

Michael Casimir & Aparna Rao, Co-Chairs of the CNP from 1994-1998

Michael Casimir and Aparna Rao were elected Chairpersons in 1994 and relinquished office in 1999. Dawn Chatty was elected to this position in March 1999. Below is the statement of Michael Casimir and Aparna Rao on the work of the Commission during their tenure.

Report on the Working of the Commission, 1994-1998

As you probably know, we succeeded Professor P.C. Salzman and tried to carry on in the spirit of the excellent work he accomplished. Since the inception of this Commission. Our main concern was to maintain the high standard of scientific discussion on nomadism, which the Commission had till then fostered. It was, however, also increasingly felt that in order to keep pace with a rapidly developing theoretical framework in an even more rapidly changing global environment, the empirical base of the concept of nomadism needed widening, that more communication was required between students of different types of mobile populations across the world and that the Commission should try and play some role, however small, in trying to improve the status of nomadic populations in their respective regions.

In our first report after taking over as Chairpersons we had thus listed four points which, we felt, the Commission should focus on. These were:

- Increased cooperation of researchers with international, national and regional organisations working to improve the status of nomadic peoples. Interdisciplinary research, together with scholars living in countries/areas with nomadic populations.
- The working out and coordination of strategies towards long-term development of pastoral resources in ecologically hazardous environments.
- Additional support to research among mobile pastoralists in Europe, the Middle East, Central, South and Southeast Asia and South America - in addition to the support traditionally extended to those working throughout Africa.

While obviously, much remains to be done in each of these fields, we did, with some measure of success, apply ourselves to a few of these problems, especially during the Inter-Congress we organised in Lucca in 1995 and then at the Congress in Williamsburg in 1998.

In keeping with our original aims we also established a fairly broad network of advisors and regional and thematic specialists - both English speaking and on-English speaking - some of whom coordinated or organized the individual symposia. We also compiled a list of the names and addresses of several hundred individuals and organisations interested in nomadic peoples. This could be expanded, to build an extensive network of institutions and persons concerned with nomadism in any capacity.

All these concerns have also been largely reflected in *Nomadic Peoples*, the official journal of our Commission. After Professor Hjort af Ornas decided to relinquish this responsibility, we looked around rather desperately for alternative editors(s), but found none. Finally, we managed to persuade William Lancaster to share the burden of editorship with us. Much of our time has been taken up by the reorganisation of this journal, which used to be published

in Sweden on a subsidised basis. Since no further subsidies were forthcoming, we had to consider how best to turn the journal into a venture profitable enough to attract a commercial publisher and yet keep the subscription costs down. All through this period the journal has, however, been published regularly and can now also be reached on a web site.

Last, but certainly not least, as those of you who could come to Williamsburg will remember, our Commission presented its first ever Lifetime Achievement Award to Professor Fredrik Barth for his widely impacting contributions to the study of nomadic peoples - including pastoralists and peripatetics in Asia and Europe. The official announcement concerning this award was made by Professor P.C. Salzman, the Chair of the Awards Committee, at the Williamsburg meeting, where other details were also worked.

This brings us back to a crucial question that probably plagues all Commissions - namely that of finances. The pragmatic role of our Commission both in encouraging research and in supporting organisations and individuals working towards improving the status of nomadic peoples is greatly hindered by the dire lack of funds. This topic, as well as the realistic role that our Commission can and should play in the coming century figured in many of the discussions at the Williamsburg Congress. We are sure that the next Chairperson will address these questions more successfully than we managed to do.

At the end of our terms we would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for having elected us to this office of the IUAES in Mexico, in 1993. Although we were unable to fulfil all the responsibilities that the chairperson of such a Commission should shoulder - especially that of raising finances - we do hope that you are not disappointed in having put your trust in us.

We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Dawn Chatty for having become the new Chairperson of the Commission, to thank her for having taken the responsibility from our shoulders, and to wish her a very fruitful tenure.

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