The Role of Folklore in Modern Afghanistan
by Louis Dupree

In illiterate societies, folktales and songs convey history, value systems, and codes of behavior from generation to generation. Six examples reported here clearly illustrate the role of the folkteller as educator.

LD-3781
ISSN 0161-0724
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Many in the developed world look on folklore as quaint stories unrelated to the real world. Few realize the important roles played by folklore in the developing world, where nonliteracy prevails. Afghan culture, for example, contains a great body of literature, primarily in Dari (Afghan Persian) and Pashto, but also in Turkic and Baluchi. More than 90 percent of Afghan society, mainly peasant-tribal, however, does not have access to this great literature. They cannot read and write. Therefore, the overwhelming majority of Afghans must learn their history, value systems, and codes of behavior through oral and visual means, through folktales and folksongs, and through imitating their elders.

In the urban areas, modern written history has begun to affect folklore. Conversely, myths and folk history influence the written word, so that the half-truths of tomorrow will replace the half-truths of today.

Literacy is undeniably important to the development process, but, contrary to the exhortations of certain education specialists immediately after World War II, not the answer, the panacea to the problems of the Third World. Apparently, the belief was that the new literates, taught through a system of Western education, would also acquire a Western vision of the good life complete with democratic institutions.

This ethnocentric prediction was not to be, nor could not be, for literacy is but a single tool in the total cultural kit of a society. It can be used to create and perpetuate political systems of whatever hue. Nazi Germany, for example, was, by all quantitative yardsticks, the most literate nation in Europe in the 1930s. It published more and had a higher literacy rate than other European countries—but it also burned more books and, by any criteria, cannot be defined as a democratic state.

Until the millennium, it is safe to assume that most Afghans will continue to be born, live, breed, and die in the rural areas, with folktales a major part of their educational diet. Recognizing this practical reality, the Laubach international system for teaching literacy uses local folklore extensively in Afghanistan and elsewhere. Appreciation for the folktellers’ role as culture communicator is growing within the country as well, and an Afghan professor at Kabul University is now preparing a book for children based on a regional collection of folktales.

The Performer as Educator

The folkteller and folksinger in Afghan society performs several functions. He (or she) is both educator and entertainer, and as such passes on history (or whatever passes for history) and values to the group. Whereas in literate, urban, multi-institutional societies, the folksinger tends to offer critical comments on social and political issues in nonliterate, rural, uni-institutional (kin groups) Afghanistan, as in the rest of the developing world, the folksinger will usually criticize neighboring groups, but not his own, to illustrate object lessons.

The tales and songs are group reinforcing and psychologically satisfying to the individual. They explain the group’s origin and justify its existence. They define the basic personality types, sexual and age-graded roles, and describe ideal interpersonal, in-group, and out-group behavior.

These functions are consistent with the inward orientation of nonliterate societies based on peasant farming and nomadic pastoralism, which emphasizes reciprocal kinship rights and obligations extending through the array of economic, political, and social institutions. The tightly knit local groups, living at an economic subsistence level, cannot afford extensive internal criticism and dissidence, forces which (sometimes) place stress on or destroy the delicate balance between order and chaos.

Therefore, Afghan folktales tend to perpetuate, not protest, the existing order. As urbanization, literacy, specialization, and modern technology modify the peasant-tribal base, however, protests will proliferate and evolve, sometimes to become revolution.
Childhood socialization (or education in the noneconomic spheres of the society) is often in the hands of grandparents or older uncles and aunts. Three generations of social symbiosis exist, symbolizing life's important stages. The grandparents represent the past, and, with other elders, are the walking encyclopedia, the receptacles of the distilled knowledge of the ages. The children's parents, intimately engaged in the present, are the active economic and biological components: they breed and feed. The children symbolize the future, the guarantors of continuation and continuity.

As the oldest generation passes on its knowledge to the young, the grandparent-grandchild connection early becomes intensely important and usually long-lasting. This closeness is emphasized by terms of endearment: for example, a grandfather will call his grandson, baba, the grandson will also refer to his grandfather as baba, thus linking — or even equating — the past with the future.

I have collected hundreds of folktales in Afghanistan as a part of my research for the American Universities Field Staff. As an anthropologist, my interest has been in how the folktales function in Afghan society. Here, I have divided the folktales into five, somewhat overlapping categories: history, love and jealousy, virtue and morality, jokes (for lack of a better term), and religion.

History
Most legends deal with intertribal or extratribal warfare. The tales often present the ideal basic personality type. In Afghanistan, the warrior-poet is the beau ideal, brave in battle and articulate in the village or camp jirgha (meeting or council), able to speak on any subject, evoking poetic imagery and allusions on specific points. Few men fulfill both requirements, but when they do — like Khushal Khan Khattak in the seventeenth century — they not only become heroes but also epitomize an entire age.

Another important function of the folktales in this context is genealogical. Many folktales can recite all the genealogies of the group's important leaders, intertwining folk songs and tales about the history of the people.

Different ethnic groups have distinct legends of origin and development, but many tales overlap and spread far beyond the boundaries of Afghanistan. Turkic-speakers usually have variations of Geser, the great Mongol epic. Uzbak relive their days of greatness in several epics, telling the story of the Golden Horde and the Central Asian Khanates, as reflected in the lives of honored leaders such as Alpamysh, Koblandy, Yer-Targyn, and Yedigy (who led the attack on Moscow).

The Kirghiz epic, Manas, greatly influenced Islamic folklore and poetry, with its emphasis on the horse-cavalry complex.

A legend I collected in the Koh Daman area north of Kabul is typical of the genre. It describes an actual historical event with relative accuracy, but not without subtle editorializing: the folktales, a Tajik warrior-people, who participated in the fighting, emphasizes the nonliterate Tajik hero, Habibullah, at the expense of the literate Pushtun hero, General Mohammad Nadir Khan, later king of Afghanistan from 1929-1933.

Amanullah was a good king, but he had bad ideas for Afghanistan, and when he was overthrown by Bacha Saqao, everyone in the country accepted the Bacha as a good king, a man of the people. Some people said that Bacha was Tajik, but this is not true. Bacha Saqao was an Arab of the purest strain.

He was really named Habibullah, and after his death was called Ghazi. He destroyed all the bad opposition in the country. Shah Mahmud and many Mohammadzai became his supporters. Habibullah Ghazi asked Nadir Khan to come back to Kabul and help form a great Afghan army. Nadir Khan agreed, but when he reached India, he talked the Pushtun people into revolting against the true king, Habibullah Ghazi. The British helped Nadir Khan, or the Bacha could not have been defeated.

Before the final battles, Bacha sent Shah Mahmud to ask Nadir Khan why he had turned against him after he had offered him the job of commander in chief of the army. Shah Mahmud then joined his brother, Nadir Khan, instead of returning to report to the Bacha. A traitorous general told Nadir Khan about an unguarded pass to Kabul. Shah Wali Khan took a force to Kabul, and found Bacha Saqao in the arg (fort) with only 400 men. Forty thousand of the army of Shah Wali Khan surrounded the arg.

Bacha Saqao came forth alone with machine guns and drove off the entire force. After two days, deserted by his faithless companions, the Bacha walked out of the arg with his wife, I think it was his second wife, on his back. Not a single one of the Pushtun tribesmen dared to fire into that masculine glare. He marched straight to Charikar and Gulbahar and into the Nijrao area, where he was immediately joined by 60,000 loyal followers.

Frightened, Nadir Khan once again sent Shah Mahmud to beg the Bacha to come to Kabul and discuss who should be king and who should be prime minister. Bacha Saqao was at first against the plan. He chided Shah Mahmud and asked why he had deserted him after he had been so good to him in Kabul.

Bacha’s followers were not so bold and brave as the Bacha. They wanted to negotiate. After a little thought, the Bacha laughed and said, “Come, let us go to Kabul.
because I have been king and am not afraid to die; for, if we go to Kabul, the treacherous Durrani will surely kill us. So do not be afraid, it will be as Allah desires. I return to Kabul to be either a king or a corpse."

So Bacha Saqao and some of his closest companions went to Kabul, and were immediately admitted to see a nervous, floor-pacing Nadir Khan, who had not slept all night. The two great men greeted each other with hugs and kisses. Nadir Khan begged to be excused, claiming to be very sleepy.

Soldiers entered, and immediately arrested a laughing Bacha Saqao and his companions. "Prepare to die," the Bacha said.

The next day, shot down by 13 soldiers, the Bacha died laughing. All the bodies of the Bacha and his followers were hung in the Chaman for a week.

Love and Jealousy
In a society where romantic love must usually be subordinated to family-arranged marriages, legends of passionate love affairs serve both as psychological safety valves and mechanisms of social control. On the one hand such tales prescribe ideal behavior for men and women, especially the latter; on the other, they remind them what punishment—or anguish—awaits those who violate their parents’ wishes. The preferred marriage (not always possible) for a man is to his father’s brother’s daughter, or as near to that relationship as availability permits.

Romeo and Juliet-type tales are popular, with the hero being a selfless lover who is killed or sacrifices himself on the altar of love, and the heroine, his lover, who dies in mourning or commits suicide.

A Silas Marner-ish tale collected in a Pushtun village near Kandahar will suffice to illustrate the type. Naturally, the tale has several variations, but in all of them it contains many of the recurrent themes in Afghan folklore: unrequited romantic love; respect for age; filial piety; acceptance of parental authority; the joys of having children; riches and happiness attained only if Allah permits.

Three brothers had children born the same year. To Mohammad Ayub, a son named Khadi. To Mohammad Akbar, a son named Aslam. To Mohammad Sufi, a daughter named Marghalai.

Mohammad Akbar and Mohammad Sufi were wealthy farmers, but Mohammad Ayub had lost all his land in a flash flood by the Khash Rud, and he worked as a laborer for his two younger brothers.

As Khadi and Marghalai grew up together, they fell in love and would often meet secretly in a clump of trees near Koh-i-Duzdan (Mountain of Thieves). Their love was as pure as they were young, and one day Khadi asked his father to ask his uncle for Marghalai in marriage. The father tried gently to dissuade his son, but could not.

So Mohammad Ayub set out on his impossible task, for he knew that Marghalai had already been promised to her wealthy cousin, Aslam.

When the young lovers met for the first time after the sad news, they both wept, and Khadi announced his decision to leave and seek his fortune in Hindustan.

"I shall return wealthy and we shall be married," he said.

"And I shall wait," said Marghalai.

Khadi left in the darkness, followed by the eyes of Marghalai, flooded with tears.

Years passed, and a rich caravan from Hindustan approached the village. The leader was Khadi, now handsome and wealthy, by the will of Allah. The caravan camped near the same clump of trees, and Khadi, disguised as a peddler, entered the village and asked about Marghalai.

The people told him. "She is alive and well. She is happy, the wife of Aslam and the mother of Jamila, Ayub, Akbar, and Khadi. Allah has been gracious to her."

"And what of Mohammad Ayub?"

"Dead, dead many years ago. He died of a broken heart because his son, Khadi, left without a word, the ungrateful wretch!"

Khadi sadly returned to the clump of trees. The caravan left and slowly made its way back to Hindustan with all its riches, and with Khadi, and his broken heart.

Virtue and Morality
These tales articulate societal values in both positive rewards and negative punishment aspects. Although folktales in all five categories present idealized personality types (warrior-poet for men; good housewife, helpmate, and mother for women), the virtue and morality themes revolve about the chevalier sans peur et sans reproche.

The ideals found in these folktales focus on key themes expressed in the Pukhtunwali and other codes of the hills. Among the major themes are: melmastia (being a genial host; giving lavish parties); mehrmapalineh (hospitality to guests); nanawati (the right to asylum, and the obligatory acceptance of a truce offer); badal (blood revenge); tureh ("sword," or bravery); meranah (manhood, chivalry); 'isteqamat (persistence, constancy); sabat (steadfastness); imandari (righteousness); qhayrat (defense of property and honor); namus (defense of women’s honor). The whole is summed up in nang, the generic term for honor, as exemplified in a legend of the Sanjarani Baluch of Sistan.

The tents had been pitched and the women prepared the evening meal.
As dusk approached, so did a rider out of the desert. He rode to the tent of the Khan, prostrated himself at the Khan's feet, and claimed asylum. A large body of horsemen appeared on the horizon. They had been chasing the man to kill him, because their respective families were engaged in a blood feud.

The old Khan, wise beyond his years and as pure as his white beard, granted the supplicant asylum, and the pursuing horsemen respected his decision. They did not wish to precipitate another feud.

The Khan sent the man to the guest tent and ordered his youngest son to bring him food and tea. Well-fed and washed, his prayers said, the guest prepared to sleep in the guest tent.

The Khan's youngest son came to his father and cried, "Oh my father! That man is Badshah Gui, who but two months ago slew my brother and your son."

"Yes, my son, but he is now a guest in our camp. He asked for asylum. We have given him asylum, and he is now under our protection. But remember, my son, even if it takes a hundred years, your brother's death, my son's death, will be avenged."

The youngest son, inflamed with the passions of youth, left the father's tent, and, taking his dead brother's dagger from its honored place, crept into the guest tent and buried the dagger into the man's breast, as they had buried his brother two months before.

The next morning, amid the women's cries and lamentations, the guest's body was discovered. Tearing his clothing, ripping off his turban, and pouring ashes on his head in agony, the old Khan cried, "Who could have done such a deed? Who could have brought dishonor on our family? The camps of the Baluch will forever condemn us!"

The young son threw himself at his father's feet and begged forgiveness, saying that in a moment of blind rage, it was he who had dishonored the tribe.

Without a word, the old Khan took the knife that had slain the guest and plunged it into his son's heart. He never spoke of his son again.

The Baluch camps still tell the story, but they tell the story of honor redeemed.

Jokes
This category of folkloric themes includes those "safety-valve" tales which attack institutions by making individuals the butts of jokes. They are often filled with double entendre, for which Persian is justly famous. Many can only be called dirty stories. Peasants and nomads, living close to nature, have earthy ways of describing every-day intercourse in poetic images, a talent carefully hidden from the casual visitor. For more sophisticated urbanites, jokes also serve as outlets for political tensions, particularly during moments of stress such as during the 1978 coup.

Villagers often make religious leaders the fall guys in their jokes, behind their backs, of course, for who can say what power they might possess to curse in the name of Allah? Such a figure of fun common throughout the Muslim world is the Mullah Nasruddin. At times a sharp operator who outwits all his opponents, the Mullah may also be trapped by his own machinations. This example, which incidentally reflects much of the Afghan peasant's attitude toward women, was collected near Kandahar.

The Mullah Nasruddin had a beautiful daughter, the desire of all the evil eyes of the men in the village. Everyone sought the hand of the fair maiden, but the Mullah Nasruddin protected her from the outside world, saving her for the wealthy young Khan who lived just outside the village.

At last the young Khan came to ask for the hand of the beautiful maiden. The Mullah Nasruddin drove a hard bargain and was to receive the highest bride price ever negotiated in the entire region. With his usual regard for Muslim ceremony, the Mullah insisted on a long waiting period before the wedding vows could be taken.

It seems that the young and beautiful daughter of the Mullah Nasruddin had a mind of her own. She fell in love with a young stalwart ne'er-do-well in the village, who constantly showered her with attention as she went to the nearby well for water in the early morning and at dusk. Her trips to get water began to take longer and longer. Most people in the village knew what was happening, but no one dared tell the Mullah Nasruddin.

The time for the wedding approached, and the young, wealthy Khan came to collect his bride. Mullah Nasruddin brought his daughter to meet her betrothed. Lo and behold! She was well pregnant by this time. The young, rich Khan was horrified, and turned on Mullah Nasruddin, demanding to know why he had permitted such a thing to happen. And when the Mullah Nasruddin merely replied that such things are normal when people get married, the young, rich Khan stormed out of the Mullah's compound, and said that he withdrew his offer of marriage to the young and beautiful daughter of the Mullah Nasruddin, and also expected a return of the down payment on the bride price.

The Mullah Nasruddin, genuinely shocked, called after the young, rich Khan, and the young Khan returned.

"Let us be sensible about this," pleaded the Mullah Nasruddin. "Actually, I should double the bride price now that my daughter is truly pregnant and can give you a son."

The young Khan, even more horrified, stuttered and asked, "In the name of Allah, why?"
The Mullah Nasruddin calmly replied, "Why, just last week I delivered a cow to a man to whom I had sold the cow several months ago. In the interim the cow became pregnant, and, therefore, when I delivered the cow, I demanded and received twice the original amount. Now, what is so different between a cow and a daughter?"

Religion
Afghan folklore and legends often are intimately related to Islam, although much of the corpus is pre-Islamic. Of course, all religions build on indigenous beliefs and adapt old legends to new needs. In addition, the Islam practiced in nonliterate Afghan villages and nomadic camps usually only superficially resembles the literate Islam of the Koran, the Hadith (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad), and the Sharia'i (Schools of Theological Law).

The rural Afghan localizes his religion to give it an immediacy to himself and his group. Pre-Islamic saints become Muslim saints. Only the names have been changed to identify the saint with a known Muslim personality.

To bring Islam even closer, Afghans believe that several important Islamic figures are buried in Afghanistan, or, like 'Ayub (Job), passed through the country. Job's boils were cured at a healing hot spring, now called Chashmah-yi-'Ayub, which bubbles forth at a spot where the Balkh River debouches from the mountains of northern Afghanistan. There a shrine, tended by a brotherhood, has been built over the hot spring, and thousands of pilgrims, afflicted with boils or respiratory ailments, annually bathe in the waters. Many claim cures.

More important, however, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, the fourth orthodox caliph, cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him!), is entombed under a magnificent structure at Mazar-i-Sharif, which means "noble tomb," or the "Shrine of the Sharif 'Ali." According to Afghan legend, after 'Ali was assassinated at Kufa, his followers tied his body to the back of a white she-camel. The night before his death 'Ali had given instructions to bury his body at the exact spot the camel died. At what is now Mazar-i-Sharif, the camel expired, and 'Ali was buried. Other legends, probably more accurate, place his interment near Kufa, where the town of Najaf (now called Mashhad 'Ali) grew up around his tomb. Some Muslim pilgrims, taking no chances, make pilgrimages to both Mazar-i-Sharif and Mashhad 'Ali.

But to many Afghans and other Muslims, 'Ali is buried at Mazar-i-Sharif, and their belief is what is important. Many also believe that 'Ali visited Afghanistan and performed miracles even before his tragic death. If one doubts, the true believers can show concrete proof in many places where unusual basaltic, granitic, or other dikes zigzag through the mountainous landscape. "Hazrat 'Ali killed these dragons and Allah turned them into stone," they will say. 'Ali is the Muslim Gilgamesh or St. George. Most areas have legends concerning his dragon-slaying prowess, and according to some, by drawing his fingers through the earth 'Ali created most of the mountains and valleys in north Afghanistan. Such feats were probably originally credited to pre-Islamic (even prehistoric) heroes.

Another legend which associates Afghanistan with the earliest events of Islam concerns Sura 18: 9 sq. of the Koran: The Ashab al-Kahf (People of the Cave, or, The Sleepers, familiar also in Christian folklore as The Seven Sleepers of Ephesus). The Koranic Ashab al-Kahf tells of a number of men "seeking the truth," and, accompanied by their faithful dog, wandering from region to region several centuries before the Prophet Mohammad. Allah, in His mercy, put the seekers to sleep in a cave to await the true Revelation.

The traditional site of the cave is in Jordan or Iraq, but the claim also exists for a cave near Maimana in northern Afghanistan, watched over by a brotherhood calling themselves Arab and Sa'dat (Descendants of the Prophet). They do not speak Arabic, but most know the Koran by heart. A blind Arab Sayyid told me this story in Persian.

In the days before Mohammad, peace and blessings be upon his name, all the people of the earth were Kafir (heathen), and Allah, The Merciful, The Compassionate, The All-Knowing, waited to give His Messenger the Message at the proper time. There were several young men who began to seek the truth, but the true message was not yet. They traveled for many years accompanied by their faithful dog, and one day, weary from the search which had taken them to many lands, they entered this cave and fell asleep. Their faithful dog slept outside to protect them.

Allah, knowing them to be good men, and wanting them to serve as witnesses for Him at the proper time, placed the men and their dog in a magic sleep to await the revelation of the Message.

Six hundred years passed as a day while the men slept. At last, Allah sent Gabriel with the Message to Mohammad, blessings be on his name.

Mohammad, may his name be blessed, heard the story of the Sleepers and sent four of his intimate Companions [Ali, Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthman] to announce the coming of the true Message to the Sleepers. The Companions flew [magic carpet?—LD] to the Ashab al-Kahf.

Allah had wakened the Sleepers before the arrival of the Companions, and, the Sleepers, being hungry, sent one of their number to the bazaar for food.

The shopkeepers would not accept their strange money, and the
Sleepers began to realize they had slept much longer than one night.

The arrival of the Companions cleared up all their questions, as the Sleepers were instructed in the true Message. The Companions offered to return the Sleepers to Arabistan, but the Sleepers looked at each other and asked, “What have we to offer when we have gained so much? Allah has preserved us to learn the true Message, so all that remains for us is Paradise.”

So the Sleepers returned to the cave with their dog, and Allah in His wisdom put their bodies to sleep and transported their spirits to Paradise.

The Companions flew back to Mohammad, may his name ever be blessed, and informed him of the miracle they had seen. Mohammad, may his name ever be blessed, asked, “How many Sleepers were there?”

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said simply, “The ways of Allah are wondrous, and only He knows how many Sleepers there are. Only He knows when one will awaken. The world is full of seekers and only Allah knows their number and when they will awaken.”

This version varies in detail from the Koranic tale, but for those who question that the Ashab-i-Kahf (Persian version) is the real Koranic Ashab al-Kafh, the Arab caretakers have a local tale to dispel their doubt.

About a thousand years ago, an Afghan king doubted the story of the Ashab-i-Kahf, so he decided to visit the cave, count the bodies—that is, if they really existed—which he doubted, and once and for all put an end to such superstitious nonsense.

He left with his whole court, and as he planned to make the trip an enjoyable excursion, he brought along his favorite companions of the hunt: his tazi (Afghan hound) and baz (falcon), for he wished to hunt ahu (gazelle) along the way.

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The king and his party traveled slowly, camping early in the afternoon, and enjoying the nights with great revelry.

As the king’s party approached the final night’s camp before reaching the Ashab-i-Kahf, a large, beautiful ahu appeared on a hill in the far distance. Swiftly the king unhooded the baz and unleashed the tazi, and those experienced companions of the hunt sped toward the fleeing ahu. Soon, they were out of sight, and night fell just as the camp was pitched.

The king did not worry unduly, for in the past hunts had often been long, and the tazi and baz either returned late at night, or stayed by their conquered prey until the king and his entourage caught up with them the next day.

But morning came, and the tazi and baz had not returned. Neither did they appear during the day, and by the time the king reached the Ashab-i-Kahf, his anger knew no bounds. He leaped from his horse, and kicked open the wooden door leading to the burial chamber. And, just inside the entrance were three mummified creatures: the king’s tazi, his baz, and the ahu. Struck by this miracle, the king praised Allah for opening his eyes, and he left the cave a true believer, and did not count the Sleepers. To this day, no one but Allah knows how many are in the cave.

“If,” the caretaker continued, “anyone is rash enough to try to count the Sleepers, Allah will strike him blind and mad, and he will wander these hills cursed by all until he dies. Listen tonight and you will hear a poor, blind, mad pilgrim howling at the moon. Last week, he tried to count the Sleepers.”

Sure enough, that night I did hear the “pilgrim” howling. For some reason, he sounded like a jackal, but then Allah does work in mysterious ways.

Like all pilgrims, I received permission to enter the Cave of the Sleepers by candlelight. To the right of the entrance is the shrine of the Sleepers’ dog, covered with high piles of wild goat and sheep horns, more evidence of the persistence of Central Asia’s prehistoric, possibly totemic, “goat cult.” Another pilgrimage had tacked a gaudy-colored print of the Ka’ba of Mecca on the door. The plastered entrance bore the religious graffiti of generations of pilgrims. I stepped through the door and into the void.

In the darkness lit only by the unstable candle, I could see a platform spread with muslin, covering several large and irregular shapes. I lifted one edge of the covering, gently, with some apprehension. Underneath I could see several mummified bodies, so I just as gently lowered the shroud. I did not bother to count the bodies, for the prospect of wandering blind and mad through the Afghan hills overcame my curiosity. So, presumably, only Allah still knows the correct number of Sleepers.

(August 1978)
NOTES

1. This Report is a slightly expanded and revised version of a lecture presented to the Royal Society for Asian Affairs at the British Academy on June 19, 1978. The lecture will be published in the Society's journal, Asian Affairs.


3. For additional Afghan folklore studies, see the following and their bibliographies.

   Ali, Mohammad, Manners and Customs of the Afghans, Lahore, 1958.


   “Folk Traditions and Beliefs in the Realm of Islam, Pilgrimage and the Veneration of Saints in the Province of Kabul, Afghanistan.” Heidelberg dissertation in German.


   Slobin, Mark, Music in the Culture of Northern Afghanistan, University of Arizona Press, 1976. (For Wenner-Gren Foundation).

   Thorburn, S.S., Bannu, or Our Afghan Frontier, London, 1876.

'Adab, published by the Faculty of Letters, Kabul University, often includes articles on folklore in Dari and Pashto, as does Ariana, also published by the Historical Society.

Afghanistan, a quarterly publication of the Historical Society of Afghanistan, occasionally contains articles on folklore. The journal is published in Western European languages.

The Journal of Folklore, published by the Ministry of Information and Culture, Kabul, is devoted exclusively to folklore. Articles are accepted in Dari, Pashto, Turkic, and any Western European language.

Pashto Quarterly, published by the International Centre for Pashto Studies, Kabul, Afghanistan.

Afghans currently writing on folklore include: R. Amin, H. Baghban, M.A. Melabar, A.R. Pailwal, E. Shahrani, F. Yunis.

4. The current revolutionary regime (Democratic Republic of Afghanistan) is downgrading Nadir's exploits. History is becoming folklore, and other folklore being resurrected as history.

5. Their descriptions of the various possible sexual positions between men and women, men and men, women and women, people and animals, people and farm implements are virtually inexhaustible.
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