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“Roles, Status and Niches: A Comparison of Peripatetic and Pastoral Women in
Afghanistan”

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ROLES, STATUS AND NICHES : A COMPARISON OF
PERIPATETIC AND PASTORAL WOMEN IN AFGHANISTAN

Aparna Rao

"The females not only perform the labour, but occupy the places of the men ... and gradually acquiring all those privileges which are held to be the proper portion of the male sex ... she throws out the taunt, 'If I have the labour, I will also have the amusement!'"

- Lord Shaftesbury's Speech on the Ten Hours' Factory Bill, House of Commons, Hansard, 15 March 1844 (quoted in Hollis 1979:77)

It has often been suggested that in complex societies the status of women is lower than it is in simpler societies. Further, "women's roles and status in stratified societies are affected to a significant extent by class position" (Bourguignon 1980:326). In this paper I propose to examine the postulate that in a stratified society women belonging to low-ranking groups will enjoy higher status within their respective groups than women of high-ranking groups of the same larger society will within their own groups. This relatively high status may be in conflict with the models of women's status as set forth by the high-ranking, and dominant groups. Consequently, such low-ranking groups may well be impeded in the articulation of their own, alternative models, as Ardener (1975:xii) has suggested for women in general; but as Okely (1975:68-78) has shown for 'Gypsies' in England, economic conditions may force, or enable low-ranking groups to diverge, or deviate from the dominant models.

To address the issues briefly mentioned above a comparison will be presented here of the status of women belonging to two socio-economic 'types' in a part of the Middle East. These two 'types' are peripatetic and mobile pastoral. In many parts of the world hunting, gathering, animal husbandry and the sale of goods and services are not necessarily exclusive strategies; communities may use one or more of these strategies simultaneously, or successively. These communities may also be situated at any point on the mobile-sedentary continuum at any given point of time. However, since role expectancy can not, and does not, take into account variations beyond a certain limit, both peripatetics and mobile pastoralists will be heuristically treated as 'ideal types'. The 'ideal type' of the mobile pastoralist in the region I am dealing with here is an animal husbander who migrates regularly and seasonally with his herds in search of fodder; he possesses little or no land, nor does he indulge in any major hunting or gathering activities. He subsists on the products of his herds and on grain which he obtains directly, or indirectly from agriculturists. The 'ideal type' of the peripatetic in the Middle East is that of an itinerant non-food-producer (Rao 1982a), who owns neither land, nor herd animals. He neither hunts, nor gathers, but subsists rather on the sale of various goods and services to non-peripatetics. It is in search of these clients and customers that he migrates regularly and seasonally. Relatively little data is available on peripatetics in the region (Rao 1983), but as Barth (1973:11) wrote, such "nomadic non-pastoralists may

become crucial test cases" in a broader study of nomad-sedentary relations in the Middle East. In this paper data collected in Afghanistan among several peripatetic communities between 1975 and 1978 (cf. Rao 1979, 1981; Olesen 1977) will be compared with material available on certain mobile pastoralists in the same region. All the populations considered here are Islamic.

Role, Status and Niche: The Conceptual Framework

The roles which compose the social fabric must first be identified with respect to groups and to individuals of either sex. The incumbent(s) of each of these roles is expected to fulfill certain obligations; in the case of both individuals and groups these obligations can be social as well as economic. The economic obligations depend largely on the level of development of the forces of production, but are also closely tied up with the ideological base, the norms and values of the specific context.

Status implies a hierarchical setting, and although definitions of the concept of status vary, the component characteristics generally recognized can be summed up as the "differential allocation of rewards to the incumbents of (the) roles" of which every social system is composed (Eisenstadt 1968:63). The nature of these rewards varies between and within societies and may consist of prestige, power, authority, goods, natural resources, services, or the access to any of these. The larger the variety of rewards existing within a society, the greater and more intricate the hierarchy in the value attached to each of these kinds of rewards. To assess the status of individuals or groups in a society one must first ascertain how the rewards available in the specific society are scaled, and then how each of these is allocated.

The role of a group, or an individual taken together with its concomitant status forms a set of relations which can be considered as the specific niche of the group or individual. This niche-concept is premised on the definition given by Love (1977:32) of the term niche (*italics mine*) as "... an aggregate representation of the relations ... " of groups and individuals to" ... factors critical to the life chances of individuals and the social groups they form." These factors must, writes Love, be "... empirically determined in each case." If, for the moment, factors extraneous to the system (e.g. new political ideologies) are left aside, niche occupancy will be seen to be fairly stable when role expectations are met and rewards obtained. Failure or shortcomings in fulfilling role expectancy can lead to reduction, or deprivation of the rewards normally due, and in extreme cases this in turn, can lead to the creation of new, alternative niches. When examined in diachronic perspective as well new types of niche filling and creation may be observed. Since niche has been defined here as a variable dependent on status, the duration of a niche must depend largely on the social ranking of each specific "perceived reward" (Eighmy & Jacobsen 1980:298), or on the sum of such rewards, when more than one is due in the local context. A pastoral niche will then, not be regarded as dependent solely say, on pasture availability, but on a very wide spectrum of environmental economic and social factors, one of which is the availability of pasture. Similarly, a peripatetic niche can only be considered as a response to the total environment, both in synchronic and diachronic perspective, with demand and supply being one of the major determinants (Rao 1985, in press b).

The specific niche of a group, or individual has hence, two principal aspects, social and economic. The social aspect is what Goodenough (1965:2) has referred to

as "social category or identity," and is in its turn, the result of two phenomena functioning together. These two phenomena are those of ascription and achievement. The boundary between these two phenomena is not always clear; thus although sexual identity is generally ascriptive, it can under specific circumstances be achieved. Age, race and kinship are other examples of this blurred boundary between ascription and achievement of the social aspect of a niche.

Roles of Pastoral and Peripatetic Women in Afghanistan

Womens' status has variously been viewed as being dependent on, for example that community's primary resource base, on the part which women play in subsistence activities on the extent and rigidity of the sexual division of labour, on whether women work singly or in groups and thereby can organize themselves in groups, and finally on the interplay between the domains (domestic vs. public). The relations between each of these aspects of a society and the status of its women has, however, also been hotly debated. It is thus not inappropriate to examine them once again in the light of data available on pastoral and peripatetic women in Afghanistan. Data on Pashtun and 'Arab' pastoral nomads¹ - chosen in particular as representative of high status groups in the country - are compared with data collected among some peripatetic communities in Afghanistan by Asta Olesen (1977, in press) and myself.²

Both pastoral and peripatetic women in Afghanistan are deeply involved in their respective household and subsistence spheres, but the studies indicate that the extent to and manner in which they are involved in these areas of labour differ greatly. The following Tables (Tabs. I and II) list these activities and categorize them either as 'household activities' or as 'subsistence activities', although it is, admittedly, difficult at times to make a clear cut distinction between these areas of labour. While some of these activities are of a daily nature³, others are undertaken only occasionally. Unlike pastoral activities which are basically the same for all herders, peripatetic subsistence activities in Afghanistan are group-specific. For example, although one group (the Ghorbat) makes drums and sieves and peddles these along with cloth and haberdashery, a second (the Sheikh Mohammadi) peddles only cloth, a third (the Shādibāz) peddles trinkets and perform with monkeys; another group (the Jalāli) begs and peddles fruits, a fifth (the Jōgi) begs and tells fortunes, and yet another (the 'Baluch') lives off prostitution, but undertakes none of the other activities mentioned. Unlike certain peripatetic occupations elsewhere, in Afghanistan these occupations are remarkably stable, and adaptation to new economic conditions slow and relatively long-term.

Table I. ROLES OF PASTORAL WOMEN IN AFGHANISTAN

PASTORAL	
Household Activities	Subsistence Activities
Child Rearing*	Milking* ¹
Baking Bread*	Processing Milk
Cooking* ³	Care of Sick Animals** ²
Serving Food*	Knotting Carpets ⁵
Fetching Water*	Sale of Certain Milk
Cleaning	Products or Wool*** ^{2/4}
Washing Clothes and Utensils	Assistance During
Sewing	the Lambing Season** ²
Setting up Tent* ²	Herding*** ⁶
Loading and Unloading	Migrating**
Pack Animals** ²	
Processing Wool and Hair*	
Building Clay Ovens	
Weaving and Repairing Tent- cloth and Saddlebags	
Cleaning and Tanning Hides to Make Leather Bags	
Manufacture and Repair of Saddles*** ²	
Slaughtering*** ²	
Collecting Fuel***	

* = activity is undertaken by men in exceptional circumstances;

** = activity is undertaken equally often by men and women;

*** = activity is occasionally undertaken by women.

1 = in eastern Afghanistan is done exclusively by men (Ferdinand 1969:136);

2 = Glatzer 1977:80;

3 = Barfield 1981:56;

4 = Tapper 1977:165.

5 = This activity is undertaken among many, but not all groups.

6 = This applies especially to eastern Afghanistan in certain seasons.

Table II Roles of Peripatetic Women in Afghanistan.

HOUSEHOLD ACTIVITIES	SUBSISTENCE ACTIVITIES		
	Ghorbat	Shādibāz	Baluch
(all three groups)			
Child Rearing* Baking Bread Cooking* Serving Food* Fetching Water** Cleaning** Washing Clothes and Utensils Sewing** Setting up Tents** Loading and Unloading their Belongings** ¹	Peddling Cloth and Haberdashery Peddling Tambourines and Sieves* Making Tambourines and Sieves*** Bloodletting Migrating**	Peddling Trinkets* Begging Migrating**	Prostitution Singing and Dancing* Migrating**

- * = activity is undertaken by men in exceptional circumstances;
- ** = activity is undertaken equally often by men and women;
- *** = activity is occasionally undertaken by women.
- 1 = All these three groups generally use trucks, or buses during migration nowadays.

Table I indicates that among pastoralists, of a total of 25 activities undertaken by women, 8 (32%) are subsistence activities. Table II shows that among three peripatetic communities - the Ghorbat, the Shādibāz and the Baluch - 5 out of 15 (33%), 3 out of 13 (23%) and 3 out of 13 (23%) respectively are such activities. These figures indicate that pastoral and peripatetic women contribute to a similar extent to their community's subsistence.

Table I shows further that among pastoralists in Afghanistan 8 out of 25 activities (32%) are exclusive to women, a further 8 (32%) are undertaken by men also in exceptional circumstances, 4 (16%) are practiced by men and women with fairly equal frequency and 5 (20%) are occasionally undertaken by women. Thus, among Pashtun pastoral nomads there appear to be few " ... specific taboos prohibiting the participation of either sex" (Tapper 1980:65) in most activities, and "sexual division of labor (among 'Arab' nomads is) only analytically divisible ... " (Barfield 1981:124). Yet only 36% of all activities in which these women participate are not viewed by these pastoralists as specifically female activities, and 64% are largely considered by group-members as predominantly female activities.

Among the three peripatetic groups considered here 4 out of a total of 15 activities (26%), 3 out of 13 (23%) and 2 out of 13 (15%) respectively are exclusive to women. 4 (26%), 4 (30%) and 4 (30%) are done by men exceptionally; 6 (40%), 5 (38%) and 6 (46%) are shared by men and women and 1 (6%), none and 1 (7%) respectively are done exceptionally by women also. The sexual division of labour among these peripatetic communities is clearly, also not very strict. Here 46%, 38% and 53% of all activities are not viewed as specifically female, while 53%, 53% and 46% are considered predominantly female. Once again, these figures do not point to any conclusions on the relative status of pastoral and peripatetic women in Afghanistan, although they do contribute to a better understanding of these role activities.

Two further distinctions must be made at this stage. The first of these pertains to the organisation of labour among women, and to whether activities are normally performed singly or in groups. The second distinction is between activities which are carried out entirely within the domestic sphere - e.g. inside a tent or on the edge of it - those performed in the public sphere, but within the group's usual habitat or territory - e.g. in the camp - and those performed in the public sphere, in what I shall refer to as the 'alien' sphere - e.g. in town, within a village, in the market-place, or in the house of a non-group member.

Both the pastoral and peripatetic women considered here work singly and in groups. Among the pastoralists 12 activities in all (50%) are not carried out by adult women in groups; 8 of these are household activities, while 4 are subsistence activities. Of these 12 activities, in four a woman receives no help from anyone else, in three she is generally helped by her younger daughters or other younger female members of her household, and in 5 she may help, or be helped by her husband, her sons or sometimes hired help. A further 6 (25%) activities may be carried out either singly or in groups, depending on factors as varied as the weather, the precise work at hand, the time of day, the season, etc. Four of these activities concern the household, while one (knotting carpets) relates to subsistence. Finally, 8 (32%) activities are generally carried out by several women together, and three of these (migrating, herding and boiling butter to make butter-oil) are subsistence activities. These figures indicate that the organisation of labour among these pastoral nomad women is such that they generally do not work alone, and that the boundaries between female group labour and individual female labour are

fluid. They also indicate, however, that as Tapper has expressed it (1980:65) "women's involvement outside the household is ... very limited."

The situation among the three peripatetic communities referred to in Table II is as follows: 8 household activities are not carried out by adult women in groups; in addition, among the Ghorbat bloodletting and among the Baluch prostitution are subsistence activities which are also not undertaken in groups. In 5 of the household activities an adult woman may be helped by younger females of her household, while males help in two (loading and unloading baggage and setting up tent). Two further household activities are performed either singly, or jointly with others, especially other adult women; this also applies to 3, 2 and one subsistence activity practiced by the Ghorbat, the Shādibāz and the Baluch respectively. There is only one activity (migration) which is performed only in groups, although usually, two adult women join together and go peddling, or begging; especially for peddling the pair, rather than the group is the preferred and usual form of labour organisation. Thus, among peripatetics as well, the units of organised labour are not sharply defined, or rigid.

Among mobile pastoralists in Afghanistan 5 activities take place outside the camp limits, in what I shall refer to as the 'alien sphere', as opposed to the 'public sphere' - here the camp. Three of these relate to the household (i.e. fetching water and fuel, and washing clothes, and sometimes utensils) and are not restricted to the alien sphere, and may be carried out in the public sphere as well, depending on exact camp location, season, etc. The other two (herding and migrating) are subsistence activities, and while the former may also take place in the public sphere, the latter is restricted to the alien sphere. A total of 18 activities (72%) take place in the public sphere; 5 of these (20%) are performed exclusively here, and while 4 concern only the household, one (milking) is a subsistence activity. An almost equally large number of activities (14 = 56%) are executed in the domestic sphere and again 5 (20%) purely within the tent or on its outskirts. While the conception of " ... Middle Eastern nomadic society as being structured in terms of two dichotomous social worlds ... the private sphere of the tent ... and the public sphere of the camp ... " (Nelson 1973:46) does not apply well to Afghanistan, it can be said that even here a pastoral woman enters the alien sphere only relatively rarely. When she does, she does so accompanied by other women, or by men and women, as during migration.

An investigation of female activities among peripatetics listed in Table II reveals that 7 (46%), 4 (30%) and 4 (30%) of these can be and are undertaken in the alien sphere; of these 4 (26%), 3 (23%) and 1 (7%) among the Ghorbat, the Shādibāz and the Baluch respectively are exclusive to this sphere and concern the communities' subsistence. 4 household activities among each group take place in the public sphere and 3 of these are exclusive to it; in addition, among the Ghorbat one subsistence activity (making sieves and tambourines) also takes place here. In the domestic sphere six activities are undertaken by women of each group. However, two activities also performed in the domestic sphere, though not exclusively here (tambourine making and prostitution) are subsistence activities. These figures show that for peripatetic women the alien sphere plays a crucial role; they enter it almost daily and spend long hours in it, usually unaccompanied by their men, and sometimes completely on their own.

We have also seen above that pastoral men and women participate equally in one household activity (5% of all household activities), whereas among peripatetics they do so in 5 activities (50% of all household activities). This supports Rosaldo's

suggestion (1974) that male involvement in the domestic sphere (here household) and female involvement in the public (and here also alien) sphere are interrelated. The question is which "preconditions" determine "mens' participation in household maintenance activities" (Segal 1983:12), a point to which I shall return towards the end of my paper.

Status of Pastoral and Peripatetic Women in Afghanistan

In traditional Afghanistan there were three main sources of status sanction and legitimation: sonni Islam, direct natural resources to 'rule' over (cf. Neale 1969) and tribal traditions combined with the principle of patrilineal descent. Those who could play roles in all three of these realms enjoyed a very high status; the Sayyed of the Kunar Valley in East Afghanistan are one such example. As Sayyed they were, by definition, good Muslims of holy descent; they 'ruled' over large land resources in the area and finally, as alleged East Pashtuns they followed the principles of Pashtun tribal tradition.

The nomadic pastoralists were also, but not always known as very devout Muslims⁴, but their herds were there for all to see and they followed tribal traditions and genealogy with great pride. Peripatetics in Afghanistan were, on the contrary, allegedly bad Muslims and they obviously possessed no natural resources. The claims of some peripatetic groups to Pashtun, or Baluch tribal identity, or allegiance (Rao 1986) were not, generally taken seriously by other, non-peripatetic Afghans, and non-tribal genealogies - e.g. those of the Ghorbat (Rao 1982) and the Sheikh Mohammadi (Olesen, in press) were apparently unknown outside the group.

Thus, although pastoralists and peripatetics share the same macro-society, and the range of rewards theoretically available to members of both types of communities are the same, the rewards actually obtained by pastoralists are better ranked, or greater than those obtained by peripatetics. Hence, my earlier statement that pastoralists in Afghanistan enjoy an infinitely higher status than peripatetics in that country. As agnatic members of their respective communities pastoral women partake of this high status.

Any discussion of their status within their respective groups would, however, entail factual comparison between

- a) all rewards at least theoretically available to any individual within the community,
- b) rewards actually obtained by men of each community within their respective communities,
- c) rewards actually obtained by women of each community within their respective communities.

The rewards theoretically available to all individuals within each of the pastoral or peripatetic communities are either of a material (cash, food, land, herds, etc.) or of a symbolic (political power, religious authority, etc.) nature. For analytical purposes of all these rewards can be classified under the following main headings:

- i) control of resources and products,

- ii) power to convert labour, possessions (cf. Castro et al. 1981) and products into income,
- iii) ability to take decisions regarding reproduction, production and distribution.

If these headings are formulated as questions to which the replies can be either positive or negative, the status of an adult individual of either sex can be concluded by the aggregate number of positive and/or negative answers received. Tables III and IV sum up the answers to the first two questions for pastoralists and peripatetics in Afghanistan as reported in the relevant literature already cited.

Table III lists the primary and secondary resources of pastoral Pashtun and 'Arab' in Afghanistan as well as of all peripatetic groups in that country; it further indicates whether men, or women of these communities have access to, or control over these resources. The importance accorded to these individual resources by pastoral and peripatetic men and women has not been taken into account; here they are considered as being of equal importance, since the absence of any one of these must lead to drastic change in, or disruption of their life-styles. This Table shows that out of a total of 7 primary and secondary resources pastoral women have access to only 2 (28%), and relatively infrequently. Pastoral men have access to, or control over all 7 resources (100%). Among peripatetics there are 4 resources in all, one of which - exogenous labour - is only rarely available to any peripatetic. Women here have access to 3 of these (75%) and men to all 4 (100%). Women of both community types thus have less access to resources than their menfolk, but a cross-comparison indicates that a peripatetic woman has almost twice as many chances of access to her community's resources as does a pastoral woman to hers.

Table IV indicates that if all that a pastoralist and a peripatetic can convert into income (in cash or kind) is categorised and listed, pastoral men act as converters in 4 out of 5 cases (80%), while their women do so in only 2 cases (40%). Among peripatetics men and women generate income in equal proportions (in 3 cases = 100%). Here the discrepancy between the women is almost as great (60%) in favour of peripatetics.

Table III Primary and Secondary Resources of Mobile Pastoralists and All Peripatetics in Afghanistan and Access to, or Control Over These According to Sex.

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY RESOURCES	PASTORAL		PERIPATETIC	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Pasture*	+	-	0	0
Water*	+	-	0	0
Herd Animals	+	-	0	0
Customers	+	+ ¹	+	+
Fuel	+	-	0	0
Raw Materials	0	0	+	+
Processed Goods	+	-	+	+
Exogenous Labour	+	+ ²	+	-

* This applies only in cases where access to pasture/water has to be paid in cash or kind. No case of peripatetics having to pay for water rights, or pasture rights for eventual pack animals has been observed.

1 = cf. Tapper 1977:165; Glatzer 1977:64.

2 = cf. Tapper 1980:65; Glatzer 1977:65.

Table IV Labour, Possessions and Products Converted into Income Among Mobile Pastoralists and Peripatetics in Afghanistan; the Converter is Specified According to Sex.

Labour, Possessions and Products	Pastoral		Peripatetic	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Milk Products, Wool and Lambskins	+	+ ¹	0	0
Surplus Animals	+	-	0	0
Carpets ³	+	-	0	0
Felts and Tents	-	+ ²	0	0
Processed Goods	+	-	+	+
Services (e.g. bloodletting, fortune-telling, prostitution)	0	0	+*	+*
Sieves, Drums, Bird Cages, certain Cosmetics	0	0	+	+

* Among peripatetic prostitutes, the woman retained a part of her earnings, but gave the bulk to her husband, or friend.

1 = cf. Glatzer 1977:64; Tapper 1977:165.

2 = Tapper 1977, 1980:65; Tavakolian 1984b:440.

3 = Though all pastoral nomads do not sell their carpets, many do.

Briefly describing the conceptions which Durrani pastoral women themselves have regarding a woman's status-determining criteria, Tapper (1977:167) mentions "... questions about their husband's wealth, about the number and sex of their children, whether they had co-wives..." These criteria mention resources - but their husband's not their own; they further mention their own (and their husband's) reproductive activities. A pastoral woman's status seems to depend therefore, almost entirely on that of her husband, which in turn is reported as being "... related to the commodity and animal purchases he is able to make on the basis of sale or exchange of the dairy and other products contributed by the labors of women of his household" (Tavakolian 1984b:441). Working in an area not far from that of the Eshakzay Durrani of Tavakolian, Glatzer & Casimir (1983: Table 6) has shown, however, that among 8 pastoral Nurzay Durrani families female labour (milk products + carpets + 1/4 of the fuel + 1/4 of the animals) contributed to only about 35% of the annual income in 1976-1977. Using mainly the resources of their husbands or fathers, pastoral women thus labour to produce products partly for the market, but primarily for domestic use. They themselves have few chances to convert labour into income. In other words, a woman's labour power is largely appropriated, at various stages of her life by agnatic, or affinal males. No wonder then that these women "... have no right to dispose of any produce or capital goods of the household in which they are living, including items from their trousseaux. A woman's right to inherit as a daughter is acknowledged, but ... women (do not) exercise this right, nor do the men who have inherited in their place ... feel any debt to them. A widow's right to inherit from her husband is similarly recognized but not exercised..." (Tapper 1980:66).

As somewhat of a contrast I would like to cite the following data which I recorded among peripatetic Ghorbat in Afghanistan. The major subsistence activities of the Ghorbat were the manufacture (and occasionally sale) of sieves and tambourines by men and door-to-door sale of these sieves and tambourines, but also cloth and haberdashery by women. Some of the older women also practiced bloodletting, and occasionally girls and women also helped make tambourines. The raw materials needed to make sieves and tambourines (mainly wood and skin) were procured by both men and women, while only women bought cloth and haberdashery from either wholesalers, or retailers. Since Ghorbat subsistence depended - and this is the case with all peripatetic communities - on the sale or exchange of goods and services, their primary resources, however, were their customers. These were of two types, regular and occasional; the former constituted the bulk. These regular customers were mainly sedentary women to whose houses Ghorbat women went peddling their wares. Thus Ghorbat women had more access to their community's primary resources than Ghorbat men; in addition, this primary resource was transmitted from generation to generation in the female line, from mother to daughter. Young Ghorbat girls also went peddling and converted goods of their own labour and that of close male agnates into wealth. In the course of fieldwork I had the opportunity to ask 38 adult Ghorbat (13 of these were men) to evaluate the economic and social statuses of each individual member, above 12 years of age of 5 Ghorbat families whom all these 38 knew very well, without being related to them through blood or marriage. Economic status was defined for empirical reasons only as the extent of earnings in cash or kind; similarly social status was limited to the ability to decide, or directly and openly intervene in decisions concerning migration, residence and marriage of children. This sample of five nuclear and monogamous families consisted of 5 mothers, 5 fathers, 10 daughters and 14 sons above the age of 12. Of the 38 persons questioned, some did not, or would not answer the questions, but there was always complete agreement among those who did answer.

Table V indicates the answers received, as also the number of informants per response. In this small sample among mothers and fathers social status was invariably accorded to the person who earned the most, irrespective of sex. In families 1, 2 and 3 the mother was the main income earner, while the father worked mainly at home, making sieves and tambourines. In the fourth family the mother was sickly and rarely went out peddling; the father sold his sieves and tambourines to shopkeepers and did some peddling. In family 5 the father, who was lame, rarely left the camp; occasionally male customers came to the camp and bought his products directly from him.

For the parents social status almost always corresponded with economic status. There was, however, a discrepancy between social and economic status among sons and daughters. Whereas daughters are, on the whole, ranked third in economic status (\bar{x} = 3.9), they are ranked fourth and lower than their brothers in social status. This can only partially be explained by the fact that, unlike the mother the unmarried daughter was not an independent controller of resources, nor did she convert labour and goods into income for herself: she, like her brother worked for their mother. But the relatively higher social status of sons must be related to the general norms of the macro-society, a point to which I shall soon briefly return.

The answers to the third question regarding individual status, namely the presence or absence of the ability to take decisions regarding reproduction, production and distribution are infinitely more subtle and hard to quantify with any degree of precision. This is especially true for the pastoralists among whom, on the face of it, at least, women have " ... the status of jural minors. Their guardians (father or other close agnate of an unmarried girl, husband or close agnate of the husband of a married woman) have ultimate responsibility for and control over their behaviour in all areas of social life ..." (Tapper 1980:64). Among the Durrani of Northwest Afghanistan, writes Glatzer (1977:34): " Die Verfügungsgewalt oder die 'Verwaltung' des Haushaltseigentums liegt in der Hand des Haushaltsvorstand (da kōr māshar). " There are, nevertheless, other indications that it would be " ... an error to conclude that such a (pastoral) society is exclusively male-dominated." (Tavakolian 1984b:441) Pastoral women are sometimes reported as directly, or indirectly influencing decisions, which their men ostensibly take, especially in the field of alliances. Peripatetic women, on the other hand, have been observed to take these decisions themselves, at times even overruling their husbands (Rao 1982). Finally, not only do peripatetic women bring in income, when they are married they keep it and control it; pastoral women do neither.

Table V Relative Economic and Social Status of Individual Members Over 12 Years of Age of 5 Peripatetic Ghorbat Families as Evaluated by 38 Unrelated Peripatetic Ghorbat Individuals.

RANK	Fam.1		Fam.2		Fam.3		Fam.4		Fam.5	
	econ.	soc.	econ.	soc.	econ.	soc.	econ.	soc.	econ.	soc.
I	M (34)	M (32)	M (38)	M (33)	M (38)	M (37)	F (38)	F (38)	M (36)	M (38)
II	D ₁ (34)	F (33)	F (38)	F (33)	D ₁ (35)	F (38)	M (38)	M (38)	S ₁ (37)	S ₁ (38)
III	D ₂ (30)	S ₁ (32)	S ₁ (31)	S ₁ (31)	F (30)	S ₁ (31)	S ₁ (38)	S ₁ (38)	D ₁ (35)	S ₂ (30)
IV	F (31)	D ₁ (30)	D ₁ (31)	D ₁ (30)	S ₁ (30)	S ₂ (31)	D ₁ (33)	S ₂ (29)	S ₂ (30)	S ₃ (30)
V	D ₃ (22)	D ₂ (29)	S ₂ (28)	S ₂ (20)	S ₂ (20)	D ₁ (19)	S ₂ (30)	D ₁ (21)	S ₃ (19)	D ₁ (10)
VI	S ₁ (22)	D ₃ (27)	-	-	D ₂ (25)	D ₂ (22)	D ₂ (30)	D ₂ (21)	D ₂ (13)	D ₂ (10)
VII	S ₂ (20)	S ₂ (19)	-	-	S ₃ (13)	S ₃ (10)	-	-	F (38)	F (38)
VIII	S ₃ (20)	S ₃ (15)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
IX	S ₄ (30)	S ₄ (12)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

M = Mother; F = Father; S₁ - S₃ = Sons according to age; D₁ - D₃ = Daughters according to age.

Bracket expressions indicate the number of informants per response (for further explanation see text).

In-group status for most communities in Afghanistan is, however, closely related for both men and women to the extent to which their roles are concomitant with the three major status-determining criteria of the macro-society mentioned earlier, namely those of Islam, the resources controlled and descent. To what extent do the answers to all three of the above questions, and notably the status criteria listed in Tables III and IV concord with these three basically exogenous criteria?

Although Islam does not forbid a woman from taking part in social and economic activities beyond her household, it does suggest that she should give priority to her domestic sphere:

A woman is nearest to her Lord (God)
When she is inside her home.
(Hadith: Ahmad ibn Hanbal)

Islamic jurisprudence also tends, by and large, to interpret Islamic law in such a manner that a married woman's role in explicit subsistence activities is minor compared to that of her husband:

Men are in charge of the affairs of their women by
Virtue of what God has favoured some over the other,
And for what they have expended of their property.
(Qoran IV, 34)

Hence, "the husband is made legally responsible for his wife's welfare, her protection and the full cost of her food, her clothes and housing according to her needs and his ability." (Abdul-Rauf 1979:67)

I have already shown that in Afghanistan pastoral women are physically more committed to their domestic spheres than are peripatetic women. Thus, comparatively, the roles of pastoral women are more compatible with Islamic prescriptions than are those of peripatetic women. But even among pastoral groups, the roles of women are considered with a certain ambivalence. While Tavakolian (1984b:440), for example, observes that "... Sheikhanzai men acknowledge that their pastoral economy would be impossible without the labors of their womenfolk", Tapper & Tapper (1982:166) report that among the Durrani of northern Afghanistan "... women become scapegoats for the failings of men and only rarely is their role associated with a man's or a household's success." All peripatetic men questioned, however, invariably acknowledged the indispensability of their women for the group's economy and for the individual household's success. Yet, since these men had at least partially internalized some of the values of their macro-society, they often felt obliged to justify, criticize, or at least discuss their women's (and thereby their own) anti-normative behaviour in this domain. Young Baluch and Vangawala men for example, blamed themselves for not following Islamic prescriptions, and for "eating women's earnings", while young men among the Ghorbat and the Shadibaz felt it was wrong for them to "exploit" (sar-e zan shistan) their womenfolk and send them out to work. The discrepancy already referred to, and evident from Table V, between the economic and social statuses of Ghorbat girls and boys can now be partially comprehended as the clash between Islamic norms which at least broadly regulate the whole of Afghan society, the actual control over resources and the power to convert labour and products into income. In other words, it reflects the conflict between moral values set forth by the larger society and the basic needs of the peripatetics. These basic needs have, however, to be met and the most expedient manner in which this can be

accomplished is by letting peripatetic women manipulate the resources, i.e. the clients and customers.

At this stage I would like to return to the distinction I made earlier on in this paper between the activities of women in the public and alien spheres. The alien sphere is dominated socially and economically by high-ranking groups. Hence for women of high-ranking groups there is little normative difference between the public and alien spheres; although these spheres are physically distinct and symbolically far apart, they are ideologically speaking overlapping. The status rewards high-ranking pastoral women can and do bring their families (whether agnatic, or through alliance) from the alien sphere are prestige (by upholding their group's social norms) and wealth (by labouring to produce some of the goods which are convertible into income). In both cases it implies safeguarding the norms and values which inform the alien sphere, by minimizing physical contact with the latter. Peripatetic women, on the other hand, directly bring in major economic rewards (in cash or kind) and important social rewards (access to influential non-peripatetics, who may and do help the group in times of crises) from the alien sphere. Like their men, peripatetic women are aware of their importance as intermediaries between their group and the alien sphere unlike some of their younger men, they do not disapprove this activity (cf. Rao 1982:152-153, etc.).

Peripatetic women in Afghanistan are considered anomalies, since the larger society which defines women " ... as lacking in legitimate authority (has) no way of acknowledging the reality of female power" (Rosaldo 1974:34). Yet within their own communities they are considered anomalous only to a limited extent, since in daily life the outside world, the 'alien' sphere has to exist more as a sort of "hunting and gathering territory" (cf. Piasere, in press), than as the ultimate frame of reference for all aspects of morality. Besides, by condemning peripatetic women too harshly, peripatetic men would automatically and fundamentally question the very identity of their group (cf. Rao, in press a).

The third criterion, namely that of descent must be considered in the light of the intergenerational transmission of economic and social values. Among pastoral nomads in Afghanistan no woman owns property and hence, for example, the " ... Durrani will insist that they transmit property and status through the male line and that nothing is inherited or passed on through women." (Tapper and Tapper 1982:160) Among all peripatetics in Afghanistan, except the Sheikh Mohammadi and the prostitute 'Baluch', primary resources, i.e. clients and customers, are handed down from mother to daughter.

The higher the status of a women's agnatic group, the greater the danger that theoretically she can bring shame on her group by marrying a man from a low status group. In Afghanistan the strict avoidance of hypogamy usually spares pastoralists this danger. But, since it is also felt that " 'women are the source of descent (nasab)'" (Tapper & Tapper 1982:160) and that it is they who " ... pass on personal traits to their offspring ..." (Tapper & Tapper 1982:160), the higher the status enjoyed by a man, the greater the precautions he must take not to spoil his line of descent by marrying a low-status woman. This is not a major problem for most peripatetics since there are few - if any - non-peripatetic communities with an even lower status. In addition, among peripatetics such as the Ghorbat and the Vangāwālā, men and women are held equally responsible for descent: the man is the seed (kasht) while the woman is the soil (zamin). As regards the transmittable nature of women, however, the Ghorbat at least, narrate the following legend:

Baba Adam and Bibi Hawa were arguing with each other. Bibi Hawa claimed that her 'egg' (nuffa) was better than Adam's seed; he claimed the contrary. Hazrat-e Adam placed his seed in a glass pot, while Bibi Hawa buried her 'egg' in a dirty spot: from Baba Adam, our Holy Prophet was born; from Bibi Hawa, the Musalli⁵ were born.

To sum up, among pastoralists, women in general are valued as hard and efficient workers and producers of goods (cf. Tapper 1977:167) and offspring (cf. Tapper & Tapper 1982:166) for the family. Among peripatetics too, women are praised and valued when they bring in wealth, offspring and prestige. Over and above this and irrespective of their male kin, individual women - be they peddlars or prostitutes - can and do enjoy reputation and high status because of their economic foresightedness and social capabilities. 'Male' characteristics are not ascribed to such women and they are not classified as 'man-woman', unlike " ... strong women among the Durrani ..." (Tapper 1980:74). As agnatic members of their respective communities, pastoral women enjoy a high status; the opposite is true for peripatetics. Within their respective communities, however, peripatetic women have a higher status than do pastoral women. Thus the status of these women are situated at different levels in different contexts, and they exhibit status inconsistency. Since the norms of the wider society influence peripatetic thought and actions to some extent, however, the relatively high status of their women is not directly acknowledged by any form of institutionalized deference⁶.

Pastoral and Peripatetic Niches in Afghanistan

The two categories of population discussed in this paper, i.e. pastoralists and peripatetics in Afghanistan represent in that country two extremes of the local status-scaling. Each of these two categories has certain roles and is assigned a corresponding set of statuses; in other words, each of these two categories occupies a certain niche, which is characterised in local folk models by the terms kōchi, māldār and jat. While kōchi and māldār refer respectively to Pashtun pastoral nomads and pastoralists in general (cf. Ferdinand 1969, 1982:66; Glatzer 1982), jat and jat-like refer to all peripatetic communities in the country (Rao 1982a, in press a). These folk conceptions are the result of both ascription and achievement. Both pastoralists and peripatetics in Afghanistan are in what Ferdinand (1970:126) has termed " ... an enforced position of dependence" upon sedentists (cf. also Glatzer & Casimir 1983; Casimir, in press; Rao 1985; Rao & Casimir 1983, in press). One status characteristic, dependence, does not however, necessarily result in subservience, another status trait. Thus, though dependent on sedentists for food, pastoralists in the Middle East are often wealthier, and in many areas until fairly recently, they held a wide range of political rights. By and large, not only do they enjoy power, they wield authority, and are conscious of this. Peripatetics on the other hand, usually have neither wealth, nor are they deferred to. In the political arena they are largely dependent on pastoral nomads and/or sedentists, and in parts of the Middle East some are exclusively attached to pastoral nomads. In Afghanistan this difference in status of pastoralist and peripatetic is closely related to the social aspects of the niches of each as reflected in the native models. Figure 1 illustrates the role-status-niche nexus in general for groups, and shows how this nexus functions among pastoralists and peripatetics in the Middle East.

- A. The economic role expectancy within each of the peripatetic and pastoral groups is seeking profits.
- B. The non-economic role expectancies within the groups are different, but

on the whole one may consider that for peripatetics they consist mainly of social survival, whereas for pastoralists they are generally of an ideological nature (e.g. for the Pashtun nomads the upholding of Pashtunwali).

- C. Economic role expectancies from without are, by and large for peripatetics poverty, and for pastoralists wealth.
- D. Non-economic role expectancies from without may be summed up for peripatetics as negative ('quarrelsome', 'dirty', 'noisy', 'immoral', etc.); for pastoralists they are on the whole more neutral ('brave', 'strong', 'devout', 'hardy', 'aggressive', etc.).

In the case of mobile pastoralists in Afghanistan B and D concord largely, and the woman acts in A to contribute in C. By rarely entering the 'alien sphere', she helps fulfill both B and D.

Peripatetic women, on the other hand, function in the 'alien sphere' and are used by their groups to fulfill A (economic role expectancies within group) directly. They are also used to achieve B (non-economic role expectancies within group), by exploiting both C (e.g. the pity of their customers, because of their image as poor people) and D (e.g. the desire of these customers not to get involved in discussions with allegedly 'quarrelsome', or otherwise 'difficult' people). It is at the levels of A and B that the expectations states theory can be applied: paraphrasing Berger et al. (1977:19) it can be stated that:

A peripatetic male believes that given the roles and status of his group, his wife, or daughter has higher ability to accomplish the needful for the benefit of all concerned. He is thus likely to wait for these women to act, hence has fewer action opportunities than them. He is less likely to offer problem-solving solutions, hence has fewer performance outputs than these women. Because he expects to do worse than the women in fulfilling the tasks at hand, he tends to inflate his evaluations of the women. Because he has more faith in the women than in himself, he accepts their influence if they disagree.

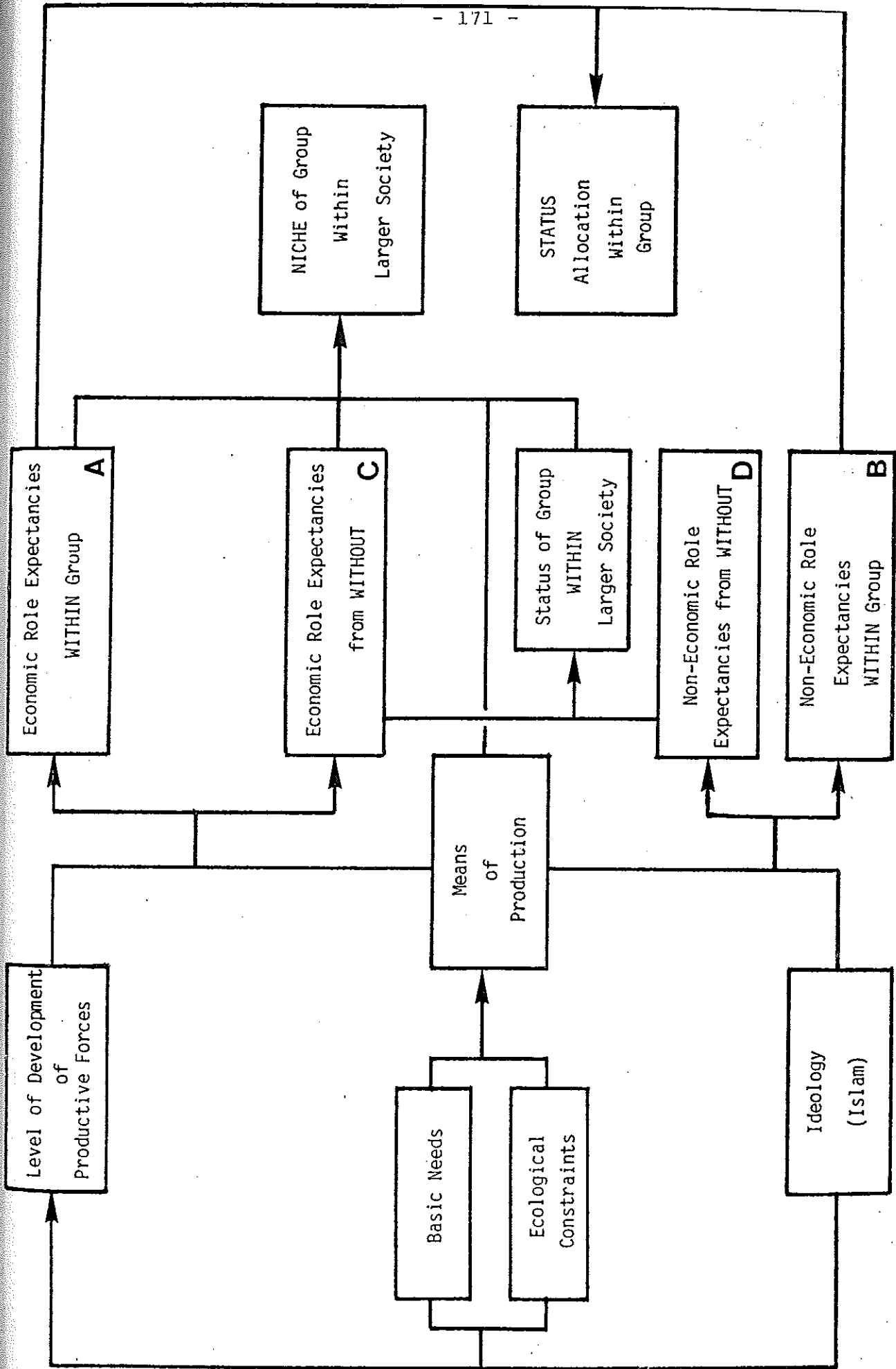


Fig. 1 Role-Status-Niche Nexus in the Middle East.

This state of mind - and the fact that peripatetic women are more successful than their men within the peripatetic niche - are the preconditions which determine, among others that peripatetic males participate in household activities to the extent shown earlier.

Individual human life and group life, among pastoralists and peripatetics are not basically different things, in so far as both have as their first goal survival under the best possible circumstances. The differentiation - and sometimes conflict - arises largely with the division of labour. Both pastoral and peripatetic women in Afghanistan act as " ... boundary and status markers..." (Tapper 1980:60); the former do so above all in the social sphere of marriage, while the latter do so by daily entering the 'alien sphere' to convert their group's labour and produce into income. Peripatetics articulate no alternative models for their communities; nor do their women do so as females. Both men and women among all peripatetics in Afghanistan - and probably throughout the Middle East - simply live out deviant models. Peripatetic women are faced with the dilemma of remaining members of low-status groups, but enjoying statuses within their communities, or of contributing to raise their group's social ranking by giving up their activities in the alien sphere (Rao, in press a) and thereby drastically reducing their own status as women within their groups (cf. Rao 1982). Similarly, peripatetic men confront the choice of either finding alternative resources, sequestering their women and thus no longer being ascribed to the peripatetic niche, or of living as peripatetics, members of low-ranking communities and allocating a relatively high-status to their women.

Notes

1. Cf. list of references: Barfield (1981); Casimir (in press); Ferdinand (1969, 1970, 1982); Glatzer (1977); Glatzer and Casimir (1983); Robinson (1934, repr. 1980); Tapper (1977, 1980, 1981); Tapper and Tapper (1982); Tavakolian (1984b).
2. The pastoral and peripatetic societies discussed here are all organised on fairly egalitarian principles.
3. The time spent on each of these activities obviously varies enormously. Differences in time, energy and frequency have not been taken into account here, since no data was available.
4. Cf. Tapper 1984:258 and Tavakolian 1984a:291.
5. For more on the Musallis cf. Olesen (1977, 1982).
6. Following Silverman and Maxwell (1978:96) deference is defined here as " ... a type of behavior that is intended to convey respect and appreciation on the part of one person or persons for another."

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