

20. Le Coq, A. von, *Chotscho*. Berlin (1913), Pl. 70f, g. h.

21. The stupa of Shingerdara shows this form well, and that of But Kara shows successive building layers as a result of recent unpublished excavations. See also Sir A., “An Archaeological Tour in Swat and Adjacent Hill Tracts”, *Memoirs A.S.I.* (1931), figs. 1, 16, 17, 18, 28, 34, 39.


23. A Turkish viewpoint on this is shown in Esin, E., “The Cosmic Mountain Tree and the Auspicious Bestiary in Turkish Iconography”, *AARP*, vol. 8 (1975).

24. As John Irwin has pointed out in his article “The Heliodorus Pillar: a Heliodorus Appraisal”, *AARP*, vol. 6 (1974), the Heliodorus Pillar can be closely identified with the Yupa, and therefore with the Axis Mundi. In form its octagonal shape has an even closer association with the minaret form than the so-called Asokan column, and major cosmological links accord with the suggested Central Asian traditions as mentioned by Emel Esin (1975) op. cit.


26. Snellgrove and Richardson, op. cit., p. 49.


32. Tafel, A., *Meine Tibet reise*. Berlin (1914), Pl. LV, LVI.
Dinner stereotypes about the traditional role of Muslim women in the West. Village women are seen as subjected to men and to a life of unremitting labour, while towns-women are hidden by their veils and confined in the home to a feminine world where men intrude. The difference between the two is bridged by a third stereotype, this time applied to nomad women, particularly those of Afghanistan. With their unveiled faces and their open-air life, they give an impression of freedom and self-assurance lacking in women of the towns and villages. Like all stereotypes these are over-simplifications and in many cases misleading. It was largely with the aim of finding out more of the realities of the Afghan nomad woman's life, that I accompanied my husband in 1972 in an ethnographic field study of Durrani Pashtuns in Northern Afghanistan.*

The Pashtuns, or Pathans, form an ethnic group of some fifteen million people, half of whom live within the frontiers of Afghanistan, the rest in Pakistan. Of the Afghan Pashtuns perhaps the best known are the Durrani tribal confederation from whom the rulers of the Afghan state have been drawn since its inception in the mid-eighteenth century. The traditional Durrani homeland lies in the southwest of the country, from Kandahar to Farah. Beginning in the 1880's, it became government policy to encourage Pashtun nomads, particularly Durrans, to migrate to the north where they were to provide the first line of an Afghan defence against the Russian approach in Central Asia. The arid lands of Herat and the steppes of Afghan Turkistan were underpopulated and suitable for both cultivation and pastoralism and by the early decades of this century, many thousands of nomads had successfully moved there, some to settle as farmers.

Our field study was based on the Saripul region of Jauzjan province in the north-central part of the country. Saripul itself is a market town and the seat of a sub-governor (Hakim or Wuluswal) whose jurisdiction officially extends over 4,000–5,000 square miles of very rough country inhabited by an ethnically mixed population of some 150,000 souls. In the northern foothills and steppes Uzbeks are numerically dominant, while in the mountain

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valleys to the south Aimaks and Hazaras are the main settled population. Pashtuns, less than 25% of the population of the region, are concentrated in the north where they are chiefly represented by members of the Ishaqzai Durrani tribe, some fourteen sub-tribes of which have winter quarters and villages in Jauzjan province, mostly in the vicinity of Saripul town. The region as a whole is dominated politically and economically by members of this group.

Nowadays these Durrani groups vary widely in both situation and character. A number comprise almost exclusively tent-dwelling pastoral nomads, based on the dry hill-steppe to the west of Saripul: others are similarly tent-dwelling but have their winter quarters along the edge of the Saripul river valley and do some dry-farming, while yet others have acquired fertile agricultural land in the river valley itself and have become semi-sedentary. It was one of these half-settled, half-nomad tribes, with both extensive irrigated lands and large flocks, that we chose to study.

Durrani households are based on the ideal of the extended family: should not become independent of their father while he is alive. Households, indeed, often comprise several married couples, a father and married sons, or a group of married brothers. Larger households commonly have both farmland and livestock, and can, when necessary, subdivide into smaller units during part of the year. In winter most of the households of the sub-tribe live in the winter villages and only a few stay in the nearby steppe pastures with the animals. Then by early March, when the pastures have become green following the winter rains, most the villagers move out to camp in groups of four or five tents, to superintend the lambing, milking and shearing. Spring is the busiest and most pleasant season of the economic year.

Some of the sheep are raised and sold for meat, but most are of the Karakul breed, whose lambs produce Astrakhan or Persian lambskins. These pastoralists are thus involved in one of Afghanistan’s major economic activities. Lambing begins in early March and is the concern of men. They slaughter the male lambs and dress and market their skins. For women, lambing marks the onset of the milking season. They milk the ewes both day; most of the milk, which is always heated and turned into yogurt, is churned in a skin hanging in typical nomad style beneath a tripod; may later convert the curds into clarified butter or ghee, and use them for a variety of products, the most important of which is kurut, or whey-balls, which can be stored and then reconstituted months later. Men also shear all the sheep, but as they consider the wool of the fleeces to be too long, coarse and dirty for domestic use, they sell it to the based merchants to provide additional income for the pastoral household.

For children, unlike their parents, the pleasures of the spring season are not tempered by hard work and they are often seen gambolling on steppe hillsides with the flocks of ewe-lambs they sometimes herd. They go on expeditions through the tall grasses collecting great bouquets of flowers or tasty herbs. Like the adults, they relish their escape from the confines of the mud-brick winter villages and they play ‘tent’, making miniature tents complete with all the furnishings for their dolls. Boys an
girls play together until puberty, but by the age of seven or eight a division of labour between the sexes begins to emerge. Child-rearing practices are very relaxed and few demands are made of young children, who learn almost entirely from example. Girls of eight or nine have mastered the rudiments of spinning or bread-making, while boys of a similar age have many opportunities to accompany the men on their herding round.

In May, when the hot sun has dried the steppe grasses and begun to turn the pastures into desert, the pastoralists and their animals must move. Of the 200 households of the sub-tribe some two-thirds return to the river valley in summer to supervise agricultural activities, while the remaining families begin the long migration to the central part of the country to join sheep in the summer pastures, returning to Saripul only in August or September.

The migration trail is 200 miles long and is covered in 20 to 25 stages. The nomads move mostly at night, setting off at any time after midnight depending on the phase of the moon and the character of the terrain. They take camp soon after day-break, for the heavy-laden camels tire quickly in the morning sun. The nomads must carry with them all their supplies: for everybody, rice and tea for the better-off, and salt for the animals. They may be enticed to buy small luxuries such as sugar and sweets, or essentials like soap, from opportunist traders along the first part of the trail. These shops are the last the nomads will see until their return to Saripul in nearly four months time.

The mountain ranges of the region run from east to west. The principal routes carve deep gorges through them as they flow northwards into Turkistan. The nomads move up these narrow and often spectacular valleys, passing the ruins of forts and caravanserais which once served ancient routes. Some five or six stages from their spring encampments, they reach the last Uzbek villages and enter the first major gorge of the trail, then they feel they have left their Saripul homeland (watan) and begun migration proper. After this, virtually every valley along the route is visited by members of yet a different ethnic group: Aimaks, Tajiks, etc. Some of these people are semi-nomadic like the Durranis, but others are following a long migration to find summer pasturage for their flocks; they move only one or two stages between the valley floor, where their villages and irrigated cultivation, and nearby mountain plateaux, where they spend the summer in round felt-covered tents of the Central type, quite different from the angular goat-hair tents of the Pashtuns. These mountain villagers are unanimous in their hostile view of the nomads, whom they see as intruders into their valleys and thieves who passers on local crops and pastures. Village women from respectable families have no contact with the nomad women; they do not visit the latter in their camps, nor are they visited by them. Poorer women, however, among whom are elderly widows without sons to support them, do enter the nomads' camp to barter local produce like walnuts, dried fruit or even dishes, for wool, of which there is a chronic shortage in these mountains. For the nomad women, such contacts with the lowest stratum of local community only serve to reinforce their convictions of superiority vis-à-vis the other ethnic groups through whose territories they pass.
Indeed, they tend to class all non-Pashtu-speakers together as ‘Uzbek’, which is wildly inaccurate and insulting to all those concerned. It is notable that in this respect the Pashtun women’s stereotypes of themselves and their culture are far more rigid and hierarchical than are those of their menfolk whose wider-ranging economic activities and visits to the Saripul market enable them to form a more realistic picture of the relative status and economic standing of members of other ethnic communities. Afghan Persian (Dari) is the lingua franca of the Saripul region, and inter-ethnic contacts of all kinds take place in that language, in which all Pashtun men and most women are quite fluent.

As they enter a new campsite, the men settle the camels and the women begin to put the baggage in order, while the guard dogs of each household often fight to establish their respective territories for the day. The tents are normally erected, though perhaps in a diminished form, to give protection from the sun especially during the morning nap taken by one and all, but they are struck again at dusk so that they can be more easily loaded in the dark. In contrast with the rigours of the journey itself, the daily stop is a time of relative leisure for women. While men may have to travel nearby villages to seek out fodder for the pack camels, the women have few domestic duties to perform, apart from baking bread for the next day. Even washing clothes, which can only happen when a household is camped near running water – an unusual and delightful situation in itself becomes a pleasant diversion rather than an onerous chore.

During the spring migration, camp groups of usually no more than five families move together. And they move quickly, never stopping more than one day at any stage. On the one hand they are anxious to reach summer pastures and resume milking, and on the other the crops and pasturage of the narrow mountain valleys are jealously guarded by villagers. Fodder for the pack animals is liable to be very scarce, and the camp leader must exercise keen judgement each day to find a suitable route without creating an unpleasant incident with the local people. Heading southward toward their proper summer pastures, the nomads have to go through three passes of 10,000–12,000 feet between different valleys; on the pass and indeed on the mountain plateaux, camps and grazing would be easy to find, but it is far too cold for the nomads at this season. The herds, however, each numbering some 600 head of sheep and goats, move separately from the family caravans. Two or sometimes three shepherds take the herd on a more direct route over the mountain ridges where grazing is plentiful and the sheep have more time to use it. This is an important aspect of the economics of the migration, but the households making the trek are thus deprived of milk products from their animals during that time: indeed their diet during this month consists almost entirely of bread and tea. One or two camps where the caravans and the flocks meet take on a festive air. The animals are milked and each housewife sends bowls of milk to her neighbours. On one other occasion the nomads with whom the travellers had milk during the migration. By chance they happened on the milking ground of a local Tajik village. After much joking and cajolery, the nomad women persuaded the Tajiks to give them small bowls of milk for their families, and this done, the women all repaired to a near-
hillside to take advantage of this rare opportunity to get to know women of a different ethnic group on equal terms. They proceeded as might any anthropologist, asking each other a series of questions to discover their respective statuses – questions about their husband’s wealth, about the numbers and sex of their children, whether they had co-wives and so on, and soon common feminine interests emerged and a pleasant afternoon was spent by all.

As the nomads move higher and higher into the central mountains, the pace of the migration appears to accelerate with their anticipation of the end of the trek and arrival in the summer pastures. The days become cooler and moves are more likely to last into the morning, allowing the nomads to appreciate the awesome country through which they pass. Moreover the stages themselves become increasingly demanding. For the easier stages the housewife herself can usually manage to guide the five or six camels of the household caravan from the top of the leading camel, but later, as the terrain becomes more rugged, the men stay close by. Loads shift or even fall off, and the women are often obliged to walk and lead the caravan on foot. Because of the difficulties of these later stages of the migration, women who are pregnant or nursing prefer to remain in the Saripul villages in summer; but most women are thrilled by the scenery, the ringing camels-bells and the prospect of unexpected adventures which the migration affords. Ultimately, however, the decision about who goes on the migration is taken by men. For example, in a household composed of two brothers and their families, the men may agree to take the flocks to the mountains in alternate years, every other year remaining behind to supervise the farming activities; or they effect a more or less permanent division of labour between them, one brother specializing as pastoral nomad, the other as settled farmer.

After crossing the third high pass the nomads reach their pastures in the Hazarajat. Their migration has the character of a pilgrimage, for along the route are numerous shrines, each believed to have curative powers, for women’s ailments in particular. The arrival in the summer pastures is also marked by an important shrine, the grave of a distant ancestor. Life in summer quarters soon settles into a routine. The camps are very small, often consisting of only one or two households associated with a single herd. For the women this is a lonely and exhausting time of the year. The nomads insist that they take their families to the mountains only for the sake of the milk and wool products which are made there; as in spring, these are women’s concern. Every day for at least a month they milk the sheep, churn the yogurt, make kurut and put aside the curds. Then one evening, after a “harvest” supper, a festive meal for which the tent is hung with flowers and herbs and other items which remind the nomads of the baking season, the housewife sends everyone out of the tent to sleep elsewhere for the night and she begins to boil the great cauldrons of curds, to clarify them and transform them into ghee. It is said that the curds must not hear the sound of a human voice during this night or they will catch fire and the tent will burn down. In the morning she measures the ghee as she pours it into storage skins, then proudly sends bowls of the newly-made ghee round to the neighbouring households and receives congratulations on
every side. Women often recall the summers they have spent in the mountains by the number of skins of ghee they filled.

Meanwhile, the men shear the sheep a second time, and this time the softer, shorter and cleaner wool is kept for domestic purposes. Once the milking season is over, the women make felts: they beat the wool with long rods to tease it, then spread it on a cloth or rug, dampen it down and roll it with their arms until it has been pressed into felt. Small felts, often elaborately decorated with designs in coloured wool, are made for everyday use as rugs, blankets or shepherd’s cloaks. A housewife, working alone or with only the help of her own children, may make up to ten such felts in as many days – a truly back-breaking labour!

When felt-making is finished, the small summer camps congregate for preparation for the return migration to Saripul. The herds stay a further month or so in the mountains with the shepherds, until the first frosts of autumn drive them back down to the steppes of Turkistan.

The women say the return migration is like a party: the hard work of the summer is finished, and they look forward to the return to Saripul and reunion with the rest of their family. The leisurely pace of this migration coincides with their mood. The mountain villagers have harvested the crops, and their hostility towards the nomads is consequently lessened, and there are now stubble fields where the nomads can camp and the pack camels graze. Larger groups move together now, sometimes 20 to 30 households, and when they camp near abundant water, they are likely to stop for two or three days between stages. Here the women find time to make the large black felts, sometimes fifteen or twenty feet square, which are an important item of a bride’s trousseau. Ten or fifteen women work together on such felts, and after a summer of isolation now revel in the conviviality and gossip provided by these felting bees and the festive meal of meat and rice provided by the woman whose wool is being worked. These camps are often visited by both men and women villagers who offer wool in exchange for various pot-herbs, nuts, brown sugar and, best of all, fresh apricots which have just ripened in the local village orchards. As the nomads descend ever lower towards Turkistan, the apricot harvest gives way to grapes and melons. The succession of delicious fruits sets the tone of the return migration.

Among those who have remained in the villages during the summer is the men rather than the women who are active, and it is only they who are directly involved in agricultural activities. In the last few decades the population of the Saripul valley has increased rapidly. The Durrani tribe with whom we stayed had only recently begun to realize the value of the irrigated farmland which they had acquired cheaply soon after their arrival. They now farm it intensively, growing wheat and barley, fodder, and a variety of cash crops like cotton, sesame and linseed.

Nowadays almost every household has a mud-brick house. A married woman is expected to have her own separate room, but harmony among all sections of the household is highly valued. Its presence is much commented on by outsiders, who point up the number of separate hearths, who cooks bread for whom, who eats with whom, so forth. Men and women always eat separately, but a household who
all men and all women eat together is much praised, while one in which each woman cooks for her immediate family is deemed ridiculous. Separate cooking pots are a sign of incipient household division.

Village life has introduced few changes into the nomads’ material culture. For example the local non-Pashtun villagers have spinning-wheels, wooden cradles, earthen bread-ovens and pottery milk-churns, but the settled Pashtuns continue to spin by hand, to rock their infants in hammocks. to bake their bread on the flat hearth-griddle, and a housewife with a cow and milk during the summer continues to churn the milk in a skin hung from a tripod. Indeed the most important change seems to be that weaving of tent-cloth and other materials is now done in the villages. The Pashtun women’s conservatism in material culture appears to be related to their lack of contact with respectable women of other ethnic groups from whom they might be prepared to borrow customs appropriate to village life.

Summer in the villages brings unpleasant insects and often intense heat. the Pashtuns say that when they first arrived in Turkistan they refused to stay in the steppes during the summer, for they were sure they would die. for the women it is also a season of relative inactivity. With all this, it is at this time when women are most likely to express dissatisfaction with their lot. One of their most striking disabilities, in this intensely religious society, is the reservation of the village mosques for the men. But women do not explain of this, rather they agree with the reasons men give for it. Moreover they do have an alternative road to religious experience, for it is they, rather than the men, who most often visit local shrines — the graves of martyrs and holy men or places remembered as having been visited by heroes of Sunni Islam. Each shrine is believed to have special powers to heal physical complaints and remedy misfortunes. but pilgrimages to them often have a picnic atmosphere. The most celebrated of the local shrines is a day’s back journey from the village, and a woman who has freed herself from her domestic round for the trip has indeed cause for celebration. Any misfortunes are attributed to jinns, spirits that attack and possess women in particular – one in three of all women are said to have been possessed at some time in their life. Possession is usually known only through illness said to result from it, but some women, especially those who suffer the social misfortune such as childlessness, an unloving husband, or a wife, fall into violent fits, during which their jinn is said to speak or cry. Fits may well be brought on by a visit to a shrine, which has the power to exorcise the spirit concerned. Kinsfolk and neighbours are especially solicitous of women who have had such fits, and this attention, if not actually ameliorating the woman’s condition, may help to reconcile her to it. For women, the principal goal in life is a successful marriage with a loving husband and many sons. More generally, marriage is the focus of a great deal of the economic and political pursuits of these people, and it solves, moreover, the most elaborate of the ritual activities in which they engage. Indeed, wedding celebrations are the high points of their year.

There are two main seasons for weddings, spring and autumn, differing only in the scale of the festivities possible. In spring, when people are busy with pastoral activities and scattered in herding camps throughout the
pastures, weddings are smaller, rarely attended by more than a few hundred people; in autumn, a slack period of the year, weddings in the villages may be attended by a thousand guests or more. The most spectacular are those where bride and groom are from different camps or villages. On the eve of the wedding day, family friends gather in the groom’s camp or courtyard to dance until long after midnight – men and women in separate circles. Then on the morning of the wedding day men of the groom’s party leave for the bride’s home, followed by a splendid procession of women dressed in all their finery and riding camels also suitably bedecked. Again, men’s and women’s dancing circles form; men also engage in shooting, riding or other kinds of competitions. Older women repair to the tent room where the bride is secluded and examine her trousseau, which consists of clothing, jewellery and household effects of all kinds; her trousseau indeed literally known as her “house” and consists of all those things she will need to start her married life in her husband’s family.

The bride’s father is entitled to demand and usually receives a large brideprice. Amounts of one lac of Afghans (worth £500 in 1971-72) 100 sheep are common. The more he receives the greater will be the trousseau he is expected to return with his daughter. The accumulation of wealth between the two families may take several years. Once the final payments are in sight the couple may, after appropriate rituals, surreptitiously begin sleeping together – the groom visits his bride at night. This part of the engagement period is known as the “game” (bazi) and is often regarded by both men and women as the best time in their lives.

The wedding feast is prepared by a professional cook hired for the occasion, and served in two relays, first to men and then to women. As the bride is dressed in her wedding finery she is expected to weep at this high emotional crisis; but distress at leaving her own family to join her husband is often tempered by real affection for him. After the feast is over, the trousseau is displayed, item by item, outside the bride’s room or tent while the women guests sing standardized wedding songs. It is important to the prestige of both families that the trousseau should be impressive both in extent and quality, and the songs chosen quickly tell the principle if they have failed in this respect. Then the groom is dressed in wedding clothes and sent off home, the trousseau is loaded on to a waiting camel and finally the bride, wearing a white veil, is brought out, seated on another camel and led away after her husband.

The final ceremony of the wedding takes place a year or so later, when the bride visits her original home, now as an established married woman whose allegiances lie entirely with her husband’s family. Divorce is legally permitted, but never practised by these Pashtuns. Husbands and wives are often devoted to each other, and well aware of their interdependence in the household. Yet for neither men nor women is marriage a success without children, especially sons, who will continue their line and support their parents in their old age. For a woman, only if she has sons, who in their turn marry and bring brides into her home, can she gain some freedom from domestic duties to complement the freedom from child-rearing brought in middle-age. These freedoms together give a woman, for the first time in her life, an opportunity to become a real force in community affairs.
RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEVELOPMENT
a Meeting with Villagers in Tamilnad, South India

JOHN STALEY

John Staley is employed by Oxfam, and lives in Bangalore. Until recently he was Oxfam's representative in South India and Sri Lanka. He is now engaged in various programmes for training and education in development. He previously travelled and studied in parts of Central Asia, and has lectured to the Society on several occasions.

Do anything you want in this village, so long as you don't try to change anything. – Village leader, speaking to a development worker.

Introduction

Many aid and development agencies, both national and international, large and small, are questioning their earlier assumptions and reconsidering their roles. This mood of introspection is found also among the voluntary agencies, including both those at work in various places in India, and the foreign (i.e. non-Indian) fund-raising agencies which help to finance that work.¹

Many of these agencies, Indian and foreign, took the plunge into "development work" during the furore over the drought in Bihar during 1966 and 1967. Now, a decade later, it is becoming clear that the expectations of that time were unrealistic. More loans for wells do not necessarily lead to more water for irrigation. More water for irrigation does not necessarily mean more food for the poor. More aid does not necessarily lead to more development. The Garden of Eden, whose creation one agency representative foretold, has not materialized. With the benefit of hindsight we can see that there was insufficient understanding of the realities of the society and culture in which the agencies were operating. There is also the mitigating fact that, during the decade since 1967, the conventional understanding of "development" has itself changed greatly. Much of the work that was started as development during the euphoria of the late 1960s can now be categorized as the provision of services. Examples are the programmes for sinking wells, for agricultural extension and for the improvement of community health. Such work is now contrasted with "real development", in which the people themselves take charge of their own affairs by becoming the "subjects of their destiny" rather than its objects.²

A four-day meeting was held recently in Tamilnad, South India, to focus on some of these matters.³ The particular theme of the meeting was "Responsibility for Development". We know that in many development programmes (irrespective of their content) the objectives of the programme do not become the concern of the people actually involved, but remain the