the future of pastoral peoples
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contents

foreword 7
participants 11
research priorities and pastoralist development: what is to be done? 15
opening addresses 27
the future of pastoral peoples R.S. Musangi 30
some remarks on the roles of advisers and advocates Philip Carl Salzman 32
the role of anthropology in pastoral development 39
development for nomadic pastoralists: who benefits? Dan R. Aronson 42
an anthropological approach to economic development Walter Goldschmidt 52
research priorities in pastoral studies: an agenda for the 1980s Michael M. Horowitz 61
livestock and livelihood: a handbook for the 1980s Daniel G. Bates and Francis Paine Conant 89
the failure of pastoral economic development programs in Africa Walter Goldschmidt 101
the anthropologist as mediator Emanuel Marx 119
the political economy of pastoralism 127
political factors in the future of pastoral peoples Philip Carl Salzman 130
herds, trade, and grain: pastoralism in a regional perspective Anders Hjort 135
evolution of policy toward the development of pastoral areas in Kenya S.E. Migot-Adholla and Peter D. Little 144
theoretical implications of pastoral development strategies in east Africa Peter Rigby 157
pasture in the Malian Gourma: habitation by humans and animals André Bourgeot 165
education for nomadic pastoralists: development planning by trial and error John A. Nkinyangi 183
the economics of pastoralism 197
production in pastoral societies Gudrun Dahl 200
livestock as food and money H.K. Schneider 210
economic institutions and pastoral resources management: considerations for a development strategy Peter N. Hopcraft 224
consumption and marketing of pastoral products among the Kal Tamacheq in the Niger Bend, Mali Ag Hama 244
women and pastoral development: some research priorities for the social sciences Vigdis Broch-Due, Elsie Garfield, and Patti Langton 251
recent changes in bedouin systems of livestock production in the syrian steppe Faik A. Bahhady 258

the role of government in pastoral development 267
organizing government’s role in the pastoral sector Stephen Sandford 270
organizations for pastoral development: contexts of causality, change, and assessment John G. Galaty 284
bedouin settlement: organizational, legal, and administrative structure in jordan Kamel S. Abu Jaber and Fawzi A. Gharaibeh 294
sedentarization of the nomads: sudan Mustafa Mohamed Khogali 302
sedentarization of nomadic pastoralists and “pastoralization” of cultivators in mali Salmane Cissé 318
livestock development and range use in nigeria Moses O. Awogbade 325
planning policy and bedouin society in oman Mohsin Jum’a Mohammed 334

the research process: strategies, goals, and methods 337
a methodology for the inventory and monitoring of pastoral ecosystem processes H.J. Croze and M.D. Gwynne 340
indigenous models of time and space as a key to ecological and anthropological monitoring Rada Dyson-Hudson 353
the collection and interpretation of quantitative data on pastoral societies: reflections on case studies from ethiopia Ayele Gebre Mariam 359
relevance of the past in projections about pastoral peoples Daniel Stiles 370

references 379
women and pastoral development: some research priorities for the social sciences

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We are making a plea for researchers in the 1980s to focus some attention on the position of women in pastoral societies. At present, there is little known about their contributions or the ways in which they shape development. Many theories have been advanced to suggest that this is a natural result of women's biological and social reproductive function. Women are seen as victims of their bodies: child-bearing, breast-feeding, and child-rearing automatically excluding them from viable political and economic participation. It is our contention that women do not occupy this position because of intrinsic biological factors. A consideration of the organization of labour, and of who controls the system of exchange, will reveal the ideological and power structure of the society, which results in women's subservient economic position and status. Discovering how labour is divided by sex and age and how the division of labour relates to the internal social and political organization of society is perhaps a first step toward a well-rounded view. It is needed not only for itself but also for its use by individuals trying to assess the impact of changing access to productive resources stemming from internal and external forces. Commercialization of the economy, sedentarization, and introduction of new economic opportunities and activities, such as wage labour and agricultural production, all imply substantial changes within the pastoral social system and, in particular, in the opportunities and resulting role and status of women.

We acknowledge that all consideration of social process should take account of the social and technical division of labour and in fact encompass all levels of social interaction. Women's situation is part of an age and sexual differentiation. Men also are not equal within societies; however, their access to power and influence varies in relation to different stages in the development cycle of the household and the wider society.

Participants in this conference are mainly addressing the problems facing pastoral groups in terms of economic viability and herd size and structure. As social scientists, we feel that our concern should be mainly with people and their interaction with their resources and that research priorities for the 1980s must be to examine the theoretical level of social change in relation to planning and development. Development policymaking should be based on a total picture of pastoral society, with an understanding of the relationships, activities, and attitudes mediated by sex and age.
One of the major research priorities is to find a valid definition of the concept of "household unit." In traditional settings it is likely that the boundaries of the household network will be far-reaching, and the consumption unit may well extend beyond the boundaries of the production unit. Change in production methods will probably alter this relationship. Research priorities should be to analyze the impact of socioeconomic change within the household in addition to the usual focus between households. Patterns of management can be observed at the level of the household where it operates as a corporate group. However, the externally corporate character of the household units should not lead one to overlook the internal contradictions based on sex.

It is evident that, in agricultural and pastoral societies in Africa, men and women often engage in different productive activities that form the basis for separate sources of income, different support obligations within the household, and different decision-making roles. There are numerous examples that socioeconomic change and ecological stress do not affect male and female household members in the same manner. Likewise, the adoption of technical change and participation in government programs designed to improve welfare have in many cases had a different impact on different household members.

In the past, women's roles have been neglected by development planners and social science researchers. With the exception of Horowitz's comments, women were not mentioned at this conference until a special request was made. This has serious implications for research priorities on pastoral peoples as well as the information base for development planning. In almost every development project, men have been the target group. It has been taken for granted that men are the providers for the household. Consequently, access to new productive resources and activities like cash-crop production and skilled wage labour has often excluded women. The critical role of women in the household economy is neglected. The problem in much former research has been that women have been considered as passive participants in their social world. This bias has at least partly been a reflection of researchers' being preoccupied with the formal power structure of pastoral societies, which implies male control of family and economic activities through decision-making. Yet, there are important areas of decision-making for women as well as ways they have of influencing male decisions.

Many social anthropologists have shown the importance of considering the wider sets of constraints and incentives that channel individual choices. To assess women's influence in a society, one must look at more than moral injunctions or jural rules, both of which stress the woman's duty to obey her male relatives. Women's courses of action appear intelligible only if women are seen as actors, whose strategies are channeled by cultural values, resources, and choices available in the social system. As new resources enter the arena, both men and women seek advantage from the new opportunities, and the course of social change reflects the complex interplay of male and female tactics as well as the differential options meted out by change agencies.

In other words, an analysis of pastoral society should take into account women's roles as members of a production and household unit; in the kinship system as members of a family and lineage; and in marriage as members of inheritance structures. It should also look into their labour input;
their position in decision-making; their investment in the market system as traders and buyers; and their potential investment in the livestock trade. A possible analytic tool might be to distinguish between the domestic and public spheres of interaction. Therefore, we suggest that research priorities should be to examine carefully:

- Differential access to productive resources/property relations;
- Division of labour by sex and age;
- Support obligations and sources of income of different family members;
- Decision-making within the household; and
- Cultural—cognitive categories.

Each of these categories should provide a wealth of information about pastoral society and should be examined from the viewpoint of how it is affected by socioeconomic change. Examination should not be restricted to a linear analysis but should take into account the history, as well as the place of the social system within a wider ethnic and national context. The influence of local and national governments, as well as neighbouring groups, in the evolution of a society cannot be ignored in an analysis of socioeconomic change.

**access to productive resources**

In the pastoral setting where land is communal, ownership of livestock, as the key productive resource, is especially worthy of investigation. The issue of rights to livestock within the family is complex. A misconception — prominent in the thinking of development planners — is that cattle are solely controlled by men, although women may possibly have special rights to sheep and goats. In fact, animals are often allocated to individuals within the family but herded as a group. We believe that if so-called ownership or control were examined in more precise terms, a somewhat more complex picture would emerge, showing that women have certain rights over livestock. Ownership or control could be divided into:

- Herding rights;
- Alienation or disposal rights; for example, in many pastoral groups in East and West Africa, consent of the wife or son is often required when the head of the herd wants to dispose of one of their animals;
- Rights to use the milk and other produce; and
- Inheritance rights.

In some societies, women do the milking and the processing and have a right to sell milk or use it as butter for sale. In some pastoral societies, women are also allocated cattle at the time of their marriage and on the marriage of close kin. Although a young woman may have only milk rights in an animal, older women actually own the cattle.

The importance of this issue can be seen from example. After the herds of the Fulani and Tuareg of the West African Sahel were decimated by drought, a government/international donor agency project was undertaken to assist in restocking the herds. It was assumed that the men were the owners of all the cattle, and they were given the rights to the new animals. Although the men were able to replace their cattle, the women (who had rights to a certain portion of the original herd) complained that their cattle were not replaced.
Land is the other key resource. In the traditional setting it is usually communally held. With the process of commercialization of the economy, privatization of property (and resources), and increasing land constraints, the relationship of pastoralists to this resource is extremely important.

division of labour

Comparative studies are needed that explicitly delineate the activities undertaken by men, women, and children among both pastoralists and agriculturalists. It would also be useful to know the relative amount of time spent by each in these activities. This might indicate the feasibility of introducing income- or produce-generating activities as well as telling something about the relative work burden of men and women. Possibly most important, it would provide a more complete framework for analyzing the effects of government policy, sedentarization, and the incorporation of agricultural activities into the pastoral economy.

Although the economic factors are important, understanding them is necessary but not sufficient to understanding change. It is essential to examine the entire cultural and social matrix.

support obligations, sources of income, and decision-making of different household members

To understand the implications of socioeconomic change in the pastoral sector, including the interaction with the encompassing society, one needs to know more about obligations to provide goods and services to the household. What is the relative contribution of men and women to the food supply? As production begins to generate cash, how do the husband and wife allocate their income? Is it possible that men may use surpluses to save for restocking and women use their income solely for food and household maintenance? And, very importantly, what implications does the possible transition from milk to beef production, which seems to be strongly advocated by development planners, have for men's and women's access to capital, income, and social status?

Earlier in this paper, we briefly discussed the importance of a consideration of the decision-making roles of women in pastoral society. We want to stress that women do play an active role in decision-making in both the domestic and the public spheres. This can be neglected by researchers if they concentrate only on the male head of the household or formal structures.

cultural—cognitive factors

Each society has its own cultural definition of sexual differentiation. Differently conceived expectations of what constitutes femininity and masculinity are mediated through cognitive categories. The sex roles in the society can be regarded as an organizational device generated by a specific set of cultural values and preferences as well as ecological, economic, and technological factors. Therefore, the specific form of any social system cannot be understood solely in terms of adaptation to the productive system.
summary and conclusions

In summary, we feel that there is a need to develop a well-rounded view of pastoral society and to ensure that the study of social change is a study of people — men, women, and children — and not just abstract units, such as households. It has been suggested that economic development — in particular changes from one production system to another — often leads to a situation where women lose power and status. They find that their traditional fields of control do not have the same significance in the new context. For instance, case studies have shown that the transition from subsistence agriculture to the production of cash crops for an external market has adversely affected women's position. The findings were that men accrued the benefits of cash-crop production, whereas women's work burden increased and they became marginal producers in the increasingly important market economy. Such studies have led scholars to generalize that economic development per se has adversely affected women; another possible interpretation is that development policy is the underlying problem because it concentrates on men as cash earners and decision-makers and fails to view women as participants.

Some encouraging results have come from recent studies in pastoral settings in Kenya — for the Somali, Maasai, and Turkana. The findings seem to show that socioeconomic change has led to greater economic opportunities and control over resources and decision-making for these pastoral women. However, to conclude that pastoral women will gain more by development than agricultural women is too simple, as are any generalizations that ignore the great diversity of social-cultural systems, environmental conditions, and the nature of new economic possibilities (e.g., scale of production, type of technology, etc.) and how they are introduced or evolve.

We recommend that researchers try to construct a model, an analytical framework that can identify the crucial set of variables defining women's status and potential under divergent and changing conditions. We have identified some critical factors for study, and we hope that social scientists will take them up in a search for a more valid understanding of the trends of cultural and socioeconomic change so that they can clarify the emerging patterns of social organization.

discussion

Horowitz: The fallacious assumption in many projects is that their impact on women and children is irrelevant. We need to anticipate in development the implications of projects for all sectors of society so that we don't later realize that effects on women, for instance, are disastrous. Our information on female functions is inadequate, in part because of constraints on the gathering of data. A profound difference exists between women who are employed outside the home and those who are not, and such tendencies are exaggerated through change. In the Sudan, the anthropologist Muneera Salem-Murdock is conducting research on the impact of sedentarization of Arabic-speaking pastoral women on the New Halfa Agricultural Scheme. She is especially concerned with how the scheme leads to increased social differentiation — with some households able to mobilize capital and labour, expanding their control, and other households being forced into an agrarian
proletariat. Women from the lowest classes appear to be entering the wage labour market. This study, part of the Institute for Development Anthropology's comparative study of agricultural potential of new lands settlement, will continue in the field until January 1982.

Khogali: There is a sharp difference between the domestic economy and production processes of the Beja (Red Sea region) and the Shukriya (Butana region) women, on the one hand, and the women in Western Sudan, on the other hand, both nomadic and settled. Women in Western Sudan do much and, in some cases most, of the work of production. Besides cultivating and herding, many women work as hired labourers in construction. On the other hand, the Beja and Shukriya women do not take part in production, and they are not allowed to do certain work, such as milking the animals, that we consider domestic. Among the Tuareg, women have greater access to means of production but are still dominated by men, so their role in production is not valued. In war and trade, men appear dominant.

I have the impression that the speaker wants to see women as actors and decision-makers. Why? Taking part in production and decision-making does not necessarily liberate women. In the nomadic and settled populations of the Western Sudan, women do much work related to production; in fact, in parts of the Nuba hills, women do most if not all the cultivation. Yet they are not liberated. We should address ourselves to this predicament.

Broch-Due: When studying men's activities, no one asks whether they are "liberated." The questioner asks why we want to see women as actors. We respond that women are, by virtue of being human, actors and decision-makers. What we are interested in, as with studies of the male side of the society, is what relation they have with the general social, hierarchical, and production aspects of the social system. Then we can analyze how changes that are introduced will influence their positions, strategies, and choices.

Salzman: In addition to changes for women brought about by changes in productive and exchange activities, there are also those brought about by changes in the administrative structure resulting from encapsulation of the local population by the state and by increased state intervention. Women may have little access to the administrative apparatus and little influence in decision-making. There may be a loss in control compared with previous times when decisions and administration were controlled by local groups.

Services provided by the government may also affect men and women differently. Education is a channel of mobility, and if women have less access to it than men, they will be disadvantaged accordingly. Similarly, medical services may be more available to men than women — for example among Muslims the modesty code prevents male practitioners from contact with unrelated women.

Ssennyonga: This suggested program on the role of women in pastoral societies neglects their reproductive role, which — as pastoral societies are noted for their low population densities and rates of reproduction — is very significant. We need to know more about reproduction. Indeed, the conference has dwelt on pastoral production to the neglect of reproduction. I suggest women will find it easier to study reproduction among pastoral groups. In Kenya, for example, among the Kalenjiin, there are matters (such as female circumcision) from which even native males are excluded.
Sandford: Governments and their officials are just as much actors in the pastoral sector as are pastoralists and cultivators. They equally merit anthropological study if we are to understand better their interaction with pastoralists. We need, for example, to study the life cycles of officials in pastoral areas to understand why they behave the way they do. The problems of providing services (such as health) to pastoral women would particularly be alleviated by such a study of the lives of women officials. Apart from a paper by Robert Chambers ("Administrators — a neglected factor in pastoral development") and Anders Hjort's Savannah Town, little has been done in this area so far.

van Drunen: Better health care for nomadic women needs more than simply the replacement of male doctors by female doctors. Remoteness from health services in simple emergencies that arise from delivery and pregnancy subjects nomadic women of childbearing age to risks much greater than those that settled women experience. Health care has to be adapted to that kind of need; it may also require a greater degree of stabilization for the women. Child spacing and birth control are not easily organized. In Somalia, with shorter breast-feeding periods, partly due to anemia, and because of shorter terms of pregnancy, also due to anemia, it is not unusual to see 8-month gaps between babies. At the worst, there is a relation between poverty, poor diet, anemia, less breast-milk, and more-quickly fertile women but less healthy placenta. These problems, like all so-called female or male problems, need the cooperation and understanding of both sexes.

Broch-Due: Studies indicate that health among pastoral people is in fact better than among settled people. Settlement can in fact exacerbate health problems through undesirable changes in diet, infection due to proximity, and the psychologic stress of a new lifestyle. Health workers have found that children in the nomadic setting have a better life expectancy than do their settled neighbours. This situation can of course be upset by severe drought.

Conant: Women's reproductive role should be a priority research goal in the 1980s. The literature on tropical medicine indicates that women have as high mortality in childbirth as men do in raiding. Women in some East African pastoral societies attempt to increase the interval between births by prolonging lactation and enforcing the postpartum taboo on intercourse. These strategies need further study.

Salzman: Having seen young women in the herding camp where I lived in Baluchistan die unnecessarily from childbirth complications (although medical services were available in the administrative centre), I can attest to the misfortune that can result from reproduction in nomadic herding camps. But to suggest, as has just been done, that women have no control over their own reproduction and that all difficulties flow from men's lack of concern gravely distorts reality. Women's own priorities and commitments, especially with regard to having children, are crucial elements of the system. Men and women share a common culture, and women participate in it and believe in it, even though it may have costs for them.