

# Pastoral Societies



As told by Dr. Frank Elwell

# Pastoral Societies

- ◆ Pastoral or herding societies represent an adaptation to specialized environmental conditions.
- ◆ Pastoralists cover roughly the same range of technological development as horticultural and agrarian societies.



# Pastoral Societies

- ◆ A pastoral society is one relying for its subsistence on domesticated herd animals.
- ◆ The first pastoral societies emerged between 10,000 and 12,000 years ago, when some hunting and gathering groups began to capture, breed, and tend species of wild animals they previously had hunted.



Flock of karakul sheep grazing in northern Afghanistan.



# Pastoral Societies

Animals were first domesticated about the same time as plants were first cultivated, and the two practices typically went hand in hand in the horticultural and agrarian societies of the Eurasia.





Pastoralists on the move. Here a Kurdish tribe of northern Iraq is pictured. Both donkeys and cattle are bearing packs.



# Pastoral Societies

This strategy has been adopted by many peoples living in deserts or other regions that are not suited to the cultivation of plants, but which contain animals--such as goats or sheep--that can be readily tamed and used as a food source.



Water is a problem in arid lands. Water is drawn from the well in leather bags and pulled up by a rope attached to the camel saddle. Afghanistan.





# Pastoral Societies

Many pastoral societies still exist in the modern world, particularly in Africa and in the Middle East. In some areas crop cultivation was severely limited because of insufficient rainfall, too short a growing season, or mountainous terrain.



# Pastoral Societies

Pastoralism is a much more reliable and productive strategy than hunting and gathering. It assures a steady food supply, and the size of the herds can be increased over time.



Encampment of nomadic pastoralists near Bojinoord, Iran. The tents are quickly erected and taken down.



# Pastoral Societies

While their communities are typically of small size (median of 72), societies are usually fairly large.



Villa Bruzzi, Somaliland.

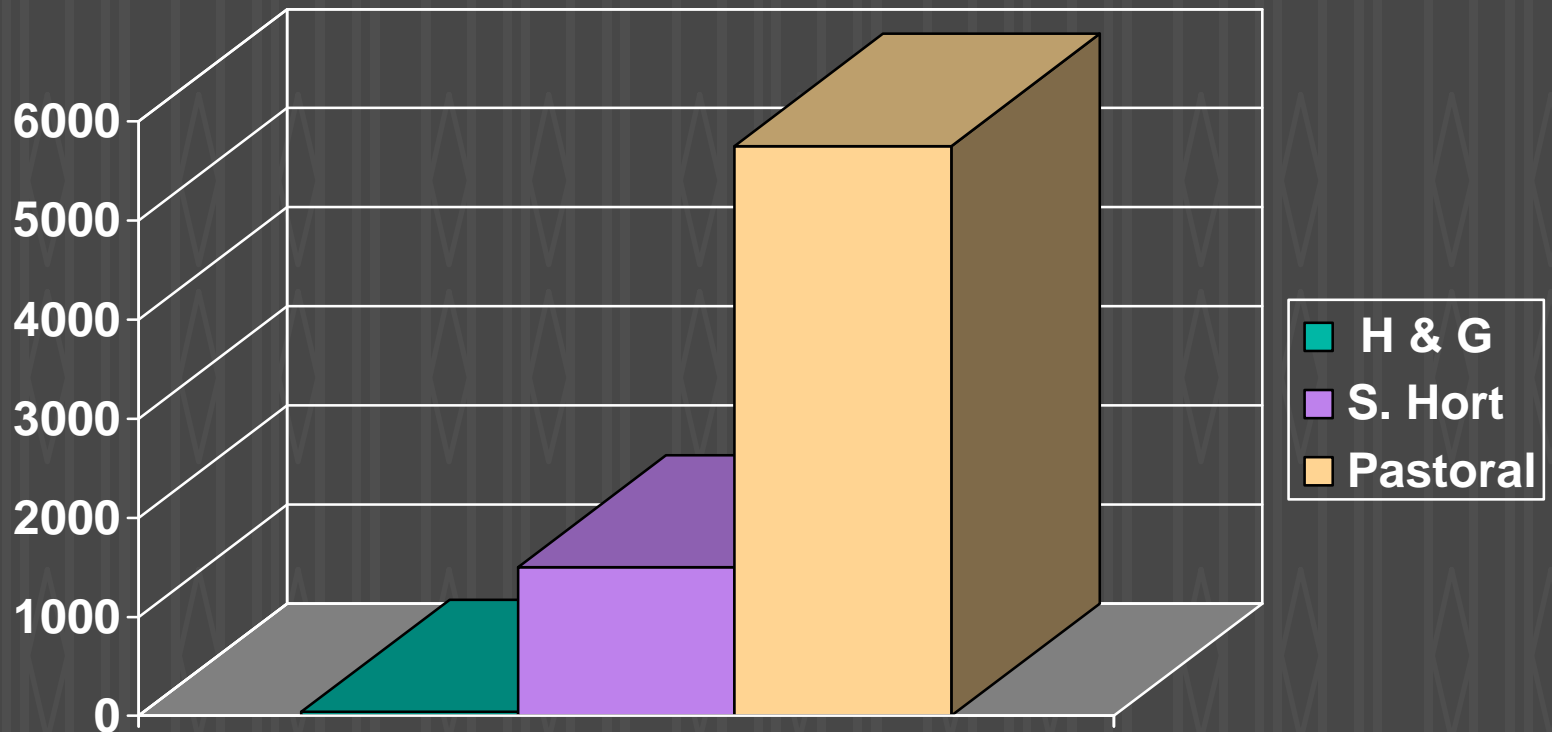




# Population

Producing more food results in society growing much larger, perhaps to include hundreds or even thousands of people.

# Median Population





# Surplus

The greater productivity of this strategy allows pastoralists to accumulate a surplus of goods.



# Inequality

For the first time, some individuals can become more powerful than others and can even pass on their status to their descendants.



Long-horned African cattle grazing near Kitega, Ruandi-Urundi.





# Inequality

Patterns of hereditary chieftainship begin to appear, as powerful and wealthy families are able to secure their positions.



# Nomadic

Pastoralists are usually nomadic because they must constantly take their herds to new grazing lands. As a result, their material possessions are few in number, but are more elaborate than those of hunting and gathering peoples because they can be carried on animals.



Livestock is the basic resource in herding societies, and the size of his herd is the measure of the man. Large herds signify not only wealth but power, for only a strong man can defend such vulnerable property: roundup time in Mongolia.



# Nomadic

Cultural artifacts in these societies therefore consist of items that are easily transportable -- tents, woven carpets, simple utensils, jewelry, and so on.



# Nomadic

Their nomadic way of life often brings pastoralists into contact with other groups. One consequence is the development of systematic trading; a second is that disputes over grazing rights frequently lead to intergroup fighting.





# Slavery

Slavery, unknown in hunting and gathering societies, makes its appearance as captives in battle are put to work for their conquerors.



# Religion

Pastoral peoples tend to develop a belief that is found in very few religions; they commonly believe in a God or gods who take active interest in human affairs and look after the people who worship them.



# Religion

This belief seems to have been suggested by the pastoralists' experience of the relationship between themselves and their flocks. The modern religions based on this view of the relationship between human beings and god-- Judaism and its offshoots, Christianity and Islam-- originated among pastoral peoples



# Summary

The subsistence strategy of pastoral societies thus provides distinctive social and cultural opportunities and limitations.



# Summary

Populations become larger, political and economic institutions begin to develop, and both structure and culture become more complex.