, eds. *The World of Pastoralism: Herding Systems in Comparative Perspective* (New York, 1990); Douglas L. Johnson, *The Nature of Nomadism: A Comparative Study of Pastoral Migrations in Southwestern Asia and Northern Africa*, Department of Geography Research Paper No. 118 (Chicago, 1969); Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*; S.P. Malhotra, "Nomads and Nomadism," in Harbans Singh Mann, ed. *Desert Eco-system and Its Improvement* (Jodhpur, 1977), 133–43; V.A. Nambia, "Modern Technology and New Forms of Nomadism: Duck Herders in Southern India," *Nomadic Peoples* ns 5(2001), 155–68; R.R. Prasad, *Pastoral Nomadism in Arid Zones of India: Socio-Demographic and Ecological Aspects* (New Delhi, 1994); Paul Robbins, "Nomadism Now: Cultural Survival in a Changing Desert Environment," *Annals of Arid Zone* 43(2004), 1–19; Philip Carl Salzman, "Is 'Nomadism' a Useful Concept?" *Nomadic Peoples* 6(1980), 1–7; G.S. Solanki, "Nomadism and Migration of Pastoralists and Their Livestock in Western India," *Annals of Arid Zone* 29(1990), 203–10.

A coda: after communicating with Paul Robbins about his paper, I sent him a draft of this article. He acknowledged that he was the anonymous reviewer in a reference to the "sics" that I placed in the quotation: "Of course, if I had to answer for every misspelling in a review, knowing that it would get a "sic" in someone's article some time later, I suppose I would have hung up reviewing altogether many years ago!" I intended no mockery but was following merely the convention of rigor exhibited in this journal to quote accurately and precisely all text and all sources. I apologize for any offense taken.

With that aside, I wish again to thank Paul (whom I will continue to refer to as "the reviewer") for his extensive and very helpful comments that made this article better. To be fair, he had interrogated typologies in the following: idem, "Pastoralism and Community in Rajasthan: Interrogating Categories in Arid Lands Development," in A. Agrawal and K. Sivaramakrishnan, eds. *Agrarian Environments: Resources, Representations, and Rule in India* (Durham, 2000), 191–215; idem, "Healing the Nomad Within? the Uses and Abuses of the Mobility Metaphor in Critical Theory," in J.P. Sharpe, ed. *Wondering through the Tropics: Western Travel and the Geographing of Others*, Department of Geography Discussion Paper Series No. 106 (Syracuse, 1994).

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"pure" type. I call this residual "the sediment of nomadism." The concept of "pure" lingers in nomadic/pastoralist studies because it has had a sententious history and, more critically, because it continues to function as an "index" or a directing sign that indicates the "degree from pure," which helps one measure where a particular type of livestock herding falls on the pastoralist continuum.[14] I shall focus on this indexical function in the reviewer's sampling of a "stronger literature review," and not attempt a thorough historiographic survey of the workings of "pure" in nomadic and pastoralist studies.[15]

Secondly, this essay loosens a bit of the "sediment" from another set of "outdated ideals," as Stephen Ellis refers to modernization or development theory in his article calling for a new methodology of reconstructing contemporary African history.[16] Modernization theory relegates incorrectly, Ellis points out, "traditional" pastoralists impotent in the face of change since it conceives subsistence herders as not yet in the modern world.[17] One of the failings of anthropology, Mudimbe notes, is its gauging distance between self and other, us and them, Americans and Africans, and so on.[18] Using "modernization" and "pure" as indicators locating pastoralists in relation to ourselves, I shall argue, encumbers the Western discourse of contemporary pastoralists to a pessimistic, even fatalistic, story of victims in a contemporary state of crisis.

II

Turning now to the reviewer's eleven submissions, only one author can lay claim to trying to "dispel the discursive" concept of "pure" in pastoralist studies. The rest make expert, usually implicit, use of it. I offer this observation not to quibble with the reviewer's critique, but to indicate the centrality of this concept in western understandings of pastoral nomadism. It suggests the need to explore the difficulties in detaching "pure" from the nomadism category. I discuss each work separately and, for the most part, in chronological order.

[14]Scholars have attempted to clarify the concept of "nomadism," as we will see below, but they leave ordinarily the concept of "pure" intact and largely unanalyzed.

[15]No thorough historiographic survey of the concept, to my knowledge, has yet been done. Robbins (personal communication 02 June, 2009) points out that such a survey would do well to offer a postcolonial critique by tracing a "longer colonial thread through the nomad . . . [of] a political explanation for [the] perverse persistence [of "pure"].

[16]Stephen Ellis, "Writing Histories of Contemporary Africa," *JAH* 43(2002), 1–26.

[17]Ibid., 7–11.

[18]V.Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa* (Bloomington, 1988), 81.

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I begin a bit out of sequence with Neville Dyson-Hudson's 1972 introductory essay in *Perspectives on Nomadism*. I spend some time on this piece since many of the authors cited by the reviewer developed either critiques of his theories or refined certain aspects of his argument. Of central interest to me is Dyson-Hudson's disavowal of both the concept "pure" and the "nomadism" typology.[19] He indicated that the category of "pure nomads" was an ideal type used by arm-chair scholars of nomadic peoples unenlightened by Malinowskian fieldwork methodology.[20] This "older style" of thought about nomads, Dyson-Hudson argued,

> works by categorising and homogenising procedures, and involves essentialist notions. The units of its analysis are, in effect, not societies but "ideal types", and its method of ordering phenomena is to produce typologies and classifications. Accordingly we have the concept of a "pure" nomadism, in which extremes of stock dependence, possession and movement, and opposition to agriculture and wider market involvement with settled populations, are all emphasised. Groups having less in the way of stock possession and dependence, of movement, of separation from agriculture, or of independence of settled populations and external markets are then conceived of as being fractionally nomadic or "not really" nomadic.[21]

Two positions in Dyson-Hudson's discussion deserve reflection. The first is that he considers the concept of "pure" in "pure nomadism" an "essentialist notion" created by scholars more concerned with producing typologies of "whole" societies and generating theories about them than in describing the actual practices of spatially mobile people. I consider this a *bona fide* argument against regarding movement as an essential quality of nomads, and against rendering mistakenly the assumption that all pastoral nomads have the same characteristic.[22] Dyson-Hudson cites the "essentialist

[19]I consider this a landmark book in anglophone nomadic studies. Although it is flawed by a synchronic perspective of nomadic peoples, it served as a model for empirical, field-work-based, studies among herders. A similarly influential model was the periodical *Nomadic Peoples*, which Philip Carl Salzman founded in 1972 at McGill University, two years before the founding of *HA*. On the francophone side, an equally influential book was L'Équipe Écologie et Anthropologie des Sociétés Pastorales, ed. *Production Pastorale et Société* (Paris, 1979). Among francophone periodicals, *Cahiers de l'ORSTOM*, in its Série Sciences Humaines, has published numerous articles on pastoralist peoples in Africa.

[20]Dyson-Hudson, "Nomads," 6.

[21]Ibid., 8.

[22]This does not mean that I concur with Dyson-Hudson's anti-historical approach to the study of nomads and pastoralists. In his introductory essay he praises the Malinowskian

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cast" that treats "movement as an absolute quality" of grass- and water-seeking nomadic herders as having slowed down the development of nomadic studies by obscuring questions about spatial mobility.[23] Rather than ask if a particular group of nomads move for other than ecological reasons—for example, political, social, or economic—Dyson-Hudson noted that by essentializing movement, "[w]e settle too readily for categories which do not so much explain as explain away the realities of nomadic behavior."[24]

In terms of "the debate" in the nomadic studies literature that the reviewer referred to above, encouraging scholarship to move away from homogenizing spatial mobility as an essential quality of "pure" nomadism is a noteworthy advancement. The "older style" approach that reduced all nomadic phenomena to a homogeneous core of spatial mobility and which typified erroneously *all* nomads as being mobile *essentially* deserved his harsh critique.[25] Nomadic studies followed his call for more fieldwork among pastoralist peoples in an effort to generate theories about herding phenomena founded on empirical descriptions of dynamic herding populations rather than on an "ideal type" based on a dubious essential quality that assumed them as isolated and bounded by tradition.[26] If by "the debate" the reviewer meant the critique of "the essentialist cast" that assumed "pure" mobility to be a reified essential property of all nomads, then the point is well-taken.

synchronic approach: "to record ordinary, day-to-day activities just as much as the exotic, and to search for explanations by way of the evident facts of observable behavior before invoking the weight of the past to account for the actions of the present. The better that advice has been followed for any nomadic society, the more we can now claim to understand it; and where it has not been followed we still cannot, in reality, claim to understand it at all." Much of my writing on Mahafale pastoralists has followed the diachronic approaches I learned at Wisconsin from David Henige, Thomas Spear, Herbert Lewis, and Anatoly Khazanov. In a later article that Dyson-Hudson wrote with his wife, he suggests an historical anthropological approach, one that uses "dynamic models for analyzing livestock herding systems" that "emphasize processes and change rather than using static models and typologies" (Rada Dyson-Hudson and Neville Dyson-Hudson, "Nomadic Pastoralism," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 9[1980], 15–61, esp. 55).

[23]Dyson-Hudson, "Nomads," 7; he cites in particular Marshall Sahlins, *Tribesmen* (Englewood Cliffs, 1968).

[24]Ibid., 2.

[25]Such skepticism towards essential qualities was by no means confined to anthropology at the time. Around the same time, arguments about essential properties abounded, for example, in analytic philosophy, and the matter continues as a philosophical problem. See Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, 1979), 361–64.

[26]Dyson-Hudson, "Nomads," 8. Rada Dyson-Hudson demonstrated that observing the spatial mobility of herded cattle differed from Karimojong self-proclaimed nomadism in her "Pastoralism: Self Image and Behavioral Reality," in Irons/Dyson-Hudson, *Perspectives on Nomadism*, 30–47.

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Nomadic studies has made methodological advancements and followed Dyson-Hudson's advice to look for contingencies, and not a generalized "pure" essential feature of nomadism:[27]

> We should try (for working purposes) to cultivate assumptions of variability rather than invariance, of contingency rather than of regularity, of individuality rather than typicality. We should try for realism and detail, and persistently fight the tendency to generalise too quickly from the data we collect. This is not a plea for a fragmenting social science based on infinitely individualised cases. We can always simplify, generalise and modulate from our detailed cases; but we cannot extract causes, details, and variations from data acquired as general statements, modalities or norms in the first place. . . .[28]

III

Dyson-Hudson's second position was not well received as his first argument. It involves a critique of the nomadism typology itself. On mainly methodological grounds he tried to dispel the category "nomadism." He considered the typology (and not just the idea of "pure") a hopelessly vague ideal type that invited erroneously sorting "whole" societies into typologies, into their presumed "natural classes."[29] After exposing the idea of "pure" as an essentialist ideal type, he turns the argument against the wider category of nomadism. He disagrees with the procedure of sorting "whole" societies using "ideal types cobbled together from such disparate records as may be available. This leads not only to mere pigeon-holing, but to bad pigeon-holing at that."[30]

The problem derives, this time, not from essentialism but from equivocation. The category "nomadism," Dyson-Hudson pointed out, had not been a very useful term since, at that time, it was used loosely to refer both to live-

[27]This search for contingencies and variance grew out of Dyson-Hudson's admiration for Fredrik Barth, *Nomads of South Persia: the Basseri Tribe of the Khamseh Confederacy* (Oslo, 1961).

[28]Dyson-Hudson, "Nomads," 9.

[29]His critique of the use of typology in anthropology follows the critique set out in David Schneider, "Some Muddles in the Models; or How the System Really Works" in M. Banton, ed. *The Relevance of Models for Social Anthropology* (London, 1965), 25–86.

[30]Dyson-Hudson, "Nomads," 23. Presumably, other ideal types, still much in use in anthropology, such as "horticulturalists" and "hunters and gatherers," are problematic for the same reasons. The same applies to the perennial "bands," "tribes," "chiefdoms" typology that Elman R. Service, *Profiles in Ethnology* (3d ed., New York, 1978), put into use and which continues in most standard introductory textbooks in cultural anthropology. One exception to the rule is Eric Lassiter's *Invitation to Anthropology* (3d ed., Lanham, 2009).

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stock rearing and spatial mobility.[31] "Yoking the two sets of phenomena together is what has facilitated the erroneous assumption that nomadic movement is caused simply by environmental factors."[32] Herders are thought to move, in this erroneous "yoked" view, because and only because their livestock need to follow the rains and find fresh pasture.[33] Cultural ecology considered nomadism as an adaptation to the biophysical environment and nomads as victims of marginal lands, who must move to sustain their herds.[34] Migrations are reduced to the struggle for survival in desolate lands.[35] Yet, as early as 1940 Lattimore had demonstrated that nomads also moved for political reasons.[36] Separating the two phenomena into the "herding model" and the "spatial mobility model" was another advance for nomadism studies, or rather, pastoralist studies, since researchers followed Dyson-Hudson's call for more field studies on the former (livestock rearing) than the latter.[37]

However, Dyson-Hudson seemed to alienate his colleagues when he went further and suggested that the "herding model" and the "spatial mobility model" should replace—and erase—the equivocal "nomadism" typology. Most scholars did not abandon the category nomadism; they merely amended the term to "pastoral nomadism" or "nomadic pastoralism" to keep the two phenomena distinct.[38] Why?

[31]Dyson-Hudson, "Nomads," 23.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Cf. Lawrence Krader, "The Ecology of Nomadic Pastoralism," *International Social Science Journal* 11(1959), 499–510; Walter Goldschmidt, "Theory and Strategy in the Study of Cultural Adaptability," *American Anthropologist* 67(1964), 402–08.

[34]Brian Spooner, "The Status of Nomadism as a Cultural Phenomenon in the Middle East," in Irons/Dyson-Hudson, *Perspectives on Nomadism*, 122–31; idem, *The Cultural Ecology of Pastoral Nomads* (Reading, MA, 1973).

[35]Robert B. Ekvall, *Fields on the Hoof: Nexus of Tibetan Nomadic Pastoralism* (New York, 1968).

[36]Owen Lattimore, *Inner Asian Frontiers of China* (New York, 1940). See also Krader, "The Ecology of Nomadic Pastoralism." William Irons has also developed this theme in, for example, "Political Stratification among Pastoral Nomads" in L'Équipe, *Pastoral Production and Society*, 361–74.

[37]Dyson-Hudson, "Nomads," 24.

[38]For example, Khazanov uses "pastoral nomadism" (*Nomads and the Outside World*, 19), which illuminates the original Greek concept of nomadism (Anatoly Khazanov, "Myths and Paradoxes of Nomadism," *Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 22[1981], 141–53); see also Jeremy Swift, "Pastoral Nomadism as a Form of Land-Use: the Twareg of the Adrar n Iforas" in Monod, ed., *Pastoralism in Tropical Africa*, 443–54. Thomas J. Barfield prefers "nomadic pastoralism" (*The Nomadic Alternative* [Englewood Cliffs, 1993], 5). One scholar who did abandon the "nomad" label is Caroline Humphrey (*The End of Nomadism?*, 1), who explained in a way that might please Dyson-Hudson: "The end of nomadism in our title thus refers not only to the possible demise of a way of life but also to the fact that the very category of nomadism has ceased to be useful analytically."

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Dyson-Hudson appears to some critics to be harkening back to Leach's argument against typologies.[39] Leach mocked typology as "anthropological butterfly collecting ..., of the arrangement of things according to their types and subtypes."[40] He ridiculed the followers of Radcliffe-Brown who considered armchair theorizing based on sorting social data by type to be superior to discovering the variations of social life through field research. For Leach, anthropological methods should not be about reducing social phenomena to data that in the end fit our analytical categories.[41] Dyson-Hudson reasoned that not only is it difficult to produce worthwhile generalizations out of an equivocal category, but the typology procedure itself is done backward. We should attend to studying what livestock rearing populations actually do to make a living and a way of life with their stock rather than pretend that the fragments of anthropological knowledge from around the world come close to capturing "whole" societies that could be sorted by typology or analytical category.[42]

Critics wondered how Leach and Dyson-Hudson could theorize without the help of generalizations, which typologies help to produce.[43] Theory building and field work are two distinct activities. Methods are means to an end, and typologies, so this argument goes, are simply tools that suggest generalizations and, eventually, theories in anthropology and history. Bringing typologies into field work, into the discovery phase of research when one is not seeking generalizations for theoretical contributions to the discipline, would invite disappointment and perhaps failure.

Considering analytical categories as ends in themselves makes no sense in the field, as indicated in the following scenario. Suppose an anthropologist or an historian sets off for Madagascar to study pastoral nomads. He discovers a few individuals, each one from a different hamlet or village, who satisfy Kroeber's marriage of pastoralism (a specialized economy ["making their living wholly off their flocks"]) with nomadism (a migration strategy ["without settling down to plant"]) but finds no aggregate or group

[39]See, for example, Salzman, 'Nomadism,' 2; Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*, 17.

[40]E.R. Leach, *Rethinking Anthropology* (London, 1961), 2.

[41]Ibid., 3–5.

[42]See Dyson-Hudson, 24–26, for suggestions on the relevant elements of his "herding model." James Ferguson provides a similar argument about looking for inter-relations and not whole societies or what fits our arbitrary analytical categories in his "The Bovine Mystique: Power, Property and Livestock in Rural Lesotho," *Man* ns 20(1985), 647–74, esp. 669. David Henige makes a similar point in *Historical Evidence and Argument* (Madison, 2005), 43: "All evidence is vestigial. The sources in which it is embedded cannot possibly replicate the events that, wittingly or unwittingly, they testify to. They can never be treated as *representing* a larger reality, but only as hinting at it" (emphasis in original).

[43]Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*, 18.

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("peoples") that satisfies the definition.[44] Upon finding no group of herders who fulfill the type or no primary sources that suggest Malagasy livestock raisers once relied solely on their migrating stock to make ends meet, he ends abruptly his field work and returns home without any research results. Having reified typologies as ends in themselves, he considers his field work a failure since his field notes contain no records that meet the requirements of the pastoral nomadic type.

As I understand Dyson-Hudson argument, he is not arguing against using analytic categories as means to an end. Nor do I understand him as opposing generalizations or theory building. His central point is methodological: theories and generalizations about cultures arise *after* field work, not before. And when we do seize upon generalizations, we should treat them as departure points in our intellectual journeys, not destinations, as a historian of Madagascar, Pier Larson, instructed in his recent book on the Merina.[45]

Dyson-Hudson erred, in my opinion, in assuming that typologies, like the essential quality of "pure," can be dispelled from the pastoralist discourse. Once the satyr of purity is cast, it lingers and resists purging. We can talk about hybridity all we want, but the fact remains that we conceive of hybridity in relation to purity. Likewise, once a typology like "nomadism" is used, it is not easily erased. This is not a new finding. Leach noted how using typologies bequeaths, in my words, "a residue" or "sediment":

> Another serious objection is that the typology makers never explain why they choose one frame of reference rather than another. Radcliffe-Brown's instructions were simply that 'it is necessary to compare societies with reference to one particular aspect . . . the economic system, the political system, or the kinship system' . . . this is equivalent to saying that you can arrange your butterflies according to their colour, or their size, or the shape of their wings according to the whim of the moment, but no matter what you do this will be science. Well perhaps, in a sense, it is; but you must realize that your *prior arrangement creates an initial bias from which it is later extremely difficult to escape...*[46]

This residue, or "bias," to which Leach refers, makes it difficult to "escape" from using typologies. It is easier, perhaps, to reject Dyson-Hudson's argument against typologies than to give them up. Considering types

[44]Kroeber, *Anthropology*, 277.

[45]Pier M. Larson, *History and Memory in the Age of Enslavement: Becoming Merina in Highland Madagascar, 1770–1822* (Oxford, 2000), 7. I also concur with Larson's approach to modernity in Madagascar.

[46]Leach, *Rethinking Anthropology*, 3, emphasis added. The Radcliffe-Brown quotation is from the preface in Meyers Fortes and E.E. Evans Pritchard, eds. *African Political Systems* (London, 1940), xii.

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as more of a proposition (or hypothesis) than a statement of fact is easier said than done. Moreover, I want to suggest that his attempt to do away with typologies did not succeed, in part, because they provide a conceptual place for scholars to keep their non-essentialist, indexical, notion of "pure." Scholars can then bring out the concept when the need arises to gauge where on the continuum a certain style of pastoralism belongs.

Once we make the assumption that there are such things as pure nomads, the category does not simply disappear when an eminent scholar says it should. This need not be a bad thing; I am simply pointing out that we should stop pretending that it has been "dispelled." Though the concept of "pure" might not refer to anything real in the world, it serves as a measuring device or indexical for the pastoralist continuum.

IV

According to Dyson-Hudson, typologies or "mechanical models of the whole-society sort" prevail in "culturological and geographical discussions of nomadism."[47] He cited as an example of the latter Douglas Johnson's geographical survey of the literature on north African and Near Eastern nomadism.[48] Regional environments act as the main players in Johnson's book, dictating the herding culture and classifying people with a geographical cookie-cutter. With the environment as the main criterion for classifying herding types, Johnson ended up with various categories that fall on a geographical continuum: "horizontal nomadism" (herd movements to "horizontal variations" of resources)[49]; "pulsatory nomadism" (pulsing herd mobility out from a central oasis or well)[50]; "elliptical nomadism" (seasonally different herd routes)[51]; and "vertical nomadism" (transhumance).[52] In Dyson-Hudson's words, "[t]he nomad emerges as a creature of, rather than actor in, his environment in Johnson's otherwise valuable critical survey and translation of available nomadic materials (1969)."[53]

[47]Dyson-Hudson, "Nomads," 23.
[48]Johnson, *Nature of Nomadism.*
[49]Ibid., 165.
[50]Ibid., 166.
[51]Ibid., 168.
[52]Ibid., 170.
[53]Dyson-Hudson, "Nomads," 7. I would add that Johnson's book exhibited remarkable scholarship for a master's thesis, the only one in nomadic studies that, to my knowledge, was published—and by the University of Chicago Press no less. Robbins (personal communication 02 June, 2009) points out that Dyson-Hudson and I "may have boxed Johnson in a little more than he deserves. This is possibilism and not determinism. The point here is that—for Johnson—people have to solve puzzles presented to them by the inevitable diversity of the world. Each solution is unique. I don't think he ever intended (in his mas-

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Why then did *The Nature of Nomadism* make it onto the reviewer's list? Presumably because Johnson appears to dismiss the notion of "pure" nomadism as an ideal type and replace it with a continuum of herding types that reflects the variable nature of nomadism rather than invariance. But in fact he keeps intact a version of "pure nomadism":

> In this framework, one should view pastoral nomadism as an adjustment to a particular set of ecological conditions, at a given technological level, along a continuum of numerous potential economic possibilities, ranging from a completely sedentary agricultural life with no movement at one extreme to a hypothetical (and nonexistent) nomadism having no need for or use of agricultural products at the other.[54]

Johnson objected—as did Dyson-Hudson a couple of years later—to the unnuanced "traditional classifications" of a "pure nomadic type, semi-nomadic type, and a semi-sedentary category" based on a single unifying criterion: mobility or the "length of the seasonal displacement."[55] Hanging ones typologies on the extent of movement leads to the imprecise position of knowing very little about a herding people. When the length of the herd migration varies from year to year, then so too the nomadic classification, and therefore our knowledge of a herding society that is based on the classification.[56]

For Johnson, a bigger problem than essentializing mobility as the defining characteristic for an ideal type was trying to define the semi-nomadic category. This category, where people move partially, is meaningless to Johnson. People either move with their herds or they do not. That is to say, the "pure" category makes sense; a hybrid form of nomadism does not.

> Most of the traditional definitions of nomadism flounder precisely at the point where they try to define semi-nomadism. . . . The term lacks precision and it is always exceedingly difficult to decide what groups should or should not be described as semi-nomadic. Most usages of this

ter's thesis, of all things) to say these were given ways of being. Rather, they were the external expression, in mappable movement, of the complex nutrient and water exchanges required in having herds. Cookie cutter is ungenerous in this regard. More importantly, I don't find the environment to be "dictating culture." I think Johnson dismisses culture altogether (rather refreshingly), except as the descriptive quality of human problem-solving. This by no means rescues him from the "purity" issues, and a kind of colonialism, which may still hold. . ."

[54]Johnson, *Nature of Nomadism*, 17.

[55]Ibid., 15–16. He cites Augustin Bernard and N. Lacroix, *L'évolution du nomadisme en Algérie* (Algiers, 1906) and Paul-Gerhardt Merner, *Das Nomadentum im Nordwestlichen Afrika* (Stuttgart, 1937).

[56]Johnson, *Nature of Nomadism*, 15.

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> term are based on either a consideration of the length of the tribe's displacement or of the role that agriculture plays in its economy. Yet it is possible for a tribe like the Tuareg to migrate over limited distances and remain nomadic, just as it is possible for a tribe like the Beni Mguild to remain nomadic while devoting much time and effort to agriculture. By the same token, it seems equally fallacious to regard certain nomads as being "pure" simply because they herd camels instead of sheep, migrate over long rather than short distances, and obtain their agricultural supplies by trade or raid instead of raising the crops themselves.
>
> Much of the semantic problem results from a desire to fit every group in a livelihood form that is inherently diverse into a neat pigeon hole. No rigid classification will suffice, for there would always be nomadic groups that fail to match rigid criteria. In such circumstances, it would seem desireable to leave the term semi-nomadism in abeyance and to classify groups on the basis of broad general criteria, setting nomads off from groups that are essentially sedentary in orientation, while searching for other criteria than displacement amplitude and the role of agriculture to distinguish between nomads themselves.[57]

In Latour's discourse, Johnson is here being the "scientist" who allows for pure nomadism but not its hybrid form. For Johnson, pure is pure; there are no hybrids. He keeps the idea of a hypothetical pure nomadism safe by not allowing a place for the hybrid form. He strikes off the notion of an essential quality of movement from the pure form in order to render meaningless the semi-nomadic category. But he leaves room for a concept of "pure" nomads based on economic or dietary criteria, as relying exclusively on the products of a herding life and not on agricultural products. "Semi-nomadism" becomes senseless when only the "pure" form of "nomadism" makes sense. It matters not that the "pure nomads" are hypothetical or even nonexistent; the concept serves as one extreme on the pastoralist continuum.

Rather than dispelling pure nomadism, Johnson sets the standard for using implicitly the "pure" form as a point of reference for locating the various other types on the continuum.

V

S.P. Malhotra's 1977 article continued to advance the idea that, in India's arid Rajasthan province, nomadism amounted to an ecological adaptation.[58] The environment, with its constant, in Malhotra's words, "disturbance in ecological balance," had "conditioned" the nomadic "source of livelihood and the way of life."[59] Besides adapting to a harsh biophysical environment,

[57]Ibid., 16–17.
[58]Malhotra, "Nomads and Nomadism," 133.
[59]Ibid.

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Malhotra points out that the arid nomads had also adapted to an economic environment involving "more advanced" sedentary peoples. He characterizes the economic relationships between the nomads and their sedentary partners in the large brushstroke of "symbiosis," which implies mutual benefit for all partners in the relationship. Rather than being "pure" nomads in the classic sense of being mobile and utterly dependent on their herds and, therefore, able to isolate themselves from the outside world, the nomads that Malhotra described depended on the outside world for their economic livelihood.

Malhotra presents a typology of arid nomads pursuing different economic livelihoods "in general symbiotic relationship with the settled population": (a) pastoral nomads (sheep herders); (b) artisan nomads (blacksmiths and cattle traders); (c) trading nomads (salt, pack animal, and cattle traders); and (d) miscellaneous type.[60] His criteria for distinguishing the three types (I can find no further mention or discussion of the "miscellaneous type") is not their spatial mobility but their economic "function as an ancillary to [the sedentary populations'] economic pursuits."[61] In other words, he configures each type on the basis of how far from an ideal "pure" type of nomadism or how close to being sedentarized they are.

Malhotra favors the sedentarists over the "backward" nomads whose "adaptation" has turned to "maladaptation" by degrading purportedly the environment. "Each type of nomad is associated with some kind of livestock which make indiscriminate use of the meagre available water and grazing resources and destroy the local soil conservation measures. The nomads in the present day thus prove a menace for the whole society and their sedentarization is inescapable."[62]

Yet when he describes the pastoral nomad type it becomes clear that it is not what the pastoral nomads are doing but what their sedentary neighbors and state are doing to them by taking control of pasture land, both "improved" and "natural" pastures, thereby making it difficult to sustain their livestock without overgrazing.[63] "The inhabitants of the region are not completely nomadic but have a permanent home and generally a parcel of land. Their nomadism is directly dependent on the necessities of their herds. The economy of these breeders is largely dependent on the harvesting of available water and the efficient use of extensive grazing lands available in the area, as the cultivated area is only 4 per cent of the total land surface."[64]

[60]Ibid., 134.
[61]Ibid.
[62]Ibid.
[63]Ibid., 136.
[64]Ibid., 137.

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The improved pastures come from a water catchment system called *toba*.[65] These amount to human built oases of dug out ponds and pasturage among the sand dunes. The "pastoral nomads" have for generations engaged in "water harvesting" via the *tobas*, recognizing rules for their use, and only becoming more nomadic during drought when they must move their herds to water far away. This Indian form of water harvesting was of particular interest to me, given its parallels with "cactus pastoralism" in Madagascar where pastoralists harvest and feed "water-food" plants to their zebu during the dry season.[66] Harvesting water in either the *toba* form or the cactus plantation form enjoins pastoralists to take steps towards "planting a village" or becoming more sedentary.

In summary, this piece did little to advance the nomadism debate along the lines set out by Dyson-Hudson. Malhotra continued to use mobility as an essential quality of "pure" nomadism. Moreover, he measured progress among India's arid nomads on how closely they were advancing towards a sedentary livelihood and way of life. Its strength, however, comes from developing the thesis that nomads do not live in a static, bounded, and isolated world of complete self-sufficiency. Their herding economies depend on maintaining partnerships with their sedentary neighbors.[67]

VI

Philip Salzman, in his 1980 article, considered Dyson-Hudson's dispute with "pure" nomadism a function of studying the Karimojong.[68] This East African people mixed both farming and livestock raising and were, therefore, some distance, on the pastoralist continuum, from those "pure" pastoralists who were fully and exclusively dependent on their livestock for a livelihood.[69] Salzman aimed to reclaim the nomadism category after it suf-

[65]Ibid.

[66]See, for example, Jeffrey C. Kaufmann, "Agency in a Mahafale Pastoralist Landscape," in Jeffrey C. Kaufmann, ed. *Greening the Great Red Island: Madagascar in Nature and Culture* (Pretoria, 2008), 197–217.

[67]Khazanov develops this idea in his *Nomads and the Outside World.*

[68]Salzman, "Is 'Nomadism' a Useful Concept?," 2. For the Karimojong (also Karamojong) see, for example, Neville Dyson-Hudson, "Factors Inhibiting Change in an African Pastoral Society: the Karimojong of Northeast Uganda," *Transactions of the New York Academy of Sciences* 24(1962), 771–801; idem, *Karimojong Politics* (Oxford, 1966); idem, "Strategies of Resource Exploitation among East African Savanna Pastoralists," in David R. Harris, ed. *Human Ecology in Savanna Environments* (London, 1980), 171–84; Rada Dyson-Hudson, "Pastoralism: Self Image and Behavioral Reality."

[69]For example, the "pure pastoralist" Maasai in terms of a pure pastoralist diet according to Alan H. Jacobs, "African Pastoralists: Some General Remarks," *Anthropological Quarterly* 38(1965), 144–54; idem, "Maasai Pastoralism in Historical Perspective" in Théodore Monod, ed. *Pastoralism in Tropical Africa* (London, 1975), 406–25.

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fered attacks from, besides Dyson-Hudson, Dahl and Hjort and from Asad.[70]

Salzman agreed with Dyson-Hudson's critique of essentializing "pure nomadism" on the basis of demonstrating that the variety of herding ways of life can not be reduced to a homogeneous core. But he disagreed with Dyson-Hudson's critique of processing herding phenomena into typologies. Salzman considered "nomadism," as he understood it, to amount to a great deal more than a mistake of ideal-typical reductionism.[71] He retained the nomadism and pastoralism labels, substituting them for Dyson-Hudson's "spatial mobility" and "herding model" labels, by distinguishing "movement from resource extraction."[72] In other words, nomadism, or more precisely, "pastoral nomadism," is as much about accessing water and food resources as it is about movement.[73] Salzman defines nomadism as the "movement of the residential community in the course of the yearly round of extractive activities."[74] He contributed to the debate the importance of agreeing on our terms.

But Salzman contributed in this article more than a point about semantics. He makes the theoretical point that if we give up the nomadism label, we would be sacrificing a category that "defines a universe to be investigated and not a uniform set. . . ."[75] In other words, our typologies are not to quell the search for cultural variations—as essentializing a generalization about mobility does when it is considered as an end in itself—but to invite questions about human practices.

[70]Gudrun Dahl and Anders Hjort, "Some Thoughts on the Anthropological Study of Pastoralism," *Newsletter of the Commission on Nomadic Peoples* 5(1980), 11–15; Talal Asad, "Equality in Nomadic Social Systems?" *Critique of Anthropology* 3(1978), 57–65.

[71]He states succinctly his anti-essentialism in later publications (Philip C. Salzman, "Pastoral Nomads: Some General Observations Based on Research in Iran," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 58[2002], 245–64; idem, *Pastoralists: Equality, Hierarchy, and the State* [Boulder, 2004], especially chapter 2, "Agency and Adaptation: Pastoralists of Iran," 17–41): "For us to select and emphasize one aspect as paramount would be a distortion of the always complex human reality. And such an essentialism and reductionism would be a distortion of nomadism, for to understand nomadism truly, we must grasp its dependence on human objectives and upon multiple social, cultural, and environmental circumstances and thus appreciate its variability, its malleability, and its impermanence" ("Pastoral Nomads," 261; *Pastoralists*, 40).

[72]Salzman, "Nomadism," 2. His argument against reductionism to single factors such as mobility, ideology, economics, or ecology had been developed in Philip C. Salzman, "Multi-Resource Nomadism in Iranian Baluchistan," in Irons/Dyson-Hudson, *Perspectives on Nomadism*, 60–68.

[73]Khazanov, "Myths and Paradoxes of Nomadism."

[74]Salzman, "Nomadism," 2.

[75]Ibid., 6.

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> Pastoralism is an element, a variable one, intermeshed with a great many others, and affecting the larger pattern at least partly according to the nature of the other elements present. In all of these respects, pastoralism is similar to nomadism, which has certain general features—spatial mobility, social flux, ongoing decision-making—but which varies in form and extent, which is one element in many in any particular society, which is affected in its impact by the nature of the other elements, and which, nonetheless, has a significant impact on social forms and practices, other things being equal. In short, I would argue that both pastoralism and nomadism are important elements in the societies in which they are found, and that treated as variables among a complex of other variables they are both concepts of analytic value.[76]

Thus Salzman seized Dyson-Hudson's call not to conflate production strategies of resource extraction involving livestock (pastoralism) with spatial mobility (nomadism). He also emphasized the variability of nomadic forms of life involving stock breeding and that, rather than being one unified, static, kind of life—as "pure nomadism" was conceived in the ideal-typical model—nomadism is a "multiresource economy." It is by degrees from "pure" that Salzman calculates and accommodates the empirical fact that

> pastoralism is usually only one of a number of major productive techniques in most societies, that pastoralism can range in degrees from subsistence to market emphasis, that pastoralism can be based upon a sedentary residence pattern or an extensive nomadic one, that pastoralism can in greatly varying degrees be intermeshed with the social and ritual system, and that peoples with major pastoral interests can be more or less involved with surrounding peoples and more or less encapsulated by wider societies and that the terms of involvement and encapsulation, often determined by political factors, can be highly disparate.[77]

[76]Ibid., 5.

[77]Ibid.; cf. Salzman, "Pastoral Nomads," 249; idem, *Pastoralists*, 24, where he elaborates this theme as follows: "Nomadism, the regular displacement of the household, is unlikely to be oriented to one productive activity only, such as pastoralism, because few populations limit themselves to a single productive activity. Rather, nomadic mobility is also likely to be put to work in support of other productive activities, such as cultivation, as among the Baluch, or fishing, as among the Nuer. . . . Nomadic mobility is not infrequently from a location of one productive activity, such as pastoralism, to another, such as arboriculture. Thus our categories and labels, such as "nomadic pastoralists," tend to oversimplify and distort the multiresource economies that most nomads have and the versatile, multipurpose nomadism that they use to the fullest extent."

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Just as there are degrees of pastoralist production, there are degrees of nomadic movement along the continuum. In Salzman's hands, the indexical use of "pure" helps to plot both the pastoralist and the nomadic continua.

VII

I turn now to my second objective. I have looked at the first half of the reviewer's list and found that the reified and essentialized notion of pure was demoted correctly to a hypothetical placeholder. This does not change among the remaining citations on the list. Rather than dispelling the pure nomadism typology, most of the scholars on the list retain a hypothetical version of pure nomadism or of pure pastoralism to serve as a guidepost at the extreme end of the pastoralist continuum. I also discovered that this indexical concept of pure is not easily dispelled from the typology. Not many scholars are prepared to join Dyson-Hudson in removing pure from the typology by resorting to the extreme measure of dropping the typology. In the remainder of this essay, I consider how this "sediment of nomadism" colors assumptions about the future of mobile pastoralism vis-à-vis modernity. I suggest that the indexical concept of "pure nomadism" marks a traditional way of life and therefore clouds our recognition of pastoralists coping with modernity and sometimes making themselves modern in their own vernacular ways.

A turning point in nomadic studies came in 1980 with the publication of Salzman's groundbreaking edited volume *When Nomads Settle*.[78] The authors took up the theme, which we saw above that Malhotra had touched on: namely, that the sedentarization of nomadic peoples was inevitable. This theme, or some version of it, focuses on how a formerly viable way of life is mired in "crisis," which calls into question the future of nomadism and pastoralism.[79] This crisis theme has come to dominate nomadic studies, where state-run livestock collectivities, beef-producing ranching schemes, and sedentarization processes eroding pastoralist economies leave little room for optimism.[80] In Africa, reports of wars and drought-stricken environments

[78]Philip Carl Salzman, ed. *When Nomads Settle: Processes of Sedentarization as Adaptation and Response* (New York, 1980).

[79]John G. Galaty, Dan Aronson, Philip Carl Salzman, and Amy Chouinard, eds. *The Future of Pastoral Peoples* (Ottawa, 1981).

[80]Caroline Humphrey, *Karl Marx Collective: Economy, Society and Religion in a Siberian Collective Farm* (Cambridge, 1983); Tim Ingold, *Hunters, Pastoralists and Ranchers* (Cambridge, 1980); Peter D. Little, *The Elusive Granary: Herder, Farmer, and State in Northern Kenya* (Cambridge, 1992); Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World.*

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cast a gloomy shadow over pastoralist peoples.[81] One renowned anthropologist argues that the "shadow" is systemic across much of Africa since the "networks of political and economic connection" do not so much "flow" through the continent as "hop over" most regions and peoples of Africa.[82] If globalization hardly touches the lives of sedentary African people, what does it do to people trying to make a living by caring and moving with their herd animals? Is globalization only for a certain kind of people who have a place in the networks? Such fatalism would seem to cast doubts on nomads being modern, as if they were artifacts of the past.

VIII

It is fitting to begin with Akbar Ahmed's 1981 article in which the "ideological/cultural content of nomadic life" takes center stage.[83] Rather than separating theoretically the Gomal nomads of Pakistan and Afghanistan from the wider society, he focuses on two "symboling" features that are shared and recognized culturally. He suggests

> that nomadic life be seen as an ideal cultural expression or statement of the larger tribal group—usually sedentary—to which the nomads belong. Through a nomadic existence, certain key features of the larger society are translated, expressed and perpetuated. Nomadism may thus be seen as an ideological expression and social extension of Pukhtun society reflecting the two major systems within which the Pukhtun organizes his life, Pukhtunwali, the Code of the Pukhtuns, and Islam.[84]

[81]David M. Anderson and Vigdis Broch Due, eds. *The Poor Are Not Us: Poverty and Pastoralism in Eastern Africa* (Oxford, 1999); Edmond Bernus, *Touregs Nigériens* (Paris, 1981); N.T. Clark, "The Effect of the 1973/74 Drought in Somalia on Subsequent Exports and Registered Slaughterings of Camels, Sheep, Goats and Cattle," *Nomadic Peoples* 17(1985), 53–57; Ugo Fabietti and Philip Carl Salzman, eds. *The Anthropology of Tribal and Peasant Pastoral Societies: the Dialectics of Social Cohesion and Fragmentation* (Como, Italy, 1996); Sverker Finnström, *Living with Bad Surroundings: War, History, and Everyday Moments in Northern Uganda* (Durham, 2008); Elliot Fratkin, *Surviving Drought and Development: Ariaal Pastoralists of Northern Kenya* (Boulder, 1991); E. Fratkin, K.A. Alvin, E.A. Roth, eds. *African Pastoralist Systems* (Boulder, 1994); Sharon E. Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with Money, War, and the State* (Berkeley, 1996).

[82]James Ferguson, *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* (Durham, 2006), 14, 38, 166. For globalization as interconnection and "flow" of global capital see Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, 1996).

[83]Ahmed, "Nomadism as Ideological Expression," 3.

[84]*Ibid.*, 3–4.

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Ahmed avoids the urge to identify Gogal nomads within a typology based on their position in relation to either a hypothetical pure ecological adaptation or to a hypothetical pure political adaptation by identifying instead the significance of the ideological features of the code of safeguarding their women's honor (*tor* [literally black]) and political freedom (*azadi*), given by one God. He reminds readers that nomadism is "not a total social category," since:[85]

> to place nomads in a discrete social category with rigid boundaries may create methodological problems. *Nomadism remains and reflects an aspect of its own desire to remain de-sedentarized.* The sedentarization process, perhaps inevitable in the last half of the twentieth century, may be a logical state in social and economic progress but it also creates serious dilemmas for the Gomal nomad. For a start, his understanding of *azadi*—the fundamental nomadic concept—is compromised.[86]

Ahmed elevates the cultural value of spatial mobility, which the Gogal and the larger settled group equate with freedom, to being the key to their nomadic identity. He points out that the state, which tends to interfere with their mobility, figures in the nomads' decision-making concerning their routes and camps.[87] Yet, they have limited choices since it is difficult to find alternative routes. When geo-political decisions impact their mobility, such as blocking a traditional route between Pakistan and Afghanistan or closing a border, they may be forced into sedentarization and, therefore, a crisis of identity. The sense of pure at work here is the ideological notion of being free and not tied to one place, but to remain de-sedentarized.

IX

In their introductory essay to their co-edited 1990 volume, Galaty and Johnson use the dual criteria of livestock density and labor intensity to distinguish, on the pastoral continuum, the different degrees of pure "specialized pastoralism" (production) or "exclusionary nomadic pastoralism" (consumption) from the different degrees of "diversified pastoralism."[88] By considering the variations of intensity and density on the three variables of land, labor, and livestock, they discuss at length the degrees of mobile strategies, economic specialization, market involvement, and degrees of autonomy

[85]Ibid., 11.
[86]Ibid., 4, emphasis added to first complete sentence.
[87]Ibid., 10.
[88]Galaty/Johnson, *World of Pastoralism*, 2.

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from or articulation with sedentarists. They build upon Ahmed's point about the ideological aspects of nomadism to include: "Land, labor, and livestock, constructs as well as realities, are imagined, conceived, and culturally constructed as they assume the status of factors of production, the elements out of which the material world is built. . . ."[89]

The authors construct a typology, varying in intensity and density, of four types of animal production systems: ranching, dairying, agropastoralism, and pastoralism. They allow for the "pure" type of pastoralism: "Although the more specialized or characteristically "pure" pastoral systems are, on a global scale, low-energy systems (i.e., relatively low per capita holdings, labor rather than capital intensive), within the pastoral domain they represent relatively high-intensity systems, benefiting from relatively productive labor and relatively high per capita holdings."[90] The low-density high-intensity specialized type of pastoralism is not well positioned to "intensify" along the lines of development or modernization. "But while many pastoral systems are increasingly involved in livestock marketing, few have "modernized," in the classic sense of altering the conditions of production through changing technologies or new forms of labor organization."[91]

There is, therefore, a "pure" type of pastoralism as well as a "pure" type of modernization that overlap. The more that pastoralists modernize along "classic" lines, the more they diversify into modern commercial ranching so that their modernization resembles our own and can be understood along the lines drawn by that model.

In their East African case study, Sperling and Galaty discuss the "crisis" involving "growing human population, recurrent drought, changes in land tenure, increasing livestock commercialization, and widening influence of national governments and international agencies in the semiarid zone" turning "specialized pastoralism" into "pressured pastoralism."[92] They suggest that a "discontinuity" exists between specialized pastoralism and the other types on the continuum, making it difficult for "a distinct type of economic activity" to change into another form on the pastoralist continuum with different production strategies and cultural values assigned to land, labor, and livestock. They draw on the concept of "pure," in the sense of "discontinuity," to develop the "crisis" theme.

[89]Ibid., 3.
[90]Ibid., 26.
[91]Ibid., 28–29.
[92]Louise Sperling and John G. Galaty, "Cattle, Culture, and Economy: Dynamics in East African Pastoralism" in idem, 69–98, esp. 85, 92.

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X

In Solanki's 1990 article, mobility becomes the only survival strategy open to Rajput nomads in their high risk "harsh and capricious" environment.[93] The author reduces nomadism to an ecological adaptation where the arid environment of western Rajasthan alone pressures shepherds to migrate with their livestock to water. "The migration may be a regular annual event, but, when there are several successive years of poor rainfall a semi-nomadic pastoralist leads a nomadic life continuously for several years. Therefore, a division of nomadism into the nomadic and semi-nomadic is rarely applicable to pastoralists in the western Rajasthan. Historically, desert and nomadism always move hand in hand."[94]

The crisis theme emerges as the author describes a Hardin-like "tragedy of the commons":[95] herders seek to maximize herd numbers as insurance against killing droughts, which leads to overgrazing on the "native grazing lands" and to environmental degradation and presumably, given the last statement in the above quotation, to desertification. Nomadism, as Solanki conceives it, is self-destructive. It is boxed in by a high risk environment, where "the nomad organises his herding on the basis of survival under worst condition."[96] Making water more scarce than it is already, and "moving the desert" by ruining the pasture lands upon which pastoral nomadism depends, leads to its demise.

Missing from Solanki's account is a nuanced analysis of nomadism. For Solanki, nomadism in the western Rajasthan is a singular event: a struggle with the environment; a battle which it can not win.

XI

For a nuanced account of pastoral nomadism let us turn to Khazanov's 1994 historical anthropology text.[97] I noted earlier his development of Kroeber's idea that the more specialized the pastoralist economy, the more it depends on relationships with non-pastoralist economies.[98] I interpreted this to mean that pastoral nomadism is such that the closer we move it to the pure side of

[93]Solanki, "Nomadism and Migration," 209.
[94]Ibid., 208.
[95]Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* 162(1968), 1243–48.
[96]Solanki, "Nomadism and Migration," 209.
[97]Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World.*
[98]Cf. L. James, "The Kenya Masai: a Nomadic People under Modern Administration," *Africa* 12(1939), 49–73, esp. 64, where the author refers to the pastoral nomadic Maasai as an "exclusively self-sufficing people."

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the pastoralist continuum, the more hybrid it becomes. The continuum is delimited by the two extremes of "pure" pastoral nomadism at one end (mobile pastoralism void of cultivation even as a supplementary activity) and sedentary agriculture at the other. Khazanov assesses a typology of "nomadic," "semi-nomadic," and "semi-sedentary" pastoralism by degree of mobility (from nomadism to sedentarism) and by degree of reliance on agriculture (from subsistence pastoralism to commercial farming and ranching).[99] His classification is oriented on economics, with pastoralism being a specific type of food producing activity varying in degrees of "the size and importance of the agricultural component."[100]

For Khazanov, the concept of "pure" is an important part of a theory of pastoralist variability. It helps him generate his typology, which opens the way for generalizations and theoretical insights about nomadism and pastoralism. Typology helps him to distinguish ideological and cultural aspects from practical and economic bases of pastoralism as a specialized form of food production through time. He could not have written his book without using a typology as a structural organizing device. What I want to suggest next is that "pure" is also part of a theory of modernity in Khazanov, viz., the more "pure" the variety of pastoralism, the less "modern" and the more it is stuck in the past, in "tradition."

The problem of modernization among pastoralists looms large in a number of Khazanov's publications.[101] He contrasts traditional economies and societies with the modernization process—the source of the "crisis" facing the world's pastoralists. He states that "the current, more often than not miserable positions of the pastoralists are directly connected to their changing relations with the outside world. In this respect, their past was unique, their present is precarious, and their future is dubious."[102]

[99]Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*, 19–21.

[100]Idem., "Introduction to the Second Edition" in *Nomads and the Outside World*, xxxii. See also Harold K. Schneider, "The Subsistence Role of Cattle among the Pakot and in East Africa," *American Anthropologist* 59(1957), 278–300.

[101]See, for example, Anatoly M. Khazanov, "Pastoral Nomads in the Past, Present, and Future: a Comparative View" in Paul A. Olson, ed. *The Struggle for the Land: Indigenous Insight and Industrial Empire in the Semiarid World* (Lincoln, 1990), 81–99; idem, "Pastoralists in Second and Third World Countries—the Problem of Modernization," *Bulletin of the Israeli Academic Center in Cairo* 13(1990), 16–20; idem, "Nomads and Oases in Central Asia" in John A. Hall and I.C. Jarvie, eds. *Transition to Modernity: Essays on Power, Wealth and Belief* (Cambridge, 1992), 69–89; idem, "Introduction to the Second Edition," *Nomads and the Outside World*, (1994), xxix–lix; idem, "Nomads in the History of the Sedentary World" in Anatoly M. Khazanov and André Wink, eds. *Nomads in the Sedentary World* (Richmond, Surrey, 2001), 1–23.

[102]Idem., "Introduction to the Second Edition," xlii-xliii.

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> Meanwhile, mobile pastoralism in its traditional and particularly pure nomadic forms, as it existed for several thousand years and the remnants of which some of us can witness in our fieldwork, is, if not already completely dead, then dying. It is dying because it has proved to be incompatible with modern, industrial, society. And just as traditional societies are more and more transforming into modern or modernizing ones, or are moving further into their orbit, traditional pastoral societies are increasingly transforming into societies of different types. I do not see any long-standing tendencies that can seriously slow down this process, or, even more so, turn it back, although a radical transformation from one way of life to another is always very painful and often not very successful from both the economic and social points of view.[103]

Khazanov emphasizes traditional mobile pastoralists who existed in another time, somewhere in the past, when, for example, they were able to exploit the sedentary people who had built oases,[104] or when they had an impact on the economic development of the Islamic heartland in the Middle East and North Africa.[105] For pastoral nomadism to function most efficiently, "it needs sedentary societies of a certain developmental level—not primitive and not industrial, but traditional ones—especially traditional state societies such as the ancient and medieval states of the Near and Middle East, Central Asia, or China."[106]

While there is no question that Khazanov's argument about non-autarky among pastoral nomads has helped to move nomadic studies away from the essentialist homogenizing ideal types of the past, he uses the concept of pure to gauge the traditional / modernization contrast. I aim this point not as a critique of Khazanov but, in light of Ellis's insights into looking for better ways of writing history in contemporary Africa than through the lens of the modernization model, to open up the question whether the time has come to stop using the traditional / modernization yardstick and to look for vernacular forms of modernity.[107] Might there be such a study among the reviewer's list? Unfortunately, we need to look beyond the next work on the list for an answer to this question.

[103]Ibid., xlvii.

[104]Idem., "Nomads and Oases," 73–74.

[105]Idem., "Nomads in the History of the Sedentary World," 15.

[106]Idem., "Pastoral Nomads in the Past, Present, and Future," 86.

[107]Khazanov says something close to this point in another context: "If we stop using the 'European miracle' as a yardstick, assume that historical process was multiform, and pay more attention to the internal logic of developments, then we may possibly allocate the nomads a more modest role in the historical process of the medieval Middle East" ("Nomads in the History of the Sedentary World," 15).

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XII

Prasad adds few new insights to our knowledge of pastoral nomadism and appears even to be dangerously close to the outmoded essentialism that Dyson-Hudson discussed.[108] Prasad assumes that an ecological equilibrium had been possible in the past, which has recently been thrown out of balance by increased population growth of both humans and livestock, by irrational land use practices and tenure regimes, and by the deterioration of the "[s]ymbiotic relationship between the settled non-pastoralists and the nomadic pastoralists" leading to conflict.[109]

Prasad does not advocate for a place at the table for the nomads, a place in the decision-making process that would let them voice their concerns about possible resolutions to the "crisis," but assigns this to the state.

> Environmental resources available to nomads have thus diminished noticeably because of inadequate government policies to protect grazing lands and active government policies to push crop production on marginal lands. To ensure their own survival livestock breeders have responded by increasing their animal populations and keeping more browsers. The result is heavier destruction of grazing lands and pressure on forests. The government, therefore, faces its biggest challenge in determining the future development strategy for its nomadic groups and in restoring the country's grazing lands to health.[110]

XIII

In his 2001 article, V.A. Nambia suggests that herding associations are better suited than the sedentarist state to shepherd the interests of a new kind of pastoral nomadism that emerged in India in the 1970s.[111] Nambia discusses how duck herding originated at the village level by using ducks to exploit fallen paddy rice and water-borne insects, then developed into a mobile strategy using modern technology. The Green Revolution opened more grazing grounds for ducks as paddy rice farmers planted high yield short duration hybrid rice. As the road infrastructure expanded a credit and lease system evolved between egg traders cum financiers, duck herders, and paddy farmers. The financiers lease from farmers grazing paddies, and they lease to duck herders specially outfitted trucks to carry around 1000 ducks at a time who must buy their flocks on credit from the egg traders and to

[108]Prasad, *Pastoral Nomadism in Arid Zones of India.*
[109]Ibid., 151.
[110]Ibid., 183.
[111]Nambia, "Duck Herders," 165.

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whom they must sell their eggs.[112] The duck herders transport their flocks from paddy to paddy and after a day of grazing they herd them into egg laying enclosures. After two years the flock is sold as meat and the herder starts over again. The author notes the element of "sharecropping" in duck herding, which motivates the development of herding associations to represent the interests of the disadvantaged duck herders.

Rather than swell the nomadism literature with another crisis of a life way that is stagnating and disappearing into the past, this piece demonstrates how modern technology and a mobile strategy make duck herding a viable economic practice. The author highlights that these unusual nomads are adjusted, rather than maladjusted, to modernity. There is no mention of the distance between some imagined pure form of nomadism and duck herding.

> There is a tendency among development specialists in South Asia and elsewhere to equate nomadism with backwardness and to 'explain' it in terms of outdated technology and a lack of modern infrastructures. My study shows, however, that, on the contrary, nomadic duck herding depends largely on modern technology. . . . Long distance migration with ducks is impossible without trucks.[113]

Duck herding is new to the standard herding typology.[114] It is a specialized food producing activity plugged into modern conventions of credit arrangements, egg markets, and modern trucking technology. There is nothing self-sufficient about duck herding, and the question about autarky does not arise. More studies are needed on how nomadic herders insert modern technology into their life ways. Caroline Humphrey's work, where she demonstrates that nomadism is not an "intrinsically low-technology" endeavor, is a beginning.[115] But scholars need to ask "whose modern technology is it?" And by whose yardstick do we recognize it as technology at all? Prickly pear cactus, for example, is a modern technology to Mahafale pastoralists, but not intuitively recognized as such by the outside world because of differences in cultural meanings about technology and modernity.[116]

[112]Ibid., 157–59.
[113]Ibid., 164.
[114]In this regard it parallels cactus pastoralism, being outside the norm of nomadic studies.
[115]Humphrey/Sneath, *End of Nomadism?*, 305.
[116]Jeffrey C. Kaufmann, "*La question des Raketa*: Colonial Struggles with Prickly Pear Cactus in Southern Madagascar, 1900–1923," *Ethnohistory* 48(2001), 87–121.

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XIV

The final item on the reviewer's list counters the "crisis" theme with refreshing insights into "mobility as adaptive practice" among Raika pastoralists of Rajasthan.[117] Robbins demonstrates the problematic "crisis" narrative unfairly relegates mobile people to history, noting that "reports of the death of mobile pastoralism have been somewhat exaggerated."[118] He aims to replace the perspective of a passive "backwards" people headed towards self-destruction, if they have not already been catalogued as historical artifacts, with a perspective that considers them as being the agents for the persistence of pastoralism in the arid zone.[119]

Robbins emphasizes the fluidity of the pastoralist continuum, allowing for an interchangeable use of terms, and for pastoralists to move from one type of practice to another as circumstances change.[120] India's pastoralist peoples have changed their pastoralist practices as much as the political economy has changed it for them. Change is "syncretic," meaning that ecologies change, pastoralists change, and they change their practices intentionally too. He notes that the historical rule of syncretic change has been in play since before 1750, when the precolonial Indian Ocean trade was based on mobile traders in "synergy with agriculture in India."[121] In contemporary India, "[t]he central lesson. . . is that modernization, infrastructural development, and market integration in India can be coincident with mobility, rather than opposed to it."[122] The author outlines numerous challenges facing the persistent pastoralists: pasture degradation; emerging pastoral politics; indigenous intellectual rights; integrating pastoralism with conservation; and the general problem of both biological and market "invasives."[123]

[117]Robbins, "Nomadism Now," 14. In this regard, it is, among the list of references, most akin to my theoretical concerns in this essay. He too is interested in deconstructing the "crisis" narrative.

[118]Ibid., 1; also personal communication 02 June, 2009.

[119]The "crisis" theme has served to call attention to the plight of pastoralist peoples, not unlike its use in the conservation biology literature on Madagascar that forecasts the end of biological diversity vis-à-vis Malagasy culture. See Jeffrey C. Kaufmann, "The Sad Opaqueness of the Environmental Crisis in Madagascar," *Conservation and Society* ns 4(2006), 179–93 (for the online version go to www.conservationandsociety.org).

[120]Cf. Sperling's and Galaty's emphasis on "discontinuity" making it nearly impossible for specialized pastoralists to change into diversified producers (*The World of Pastoralism*, 92), and Khazanov's discussion of the "painful process" of going from one way of life to another on the continuum (*Nomads and the Outside World*, xlvii).

[121]Robbins, "Nomadism Now," 2.

[122]Ibid., 4.

[123]Ibid., 8, 10, 11, 14.

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XV

In conclusion, some suppositions about pastoral life take longer to die than others. The idea of a "pure" type of mobile livestock raiser has settled like a sediment around an analytic category. Dispelling the myth of nomadism as a "total social category" of homogeneous mobile people, and replacing it with the "pastoral continuum," seems to have made little difference.[124] The "pure" kind of pastoral nomadism, which conceives herders as making a living entirely from their livestock as they move across the landscape in search of food and water, now serves to index where the other, less nomadic or the less pastoralist, forms fit on the continuum. It matters not what criterion scholars use to distinguish the various types on the pastoralist continuum: the environment and its cultural adaptations; the criterion of freedom whereby nomadism is an adaptation to a political environment; an economic criterion; or a dietary criterion. All make reference to pure.

The sediment of nomadism goes beyond claims of pure types of mobile people or pure types of food producing economies centered on livestock. Even if we have a nuanced notion of nomadism / pastoralism, assumptions about a pure form affect our theories of nomadic / pastoralist life. The shift from the romantic, one-dimensional, static nomad, conceived as a pure-survivor-by-livestock-alone to the livestock-raiser-in-degrees did not eliminate the concept of pure. Hybridists use it as much as purists. Once there, "pure" remakes itself and echoes throughout our theorizing. Anthropologists may indeed use the pure category to justify and motivate their work in going out among pastoralist and nomadic peoples and record their cultures before they are doomed by the "crisis" of modernity.

Following the reviewer's advice has not made the "inherent problematic modernism" in nomadic studies more palatable to me. The problem turns out to be more complex and troublesome than I thought. It is not as easy as Dyson-Hudson suggested to exorcize "pure" from scholarship on nomadism or on pastoralism. That turns out to be a preposterous idea since the concept is part of the sediment of nomadism—a modern conceit with long colonial coat-tails.[125] Our need for the concept, no matter how empirically based or idealized it is, tempers our thinking about modernity and about pastoralists' struggle to remain "traditional." That we see them in this struggle, rather than as adjusting and making their own modernity, is a function of our categorizing them via the indexical pure into a typology. "Pure," then, implies a theory of modernity that excludes nomadic and pastoralist peoples from modernizing.

[124]Paul Spencer, *The Pastoral Continuum: the Marginalization of Tradition in East Africa* (Oxford, 1997).

[125]I thank Paul Robbins for clarifying the "sediment" as a colonial stain on modernity (personal communication 02 June, 2009).

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The sediment of nomadism holds us down. Or, perhaps better, it has a hold on us. It makes it difficult to think of nomads as modern, as adjusting to changing environments and relationships, as making their own modernity, however poorly synchronized with western-style modernity, or as finding their own way of entering and leaving modernity.[126]

Ellis argues convincingly that modernization theory has impacted the way historians have patterned sequences of events, has influenced the sorting or choosing of sequences, has colored negatively the pessimistic failure of Africa to "develop" along modernization's charter, has pictured the triumphalism of Western capitalism the victor to Africa the victim. Modernization theory has likewise influenced the literature on nomadic peoples. It has ushered in the same emphasis on the failures of nomadism, with which much contemporary scholarship continues to be concerned.

The lesson that I would like to end on is a methodological one, one that follows the historians' way of piecing together a puzzle of past events and characters. Typologies need not be only shorthand ways to theory, especially in ethnographic and historical ethnographies, but as departure points that need filling out. Too often they work as destinations—as fulfillment stories of some theory about human social life and social history. But an inductive turn would suggest that the point be about discovery and surprise rather than about fitting a mold. As James Ferguson puts it, which sounds a lot like a mission statement for *History in Africa*, "we have only the prospect of partial sketches of partial objects, arrived at by asking questions and following wherever they lead."[127] Our categories need not be considered as destinations but as departures that open the way for queries about life rather than final answers boxed into a type. It is helpful, then, to explore vernacular categories and meanings before submitting them to the compressive effects of our analytical categories.

"Purity seeks to eliminate inessentials," Annie Dillard stated in her wise prose.[128] "It is hard to see how anyone could think, even in the abstract, that a purging of inessentials is good in itself. Who would want to see the woods purified of inessentials?" I for one find joy in raising the significance of the so-called inessentials through anthropology and history.

[126]Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (Minneapolis, 1995).

[127]James Ferguson, "The Bovine Mystique," 669.

[128]Annie Dillard, "About Symbol, and with a Diatribe Against Purity," *Living by Fiction* (New York, 1982), 163–72, quotations from 171.

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