*Internationales Asienforum, Vol. 45 (2014), No. 1–2, pp. 69–84*

# Pastoral Mobility in Northern Afghanistan

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**Abstract**
This article suggests a framework for analysing pastoral mobility in Afghanistan that takes into account the manifold changes and violent upheavals that have affected the country and its people over the past 40 years. It is argued that reconciling the empirical thoroughness and developmental perspective of research on pastoral mobility with the conceptual and analytical power of work on new mobilities offers a promising way forward. An attempt is made to analyse pastoral mobility in Afghanistan by focusing on the territorial scope of movement, the meanings attached to those movements, and the social, economic and political connotations of pastoral mobility. The analytical framework consists of three broad elements that are historically grounded and suitable for addressing change. In conceptual terms, it sees mobility as territoriality, mobility as social and economic relations and mobility as identity. The argument is based on empirical fieldwork with Pashtun pastoral groups from the Kunduz oasis in northern Afghanistan.

**Keywords**
Afghanistan, Pashtun, livelihoods, mobility, pastoralism, territoriality

## Introduction

This article suggests a framework for analysing pastoral mobility in Afghanistan that takes into account the manifold changes and violent upheavals that have affected the country and its people over the past 40 years. It uses two lines of inquiry. First, it seeks to reconcile the relatively new notion of mobility turn in the social sciences, which emphasises that all places are tied into networks of connections that stretch beyond each respective place, with the historical and developmental approach to mobility in the context of nomadic pastoralism. Second, the article aims to improve understanding of the social and spatial practice of nomadic pastoralism in Afghanistan by

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emphasising the flexibility of pastoral livelihood systems and the challenges faced by pastoralists confronted with multiple insecurities.

The article begins by transposing the debates around new and old mobilities to the situation in northern Afghanistan. Building on this, a description of local contexts leads to the analysis of pastoral mobility. The argument is based on fieldwork among two Pashtun pastoral groups residing in the Chahar Dara District of Kunduz Province who are engaged in seasonal mobility between Kunduz and the high mountain pastures of the Badakhshan Province. Fieldwork was carried out in the residential village of these groups in the Kunduz oasis during multiple visits in 2007 and 2008 and in the summer pastures in Badakhshan in July 2009.

## Old mobilities, new mobilities

Mobility as a strategy to access resources under conditions of insecurity has long been central to geographical and anthropological inquiry, often with a focus on the different forms of mobile animal husbandry. This research requires both empirical rigour in fieldwork and a historical and developmental perspective (Janzen 1999; Schlee 2005; Gertel 2007). This is also true of research on pastoralism in Afghanistan, where a number of studies provide important insights into the historical conditions of mobile pastoralism that are indispensable for an understanding of the situation today.[1] This body of research looks at how pastoral groups cope with insecurity and uncertainty and how intergroup relations, e.g. with settled farming communities, are negotiated in everyday practice. Central to this approach is an awareness of the significance of spatial mobility for sustaining pastoral livelihood systems and establishing access to distant grazing grounds in a context of the declining availability of resources and widespread competition for access to pastures between mobile and sedentary social groups.

Work on spatial mobility in nomadic pastoralism is not concerned per se with a conceptual approach to mobility as inherent in the mobility turn in the social sciences (Hannam et al. 2006). Rather, it looks at social inequalities in resource access and the asymmetrical power relationships shaping mobile pastoralism. In contrast, the "new mobilities paradigm" (Sheller / Urry 2006) is rooted in a different vantage point. It seeks to address the increaseing importance that movement of people, things, images, ideas and information across territories assumes in a globalising world. Here, the notion of mobility becomes a basic principle of modernity and, accordingly, its analysis spans a

[1] See e.g. Ferdinand 1969, 2006; Jentsch 1973; Glatzer 1977; Barfield 1978, 1981.

broad range of issues, for instance migration, tourism, travel, airports, cities or virtual mobilities (cf. Cresswell / Merriman 2010). However, this analysis is largely restricted to affluent societies and does not take into account "the relation between social reproduction and mobility under the conditions of insecurity" (Gertel 2007: 16). That said, as it draws on a range of theoretical ideas, the mobility turn has a lot to offer conceptually. Mobility has been defined as the entanglement of movement, meaning, and practice (Cresswell 2010) and can be thought of in spatial, social, economic and political terms. Work inspired by the mobility turn also looks at the production of space through mobile practices and forms of social representation in terms of identity and alterity (Merriman 2009; Cresswell 2012).

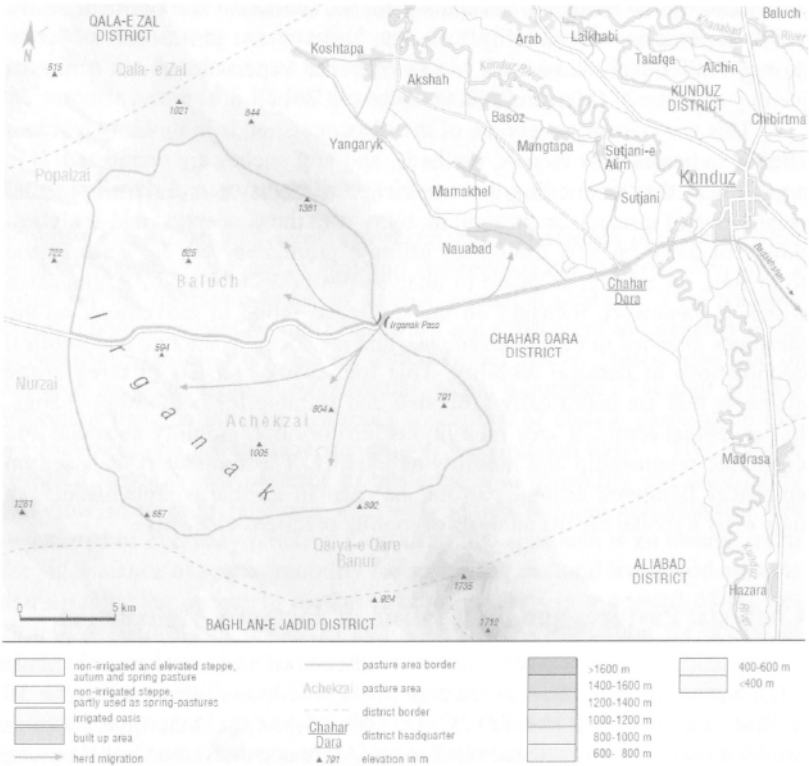
This very cursory overview of the disparate strands in mobility research already indicates how themes, methods, and approaches are connected. It is argued here that reconciling the empirical thoroughness and developmental perspective of research on pastoral mobility with the conceptual and analytical power of work on new mobilities offers a promising way forward. In the following, an attempt is made to analyse pastoral mobility in Afghanistan within a framework focusing on the territorial scope of movement, on the meanings attached to those movements, and the social, economic and political connotations of pastoral mobility. This framework consists of three broad elements that are historically grounded and suitable for addressing change. In conceptual terms, it sees mobility as territoriality, mobility as social and economic relationship and mobility as identity. The framework is based on empirical fieldwork among pastoral nomads in northern Afghanistan, but may offer a model for the analysis of mobile practices elsewhere.

## Contexts: Pastures and pastoralism in northern Afghanistan

Pasturelands are the backbone of the livelihoods of most rural households in Afghanistan: an estimated 68 percent of Afghan households raise some 30 million large livestock (MRRD / CSO 2009: 48). At the same time, pastures are an increasingly threatened resource in Afghanistan. Somewhere between 45 and 70 percent of the country's land area is used for grazing or for the harvesting of shrubs for animal fodder or fuel. However, today access to certain pastures is heavily contested. Pastures are the source of most of the unresolved tenure issues and often of volatile conflicts (Alden Wily 2004, 2013; Kreutzmann / Schütte 2011). The social practice of pastoralism in northern Afghanistan and the manifold challenges it is confronted with have been described in detail elsewhere (Schütte 2012, 2013). Here, the focus on mobility warrants a historically informed analysis of the Kunduz oasis, where a

large number of pastoral groups have taken up residence. Fieldwork in Kunduz Province among specific Pashtun groups residing in the village of Nau Abad in the Chahar Dara District – the Baluch and Achekzai – laid the groundwork for developing the mobility framework (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1: Location of winter and spring pastures for Baluch and Achekzai pastoralists of Nau Abad, Kunduz




Source: Topography based on Generalny Stab 1:50000, Topographic Series 1984–1986; design: Schütte, cartography: Hilbere

Two points are critically important for any historical analysis of the situation in Kunduz oasis. First, the drainage of the malaria-infested swamps in Kunduz during the 1930s turned what had been a hostile and disease-ridden environment into a fertile agricultural area and the richest province in Afghanistan. Previously, during the winter months the area had supported

only strictly seasonal pastoral strategies by the Central Asian Arabs of Afghanistan, who migrated seasonally with their flocks to the high mountain areas of Badakhshan (Barfield 1981). At that time the name Kunduz was associated only with danger and decay. Termed the biggest development project in recent Afghan history (Barfield 1978: 29), the drainage of swamps was followed by the creation of intricate canal networks and successful attempts at state-led industrialisation, epitomised through the establishment of the Spinzar (white gold) Company, which grew and ginned cotton and produced edible oil and soap. In fact, Afghanistan's cotton industry began in Kunduz in the 1930s and was accompanied by reasonably large schemes of land distribution and the forced cultivation of cotton (Bleuer 2012).

The second point concerns the Pashtunisation of the north, initially introduced by the Afghan ruler Abdur Rahman Khan as part of his centralisation policy with the intention of consolidating his rule in the north and protect the northern frontier against Russian imperial expansion during the period of the Great Game that eventually established Afghanistan as a buffer state between Russia and Great Britain. However, the arrival of Pashtuns in an area previously dominated by Turkic, Uzbek and Tajik groups changed the social structure. Eventually Pashtuns became the dominant group, a majority favoured by state policies (Bleuer 2012). After the drainage of the Kunduz marshlands, Pashtun settlers were given preference in land distribution and infrastructure, e.g. in respect of irrigation canals. This is also true for the Achekzai and Baluch of Nau Abad village. After migrating from their native areas in Kandahar and Helmand to the now drained Kunduz oasis and jointly building an irrigation canal in year 1312 of the Afghan calendar (i.e. 1933) they were allotted 24 *jerib* (about five ha) of land. The development policy of forced cultivation to supply the newly established gin in Kunduz town required that part of this land had to be used for growing cotton. However, land was not a scarce resource at the time, and, owing to favourable official land distribution, Pashtun groups quietly and effectively established residence in the oasis.

After the Kunduz oasis was established through the drainage project and supported by industrialisation and settlement policies, complex agro-pastoral livelihood systems emerged. These systems were based on a combination of irrigated agriculture on land parcels that were certified in the cadastral system of Afghanistan in the 1970s and practices of mobile animal husbandry that connected the Kunduz oasis both with the pasture areas at its margins that seasonally serve as autumn and winter pastures and with the distant high altitude summer areas in Badakhshan. Not only was agriculture practised in combination with pastoralism, but by establishing a fixed sedentary base pastoralist groups could now make use of the best grazing lands

available throughout the year. Access to summer pastures in Badakhshan (*ailoq*) was protected by title deeds (*qawala*) issued by the Afghan king; here, too, Pashtuns were given preference. In the case of the Achekzai and Baluch, both were given *qawala* in 1952 explicitly specifying the area to be used as summer pasture in Badakhshan. The Achekzai were given pastures on the Shewa plateau and the Baluch in the mountain areas around the town of Kishim. Henceforth, they treated these pastures as their own and as the destination of their seasonal migration with large herds of fat-tailed sheep. These developments enabled the Pashtun and other groupings to sustainably engage in practices of combined mountain agriculture (Ehlers / Kreutzmann 2000) spanning very large distances. Today, about 50 percent of the 1,201 households in the study village still engage in far-reaching mobile livestock herding, and a majority of these households do so exclusively, i.e. have no access to agricultural lands. This system functioned largely undisturbed until 1978, the year of the Saur revolution in Afghanistan, followed by the Soviet intervention (Dorronsoro 2000). When examining ruptures and continuities of mobilities in Kunduz, 1978 is a critical point that altered social and economic practices in the Kunduz oasis and triggered a struggle for control that continues today, both in the oasis itself and in relation to the summer pastures in Badakhshan.

## A framework for analysing pastoral mobility

Against this background, it becomes obvious that any analysis of mobility must be able to address such changes, and the proposed tripartite framework aims to do so by focusing on territoriality, on social and economic relations, and on the formation of social identities. The importance of these aspects emerged during fieldwork and is evidence as to how empirical social research can contribute to conceptual analysis and theory building. It is argued that these three essential and encompassing features are intricately linked with mobility and that their analysis helps to better understand the shape and flexibilities of agro-pastoral livelihood systems in contexts of uncertainty and insecurity.

### Mobility as territoriality

The notions of territory and territoriality "involve the practical interrelationships among 'space', 'power', and 'meaning'" (Delaney 2009: 198). This holds true also for mobility that is in itself intertwined with these very aspects. Territory is a social (and political, economic and cultural) process (cf. Delaney

2005), and a political technology that "... comprises techniques for measuring land and controlling terrain. Measure and control – the technical and the legal – need to be thought alongside land and terrain." (Elden 2013: 323).

The value of such thinking about territoriality and mobility becomes evident when examining the practices of Pashtun pastoral groups. In a general, very practical sense, territoriality in the experience of the Baluch and Achekzai is always based on spatial mobility in their quest to establish secure access to spring and summer pastures and to traverse the spaces in between. The long march between these moorings on a "road of insecurity" (Kreutzmann / Schütte 2011: 113) is a good illustration for what in the terminology of new mobilities is characterised as "places and landscapes [that] are continually practised and performed through the movement and enfolding of ... people and things" (Cresswell / Merriman 2010: 7). Analysing mobility as territoriality in terms of the interrelation between space, place, power, movement and meaning directs attention to the political technologies that are instrumental in determining access to pasture resources.

People classify certain pastures as their own. The basis of this classification of pasture territory is diverse and shifting: different groups have contesting claims to the same pastures, armed strongmen exercise violent control over pastures, and user groups have negotiated shared agreements that establish clearly demarcated pasture parcels. All of these conflict-prone, power-laden and customary approaches to pasture territories exist alongside formal legislation as codified in the Pasture Law and Land Management Laws that refer to pastures as national property under strict state control (GoA 2000a, 2000b).

The winter and spring pastures used by the study groups are located in an area called Irganak some distance away from the residential village. Here, temporary tent camps are erected and members of the pastoralist households tend to the animals (Figure 1). The area was the scene of heavy fighting during the resistance against Soviet occupation. It was heavily mined during the war and has not yet been entirely cleared of landmines. It is also reputed to still be an area of retreat for insurgent groups.

Access to certain areas of winter and spring grazing is based on shared community agreements and a clear definition of space and territory based on tribal affiliation. Certain pockets of pastureland are subdivided in keeping with a custom referred to in Pashto as *mena*. Literally meaning tent or locale, the term refers to a clearly defined geographic area of pastureland for which the usage rights lie with a specific group of herdsmen. The shapes of *menas* have evolved over time and the location of their boundaries is orally transferred from one generation to the next; the size of each area was originally determined by the size of an individual household or clan's herd. However,

in the view of Pashtun pastoralists, a *mena* represents not only a specified geographic area, but also a system of rights to pasturelands. Access rights are negotiable. In a given year a pastoralist household may not be able to acquire a large number of animals and thus will allow some related households to use the grazing area of its own *mena* so as to make full use of its capacity.

The shapes and boundaries of these areas have been collectively agreed by all the pasture users of all groups residing in the extensive Kunduz oasis. A gathering of elders from all the different pastoral groups summoned to discuss the issue reached unanimous agreement on the location of boundaries demarcating areas used by each village and tribal group. In this way the user communities established clear pasture territories in Irganak. It is, in fact, the tribal group (*Khel*) that claims the right of use to a specific parcel of pastureland subdivided into individual *menas*, an illustration of the modes of social organization prevalent among pastoral groups in Afghanistan.

The example shows how customary agreements have created bounded spaces. The practice adheres to the Islamic principle of shared consensus. However, as the distribution of user rights does not follow the provisions of the written Pasture Law it is not acknowledged in state legislation. In terms of tenure security, however, the spring pastures close to the residential village of the pastoralist communities are comparatively safe and mostly undisputed grazing resources. In times of abundance, after sufficient rainfall, people trade access rights to their pastures to wandering groups passing through the area. However, these pasture resources can be used for only about five months in a year (November–December and March–May). Over the cold and snowy winter months the animals are usually kept near the house, and in the hot and dry summers of Kunduz, Irganak turns into a desert, so pastoralists are forced to move with their animals to the distant high mountain pastures where quite different political technologies hold sway.

Measure and control of pastures worked in favour of the Achekzai and Baluch under the supportive policies of King Zaher Shah (1933–1973). These included the issuing of *qawala* documents that acted as passes and safeguarded access to clearly specified land pockets that have been used by pastoral households ever since. When pastoralists from the study village first came to the area five generations ago, parts of the Shewa Plateau were already inhabited. From the beginning, there was some competition over the use of natural resources both among pastoralists from different ethnic groups and between them and the high plateau's permanent sedentary population. The latter consists entirely of people of the Ismaili faith, whose forefathers migrated to Shewa from the District of Shugnan, today part of Badakhshan. The competition between the pastoralists and the sedentary

Shughni deepened as the size of the settled population increased, but actual conflicts were usually settled by consensus.

Things changed radically after the Saur Revolution and Soviet occupation. Subsequent periods of war and displacement induced a change in mobility strategies and show the flexibility of pastoral livelihood systems in dealing with uncertainty. Historically, four phases of distinct pastoral territorial practices with their attendant mobility strategies have characterised the experience of Pashtun and other mobile pastoralists from Kunduz Province. A phase of comparatively unrestricted mobility existed prior to the Saur Revolution of 1978. Mobility strategies were much more extended than today, and the annual migration period lasted up to eight months. Following the summer period on the high mountain pastures, a special delegation of the Achekzai pastoralists used to go directly from the Shewa Plateau to the Afghan capital Kabul to market their fattened animals and obtain the best prices for rams at Charikar, the capital of Parwan Province. This entailed another extended journey across the Anjuman Pass. The return journey to the residential village was also made on foot, after which the group was united in Chahar Dara during the winter and spring. A second phase of disrupted mobility occurred between 1978 and 1996. These were the times of actual foreign occupation and the subsequent disastrous civil war, when landmines on pastures, aerial bombardments, forced revenue extraction in kind, or outright livestock theft by different factions of the resistance endangered the practice of mobile pastoralism itself for the first time. Subsequently, a third phase of involuntary sedentarisation resulted in the collapse of mobility during the rule of the Taliban between 1996 and 2001, when heavy fighting closed the route to Shewa. During this time the tenure relations on the plateau changed significantly. Tajik commanders established their power bases in Badakhshan, which enabled them to obtain control over the vast pasturelands and forcefully extract revenues from pastoralists and other pasture users. The current fourth phase of renomadisation and restricted mobility started in 2001, when the route became free again, but pastoralists discovered that their ancestral pastures were now under the control of armed groups and access had to be bought with large cash payments. On the plateau itself, mobility by herd and shepherd remains significant, as summer camps, where most household members reside, are often located at a considerable distance from the actual grazing lands.

The advantage of analysing mobility through the lens of territoriality is evident at several levels: when focusing on changing access to pasture space, when analysing the power relations determining this access, and when assessing the social practice and meaning in a setting of uncertainty and

insecurity in which mobility is not only an essential part of a livelihood, but also an important marker of identity.

**Mobility as social and economic relation**

Mobility as a socio-economic relationship is connected to a livelihood perspective, and to issues of cooperation and conflict on the road between spring and summer pastures, which in the case of the Achekzai spans a distance of more than 300 km and takes about one month. The combination of animal husbandry and mobility produces challenging complexities. During migration across difficult terrain, herd management is delegated to appropriately sized groups with manageable flocks who look for a secure route. Four herdsmen are required to manage one flock (*rama*) of 650 to 700 sheep. Such a flock is often maintained by various herd owners and their hired shepherds. When migrating, this large flock is usually accompanied by a smaller number of goats, and as many as seventy camels, donkeys and horses to transport household belongings and food. A single migration unit might consist of up to 50 people. This venture is often organised through separate mobility groups. Part of the food supplies and household utensils and all female migrants and children are normally transported by hired car, whereas herd owners ride on horses, accompanying their flocks that are taken care of by hired shepherds from the same community.

Individual groups use the same routes every year, thereby maintaining a symbiotic relationship with sedentary populations that can be characterised by both cooperation and antagonism (Ferdinand 1969, 2006). The journey includes up to 31 stages; thus, more than four weeks are spent along the route in a different location each day. At each stage, fodder and water supplies for the animals have to be provided, the spacious tent dwellings for the migrating parties erected, and special care taken to prevent the animals from feeding on the agricultural fields of their hosts. Customary arrangements are made with the resident communities along the route to ensure that these necessities are available. At each stop, local farmers grow animal fodder crops to sell to pastoralists passing through in the spring.

This reduces pastoralists' dependence on meagre, sparse commons, while at the same time providing a secure income for farmers. Each night the animals are kept in designated spaces by permission of the watchman of the village grasslands, who is paid a grazing fee. Outbound, the stops en route usually last longer, depending on the agro-ecological conditions in a given year and the availability of fodder and water. On the return trip from Badakhshan in late summer or early autumn, when the animals are brought down from the mountain pastures, the stays can easily extend to a week or

even longer, so the sheep do not become exhausted and are able to maintain the weight gained during their three months in the copious summer pastures. Encampments are usually erected on harvested fields: no charge is levied and the animals are allowed to roam freely to feed on crop residues. This practice also benefits settled farmers because the animal droppings fertilise their lands. The animals are marketed on the return trip, and both the Achekzai and Baluch sell about one quarter of their fattened animals to farmers and butchers and in the livestock markets en route to the larger urban areas of Faizabad, Kishim, Taloqan and Kunduz.

The analytical focus on mobility as a relationship brings the economic and social dimensions of movement to the forefront. It also highlights the problem of unequal power relationships. Examples include the widespread practice of livestock theft and the forceful extraction of revenues by armed holders of power that control summer pastures in Badakhshan. Pashtun pastoralists are forced to pay large amounts in cash for access to pastures in addition to donating livestock to the strongmen in power. Paying dues in cash is a new phenomenon for pastoralists that only commenced under the Karzai administration. This exposure to arbitrary rent-seeking behaviour of local strongmen in their ancestral summer grazing grounds puts the already risky practice of animal husbandry under severe economic strain. As a respondent put it:

> From the time of the Saur Revolution [i.e. 1978] everybody raised taxes from us for using the pasture for which we already have a title from the King. Baraki, Rabbani, Najibullah, all did so, but under Karzai it is the worst. (Achekzai pastoralist, 4.9.2008).

These revenues are forcefully extracted, often at gunpoint, and used to maintain the power bases of commanders, not to improve the welfare of local communities: "Throughout 2001–2008, there was little or no sign of the revenue collected by local actors in Badakhshan being reinvested in the local economy and even less so in the provision of services to the population." (Giustozzi / Orsini 2009: 14).

**Mobility as identity**

The fact of physical movement to gain and maintain pasture access (mobility as territoriality), the practice of movement (mobility as relation) and the various meanings that are attributed to this movement all contribute to form pastoral identities. However, identity is many things at once; it is built, for instance, on affinities and affiliations, on belonging, on experiences of commonality, connectedness, and cohesion (Brubaker / Cooper 2000). The social realities that arise out of shared identities and the representation of

difference and "the other" – as in the supposed dichotomy of nomad and settler – are of great significance.

This becomes obvious when looking at how identities are formed, maintained and changed among Achekzai and Baluch pastoralists, and, further, how identities are used to legitimise access to resources. At the same time, the examples demonstrate that identities represent fluid entities that can be deployed strategically; they are "flexible, negotiable, multiple, and always situational" (Tapper 2008: 101). The Achekzai refer to themselves by the generic term *Kuchi*[2] in their summer areas and while on the move. By stressing their practice of mobility, they differentiate themselves from sedentary people. In this sense, mobility quite literally operates as a lived relation: "an orientation to oneself, to others and to the world" (Adey 2009: xvii). In their residential village, however, it is the specific tribal affiliation that serves as a distinguishing marker of identity and belonging. Being Achekzai, Baluch, or Popalzai is literally connected to territoriality, because access to the winter and spring pastures in Irganak is regulated on the basis of tribal affiliation. Additionally, at a higher level ethnic identities such as Pashtun are also cultivated. As Richard Tapper observes: "Belonging to a particular group could decide whose side you fought on in the past, and who you are now aligned with politically" (Tapper 2008: 104). This was obvious during the reign of the Taliban in Afghanistan, when the Tajik and Shughni population of Badakhshan suspected the Achekzai and others of being associated with the Taliban. It is also evident today, when the Pashtun-dominated residential district of Chahar Dara is uniformly perceived as a Taliban stronghold. Ethnicity is also in play when Achekzai pastoralists claim that Pashtuns are universally oppressed by rent-seeking Tajik power holders that today control their ancestral pastures and demand revenues or even forcefully evict pastoralists. This recently happened to the Baluch, who in 2009, for the first time, were denied access to the pastures around Kishim, for which they possess a *qawala*. These developments, including the ways different groups are represented, are of critical importance, as social identities constructed in these ways are instrumental for claiming and establishing access to resources.

Consider the competition on the Shewa Plateau between nomadic pastoralists and residential Shughni: the Achekzai perceive their distant summer areas as an integral part of their lives, their livelihoods, and their profession as animal breeders. They see themselves as a group whose distin-

[2] "The term [*Kuchi*] is Persian for one who migrates, from kuch, meaning migration. Currently, Afghan government officials, foreign journalists, and development workers call all the pastoral nomads of Afghanistan *Kuchi*, in both Afghan Persian and English." (Tapper 2008: 97).

guishing marker is mobility. The spaces they use for grazing on the Shewa Plateau form an important element of their spatial identity as Kuchi, an identity that is employed to claim seasonal access to those pastures. Shughni stay in the same area all year round and depend on a combination of mountain agriculture and short-distance pastoralism. They have to deal with extremely harsh winters, a very short and restricted agricultural season and distant market access, and they are in many respects a disadvantaged group. The opportunity to obtain written title to additional land on the plateau that formerly belonged to pastoralist groups and has since been converted to rainfed agriculture was thus readily grasped, despite the fact that people were well aware that user rights had previously resided with pastoral people. This happened at a time when pastoral mobility to Shewa was impossible because of warfare in Kunduz and Takhar during the Taliban expansion to the north in the mid-1990s. The Achekzai inferred from this challenge that they had an "obligation to mobility", or would otherwise risk losing their pastures. Their identity has become politicised. It served factional struggles over land, with all parties having competing titles and documents from different dates and different rulers. Pastoral self-legitimation as a social group that engages in meaningful mobility on the one hand and social ascriptions from settled people that perceive Kuchi as powerful competitors over identical resources on the other perpetuate a clear-cut and essentialist identity/alterity dichotomy that revolves around conflicts over space and resource access.

## Conclusion: The value of analysing pastoral mobility

This article aims to reconcile an empirical perspective on mobility as a livelihood strategy to access resources with the theoretical demands of the mobility turn. It analysed mobility as territoriality, as relationship, and as identity. The approach is based on empirical fieldwork among Pashtun pastoralists in Northern Afghanistan, but the analytical value of this tripartite approach to mobility beyond this specific case study needs further elaboration. The conceptual framework advocated here appears broad enough to capture a variety of situations in various settings, while at the same time allowing a detailed exploration of the specifics of certain research contexts. As such, it may well contribute to analysis in cases other than pastoralism.

Territoriality addresses questions of space, power, control and meaning that arguably are crucial for any mobility analysis. Social and economic relations always constituted a major element of migration research, but also take centre stage in livelihoods analysis when addressing situations of in-

security. Processes of identity formation, of representation (Hall 1997) and the practices of "othering" (Van Houtum / Van Naerssen 2002) are central aspects in anthropological and geographical enquiry. They have been analysed in work on new mobilities, but they are crucial also when examining long-established mobility practices such as pastoralism.

The analytical categories put forward here are well suited to describing the example of Pashtun pastoral groups and to analysing the dynamics and flexibility of pastoral livelihood systems. In addition, broadening mobility research in diverse contexts along the suggested lines may help to better frame discussions both in work on "old" and "new" mobilities and open up new avenues for studies that combine empirical rigour with conceptual and theoretical explications.

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