the future of pastoral peoples
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the future of pastoral peoples

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I am not a pastoralist. I do not own livestock, do not herd livestock, do not husband livestock. I do not require access to pasture, watering holes, or salt licks. I do not depend for my livelihood upon the well-being of livestock or upon the favourable disposition of markets and authorities to livestock. This means that I do not have an immediate, material stake in pastoralism, that I am not at risk from the tribulations, recurrent or unique, cyclic or cumulative, of pastoralism. I am also uninvolved in the sense that I am safe, protected, and sheltered; and dissociated in the sense that I am independent, self-sufficient, and distant. I do not produce milk and meat; I produce arguments and documents. I do not husband animals and organize herding groups; I husband ideas and organize conferences. My interest in pastoralism is an academic one. I am interested in two senses: I find pastoralism an intellectually stimulating subject of inquiry, and my livelihood depends to some extent upon my producing arguments and documents about pastoralism. My interests are neither the same as those of pastoralists nor held in common with them. Consequently, when I speak about pastoralism, I speak as an outsider, with little risk. And speaking thusly is presumptuous in that a right to speak about the interests of others is presumed. It is worth reflecting upon the basis of this presumption.

There is a second respect in which I am an outsider: I am a foreigner in countries that have populations of pastoral people. I do not live within the constraints imposed by the circumstances and resources of those countries, nor is my personal destiny tied in any direct way to developments, beneficial or harmful, in those countries. Once again, because I am not a compatriot, I do not share the risks or pay the costs.

In yet another respect I am an outsider: I am an academic with largely scholarly and theoretical interests. My work has little of a directly practical character; I am not very much involved in applied anthropology. Even less do I have any practical responsibility as a planner or administrator. And because the problems that we are concerned with — those bearing upon the future of pastoral peoples — are preeminently of a practical nature, I find myself somewhat disinvolved and distant, in spite of my sentiments and concerns.

Now I have gone on at some length speaking about myself, stressing my separation from the subjects of our concern and from the tasks at hand. I
have started with myself as a referent, but what I have said applies to one degree or another to almost all of us here: few of us at this conference on the future of pastoral peoples are pastoralists. Many of us are foreigners. Most of us do not have any practical responsibility, in either planning or administration of programs bearing directly upon pastoral peoples. Many of us are or have been advisers or advocates of practical measures that would affect particular pastoralists, but some of us have not been involved even to this extent. So the distance and the safety of which I have been speaking are shared to some extent by most of us here.

The safety and distance of our individual positions raise in my mind the question of our right to advise and to advocate, of our right to intervene in ways, from analysis of current problems to recommendations for policy, that could have profound effects on the lives of pastoralists, that could impinge upon the interests of pastoralists as they themselves define their interests. Do not misunderstand me: I neither ignore nor denigrate the import of our professional expertise and its potential for making a constructive contribution or our disinterested concern with its component of altruism. But I do see something of an ethical dilemma in interfering in the lives of others from a safe distance. What right have we to act, even given the best of intentions and profoundest knowledge, when we are not subject to the consequences of our acts?

It is hardly difficult to be aware of an ethical dilemma; certainly we are faced with dilemmas such as this continually in all aspects of our lives. It is even less difficult to find a myriad of good reasons not to act. The more difficult question is how to circumvent the dilemma satisfactorily and to lay the groundwork for action that can be considered justified under the circumstances.

I would like to begin a consideration of this particular dilemma, the right of the safe outsider to intervene in or to ignore the lives of pastoralists, by reference to the concept of liberty, especially to the distinction, discussed by Isaiah Berlin (1969), between the negative and positive concepts of liberty. I shall not attempt to convey the subtleties of Berlin's elegant argument, so I hope the simplicity of my summary will be forgiven. The negative concept of liberty emphasizes one's ability to act without constraint and interference from others. This is the classic, 19th century English concept associated with John Stuart Mill. The positive concept of liberty emphasizes the ability to fulfill oneself through development of one's real nature with no artificial hindrance. This is a continental perspective of Hegelian derivation.

Each of these notions of liberty can be seen as a criticism of the other. From the perspective of the positive concept, the negative concept is highly inadequate: What is the good (it would argue) of being left to act autonomously if one does not have the resources, spiritual or material, to act in an effective fashion? Is this liberty, to be not interfered with when one is starving, not to be constrained from living as an animal? But from the perspective of the negative concept of liberty, the positive concept is intrusive and thus self-contradictory: to define the terms of fulfillment (it would argue) is to constrain one from being oneself. Must we then ensure that people fulfill themselves, even if they "in their ignorance" would not act to do so? Does this not put us in the position of forcing people to be free? This is liberty?

Now, what I would suggest is that in the role of adviser and advocate we are put in the position of being adherents of the positive concept of liberty.
We analyze "problems"; we indicate goals and means to those goals; we speak to the "needs" and "interests" of the "target population"; we project the "improved" state of affairs that will be the consequence of implementing our advice; we act, in short, to provide conditions in which our "clients" can "improve" themselves or develop their potential, their "better" selves. We can thus find ourselves — and I am here painting the bleakest position, one that we are prone to take by the nature of our tasks, even though we may be aware of the problem and attempt to avoid it — acting in what we take to be "interests" of pastoralists but in actuality acting against their wills, preferences, and sense of who they are. By acting, whether purposely or inadvertently, as adherents of the positive concept of liberty, we are taking responsibility even though we are not responsible, are establishing conditions and constraints even though we are not subject to them, are generating consequences even though we will not suffer them.

And, yet, how can we hold the negative concept of liberty and fulfill our role as adviser and advocate; how can we hold the negative concept and do good where it is needed? Is it desirable to leave pastoralists to their fates? Do they not need support, assistance, protection, encouragement, and guidance under the new and trying conditions of the modern world? Must we leave them to be free to starve, to fall behind, to stumble under the burden of their ever heavier lot?

Dare I propose an answer to this dilemma? Or perhaps the real question is whether we dare to avoid addressing this dilemma, for if we do not try to answer it, where will we be? What I would say, the answer I would propose — and I certainly claim no special originality here — is that we propose, and the pastoralists dispose: that is, we advise and advocate, and the pastoralists decide. In this way, we can bring to bear our honest disinterestedness and our informed expertise for defining alternative courses of change and development, alternative kinds of projects and forms of assistance, and for specifying the consequences — economic, social, and cultural — of choosing one or the other of the alternatives. The pastoralists would then have to make a choice — and the ways in which such decisions might come about require separate consideration — according to their best judgment. Thus the pastoralists themselves would determine to the greatest possible extent their own destiny, rather than having their destiny determined for them by outsiders. And we, as advisers and advocates, would not be put in the false position of taking responsibility where we cannot be held responsible and putting others at risk while we ourselves suffer no risk.

I am reminded of the repulsion I have felt from time to time when encountering self-proclaimed enemies of pastoralists, of nomads, of tribal peoples; enemies with diverse origins and situations, from that of centrally appointed regional governor to that of reconstructed, reeducated, recultured tribesman; enemies with, to be sure, the best of intentions and also the best of certainties about what would be best for the poor, benighted pastoralists. "They are poor, ignorant, dirty. They do not like to work. They move around for no good reason. They are backward, hardly better than animals in their habits. They need progress, or modernization, or civilization; they need to settle in villages, have bath houses and schools, and learn to speak our language" so the refrain goes. Well, these are certainties that are less than certain to me. What I am more certain of is that I see no particular good
reason that such certainties should be imposed upon pastoralists, and even less reason that outsiders should be involved in such imposition.

This is why I believe it morally imperative that pastoralists not be target populations but decision-makers, not recipients of programs but collaborators in the formation of such programs, not pupils but consultants, not dependents but independent actors. Our job should not be to constrain choices but to enable them, not to impose solutions but to facilitate decisions about alternative solutions.

Now it is always ennobling to do the right thing, to do the moral and ethical thing, and so to do good. But there is more than doing good in allowing pastoralists to choose for themselves. There is also the possibility of doing well, in the sense of working effectively, by letting people make decisions for themselves. And we have not, so it seems, been doing very well. According to many authorities, as exemplified by Goldschmidt in his background paper, we have not been doing well at all, for our proposals and our projects for modernizing and developing pastoralists have not been succeeding in terms of their own objectives. What I would suggest is that one major reason for the high rate of failure is the lack of participation of the pastoralists in the planning and in the decision-making. Exactly the way in which lack of pastoral participation in planning and decision-making hurts the projects might vary; perhaps, some projects are not well-conceived because the extant pastoral system is ill-understood. Perhaps the multiple consequences of the project, whether in the sphere targeted by the objectives or related economic, social, and cultural spheres, are not taken into account. Or perhaps the project is well-conceived, but because it is imposed from the outside and because the pastoralists have not participated in its construction, they have no faith in it and no commitment to it and thus do not give it a chance. Whichever one or combination of these factors is at work inhibiting the success of our projects, active participation of pastoralists in all phases of planning and decision-making will improve prospects for success. And with luck, we can be doing well by doing good.

But if the solution to our problems, or at least some alleviation of our difficulties, is so obvious, why have we for the most part not included pastoralists in planning and decision-making? The reasons are several, some political and some cultural. One reason is our stereotype of the pastoralist. Once again, I would like to draw upon the apt insights of Isaiah Berlin. Quoting the Greek poet Archilochus who says, "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing," Berlin (1978) argues that

... taken figuratively, the words can be made to yield a sense in which they mark one of the deepest differences which divide writers and thinkers, and, it may be, human beings in general. For there exists a great chasm between those, on one side, who relate everything to a single central vision, one system, less or more coherent or articulate, in terms of which they understand, think and feel — a single, universal, organizing principle in terms of which alone all that they are and say has significance — and, on the other side, those who pursue many ends, often unrelated and even contradictory, connected, if at all, only in some de facto way, for some psychological or physiological |or, I would add, social | cause, related by no moral or aesthetic principle; these last lead lives, perform acts, and entertain ideas that are centrifugal rather than centripetal, their
thought is scattered or diffused, moving on many levels, seizing upon the essence of a vast variety of experiences and objects for what they are in themselves, without, consciously or unconsciously, seeking to fit them into, or exclude them from, any one unchanging, all-embracing, sometimes self-contradictory and incomplete, at times fanatical, unitary inner vision.

Thus the single-minded hedgehog and the multiple-interest fox. And how does this bear upon our stereotype of the pastoralist? What I would argue is that we tend to see pastoralists as hedgehogs, knowing one big thing, subsistence livestock rearing, very well, being highly committed and single-mindedly focused upon herding and husbandry. It is because we see pastoralists as hedgehogs, narrowly focused and single minded, that we, or many of us at least, do not think that pastoralists are up to dealing with the rapid changes and extreme complexities of the modern world. How could these pastoralists, goes the hedgehog stereotype, take into account the supralocal, the national, the international influences that impinge upon them; how could they understand the complex consequences of continuing as they are or shifting this way or that; how could they choose intelligently between alternative courses of action? The pastoralists, continues the stereotype, know only one thing, even if well, and although it was once a big thing, it is no longer big enough or apt enough. So, the argument based upon the stereotype would conclude, pastoralists are hardly competent to be collaborators, consultants, and decision-makers.

My view is contrary to the stereotype of pastoralists as hedgehogs; I would say that most pastoralists are much more like foxes, pursuing many ends and moving on many levels. It has often been observed that, whatever our ideal—typical conceptualization and whatever the special claims of folk ideologies, so-called pastoralists are almost always involved in a number of productive activities other than raising livestock. I myself have argued that most so-called pastoralists are in fact fully involved in multiresource, mixed economies. And Rada Dyson-Hudson (1972) has demonstrated that peoples' claims that they are primarily pastoralists can be gross distortions of the behavioural reality. More recently, Harold Schneider (1982) has argued that we misunderstand what pastoralists are up to if we think they are producing food to consume; rather, pastoralists view livestock in a much more flexible, open-ended, opportunistic fashion. "These animals," Schneider states, "to one degree or another play the role of... money, media of exchange, stores of value, standards of value, liquid reserves, standards of deferred payment and means of deferred payment," and are thus "...wealth, an asset to be manipulated in whatever way will bring the best return." This means, in the more or less usual multiresource economy, that each owner plays off the resources of the livestock sector against resources in other sectors of involvement. Does this not, in fact, fit in with our image of the family head, who is not to be found in the pasture chasing animals but is instead either coordinating the multiple activities of various dependants or gathering information from peers about the conditions and circumstances of all the sectors in which he has interests? Yes, the successful family head is usually very foxy, both in the sense of being involved in many different things and in the sense of making astute judgments about a multitude of tactics and strategies and transactions. These pastoralists, I
would argue, are well-suited to involvement in planning and decisions about their future and the fate of their children.

discussion

Sandford: The notion of "let the pastoralists themselves decide" cannot be dissociated from the social structure and the question of how they decide and who decides. That is, one cannot differentiate the principle of pastoralists' making their own decisions from the precise way this will be done. If the existing political and social structure in pastoral society is inequitable, the decisions will also likely be inequitable.

Willby: The comments made early in the paper apply just as well to most forms of external development aid and not just to development of pastoral economies. However, much of what is said is only being wise after the event. A major handicap (in drawing on pastoral perspectives) has been weak participation of pastoralists in national governments and other institutions due generally to poor education, etc.

Awogbade: This paper concentrates on pastoralists (as an entity) rather than on all poor rural peoples. Instead, pastoralists should be seen as part of the total population of neglected rural dwellers whose environment has been subjected to physical and socioeconomic changes. In this respect, it would be desirable to ask what role these people should play in their own development and how they should be prepared. No society is static, and the theory based on a nomadic stereotype must be viewed with caution.

Ssennyonga: The first part of this paper highlights the moral and ethical issues that an academic faces. It assumes each academic deals directly with the pastoralist. The second part represents a changed position; the academic identifies with development changes initiated among the pastoralists that may have gone wrong. The author does not tell us how he has participated — did he directly initiate change or was he advising the government or other agencies? If the latter, then there is now an intermediary between the anthropologist and the pastoralist. I would have liked to hear more about the relationships between the three — scholar, government, and pastoralist. For example, the anthropologist now finds himself merely consulted by those who make changes. In Third World countries, the native scholars' funds come from their own government, and less detachment is expected of them. At stake is the future not only of the pastoralist but also of the anthropologist.

Salzman: As the title of the paper indicates, the anthropologist-adviser — whether to pastoralists or to outside agents — finds himself or herself in an ethical dilemma. This problem is compounded for Third World scholars, who depend upon their government for funding, because their direct interests are then tied to government, with its power to impose changes on pastoral (or other) peoples. Therefore, in my view, the anthropologist is obliged to press for local decision-making.

Horowitz: Salzman has addressed the ethics of decision-making. In practical terms, most rural development in the last 30 years or so has been imposed, and we all agree it hasn't worked with transhumant and migratory peoples. There is a wide discrepancy between what is happening and what we think is happening with these peoples. It would be beneficial to have more shared
information and informed speculation about the likely consequences of various development projects.

*Mpaayei:* Pastoral communities — the Maasai for instance — are not static. They respond to change, and they themselves change individually and as communities. They are not the same people they were; in 1911 when the Maasai in the south of Kenya were separated from the Sampur in the north, the two groups dressed exactly the same. Now they look quite different after only 70 years.

*Carr:* There are other myths about pastoralists. For instance, changes are not always in response to external forces; they may be internally generated.