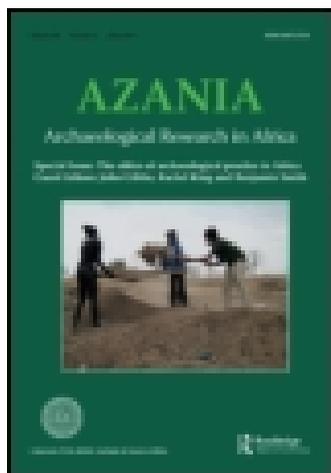


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Pastoralism in Africa: past, present and future

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BOOK REVIEWS

Pastoralism in Africa: past, present and future, edited by Michael Bollig, Michael Schnegg and Hans-Peter Wotzka. New York and Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2013, 544 pp., \$99.00/£62.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-85745-908-4. Also available as an e-book, ISBN 978-0-85745-909-1. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0067270X.2014.903130>

Scholars working on the Arid Climate Adaptation and Cultural Innovation in Africa (ACACIA) project have, since the project's inception in 1995, provided some of the continent's best research on the dynamics of pastoralist societies. Bollig, Schnegg and Wotzka's new edited volume represents the culmination of this project and it stands as an impressive collaborative effort between scholars at the University of Cologne, the University of Hamburg and other institutions worldwide. *Pastoralism in Africa: Past, Present and Future* is one of very few collections on pastoralism to attempt an integration of archaeological, historical and ethnographic perspectives and as such it deserves to be widely read.

An introductory chapter by Bollig and Schnegg lays out the history of research on pastoralism in Africa. Older models have stressed adaptations to arid and semi-arid environments, particularly mobility, and have emphasised the sustainability and long-term success of mobile pastoralist systems in these resource-patchy and drought-prone environments. Here, instability and change are emphasised instead. Economic specialisation and diversification are discussed as adaptive strategies and these two-way processes, the editors argue, have long characterised African herding societies. A later chapter by Bollig and Österle on the political ecology of pastoralism in East Pokot, Kenya, addresses this dynamic in depth. Overall, however, one gets the impression that despite the new models presented we are all still talking about the same (yet still relevant) issues, namely the variability and flexibility inherent in ecological, economic and political aspects of pastoralist life.

Part I comprises five chapters that summarise the prehistory of pastoralism in Africa. Archaeologists will find this section exceptionally useful. There are two chapters on early herding in northern Africa. Kuper and Reimer's sidesteps the question of cattle domestication, but the authors do present a highly readable introduction to the archaeology of the eastern Sahara, in which climate change is noted as the driving force behind economic and social change. The second chapter, by Jesse, Keding, Lenssen-Erz and Pöllath, is a two-part discussion of prehistoric pastoralism in the eastern Sahara of Sudan and Chad. They begin with an overview of the 'Leiterband Complex,' and conclude with a discussion about rock art and cattle-centric societies. Lane's review of the 'Pastoral Neolithic' in eastern Africa is thorough and integrates a wealth of older information with more recent data now available from north-central Kenya's Laikipia Plateau. Linseele covers the introduction(s) of domestic stock to West Africa and the later development of specialised pastoralism during the Iron Age, which seems to have co-occurred with the appearance of sedentary agricultural societies. In southern Africa, Sadr argues, there is now

little evidence to support the long-held idea that pastoralism as an economic and cultural system was introduced to southern Africa by immigrating Khoekhoe herders two thousand years ago. Hunter-gatherer populations at that time may have incorporated some livestock in small numbers into their subsistence and settlement systems, but only with later migrations does 'true' pastoralism finally appear. The reader will likely be struck by the diversity of pathways to animal-based food production throughout Africa now evident, and perhaps be impressed by the multiplicity of ways through which archaeologists have brought to light the deep histories of mobile peoples who would, it was once thought, leave very little of archaeological interest behind.

The rest of the volume's focus lies heavily on pastoralism in southwestern Africa, particularly Namibia, as might be expected. Five of six chapters in Part II, 'Historical and Contemporary Dynamics of Pastoralism' are about the nineteenth- and twentieth-century history of Namibian pastoralism. Contributions by Henrichsen, Bollig and Schnegg, Pauli and Greiner together provide a comprehensive picture of historical trajectories in this region. I am puzzled by the inclusion of Dieckmann's chapter on colonial 'settler pastoralists' and the bluntly celebratory tone she takes in describing the 'impressive achievements' of white Europeans in establishing commercial livestock farms. Botha's chapter on commercial ranching in Namibia takes a more sensitive perspective, acknowledging the devastating impacts white settlers had on indigenous pastoralist communities forced onto reserves.

Part III is a catch-all section entitled 'Violence, Trade, Conservation and Pastoralism in Africa.' The focus is on pastoralist economic systems that transcend national borders and on pastoralist relationships with states. Meerpohl documents historical changes in the trans-Saharan trade between eastern Chad and Libya, and Little's work explores the 'unofficial' cross-border livestock trade between Somalia and Kenya that drives much of the region's economy. Jánoszy and Jungstand study the conflicts in eastern Chad that arose when Zaghawa pastoralists came to power in the 1990s. Their work provides an important counter-narrative to the idea that all pastoralist groups in Africa are becoming increasingly economically and politically marginalised, and it speaks to complex factors that continue to play into ongoing tensions and indeed violence in many parts of the continent (e.g. in Sudan and South Sudan). Berzborn and Solich's research on pastoralists and state- or NGO-driven conservation efforts in southern Africa likewise holds international relevance, particularly as many actors in conservation movements now promote large-scale projects that cross far beyond national borders.

The concluding chapter is by John Galaty and, rather than commenting upon the work presented in previous chapters, he presents four entirely new case studies that ultimately speak to the future (or futures) of African pastoralism. He describes systems of mobility and territoriality employed by the Nuer, Fulbe, Maasai and Tswana and the ways in which those systems are structured by both local ecologies and varied social and political institutions. Galaty showcases both the diversity of pastoralist experience in Africa and the myriad ways in which contemporary African pastoralists actively negotiate their places within modern states and in global contexts. It is a thoughtful and fitting conclusion.

A book with such an ambitious title will surely leave some readers disappointed in something: limited discussion about pastoralist ecologies or lack of discussion about gender dynamics, development policies and any number of other relevant topics. Nevertheless the volume's coverage is impressive in scope and it should serve as an important reference for those interested in the deep history of African pastoralism and the tremendous extent of its influence today. The volume makes a strong contribution to the archaeological, historical and ethnographic literatures on African pastoralism and coheres as a collection worth far

more than the sum of its individual papers. The book is beautifully produced and is highly recommended for scholars of pastoralist systems in Africa, as well as for those elsewhere who might turn to the African case for deeper insight into the successes, failures and futures of pastoralist societies worldwide.

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Gobero: The no-return frontier. Archaeology and landscape at the Saharo-Sahelian borderland, edited by Elena A. A. Garcea. Frankfurt, Africa Magna Verlag. Journal of African Archaeology Monograph Series vol. 9. 2013, 312 pp., 195 figs, 63 tables, €69.80 (hardcover), ISBN 978-3-937248-34-9. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0067270X.2014.904073>

This much anticipated monograph presents the archaeological and palaeoenvironmental results of recent excavations at the site of Gobero, Niger. Thanks to an accidental discovery by palaeontologist Paul Sereno in 2000 and subsequent excavations led by Elena Garcea in 2005 and 2006, this fascinating site provides insight into the burial practices and cultural behaviours of Holocene hunter-gatherers and later pastoralists in central Niger between 9000 and 4500 BP. Despite shooting to fame in 2008 with a front cover story in *National Geographic*, however, the archaeological excavations were sadly cut short due to recent political instability in the region. This book provides a rare and valuable record of an occupation that is most likely now lost to the sands of time.

The Gobero complex, covering only a few kilometres in area, comprises eight sites located on ancient stabilised dunes on the edge of a small palaeolake. When it was first discovered, over 100 human skeletons were reported eroding from the surface, of which 70 were excavated and recorded. These burials shed important light on the cultural and bio-anthropological characteristics of early and later Holocene populations, distinguishing between two morphologically distinct populations with divergent burial practices. A wealth of material culture was also recovered, indicating occupational activities alongside the burials and demonstrating far-reaching Saharan, and subsequent Sahelian affinities.

The book is composed of 16 chapters and is divided into four sections, respectively titled *The Context*, *The Landscape*, *The Lithic and Ceramic Assemblages* and *Conclusions*. The book begins with a perceptive, albeit brief, discussion of the reductionist tendencies typical in Saharan archaeology, summarising some of the main problems and potentials in the chrono-cultural sequencing of this vast region. Unfortunately, this promising, theoretically inclined, first chapter is then followed by two report-like chapters dealing with the description of excavation methods and the topographic and archaeological mapping. Although useful in some respects, these are perhaps not the most interesting features of the Gobero site and could have been condensed into a single methodological chapter. Maga's somewhat oddly placed chapter on the illicit trade in archaeological goods in Niger, and the only one written in French, is placed in the middle of these introductory chapters. Whilst interesting in its own right, providing a thought-provoking assessment of the scale of illicit trade and the degree to which all levels of authority are implicated in it, I fail to see how it is relevant to the Gobero site monograph.