Title: Mauritania: nomadism and peripheral capital

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Abstract: In this chapter, the case of Mauritania serves as an example of recent transformations of Sahelian pastoral systems, the major factor in the evolution of these systems remaining their marginal integration into a monetary economy centred in towns. Not until the completion of colonization (1902-1934) was there substantial progress in the incorporation of the pastoral economy into the market economy. This progress can be seen particularly in the establishment of a market in cattle. An examination of the incomes and expenditure of nomad households demonstrates the transformations suffered by the Mauritanian nomadic way of life in relation to the advances of the dominant commodity sector. An analysis of the evolution of the social and political framework of nomadism pays attention to the role of livestock as a vehicle of social relations, and to the political control of the land, whose changes over the last 50 years have had a crucial effect on pastoral mobility. A description of the role of the Mauritanian State with respect to pastoralism shows that, since independence (1960), the authorities helped accelerate what has in recent years become a pronounced trend towards the sedentarization of nomads, and that the hierarchical structures of precolonial pastoral society have been largely transferred to the present Mauritanian State order. Notes, ref.