

Commission on Nomadic Peoples

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Nomadic Peoples, Number 38, 1996

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Towards an understanding of the fate of modern pastoralists: Starting with the state

Daniel Bradburd

Starting with the state

In this paper, I will present an alternative approach to the question, "How should one study pastoralists and the state?" Typically, those who study pastoralists and the state have begun by focusing on pastoralists. To exaggerate only slightly, studies of pastoralists and the state have been framed in two ways: the particular and the general. Most often, the focus is the relationship of particular pastoralists to the state(s) which have greatest impact upon them. The relationship is described with considerable specificity. Such studies often possess what one might call 'descriptive adequacy': one clearly sees the impact of State X on Group Y. The second approach attempts a more general, comparative view, and is perhaps most commonly found in the introduction to edited collections. But here too, the comparison is most often framed in terms of clarifying the differences between groups of pastoralists, with a focus on identifying and describing significant variations in pastoralists' political, economic, or social structures. This is usually followed by an attempt at crafting an appropriate typology and then at creating a reasonable descriptive matrix that accounts for the variations in the relationships of the particular pastoralists, or types of pastoralists, in question to "the state." Where the monistic notion of "the

state" is broken down, it is placed in a rough descriptive typology: weak or strong; colonial or not, creating a larger, more complex matrix.

I would like to propose a different approach to the problem of pastoralists and the state. Rather than beginning with pastoralists or even with particular cases of pastoralist/state relations, I shall begin with the state as a theoretical construct. Examining the nature of the state and focusing upon what is entailed in the process of creating modern nation states provides a broad framework which lets us more clearly understand not only the quidity of pastoralists' relationships to the state but the reasons those relations have the qualities that they do.

In discussing the nature of the state, I shall primarily cite the work of Charles Tilly, though my view of nation state formation is also influenced by the group of historians, sociologists, and political scientists who, over the past 20 years, have published with him or are identified as working with him.¹ Given constraints of space, I will not discuss in detail any of the historical material which gives texture to his analysis and, for me at least, makes it compelling. In effect, I am combining a series of complex analyses into a single, linear argument. I do not think I am doing violence to the work I am drawing on, but I am certainly simplifying it.

States and statemaking

Since the mid-1970s, Charles Tilly has published a series of books and articles exploring various aspects of the rise of the modern nation state.² Moving outward from examining social unrest and rebellions (what he calls "contention") in modern and early modern Europe, Tilly seems to have been almost inexorably drawn to confront the question: *what are people rebelling against, and why are they rebelling?* In framing an answer to that question, over and over Tilly concludes that the state is the institution against which people contend. To tell why people resist the state, Tilly is forced to present a very detailed discussion of what the state is, what it does, and how it does it. Given his focus on the state, it is not surprising that Tilly's account of the nature of states is far more developed than any equivalent discussion I have seen in the context of either studies of "tribe and state" in the Middle East or more general works on 'the nature and future of nomadism.'³

In some sense, the central theme of Tilly's work is his argument that the process of nation state formation entailed an interdependent process linking growing forces of coercion and violence with a growing need for and extraction of wealth. Thus, Tilly suggests that,

Under the general heading of organized violence, the agents of states characteristically carry on four functions:

1. War making: Eliminating or neutralizing their own rivals outside the territories in which they have clear and continuous priority as wielders of force
2. State making: Eliminating or neutralizing their rivals inside those territories
3. Protection: Eliminating or neutralizing the enemies of their clients
4. Extraction: Acquiring the means of

carrying out the first three activities (Tilly, 1985: 181).

He adds that, "all four depend on the state's tendency to monopolize the concentrated means of coercion" (1985: 181).

Tilly argues that beginning in the early modern period, states and would-be states needed to project ever more effective and larger scale forces of violence in order to survive and prosper. To project those forces, states needed more and more revenue, and they needed that revenue in cash. To overcome popular resistance to increased state demands for revenues, to be able to collect the cash revenue they required, states needed both new institutional structures and enhanced armed forces. Thus, in a very significant way, emerging modern states were coercive institutions burdened with ever increasing demands for revenues, in part necessary to pay for the structures of violence and coercion needed to collect that revenue.

Under these conditions, efficient collection of revenue itself became a goal of states and their agents. This led to a number of changes in the ways that states were structured and operated. One significant shift is the switch from 'tribute' to 'taxation' as the main means of revenue collection. This switch, in turn, required quite new political and economic structures, including eliminating those alternative loci of power with traditional claims to locally produced wealth that interfered with revenue collection. Tilly thus argues that, "Building a differentiated, autonomous, centralized organization with effective control of territories entailed eliminating or subordinating thousands of semi-autonomous authorities..." (1975: 71).

On the one hand this centralization of control entailed the destruction of independent and/or competing loci of power within the state. On the other hand, the move to enhance revenue collection also

required what might be called the 'creative destruction' of structures impeding state action. Thus, 'standardizing efforts' constitute another characteristic historical process isolated by Tilly. For instance he argues that,

"In the period of movement from tribute to tax, from indirect to direct rule, from subordination to assimilation, states generally worked to homogenize their population and break down their segmentation by imposing common languages, religions, currencies and legal systems, as well as promoting the construction of connected systems of trade, transportation, and communication" (1990: 100).

Tilly also points out that the process of state formation did not simply entail the breaking down of older political structures and so-called 'primordial loyalties.' He argues that "[i]n an economy where only a small share of goods and services are bought and sold..." there are numerous barriers to the collection of taxes. While one obvious barrier is the limit the absence of cash places on the state's ability to raise cash revenues, other barriers also exist. For instance, Tilly suggests that in non-commodified economies "many people have claims on any particular resource...." Multiple claims mean that when the state takes its share, others see that action as interfering with their own time-honored (if not legitimate) claims. The web of claims means that to the taxed "any taxation imposed is inefficient, visibly unjust..." As a result, Tilly concludes, all new taxation is "quite likely to stir up resistance" (1990: 85).

The solution to this problem involved states favoring a variety of new political and economic structures, including private property and a cash economy, that enhanced the process of taxation. Specifically, taxation or revenue collection was easier if ownership was clearly defined and there were fewer conflicting claims

to property. Thus, Tilly argues,

"...capitalists and statemakers collaborated in the creation of bourgeois property: unified, disposable, and private. In place of fragmented, overlapping, multiple claims on the same land, labour or commodity there developed a situation in which, at the extreme, only two claimants remained: an individual owner and a taxing state" (193-94).

I want to stress for a moment the logic of the preceding argument. A series of elements in the history of state formation which are rarely discussed in the studies of the problem of "tribe and state" or "the problems of pastoralists" - the formation of the nation state and the rise of bourgeois or private property - are now linked together as part of the same process central to state building.

The next step is straightforward. The creation of bourgeois property entails the creation 'free labour.' Here Tilly argues (along with Marx and a host of followers) that the process of the creation of bourgeois property is accompanied by increasing proletarianization and vice versa, such that "...historically speaking, proletarianization has linked itself closely to the concentration of land and capital" (1981: 183). Tilly also argues that "Increasing taxation, especially taxation in cash rather than kind ... diverted resources from peasants, landlords, and others [and]...it promoted commercialization of production by forcing people to market commodities and labor in order to acquire the wherewithal for tax payment" (1981: 193).

Thus, we can see that in Tilly's model there is an organic linkage of the state, statemaking, taxation, and proletarianization. As a practical note, Tilly suggests that 1) "land reforms were especially potent in proletarianizing poor farmers," and 2) that in the process of proletariani-

zation, "expropriation of the means of production [that is use of sticks vs. carrots] from the producers themselves ... is ... fundamental" (1981: 195). I would suggest that the literature on pastoralists in southwest Asia records exactly this process, though in oil rich nations, land reform and enclosure has played a greater role than taxation.

Applicability of Tilly's model: The Iranian example

One may accept or reject the accuracy of the preceding model's account of European nation state formation. If one accepts it, and I do, one still must address the question: What has this to do with the problems of pastoralists?

If I am not deluding myself, the answer is this. When we look at the pressures that have affected pastoralists as problems of pastoralists or of pastoralism, when we look at the difficulties they have faced in this century and are certain to face in the next as problems of pastoralists, or problems of 'tribe and state,' we largely miss the point. The specific problems and pressures experienced by pastoralists are simply instances of a long-lived, well documented historical process, which is the linked rise of the modern nation state and capitalism.

Tilly's work suggests that the historical process of nation state formation has *everywhere*, entailed the suppression of independent, local political power; increased commodification of land and labour; increased taxation; closer control of populations; the attempt to break down local differences and create a homogenized population. It has entailed the creation of bourgeois property that is private and clearly bounded,⁴ and it has entailed increasing proletarianization.

I see in Tilly's list of the effects of nation state formation an enumeration of the traumas suffered by pastoralists in southwest Asia and elsewhere. Tribal/pastoral polities have been destroyed; pastoralists have been disarmed; communal property has been ceded to the state through land reform or has been privatized and converted to other use; pastoralists have been settled, have moved to cities, have taken work in oil fields, and have become part of either a rural or urban proletariat (or a migratory proletariat moving back and forth between the two poles). The commodification of labour has meant that where local salaries for labourers are high, poor pastoralists 'leave the tribe' with numerous attendant consequences.⁵

One might write a very long piece, providing a detailed match for each of the points drawn from Tilly's work with examples drawn from the literature on Iranian pastoralists. However, my intention in this paper is to focus on the overview rather than the details. Thus, I will quickly sketch the application of Tilly's framework to Lois Beck's summary of the history of the relationship of the Qashqa'i and the Iranian state (Beck 1990). In a work specifically intended to set out the relationship of tribe and state, Beck writes that,

"The Qashqa'i were living under harsh, government-imposed restrictions in the 1960s and 1970s. The secret police, the army, gendarmes, land-reform officials, forest rangers (who administered pastures), and other agents of the state kept the Qashqa'i under surveillance and control. Mohammed Reza Shah exiled from Iran or removed from office their major political leaders, and gendarmes disarmed the tribespeople. State agencies confiscated and controlled access to the land of Qashqa'i

pastoralists through land reform and the nationalization of pastures. Non-Qashqa'i agriculturalists and livestock investors encroached on land on which the Qashqa'i depended. State authorities pressured Qashqa'i nomads to settle, but settlement on former tribal lands was forbidden. Military forces controlled and restricted their seasonal migrations; the Qashqa'i could no longer migrate according to ecological conditions and economic needs. Government manipulation of the national economy, through massive meat and dairy imports and subsidized prices, disrupted the economy of the Qashqa'i, who needed to sell their own meat and dairy products in Iranian markets. These and other pressures were forcing most Qashqa'i to abandon nomadic pastoralism, settle, and adopt low-paying wage labor and agricultural work" (Beck, 1990: 185-86).

Beck's list is essentially a local description of the general process. Moreover, a more detailed examination of Beck's work would show that elements of the Qashqa'i tribe/state relationship not enumerated in the preceding paragraph also closely exemplify aspects of Tilly's model. For example, Tilly suggests that as states seek to create homogeneous populations, they move to break down linguistic diversity, often using a national educational system as an element in this process (see above). Beck reports that, for the Qashqa'i,

"The state did provide education to many areas, but the language used and models offered were those of a Persian controlled Iran. The lesson of education was to direct the attention of youths outside their tribal, ethnic, and regional communities. Many educated young men sought jobs away from home" (Beck, 1990: 208).

Additional examples would only reinforce my point: Activities and processes that appear to be attacks on their way of life to pastoralists and tribesmen are, within a larger context, part of the general process of nation state formation.

The long range impact on pastoralists and tribespeople of this process of creating a nation state is apparent. In the Iranian case, the recent history of pastoralists is one of decline in both the absolute and relative number of tribespeople within Iran's borders. Tapper suggests that during the 19th century there were between 1.5 and 3 million 'tribesmen' in Iran, comprising as much as 25%, and perhaps more, of the total population (1983: 18). Tapper further notes that by the 20th century tribesmen represented less than 10% of the total population. The most recent figures I have seen (Organization for Nomadic People in Iran, 1993: 15) claims a population of 1.2 million nomadic pastoralists representing 2.5% of the total national population. Further, while pastoral populations once had a political, economic and social prominence that was at least representative of their numbers, pastoralists in Iran are currently a remnant, devoid of political power. No major role is projected for them in the country's economic future (Organization for Nomadic People in Iran, 1993, Beck 1990). In short, the processes of nation state formation are directly linked to the decline of Iranian pastoralism.⁶

It is, of course, quite apparent that much state pressure on Iranian pastoralists has been directed at their political rather than their economic structure. That is, the state's attack has been motivated more by a desire to destroy rival loci of power than to stamp out the raising of sheep and goats. However, I would argue that Iranian pastoralism has many features which make problematic its coexistence with a nation state. These

features include communal ownership and usufruct of pasture within pastoral communities; sequential use of and rights to the same pasture by members of different communities - Barth's "il rah" (1960); the ability to move to avoid taxation, conscription, or other state pressures (Irons 1974); the difficulty and cost that movement entails for the provision of state services, particularly education which, as we have seen, is often a key-stone of the state's program for homogenization of its population; potential competition for or encroachment on agricultural land; and so on.

The implications of Tilly's model for pastoralists and the study of pastoralists

Tilly's model suggests that the development and expansion of nation states follows a common pattern. Rulers seek the ends outlined above, and they work towards achieving those ends. Elsewhere, in sections of his work that I will not discuss here, Tilly argues that the processes of nation state formation are not peaceful. States' consolidation of their control over their domains requires coercion, and this in turn sparks resistance.

Despite the intentions of rulers, nation states do not simply develop in ways the state or its agents plan; local resistance shapes the trajectory of state formation in a variety of ways.⁷ At the same time, the central burden of Tilly's argument is that those who create nation states and consolidate their control over them do so through their ability to project greater amounts of coercive force than their rivals. While rulers may be concerned with the costs of forcing compliance, they still attempt to have their way.

In Iran, the attempt at building a nation state has led to the decline of pastoralism and tribalism and a reduction of power and independence for many pastoralist social formations. Can one generalize from this?

For the Middle East and Southwest Asia as a whole, it seems that the Iranian case is not atypical. While significant variations in policy are to be found, throughout the region developing nation states have limited the autonomy of pastoral and tribal peoples.⁸ For the study of pastoralists as a whole, the significant question is the degree to which one can generalize from what has happened in the Middle East and Southwest Asia.

There are good reasons to believe that political and economic circumstances in the Middle East and Southwest Asia have conditioned aspects of nation state development in ways that are distinctive.

First, states with huge oil wealth and relatively low populations have provided those rulers who have been able to consolidate control over their territories with unmatched resources. Where, in the process of contention between a centralizing force and peripheral loci of power, the centre has access to and control over substantial oil revenues, it possesses the enormous potential to 1) arm itself and its clients; 2) buy off competitors; and 3) provide patronage for elements of the larger population (through, e.g. roads, jobs, schools, medical care) without raising revenues through taxation. In the Middle East this had provided successful centralizing rulers with a striking competitive advantage vs. other contenders for power.

Second, from the end of World War II until the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Middle East was a key arena of direct and indirect East/West conflict. As a result, many of the region's states became active clients of one of the super powers whom

they often served as proxy combatants. For doing so, they received from their patrons quantities and qualities of military hardware far in excess of that available to most equivalently sized states. In addition to military hardware per se, training and logistical support, infrastructural development, and help in building intelligence and national security agencies was often provided. This outside support greatly enhanced state leaders' abilities to project coercive power, thus providing them very effective means for reducing opposition.⁹

To some degree, the combination of concentrations of great local wealth and large scale access to external patrons appears unique to the Middle East. During the height of the Cold War, nations such as Somalia and Ethiopia may have had access to external military support, but the region remained poor. By contrast, Nigeria had the wealth but did not have the open access to military goods enjoyed by front-line Middle Eastern states. Thus, it seems quite likely that pastoral communities in the Middle East have, in fact, felt the impact of nation state formation more sharply than have pastoral communities in poorer or less strategically significant states.

This, in turn, raises the question of whether the difference in impact is an enduring one, or whether the unique combination of geopolitical and economic forces found in the Middle East have simply created a situation in which the process of nation state formation has been more accelerated there than it has been in many other regions that are homelands to pastoralists.

The answer to this question is, of course, an historical one. Time alone will tell whether poorer states with less developed forces of coercion will deal with their pastoralists as has Iran or other Middle Eastern states. Nonetheless, I

strongly suspect that what has happened in the Middle East will happen elsewhere as well. There are several reasons to think that this is so.

Tilly's model was specifically cast in terms of European nation states: It was an attempt to account for the historical circumstances observable there. However, it seems that one does not find a new, different kind of relationship between centralizing Middle Eastern rulers and the peripheral economic and political loci within their borders. One only finds that the particular political and economic conditions that define the region provided Middle Eastern states the economic and military power to consolidate their control more rapidly than they otherwise might. The fact that the process of nation state development in the Middle East closely paralleled the process in Europe suggests to me that, all things being equal, Tilly is describing the process of nation state development.

Thus, I would argue that the process of nation state formation in the Middle East follows the pattern described for Europe, and that pastoralists or tribal peoples within the borders of Middle Eastern states faced the same processes of integration into these states as did regional, ethnic, economic, religious, or other definable groups during the construction of nation states in Europe. From that, I would also argue that one might expect that developing nation states in other regions of the world will follow a similar trajectory of centralization with similar impact on their pastoral populations.

As this process takes place, it is important to remember that state pressures are not generally moves against pastoralists per se. It is vital that those of us who study pastoralists understand that what appear to be attacks on "our" peoples are not simply that. Historical

and anthropological literature from all over the world clearly shows pressures for the destruction of communal property and for the promotion of private property, for linguistic integration, for the reduction of independent ethnic or 'tribal' enclaves, and for the extension of fully monetized and commoditized economic relations, for the reduction of alternative loci of power.¹⁰ Thus, rather than asking why there are state pressures on pastoralists, a more reasonable question might be, are there any aspects of the pastoral adaptation that make it less likely to suffer from these pressures? The two that come most strikingly to mind are private ownership of herds and the occupation of lands that are truly marginal to agricultural production. The former condition provides the opportunity for at least some pastoralists to become entrepreneurial simple commodity producers, finding successful niches within their national economies. The latter condition means that direct state or market pressure on the pastoral economy based on their displacement from communal property may occur more slowly than it does in those regions in which land resources are considered more valuable for non-traditional than for traditional use.¹¹

Nonetheless, the central points of this paper, and the points with which I choose to close, are 1) because they are caught in the process of nation state formation, pastoralists, like other groups with established local identities, traditional economies, political or ethnic identities, are likely to continue to experience significant pressures on their traditional ways of life as developing nation states create themselves; and 2) understanding the fate of pastoralists requires understanding the nature of the processes in which they are enmeshed: Pastoralists are part of history.

Notes

- (1) See particularly, Bowles and Gintis (1984); Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol (1985); Ardant (1975); Rokkan (1975). I have also found useful Mann (1986); Baechler, Hall, and Mann (1988); Levi (1988); Giddens (1987); P. Anderson (1974); and Barkey (1994).
- (2) Tilly, it should be clear, never uses the term 'nation state.' At some points he uses 'national state', but in general he eschews these terms and their many connotations. Nonetheless, it is clear that he is writing about nation building and state formation and to focus the discourse, I use the term nation state.
- (3) See, for example, the theoretical discussions of the state in the essays in Tapper (1983) and Khoury and Kostiner (1990).
- (4) In the context of southwest Asia, the classic example of this is Midhat Pasha's attempts to reorganize land tenure in the area that comprises portions of modern Iraq. See, e.g. Fernea (1970); Batatu (1978) for discussions of this.
- (5) Barth (1961), Beck (1980, 1981, 1983, 1986, 1990), Garthwaite (1983a, 1983b), Brooks (1983), and others have documented the history of the Iranian state's efforts to destroy the political power and autonomy of larger tribal confederations of south western Iran like the Qashqa'i, Bakhtiari, and Khamseh. Tapper (1983), Loeffler (1976, 1978) and Black-Michaud (1972, 1986) have recounted similar assaults on smaller, tribal polities in western Iran, while Irons (1975, 1994) has summarized state encroachments on the Turkmen in northeastern Iran and Salzman (1974, 1994) has noted the impact of state pressures on the Baluch in the south east. Beck's work on the Qashqa'i has the most detailed discussion of the impact of land reform on access to pasture (see especially 1981, 1986, 1990). Barth (1961) provides the classic

description of settlement, and there are interesting discussions of aspects of this problem in Beck (1980, 1981, 1986), Black-Michaud (1986), and Bradburd (1989). Black-Michaud describes the pressures driving poorer Lurs to work in the oil fields and the impact of that labor migration on the group's class structure (1986).

(6) I wish to make it perfectly clear that I am not claiming that Beck (1990) or other authors do not realize that the process of nation state formation is the source of the pressures pastoralists suffer. What is less clear is the degree to which they realize just how much the processes they describe typify what occurs elsewhere and thus just how much "tribe/state" relations are a subset of the more general process of national state formation.

(7) Two different authors are noteworthy in their attempt to deal with this issue of local/state relation as a general process. James Scott's work (1986, 1990) deals centrally with this issue from the perspective of the subordinate members of systems of power. Margaret Levi, in her book, *Revenue and Rule*, provides a broader view of the kinds and parameters of trade offs that occur at various levels of political systems. L. Anderson (1994) provides an interesting case study of various aspects of local resistance in Central America.

(8) For detailed examples see Lancaster's discussion of controls placed on the Rwala by the states surrounding them (1981); Cole's examination of the extension of Saudi over the al Murrah; and Bate's accounts of the Turkish state and the Yörük.

(9) The success of the Iranian Revolution, of course, demonstrates that possession of great oil wealth and a very large, well armed military is not absolute guarantee against successful opposition. Significantly, the opposition that toppled the Shah's regime was not tribal and the contention was not a civil war.

(10) Eric Wolf's *Europe and the People Without History* (1982) provides an extensive bibliography for accounts of aspects of this process. Interesting accounts that dwell on portions of this process for highland South America can be found in Stern (1988). See the essays in Cooper, et al. (1993) and the bibliographies therein for greater coverage of Africa and Latin America. Smith (1988) and L. Anderson (1994) provide interesting accounts of particular cases in South and Central America respectively. B. Anderson provides an excellent discussion of the role of language in nation building (1983).

(11) An extreme case would be the vast migration into Indian territories following recent discoveries of gold in regions of low land South America. Less extreme cases involve state supported displacement of swidden agriculturalists by multi-national forest products companies in many areas of mainland and Insular South East Asia.

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Résumé

C'est en général la perspective des nomades que l'on présente dans les études sur les relations entre l'Etat et les tribus nomades. Partant de propositions théoriques concernant la nature de l'Etat centralisant et modernisant, cette étude essaie de montrer que les événements souvent perçus comme symptômes des problèmes existant spécifiquement entre Etats et tribus ne sont en effet que des aspects du processus plus général de la construction de l'Etat.

Resumen

Tradicionalmente, los estudios sobre la articulación entre nómades o sociedades tribales y el Estado han sido escritos desde la perspectiva de los nómades. La presente contribución revierte este foco de análisis. Comenzando con propuestas teóricas sobre la naturaleza de Estados centralistas y modernizantes, se intenta mostrar, que eventos, que frecuentemente han sido tratados como ejemplos de los "problemas entre tribus y el Estado", constituyen más bien aspectos de procesos más generales de construcción del Estado. A partir de esta perspectiva se puede comprender mejor lo que ocurre en el terreno.

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