

D A W N

C H A T T Y

Development

Planning and

Social Change

Mobile

in Oman ■

PASTORALISTS



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Looking to the Future:

Pastoralists in Oman and the Middle East

The great expanse of land across the Middle East can be characterized as an unpredictable but invariably harsh and arid environment. Very thinly populated and receiving little rain, it is a landmass that discourages agricultural exploitation. Indeed, its only successful use over the centuries seems to be for animal husbandry or mobile livestock management. Like the pastoral areas of Africa, which Dyson-Hudson discusses at length (1991:219–256), existing local techniques of exploitation are often regarded as minimal if not controversial by national and international experts. Many of these same experts regard local populations as having a poor knowledge of animal breeding. In some cases, academic theories of the 1930s (for example, Herskovits's cattle complex), long rejected by most scholars, are still maintained, as is the common opinion that for these peoples the condition of the livestock is less important than the number. In addition, many "development" experts assume that the pastoral populations in parts of the Middle East, as in Africa, are ruining their physical environment (Dyson-Hudson 1991:219).

Unlike Africa, however, the Middle East has never been the focus of mass international pastoral development assistance.¹ Governments of the Middle East, perhaps because they regarded their pastoral populations as signifiers of internal political problems, sought local rather than international solutions. Accordingly, government policy in the Middle East has been directed at settling these populations either by physical force or by economic enticement. Settlement of nomadic pastoralists has been seen as the only way to control and integrate marginal and problematic populations that did not conform to the modern nation-state aspirations of the newly created republics and kingdoms of the region.

Settlement Efforts in the Middle East

In the northern part of the Arabian Peninsula, and in parts of North Africa, governments have attempted to lure the nomadic pastoralists out of the deserts and arid rangelands to settlement schemes and agricultural pilot projects. These, in large measure, have failed. More forceful approaches have included revoking the traditional communal land holdings of these people. Modern private registration of land has been encouraged, particularly in the marginal areas of the desert that border the agricultural belt, the Fertile Crescent, where dry farming of cereals can be supported in years of good rain. This last approach has had some success from the governmental point of view. At the time of the various cadastral surveys, many tribal and subtribal representatives were able to register themselves as private owners of land that tribesmen had considered to be held in common. Impoverished families who were forced to leave the pastoral way of life through loss of herds or manpower—or both—often found themselves transformed into hired shepherds or, worse, agricultural laborers for their landowning tribal leaders. Even after several generations of uneasy compromise, these families have continued to keep some livestock—generally goat and sheep—and many maintain that they would return to their former pastoral way of life if circumstances made it possible.

In Saudi Arabia and the southern region of the Arabian Peninsula, the situation of the nomadic pastoral populations has been complicated first by the discovery of oil and, more recently, by the tremendous wealth that has come into the hands of these governments. Saudi Arabia has for decades tried to settle its large nomadic pastoral population. Beginning as early as the 1920s, settlement schemes were built to house these populations. Initially the urgency of the projects reflected the government's need to consolidate its hold over the country by controlling its far-flung and highly mobile population. The association of this way of life with a backward, less evolved human state also contributed to government efforts to suppress it. In later decades settlement projects built at tremendous expense were financed locally from oil revenues. Predictably, the schemes failed (e.g., the Wadi al-Sarhan Project, the King Faysal Settlement Project). The nomadic pastoralists, discouraged by attempts to turn them into settled tillers of the soil, flitted away. Some returned to their old way of life; others turned to new endeavors more compatible with pastoralism, such as in the transport industry or in

trade. Many an abandoned settlement scheme stands today as a stark reminder of how little understanding there was, and still is, for this way of life.

With the tremendous increase in the profit from petroleum extraction, which the Arabian Gulf States, Saudi Arabia, and the Sultanate of Oman experienced in the early 1970s, came a new approach to the problem. Mass settlement schemes were abandoned in favor of enticements to individual citizens. Control, in a political sense, was attempted by encouraging the individual tribesman to come forward and register himself as a citizen. In return, these governments granted various privileges. In the wealthier states, with very small settled populations, registration carried with it an entitlement to a plot of land, a house, an automobile, and a subsidy for each head of livestock. In other states, registration meant a monthly stipend—generally in the region of the local equivalent of several hundred U.S. dollars—often disguised as a salary for some form of national paramilitary service.

In Oman, where the profits from oil extraction as well as modern statehood have a historical depth of less than twenty-five years, the government policy toward its nomadic pastoral peoples has been equally problematic. Unlike its neighbors to the north and west, Oman's pastoral population has never represented a large percentage of its overall population. Although some of these tribes did take sides in the centuries-old struggle for control of Oman, they were never considered a threat to the central authority of the government. Unlike the Aneza and Shammar tribal confederacies of Northern Arabia, which historically threatened to overrun and take control of large areas of agriculture on the borders of the Ottoman Empire, the nomadic pastoral tribes of Oman could only pose a threat to individual villages.

In the early 1970s a tentative and incomplete effort was made to settle the pastoralists. This step was more of a gesture of largesse on the part of the new Sultan, Qaboos bin Saiid bin Taimur, than an effort to force a people to transform their way of life. A large housing scheme was built to the west of Ibri with the first profits from petroleum extraction. In some ways this project could be seen as a simple effort to "repay" the pastoral tribe on whose traditional grazing area petroleum had first been discovered. The houses were never occupied and now, two decades later, serve as a reminder of the tenacity with which people hold on to their culture and way of life.

Pastoral Development Efforts in Oman

By the early 1980s, with basic social services rapidly and methodically extending further into the rural countryside, Sultan Qaboos issued a number of decrees of vital interest to the remote nomadic pastoral communities. This component of the country's population was to be targeted for development. His wishes, reiterated in a number of speeches, were that the desert regions of Oman were to receive the same care and attention as the villages and towns of the country. This mandate initially became the responsibility of the thoughtful and conscientious Minister of Social Affairs and Labor. With his own intimate experience and understanding of the nomadic pastoral way of life, the Minister took the Sultan's directives to mean that a way was to be found to extend the same social services to these people without forcing them to give up their traditional way of life. Plans were drawn up to create a series of six "tribal administrative centers" throughout the desert areas where the basic social functions comprising health care, education facilities, and welfare services would be available.

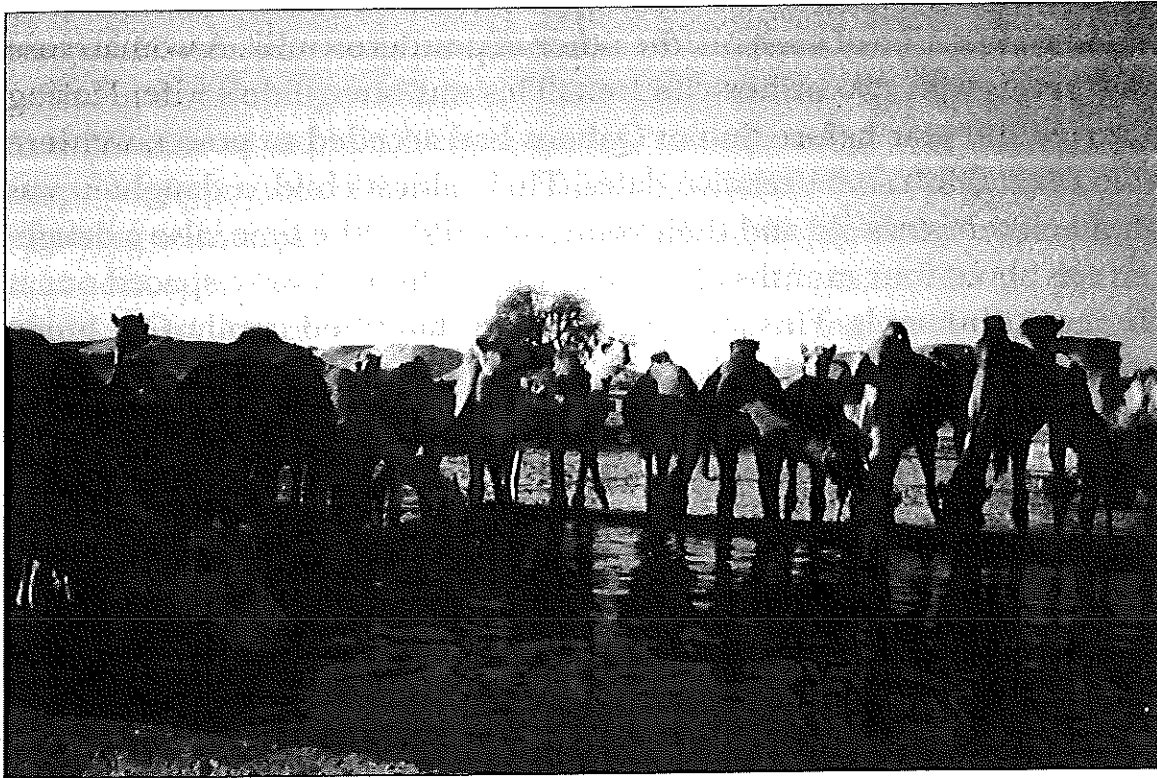
By late 1980 the first of these centers was nearing completion at Haima in the Jiddat-il-Harasiis. As described in detail in earlier chapters, the Minister of Social Affairs and Labor recognized the need to learn more about this population and to find ways to draw them to the newly created, but totally artificial, center set on a salt flat right in the middle of nowhere. In May 1981 the first UNDP project aimed at the development needs of a pastoral population in the Arabian Peninsula was initiated. I had been intimately involved in the project's development from conception to implementation.² The first year's terms of reference were basically to conduct an "anthropological study of the population" and identify their felt needs and problems to the government. The second year's terms of reference were to recommend, and implement, practical programs that would extend basic social services to this remote and marginal community.

By September of that year the project was well on its way. The team had settled into the government villa allocated to it at Haima. The project's Harasiis driver and, more important, guide had been selected by a committee of tribal elders under the chairmanship of the Wali, the government's representative at Haima. Information on this tribe had been very limited and contradictory and was based on a few reports and notes made at the beginning of the century by explorers such as Bertram

Thomas and, later, Wilfred Thesiger (see Lorimer 1986 [1908]; Miles 1966 [1919]; Thomas 1929, 1937; Thesiger 1950). Some reports claimed the tribe inhabiting the Jiddat-il-Harasiis numbered only "250" arms-bearing men, and others that they numbered 450 men.³ There were reports that these people were so "primitive" they had no tents and grabbed what shelter they could from the shade of a tree. Others claimed the people lived in such hardship and were so weak that they could not control any wells, springs, or other watering points and hence spent their lives drinking only milk from their herds of camels and goats. My knowledge and field experience in the Syrian desert led me to doubt this "information."

The project team's first visit to a Harasiis family took place in September 1981, shortly after our guide had been appointed. Setting out from Haima across the rock and gravel plain called the Hadab, we traveled for hours, bumping and bouncing over what seemed a featureless terrain. Occasionally we passed a few *Acacia tortilis* bushes. Whenever we came in sight of a *Prosopis cineraria* tree, our guide would stop the vehicle and give us its local name. After nearly three hours of driving we came to an area that seemed to have a few more acacia bushes than we had seen before. This was identified to us as a wadi (a valley). As our eyes began to take in some details, we noticed a tree with a commercial acrylic blanket thrown over it. A goat standing in its shade appeared to be tied to the trunk on a lead of less than two meters. Then we noticed a young hobbled camel nearby becoming increasingly agitated by our presence. A few discarded petroleum barrels lay about on the ground and bags made of cloth and of animal skins could be seen hanging from branches of the tree, out of reach of children or goats. A woman dressed in black with a mask of dyed indigo covering her face and a thick, black muslin scarf wound round her head and neck appeared from the shadows. Only her eyes were visible through her mask and even her hands were obscured by the thin black muslin outer covering. Clinging to her were three young children between the ages of three and nine, while an infant of perhaps six months lay in a portable crib that she carried as she approached us in greeting. The children looked and dressed no differently from children in the rural countryside of Oman; the girls wore colorful dresses with their hair left uncovered and the boys wore light-colored shifts—locally known as *dishdasha*.

At first I took this site to be a temporary camp, with a more permanent and solid encampment belonging to the family being elsewhere.



Finding enough water for camels is a constant worry. A large herd is rarely watered at a homestead or campsite but needs to be taken, instead, to one of the few community wells and camel water troughs (as above) in the Jiddat.

Although our conversation revealed that this was the only homestead for two brothers, their wives and children, I still did not feel that this would come to represent a fairly typical household. However, after moving on and traveling a few more hours until we reached the homestead of our guide, I realized I was wrong.

Our second household was also an encampment of astonishingly few material possessions. Unlike the pastoralists of Northern Arabia, with their elaborate, if at times shabby, goat-haired tents filled with carpets, rugs, pillows, reed section dividers, bags, and boxes, this Harasiis household was stunning in what it seemed to lack. Here, with no large tree to use for shade or shelter, a few wooden poles had been inserted into the sand and gravel. Some blankets were thrown over them to create a small rectangular area of shade from the sun's fierce heat. Temperatures of 45°C to 48°C were not unusual at that time of year. Again, as we had seen earlier, a few goatskin bags, woven palm frond and leather bowls and sacks were thrown over the top of an acacia bush. An acrylic blanket was

spread out over the ground and, to the side of the shaded area, were a few large tins, one of corn oil, the other of powdered milk. A woman rose to greet us with two of her children. This was our guide's wife. Having married the year before Sultan Qaboos had acceded to power, we were able to establish some relative dates. Their oldest child, a daughter, was about eleven years old and their youngest child at the time, also a daughter, was about four months old. Three other children were spaced out at three-year intervals. This was a young but established family. Our guide was in his early to mid-thirties and, thus, in his prime, and his wife, perhaps in her late twenties, also displayed a vigorous maturity.

A decade later, in January of 1992, I found myself making another visit to this household. Over the years my visits had changed in character. In the mid-1980s they had been part of an informal, ongoing evaluation of the project and had involved traveling throughout the Jiddat-il-Harasiis with my guide and perhaps a doctor or nurse to offer any medical help the population required. Gradually, as my own family had grown, I began to take them with me, until the last few trips had begun to assume the appearance and feel of a family visit. I continued to collect the follow-up data I wanted on the seventeen households in my initial sample. And, perhaps with more hopelessness than in earlier years, I recorded their grievances, requests, wishes, demands, and suggestions for transmission to any government official willing to hear me out. During the early years, when the project services were being implemented, Harasiis requests were nonspecific (such as the generalized pleas for canvas tents or tarpaulin, for more schools, for more mobile clinics, for more frequent road grading, for better water distribution, for veterinary services, for subsidized animal feed, and for livestock marketing assistance). As the years passed, some of these services were realized, but the people continued to need water, mobile shelter, and livestock marketing assistance. Besides these last three needs, the Harasiis began to express more personalized requests (such as welfare assistance for an elderly kinsman or kinswoman, blankets for ill or infirm individuals they knew of, and special medical care for specific disabled or handicapped persons).

Pastoral Policy and Praxis

Over the ten years I had worked with this population, my priorities and research focus had changed and matured. First my goal had been to learn as much as possible about their way of life, so as to act as something

of a cultural translator. Anthropologists and other social analysts, in the words of Dyson-Hudson, "are essentially translators," and anthropology's utility in development aid is in "the conviction that it is both necessary and possible to explain human groups to each other" (1991:253). Not surprisingly, my next few years of involvement had been largely devoted to trying to interpret this population's needs and problems into realities and concepts that both government and the international aid agency could grasp. At times it did seem as though, in taking on the role of cultural broker, I was succeeding in getting a kind of three-way conversation going between the people, the national government, and the international aid agency.

Toward the end of the decade, however, it became apparent that, although a conversation was still taking place and the voice of the community was being heard in translation through my reports and commissioned studies, this was not being transformed into any special government or international development assistance especially designed for the pastoral community. It was as though the official policy decreed by the Sultan, to extend services to the pastoralists of Oman without forcing them to settle, only succeeded in thinly veiling national and regional "expert" opinions that the pastoral way of life was somehow backward and that settling pastoralists was synonymous with development and progress (see Bocco 1990:101). For example, throughout this period I had tried to translate the needs of the pastoralists' to move with their herds into concepts and terms local officials understood. I had also tried to indicate the many ways in which government could assist in raising the living standard of this mobile way of life. Seasonal allocation of tarpaulin, or tents, would go far in improving the kind of shelter these people created for themselves as they moved their animals from grazing and browsing areas.

The futility, the expense, and the folly of building "low-cost" housing had been a particular focus of my interaction. Twice government officials had nearly passed plans to build small permanent modern housing settlements and twice I had been able to show how wasteful and economically unviable it would be. However in 1990 a political decision, following a Ministerial visit to an oil installation, resulted in the order to build twenty three-bedroom town houses on the outskirts of Haima for the pastoral population of the desert. This compound, now completed, has been inhabited by a few nonpastoral families from a rival tribe and is the focus of much contention. There is little likelihood that the modern

building site will ever be occupied by Harasiis herding tribesmen on a permanent year-round basis.⁴ For a fraction of the cost the government could have provided each family with a good-quality tent annually for the duration of its existence as a discrete unit—around forty-five years. Without any conscious decision to do so, I saw myself slip from cultural translator, to broker, and, finally, to activist. Over this same period of time, a decade during which most families purchased one if not two vehicles and material possessions proliferated, the requirement for a regular cash flow became an urgent preoccupation.

In earlier chapters I have described and analyzed the impact that regular male employment had on the tribe as a whole and on the family itself. During this period, women turned their traditional skills at making camel straps and decorations to the production of car key “switches” and stick shift covers for their husbands and sons.⁵ A few more industrious women began to leave samples at the small shop at the Haima gas station for sale to any passer-by or tourist making the long overland journey from Muscat to Salalah. These items sold quickly, and soon I was bringing a few samples to the capital area for sale. The British weaving consultant who had first looked into the possibility of developing a “weaving” component for the project during the early 1980s returned to the area on a permanent basis and quickly became the focus of the women’s handicraft efforts. An outlet was found for selling their work at a gift shop in Muscat popular with expatriates. Before long it became clear that the sheer number of women who wanted to participate required more organization than the British weaving consultant or I could offer.

After numerous unsuccessful attempts to interest various ministries in setting up a small project for the female Harasiis population, I decided to pursue the possibility of forming them into a nongovernmental organization (NGO) or voluntary association of traditional craftswomen. If the women and their husbands were interested, and such an association was formed, then international funding could be sought—with government permission—and these women could embark on a more formal and less unpredictable moneymaking venture. Indirectly, I hoped that the current process of marginalization of the women within their own society—through the loss of many of their productive roles—would be slowed down if not halted.

The women and their families were very interested, and a formal application was made to the Ministry of Social Affairs to recognize them

as an NGO. At the same time, I prepared a formal request for a two-year grant of nearly RO 45,000 (\$120,000) to set the association up on its feet with an office and collection center at Haima, a vehicle, a revolving fund, and a salaried marketing coordinator. In theory the grant would give the group two, possibly three, years to become a self-sufficient income-generating business. The funding request was granted several months later and only awaited the group's formal recognition as an NGO by the Ministry of Social Affairs. More than twelve months later, and after numerous unsuccessful attempts to secure that recognition, I had to decline the grant. The government was only prepared to conceptualize the women and their families as illiterate, both literally and figuratively. I was bluntly told that these people were not yet developed enough to run an independent venture and that government would be better able to set up an in-house craft project for them. Needless to say, the Harasiis people involved in this effort were very disappointed.

What effect has my role as an activist, encouraging Harasiis men and women to organize themselves—to shortcut and streamline the bureaucratic process whenever possible—had on the population? Was there anything I had attempted to do that had any impact upon their daily lives? And did any of my efforts to put forward their case really make any difference at the decision-making level? Were there any changes in their expectations of the government or any other formal associations of authority? In terms of material things, like the boarding school or tent distributions, the answer is probably yes, but in psychological terms, probably not. Although their expectations might have changed and their political consciousness might have been raised, their natural pragmatism and self-reliance was unaffected.

Their continuous adaptation to an exceedingly harsh and unpredictable environment and their firm belief in a strong, just, and beneficent deity presupposes an unshakable independence of spirit and mind. They have taken in the past, and perhaps always will take, every opportunity to plead their case, to ask for assistance, to request help from the larger society on the fringe of their universe. Their pragmatic position has been that sometimes they succeed and sometimes they don't. Grudges have never been held for assistance not given. Although some of their material expectations—mainly centered on their acceptance of the motor vehicle and the way it has transformed daily life—have grown, their cultural integrity remains.

Cultural Foundations: Generosity and Hospitality

The Harasiis tribe's contact with other people and cultures has been minimal, and their exposure to modern Western culture and society limited to what has been imported into the desert by the few intrepid explorers, soldiers, oil workers, and, more recently, a handful of zoologists, anthropologists, physicians, nurses, teachers, and administrators. Without exception, these individuals have been accepted as guests, entertained, and then maintained as friends or discarded as people with no understanding and no "humanity."

The important cultural markers that underpin the society remain and, if anything, have an exaggerated quality about them. These fundamental values, which link their material culture with their moral and belief system, are best described as goals of generosity and hospitality. Among nomadic pastoralists—particularly in the Middle East—these two goals are part of the fabric of the society.⁶ It has been put forward by some that Arab society as a whole is based on "Bedouin society." This position, which perhaps draws its inspiration from the theories of Ibn Khaldun and the cyclical nature of nomadic pastoral (bedu) incursions from the desert to the towns, still finds adherents, as, for example, in the recent work of Hourani (1991). Furthermore, Wilkinson has argued that Omani society as a whole is Bedouin (1987). However, as Webster (1991) very ably reveals, this assumption, or myth, that all Omani tribes, or all Arabs, are former Bedouin is based on the assumption that Bedouin are those who have not yet settled. Thus the nomadic pastoralists/settled farmer dichotomy is reduced to an outdated and discredited notion of stages of human development. Such assumptions ignore the easily observable differences in economic behavior and in outlook, goals, and values. It is the existence of herds raised primarily on natural graze and browse that marks the difference between these two ways of life. As Webster and many others, myself included, have tried to convey in their work on nomadic pastoralism, "It is the life of the desert that is both the cause and effect of the characteristic social forms, political systems, symbols and values of the bedouin" (Webster 1991:7).

Among the Harasiis tribe, as well as the other nomadic pastoral communities of Oman and the Middle East, the society's evaluation of its members as good or upstanding is based on an assessment of how they manipulate their material possessions—or, as Barth first analyzed, their capital (1961). Hospitality and generosity, in a society of few material pos-

sessions, requires the utilization of livestock to that end. Where the small herding group is isolated and vulnerable and where the instability of material and personal attachments is pronounced, complementary social and symbolic structures exist that reinforce the benefits of such a precarious existence and give it meaning. These principles of kin solidarity, tribal cohesion for defense, and self-reliance are at various times and occasions described as self-sufficiency, honor, and generosity (cf. Chatty 1986:52; Lancaster 1981:119). Thus generosity and honor become the foundations of the relations of equality and sharing that permeate the society (Webster 1991:7).

Livestock in this context has a dual value, one material and one symbolic. Development planners generally emphasize the former value but not the latter, which in many ways is the more significant for the continued well-being of the society's survival as an integrated community. Livestock are the nomadic pastoralists's means of going without, of asserting their independence and self-sufficiency. Their cash value is recognized; they are sold and bought. Just as important—if not more so—they are essential to the correct entertainment of visitors, upon which a reputation for generosity is built. Hospitality in the form of fresh meat, generally a goat or a sheep, slaughtered by the host from his family's herd, underpins the acquisition of a reputation for generosity. The failure to provide such a meal for a guest, or a friend or business associate at the conclusion of negotiations, undermines the host's standing and renders the agreement questionable. For great feasts or socially significant events like weddings or funerals, or for the visit of an especially important guest, one or more camels will be slaughtered. A comparison of the households of the Harasiis tribe between 1981 and 1991 would show a substantial material development. Households, which earlier in the decade were simple affairs of a few blankets and goatskin bags tied or thrown over an acacia tree with a number of storage barrels of water, perhaps a sewing machine and a cassette player, are today serious, though still mobile, establishments. This material development has unexpectedly been matched by an increasing elaboration of the practices that support their moral economy—the use of livestock to augment and reassert their hospitality and thus their reputation for generosity.

The household of the project's guide is a good example of the way in which certain values important to nomadic pastoralists have been nurtured and perhaps exaggerated during the past ten years. During this decade the family has matured and its membership has grown.

Furthermore, its material presence can no longer be mistaken for a temporary camp. In the winter of 1992 the household consisted of two interlocking, portable metal enclosures totally covered in tarpaulin. These four-by-four-meter living areas were further organized with high shelves upon which children's school satchels were stored along with a briefcase containing important papers for the family, a radio, some clothing, and other valuables that needed to be kept out of reach of the young and the livestock. One enclosure was "home" for the married oldest daughter and her children while, the other belonged to my guide and his family. The third enclosure, created with the same metal fencing, had no roof or overhead covering and served as the kitchen for the homestead. Cooking gas bottles were stored along the outside wall while within several large metal cabinets held supplies of flour, dates, rice, sugar, coffee, tea, and other kitchen sundries.

Between these shelters were an assortment of vehicles. An old and battered Bedford truck that had once been used to haul water to the homestead now served to store water and to shelter the lactating camels and their young from the harsh winter wind. Another vehicle with no license plates, clearly earmarking it for the women and children to drive only off-road, was parked nearby. The household head's own automobile, a registered but only marginally newer version of the women's vehicle, was close by. A wind shelter made up of empty petroleum barrels and woven goat-hair sidings stood about one hundred meters away. Within this enclosure, the household's herd of goat and sheep sheltered from the cold and wind. This homestead could still be packed up within hours and moved by truck to a new site, just as in earlier times when possessions were very limited and transport depended on pack camels.

The flock of goat and sheep was nearly the same size as it had been ten years earlier, and the camel herd was only marginally larger.⁷ As before, a guest was entertained generously. But, unlike earlier times, there was no option but to slaughter a goat. On very special occasions, the visitor would be more than generously honored with a meal of fresh meat on arrival and another such meal at an adjacent household the following morning. In the early part of the 1980s some households fed guests the woman's cooking—rice with a meat- or fish-flavored sauce. A choice could be made as to whether a complete gesture of hospitality—in the offering of fresh meat—was required or not. Returning to the analysis offered by Webster (1991), one is left to ponder over the recent emphasis on traditional behavior and gestures. Perhaps the past decade has

seen too much change on the borders of their universe, and the reaction of individuals within the community is naturally to fall back on traditional ideals and values as a way to protect themselves and their family from outside influences. Or perhaps the newfound emphasis on the importance of entertaining is related to the association that hospitality, and accrued generosity, has with the social standing, influence, and, finally, authority the individual household head can muster in his dealings with other tribesmen, government administrators, and creditors.

Associated with this recent emphasis upon gaining and establishing reputation is the economic problem of debt management. With few exceptions, Harasiis herding families regularly carry debts that have been incurred buying third-grade wheat chaffings for their livestock during the long periods of drought in the Jiddat-il-Harasiis.⁸ A reputation for generosity built up through hospitality makes the management of such debt more viable. The "generous man" is more likely to get an extension of credit from the local lenders. When those terms are exhausted, the herder must sell off a camel to repay his debts.⁹ The herd, then, is an economic and moral asset, but only so long as it is not allowed to grow so large as to be a burden. Unlike other areas of Oman where huge growth in herds has been documented, such as in Dhofar, the Harasiis tribe seems to have struck a balance. Although the large camel herd owner is respected as a good manager, the man with a reputation for generosity, but perhaps possessing a smaller herd, is more highly valued both within the community and among the circle of local decision makers at the tribal administrative center at Haima.

The presentday management of the herd includes the ritual slaughter of small stock (goat and sheep) for entertainment and indirectly increased reputation; the frequent sale of young male stock—mainly goat but some young camels—for daily household requirements; and the occasional sale of large livestock—camels—to clear debts, make large purchases—usually of vehicles or vehicle parts—or mark significant ceremonies such as marriage or death. This animal husbandry can be viewed from two perspectives. First, it underlies the traditional system in which the economic and moral value of the herds is upheld, and, second, it highlights the newly evolved system whereby the reputation for generosity is interpreted into credit terms. The generous man is regarded as the good credit risk and thus is more likely to be able to operate in a debt management cycle that requires the occasional liquidation of surplus assets to meet his obligations.

The Harasiis Tribe and the Omani Development Paradigm

Chapters 2 and 3 considered the process whereby a development project for the nomadic pastoral people of the central desert of Oman was designed, initiated, and implemented. The administrative orphaning of the project, cutting it loose from the full control under which most schemes in large international development agencies operate, was—in hindsight—a blessing. The project was left free to develop along the lines the Harasiis population preferred, with a special emphasis on education. The plight of the population became more widely understood on a national level. But intervention was minimal. For all the philanthropic and well-intended slogans used by development agencies, they are fundamentally organized to promote international business. As Escobar eloquently argues, development strategies from the early 1970s and onward centered on the “modernization and monetization of rural society, and with it the transition from traditional isolation to integration with the national economy” (1991:663). This focus, he concludes, was little more than a reproduction of the world of big business monopolies, “a world organized around production and markets, divided between developed and underdeveloped, traditional and modern, ruled by the politics of aid and multinational corporations, riddled by fears of communism, anchored in a faith in material progress through technology and the exploitation of nature” (Escobar 1991:664). A current catchphrase of many of these agencies is to “make the poor of the world economically productive people.” Such phrases are now, in the 1990s, just beginning to be sounded out in government corridors in the Sultanate and applied to its nomadic pastoral people. Administrators are seeing large numbers of these people come forward to request monthly welfare assistance from the government. These officials, in turn, regard the requests as evidence of increased poverty among that sector of the country’s population, evidence that requires solutions in order to make these people “economically productive.”

The nomadic pastoral population of Oman is increasingly classified by government administrators as a “poor” people that are making no productive contribution to the national economy. They are seen as a drain on the country rather than as an asset. This assessment is not derived from any particular facts or technical study, but rather from the long-standing ambiguous nature of the relations between the urban, settled

societies of the towns and cities and the mobile, remote, pastoral peoples of the desert interiors. Hence "income-generating" schemes, among other ideas, are now being considered as a way to turn these "poor" debt-ridden communities in the country into productive contributors to the country's gross national product. Such schemes, which are based more on fancy and wishful thinking, have little chance of making any long-term impact on the pastoral population of the country. This is not to say that government assistance is not required but simply to point out that the implementation of economic development schemes requires a detailed understanding of the population targeted, the way in which it has adapted and changed, and the perceptions the population has about its future needs. Otherwise, everything may change superficially, but basically things will remain the same.

The Harasiis, as all nomadic pastoral tribes, have adapted, and continue to adapt, to the changes in their physical, social, and material environment. The individual's material dependence on livestock as the main source of livelihood has fluctuated in the past and will do so in the future. This fact has created a problem for scholars and development experts as they grapple with how to define nomadic pastoralists, particularly when they have lost their livestock. Today the cultural self-definition of the individual or society is proving a most promising approach to an understanding of these people and their way of life (see Eickelman 1981:74). As Dahl writes, "People are pastoralists to the extent that they feel that a secure subsistence for them can best be achieved through dependence on livestock, and that such dependence is the best way for them to live a worthy life, achieving what they consider to be fundamental human values" (1990:1). For many dispossessed pastoralists, their belief in their ability to reenter pastoral life is the focus of their cultural self-definition. This is very obvious among the poor rural "Bedouin" laborers, found throughout Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and, perhaps, part of Iraq, who are obviously dispossessed of their livestock through a combination of poor management, loss of land rights, and perhaps climatic conditions. For others, their pastoral identity is a kind of ethnic badge that does not have any relation to actual dependence on livestock (see Layne 1994:12-17).

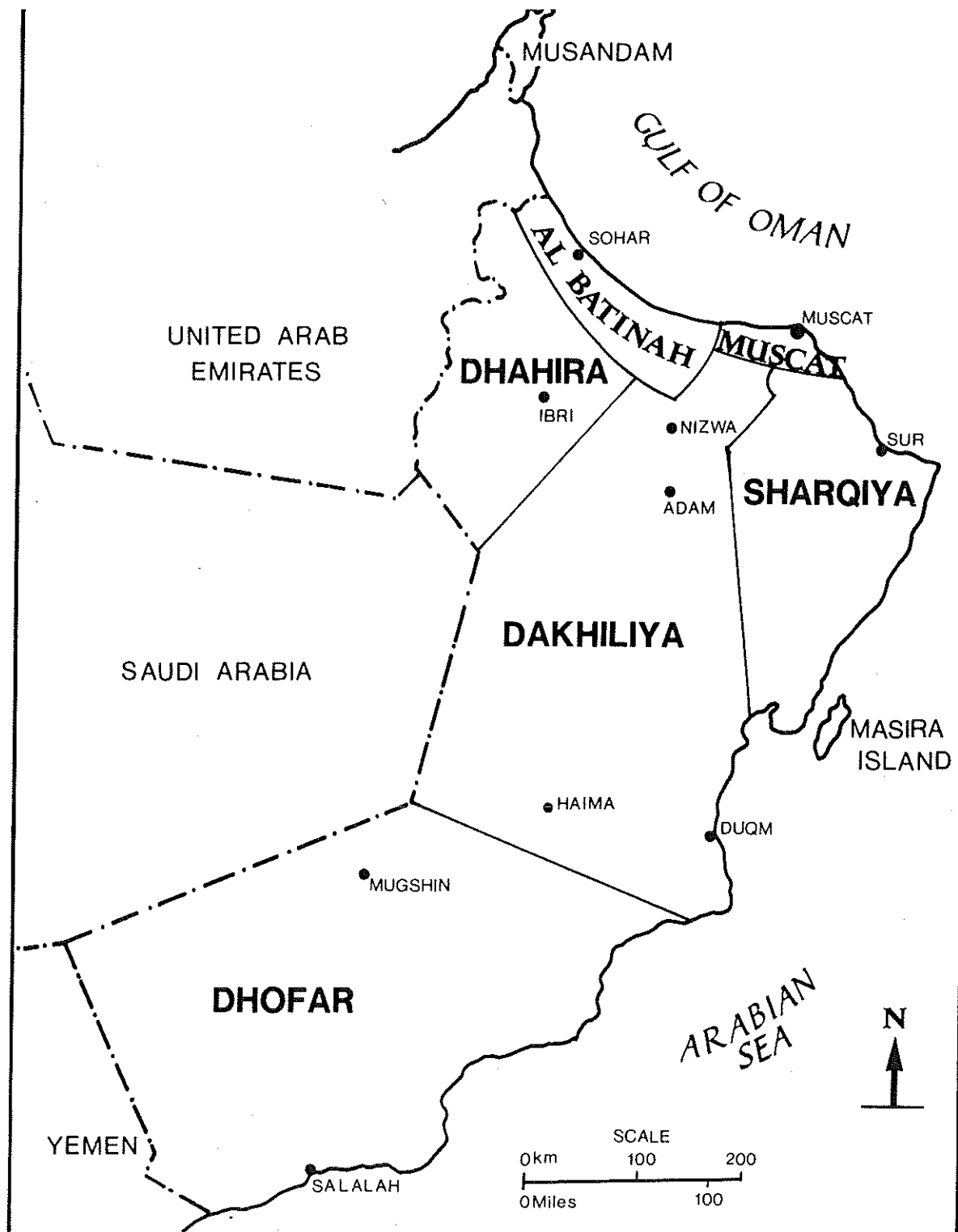
Thus, in Jordan and parts of Syria, wealthy families in trade, industry, or other modern commercial enterprise often identify themselves as Bedouin. What has become clear in the past two decades of study is that pure pastoralism does not exist (Chatty 1972, 1990). Pastoralism presupposes the existence of adjacent subsistence systems that are often an inte-

gral part of the total culture of pastoralists. The recent study by Dahl discusses the more typical subsistence forms pastoralism takes today. Rather than a monodimensional dependence on one type of resource, pastoralists exhibit a flexibility that combines different resources (also see Salzman 1969). To survive as pastoralists (in the cultural sense) within a long time perspective, the specialized livestock rearers have had to integrate take-a-chance farming or small-scale irrigation, famine year hunting, trade, etc., into their own general system of activities and opportunities or maintain close contacts with other groups pursuing complementary activities. "Pastoralism" economically taken thus covers a wide range of such combinations, particularly of cultivation and livestock rearing (Dahl 1990:1).

The relationship of the Harasiis tribe with central authority has gone through several phases as the interests of the state have changed. While other tribal segments of the population were at various times caught up in numerous political struggles for control of the country, the Harasiis tribe was not involved. Its very remoteness, its uncontested right to the hostile landmass of the Jiddat-il-Harasiis, and its relatively small population size made it an insignificant actor on the political stage. Its leadership was recognized by the government, and the ruling Sheikh made annual trips to the palace of the Sultan to receive money and gifts in kind, along with the heads of other tribes in the country. Thus the Sultan was the paramount tribal leadership figure who dispensed largesse and demanded loyalty.

Between 1954 and 1980, however, when oil exploration first reached the Jiddat, relations with the central authority changed dramatically. During this period the Harasiis elders saw an opportunity to gain some benefits from the sudden interest in their tribal land. Demands were made for control over the hiring of laborers from the tribe for any oil company work in the Jiddat-il-Harasiis. They also saw an opportunity to gain greater access to the most scarce resource of all, water, and made the appropriate demands to the oil company. The government and the oil company were, to the minds of the Harasiis tribesmen, one and the same. In actual fact, government activity in the desert was oil company activity, and only when relations between the tribesmen and the oil company became explosive was the Sultan asked to intervene or set policy.¹⁰

Politically, this was an important period for both the government and the oil company, since uncontested rights over the desert land needed to be established over what previously had been exclusively tribal territory.



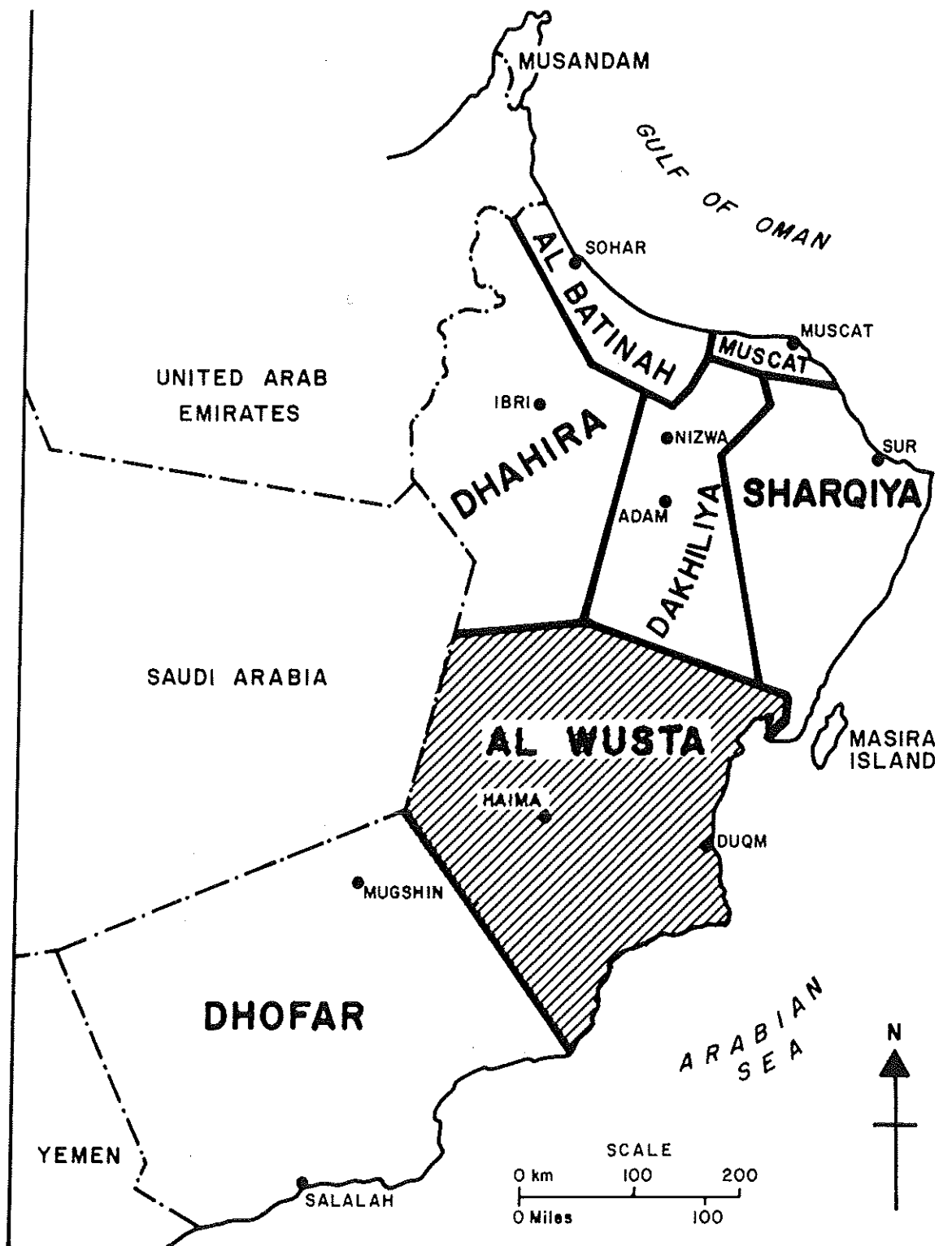
MAP 6 Administrative Regions Before 1991

It was vital to the interests of the government that areas near the borders with the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia be populated by nomadic pastoralists with an allegiance to the Sultan. Thus, in the early years of oil exploration, the Duru tribe's leadership, on whose tribal territory oil was first found, received generous hand-outs, gifts, and concessions for drilling water wells. An extensive housing scheme was also built between Ibri and the border with the United Arab Emirates. These measures were a confirmation of the government's interest in keeping the Duru tribe attached to Oman.

This government concern extended to all the tribes that held territory near the border areas and included the Harasiis, the Beit Kathir, and the Har-Rashid. Important government infrastructure was set up along the border shared with Saudi Arabia. To the south the government established offices and schools in Fasad for the Har-Rashid; further north it opened a tribal administrative center at Mughshin that included low-cost housing, a school, and a hospital;¹¹ in the middle section, the Haima tribal administrative center was opened. These measures served many purposes. They were unquestionably an economic and service boon for the populations in the areas. For the government, they served the important political function of establishing—with some flexibility—the borders of the country.

As oil exploration pointed increasingly to more and more fields in the central desert area, its significance to the government increased and in 1991 the provinces of the country were redrawn to create a central province in addition to the northern and southern ones. This province, called Al-Wusta, stretches across the entire middle of the country from Mahout to the Empty Quarter and from Jazir across to the Saudi Arabian border (see maps 6 and 7). Haima, which began its life as a simple water well dug by the oil company in 1958 and grew into an economic and social focus for the Harasiis tribe after its establishment as a government tribal center in 1981, is now set to become the capital of the central province. For the Harasiis tribe, the benefits will be myriad. Infrastructural development and expansion of the road systems are likely, employment and education opportunities, as well as simplified access to government officials, will increase. The appeal of Haima as not only a tribal capital but now also as a government capital, albeit a provincial one, will create a renewed focus on the tribe in government circles and elsewhere.

How the individual tribespeople will adapt to these developments in



MAP 7 Administrative Regions After 1991

the middle of the Jiddat-il-Harasiis is more problematic. Here are a people caught in the modern postcolonial world of development and planning. It is a world where the current focus is on saving the planet and its plants and animals. Their tribal rights to part of their territory have already been ceded to the government by its leaders in order to provide a suitable spot to reintroduce the white Arabian oryx after its extermination in the early 1970s. Much of the rest of their territory—with the exception of a seventy-five-kilometer radius of Haima—was declared a “national nature reserve” in 1986 by royal decree. This was the outcome of a concerted effort by the expatriate adviser to the Sultan on conservation (and on the oryx reintroduction effort). The purpose of this nature reserve was to protect the potential home range of the oryx. No Harasiis were consulted and few government officials understood the implications of the decree, which was only the first step in having the entire region registered as a World Heritage Site with UNESCO.

For a region to be accepted as a World Heritage Site, it must be shown that infrastructural planning and development within that area would be very rigorously discouraged, if not prohibited. Thus, in spite of the remoteness, the marginality, and the isolation that characterizes the Harasiis and their tribal lands, they are now beginning to face problems similar to the nomadic pastoral tribes of the rest of the peninsula. Their lands have been, in a sense, confiscated as in the rest of the Middle East and are controlled *de facto* and *de jure* by the nation-state. Recent infrastructural growth has meant that they have access to and are affected by developments hundreds of kilometers away. Motor transport and motorized water pumping facilities have revolutionized their lives, as have telecommunications. Many have had the opportunity to leave and take up new lives. Some have, but many have chosen to remain. This situation is not very different from other parts of the peninsula.

Although each country in the Arabian Peninsula has to face different sets of economic, political, and social factors, a feature that is found in common throughout is the plight of the subsistence nomadic pastoralists. Without exception, their territorial usufruct is no longer recognized by the central government; their struggle to subsist has required that they acquire modern forms of transport that can only be supported through some form of wage labor. This, in turn, often means the household head spending long periods of time away from the pastoral household, leaving the management of the herds to other, often younger and less experienced, members of the family. At the same time, entrepre-

neurs, often from politically powerful families, have seized the opportunity to profitably use the open rangelands by moving extremely large herds on to it until the graze and browse is totally depleted. These herds often have little significance for the hired laborers other than as a pay packet at the end of their contract. The animals do not provide subsistence for any nomadic pastoral families. They simply feed off the land, giving little if anything back to the human group handling them. The benefit is to the absentee owner, whose profit is strictly from commercial sale of the animal for meat. The immediate effect of this type of activity is rangeland destruction, which is then inevitably blamed on the subsistence nomadic pastoralist and not on the commercial entrepreneurs.

This situation, which characterizes the current crises in the Dhofari region of Oman as well as in large parts of the Middle East, threatens the livelihood and well-being of subsistence nomadic pastoralists everywhere. Where the problem of rangeland destruction or deterioration has been taken up by governments and international agencies, the tendency remains to blame the subsistence pastoralists for the sins of the commercial entrepreneurs. The reality of the situation is the same as I described two decades ago, a cultural gap between the officials and planners in a region and the nomadic pastoralist utilizing the otherwise barren arid land.¹² The national officials feel that they understand the situation and do not require foreign experts to tell them about their own region. Their negative appraisal of the situation is easily reaffirmed by mounting evidence of grass and rangeland destruction. The subsistence nomadic pastoralists are blamed for a situation that is no longer in their control, as land use and, in particular, water rights—two of the three most important factors in the success of a common property system—are actually controlled by central authority (Ensminger and Rutten:1991).¹³

The situation in the Jiddat-il-Harasiis is a reflection of this reality. The government, facing very extensive grassland deterioration in the southern region of the country, has sought international assistance to try to reverse the rapid decline of that unique ecosystem. The blame for this destruction, in the eyes of government officials and local planners, rests with the population on the grasslands and in the mountain meadows. The fact that control over the resources that once underpinned the local political economy now rests with the government itself is not being addressed. More ominous is the increasing tendency among government planners and visiting advisers to view problems of the Jiddat-il-Harasiis

through the same lens with which the overgrazing and misuse of resources in Dhofar is seen.

A few government advisers and experts have also begun to speak of the overgrazing and destruction of the "rangelands" of the Jiddat-il-Harasiis by vehicle tire tracks. The fact that recent studies exist on this population (Chatty 1984, 1989, 1990; Jaafer 1989; Sammane 1990), which establish a fairly accurate record of animal and human population size and attempt to explain the rational economics of the society, does not seem to affect the national "development expert circles" and theories currently in fashion. As elsewhere in the region, assumptions of pastoral-induced damages to the rangeland and claims of overgrazing are being used without careful presentation of proof or their relevance to the specific situation.

In the past decade, much criticism has been raised against the way concepts such as overgrazing and carrying capacity are mechanically applied in many situations in East Africa and elsewhere (Dahl 1990:2). The fierce discussion concerning the drying up of Africa—the most serious consequence of which is the degradation of the basic resources—has ominous overtones for the situation in the Middle East. In Africa the victims, particularly the nomadic pastoralists, were blamed. Among specialists, however, there has been a shift in thought, and the great force of climatic change is now held by some physical geographers, such as Rapp and Mattson (1988), to reflect changes on a continental scale related to Atlantic rates of wind and water circulation.¹⁴ However, this academic absolving of guilt of the nomadic pastoralists has yet to reach the people who decide their future. For, in the Middle East, in East Africa, and elsewhere, conventional wisdom rather than careful consideration of specific cases forms the framework upon which development decisions, particularly at the national level, are made. This conventional wisdom generally reflects outdated scientific understanding as well as ethnocentric preconceptions.

Development Planning for the People, Not by Them

In 1991 an important book on rural development was published by the World Bank in a revised second edition. It reflected the lessons learned in development planning in the 1970s and 1980s. Its title, *Putting People First: Sociological Variables in Rural Development*, dramatically highlighted

the seriousness of the lag with which new knowledge trickles down to those who actually design and plan development schemes. Putting people first is often regarded as little more than a goodwill appeal to the humanitarian feelings of project planners at the national level. It is, in fact, much more. As Cernea argues, putting people first is a "scientifically grounded request to policymakers, planners and technical experts to explicitly recognize the centrality of what is the primary factor in development processes" (1991b:7). When this requirement is addressed to those who currently design projects, it is tantamount to asking for a *reversal* of the conventional approach to project making, where technical factors or economic models so overwhelmingly dominate and the characteristics of the social organization and the very actors are dealt with as an afterthought (1991b:7).

In an earlier book on the development process, Chambers (1983) also tries to come to terms with the seeming inability of planners to consider the target population. As he explains, in trying to see what to do, non-rural outsiders are trapped by core-periphery perception and thinking. Looking outward and downward toward the remote and powerless, their vision is blurred. They see most clearly what is close by; they see action starting from where they are. The very words reflect the problem: "remote" means distant from urban and administrative centers, from where most of the outsiders are; and "what to do" implies initiatives taken by them in the centers of power. However much the rhetoric changes to "participation," "participatory research," "community involvement," and the like, at the end of the day there is still an outsider seeking to change things. A stronger person wants to change things for a person who is weaker (1983:141).

Both Chambers and Cernea are writing from experiences among rural populations. Most of their case material was derived from agricultural development planning—projects designed to improve existing technology or to increase crop production. In the case of nomadic pastoral societies—those remote, marginal, difficult-to-reach populations that have been particularly recalcitrant and resistant to outside domination—the situation is more bleak. As the East African experience has shown, nomadic pastoral societies are an evolutionary response to environmental pressure. These societies exhibit a pattern for survival that has proved successful insofar as pastoral populations continue to exist. These East African nomadic pastoral societies were almost obliterated at the turn of the century by epidemic disease and were badly hit by

drought in the 1920s, 1960s, and 1970s. For centuries, and perhaps millennia, spatial movement and periodic devastation of human and livestock population were essential features of these societies and have proved to be successful survival strategies.

Over the last two decades, however, a new pattern for survival has appeared, based on the technical rationale brought in from the outside but not yet adjusted to social factors nor subjected to the test of time. It is in East Africa, among a population devastated by drought, by the death of livestock, and by loss of control over land and water, that the problems of development planning are most prominent today. The results of the past two decades in pastoral development have been disappointing. The frustrations and disappointments felt by those people intimately involved with East African livestock development does not mean that lessons have not been learned and that the basic sociological contentions put down on paper should not now be implemented. For slowly a recognition has come to international as well as national development planners that pastoral systems are not as modest as their simple tools would imply. And, moreover, that they are not as inefficient as their herd structures first suggested to Westerners raised on a livestock taxonomy of beef ranches and dairy farms. Finally, it is being recognized that these people employ a highly complex strategy for survival in a severely fluctuating environment. The problem is how the national government can achieve the "political and economic integration of pastoral populations without destroying their special skills and cultural variety and without causing human misery" (Dyson-Hudson 1991:237).

Government policy in Oman reflects this concern. By decree of the Sultan, government is enjoined to find a way of extending to the pastoral populations the same basic social services that have reached the rest of the country's citizens, but without forcing these people to give up their way of life. In Oman, as is the case wherever pastoral populations form a remote minority, policy planners do the planning *for* the people. The pastoral populations are treated as simply mobile versions of the agrarian-based sector of the population, and the assumptions made about them reflect the national planners' entrenched ideas that these peoples are simply poor, illiterate versions of themselves. Given half a chance and a little agricultural education, planners believe they would become properly settled oases dwellers.

The grounds for this ethnocentric assumption are shaky when the evidence is examined. Up to the present time—and with the exception of

the limited success of the project OMA/80/WO1—development planning *for* the nomadic pastoralists in Oman has meant little that has not already been extended to its rural agrarian-based population. Numerous housing units have been built in the desert for these populations. These “social housing” projects are exact replicas of constructions elsewhere in the country. They are, without much exception, tightly packed units of twenty to thirty two-story town houses that require substantial adjustments for a villager to comfortably occupy, let alone a nomadic pastoralist. No concession is made for livestock, small or large, in the patch of land between the house and the walls of the garden. Only when the selected recipients refuse to move into these units are questions raised as to what might be lacking. And, as often as not, a bad plan is made worse. In two recent cases, the planners decided to bring in piped water and electricity in a bid to entice the nomadic pastoralists to settle into the houses. No one came.

That a home need not be a cement house but can be something as simple as the creation of shade is simply not accepted as legitimate by national development planners. The needs and problems of the nomadic pastoral population of Oman and elsewhere are perceived, even in the 1990s—and despite numerous studies to the contrary—as what the planners themselves regard to be the problems. Thus, if a family has no physical home, a house is what should be provided. Never mind that they neither want nor need one. The fundamental problem—the cultural gap spoken of earlier—is that the reality of existence in the desert is simply not grasped by national planners. The media in Oman and elsewhere exacerbates the situation by continuously referring to the “villages and villagers” in the desert. That there are no villages and villagers in the open gravel plain deserts of the country is inconceivable, just as a man with no house is an incomprehensible entity. The reality of the nomadic pastoral existence thus runs counter to all the accepted cultural norms and standards exhibited by the majority society in the country; the nomadic pastoralist who is perpetually in motion, with no fixed place of abode, is simply not officially recognized. Occasionally one or another government official, after serious effort and study, begins to come to terms with the very different mentality and way of life that nomadic pastoralists exhibit. Such individuals are rare and as often as not do not remain in the same position in the government bureaucracy long enough to be able to implement or follow through any program specifically designed for the desert communities.¹⁵

Ill-conceived development planning only adds to the poor impression most planners have of these societies as negative, conservative, and backward populations. Yet nomadic pastoralists themselves, in Oman and elsewhere, continue to change, to adapt, and at times to spontaneously adopt techniques, technologies, and ideas they perceive to be in their own interest. This book has described the many innovations that have dramatically altered, simplified, and consolidated daily life among the Harasiis. Yet all of these changes were the result of spontaneous efforts within the society. Some individuals initiated the changes. When the change proved valuable to the group, others adopted the idea, often improving and refining along the way. All the changes, small or large, insignificant or momentous, needed a "native" spark. Earlier in this chapter a partial cultural definition of pastoralism was discussed. Within the concept was that of "worthiness," encompassing traits such as a good degree of self-reliance, independence, self-control, foresight, generosity, and bravery. All these features are brought into play when change is introduced in a community, whether it be in a harsh, inhospitable desert or a simple agrarian community. Among the pastoral community, however, innovators derive particular benefit from their efforts, that is, an increased worthiness in the eyes of the community.

The Intermediate Culture in Development

Development planning for nomadic pastoral populations requires the intimate involvement of an intermediary culture. There is the local population, the nomadic pastoralists themselves, the national community of development planners and policy makers with a culture of their own, and, finally, the international body of development or technical assistance experts. At the most basic level, evidence is mounting to show that in rural development putting people first "is a necessary condition for good performance whenever local people are involved" (Chambers 1991:515). At the intermediate and highest tier—the national and international communities of planners—the popular adage for technical assistance experts seems to hold true. To see a plan or program implemented, it is considered important for the technical assistance expert to make "them" believe it is their own idea; "them" referring to both the government and the target population.

In the case of the remote and increasingly marginalized pastoral populations of the Middle East, neither "putting people first" nor "make

them believe your idea is theirs" ever necessarily applies. Recently, in Oman, for example, a branch of the government requested a two-month study of the needs and problems of the country's nomadic pastoralists. This study was a prerequisite—following UNDP regulations—to developing a program for these communities. Having prepared a similar study five years earlier, I was asked to undertake the assignment. Water, in the final analysis, turned out to be a deeply felt and most urgent problem, and a number of local suggestions were put forward in the report to help alleviate the situation. The completed technical report was sent to UN headquarters for clearance and comment before being submitted to the appropriate authorities in the government.

Four months later the report was returned to Oman for submission to the government with a modification from the technical backup unit at UNDP headquarters. "If water is such a problem then the Omani government should move the people to other areas," wrote the Arab-born, but naturalized, American technical expert. Here not only was the local involvement in solving the problem being ignored but the unusually enlightened, if not unique, position of the government of *not* trying to force these peoples to settle was also being overlooked. That report was distributed among a very small government circle, and in the following year a second study was commissioned, with the same terms of reference, that resulted in nearly identical findings. No policy, plan, project, or action has come about as a result of either study.

International and national development experts and planners continue to write papers and commission studies. And the local pastoral population moves on, adapting, adjusting, experimenting, and at times adopting innovations that *they* perceive to be in their best interests—though not always regarded as such on a national or international level. Is it any wonder, then, that after four decades of a "nomad" problem among the government circles of the Middle East, the "problem" has yet to be solved?

Development planners at the national and international level need to closely study the nomadic pastoralists' responses to their particularly unstable and capricious environments. For in their responses and native strategies lies the way to a solution to the problems. Up until the present time, the problems have been the focus of world attention. Once the international community shifts its attention from the problems to the *people*, viable and sustainable solutions can emerge.

This study of the Harasiis population and the peripheral interaction

of a small development program is just one case in point. By accident, mismanagement, and force of circumstances, the people have—by and large—been left to find their own solutions. Their dependence upon government or outside agencies has remained superficial, and the society continues to adjust and adapt to changes in its environment; ever searching for a meaningful and viable existence for themselves and their family herds.

As detailed in earlier chapters, Harasiis household subsistence patterns have changed to accommodate the demands that have been made upon it. With the adoption of the four-wheel-drive vehicle, households were forced to enter the cash economy for no other reason than to find a means of operating their machines. Petrol costs alone swallowed most of the locally available monthly wages. Within a decade of adopting the vehicle, long periods of absence for higher wage labor by the young adult men became common, and a form of debt management arose whereby local tribal creditors provided support to families on the understanding that debts would be cleared annually either through the sale of larger livestock, through the prize money of a racing camel, or through the employee gratuities that were commonly awarded at the end of a year's service.

With the growing absence of young male household heads over long periods of time, it has become increasingly common to find hired household laborers from the Indian subcontinent looking after the needs of the larger livestock and undertaking the arduous task of hauling water long distances for the household and the herds. Women have become more mobile, using the vehicles to move and search for smaller livestock as well as to visit other women locally. Income-generating activities have begun to attract women's attention and a spontaneously implemented activity begun in the mid-1980s—the production of car key chains, stick shift covers, and other decorative items using traditional skills—has found some success in a few tourist outlets in the capital area.

Group self-reliance and interdependence among households sharing the same grazing areas is increasing. One can almost speak of neighborhood associations where the larger animal herds' needs for fodder and water are met in common, where increasing carpooling to the tribal center of Haima helps cut down on expenses, where short brief visits by both men and women among each other's households is greatly increased, and where information that once took days to travel across the Jiddat

now takes but hours. Still the herds, the camels, goat, and sheep, form the centrality of daily existence, and the Harasiis continue to search for the optimal adjustment to gain the best of both worlds—the modern cash-oriented economy and the one they know best.

Depending upon the definition or measure that is used, nomadic pastoralists are either thinning out or dying out altogether. Throughout the region, similar changes to those discussed here are taking place. In Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq, large-scale, ranching type systems operate at the expense of the small-scale pastoralists. The abuse of natural resources, the overgrazing and destruction of the grasslands, is finally in the 1990s being attributed to these large-scale entrepreneur livestock owners, who are generally not subsistence pastoralists. The Harasiis are, however, far removed from rich grazing lands, and, with no human competition for the extremely harsh lands they consider their own, they operate against simpler pressures. However, they, as pastoralists everywhere, hope for a better standard of living within their environment.

Until 1958 this small, remote nomadic pastoral community was totally isolated from the rest of the country by the sheer distances that had to be traversed before settled communities were reached. Nevertheless, they have adjusted to the very rapid changes in their physical, social, and technical universe. These adjustments continue with an internal logic that is often not understood or grasped at the national or international level. However, their very remoteness and inaccessibility has allowed the community to search, experiment, and, on occasion, adopt new ideas and tools in their fight for a meaningful pastoral existence in the midst of a rapidly changing world. Haima was a water hole in the 1970s, a tribal administrative center in the 1980s, and a promising provincial government capital in the 1990s. It has, in many ways, been the making of the Harasiis tribe.