

**NOMADISM IN MODERN
AFGHANISTAN: ASSET
OR ANACHRONISM?**

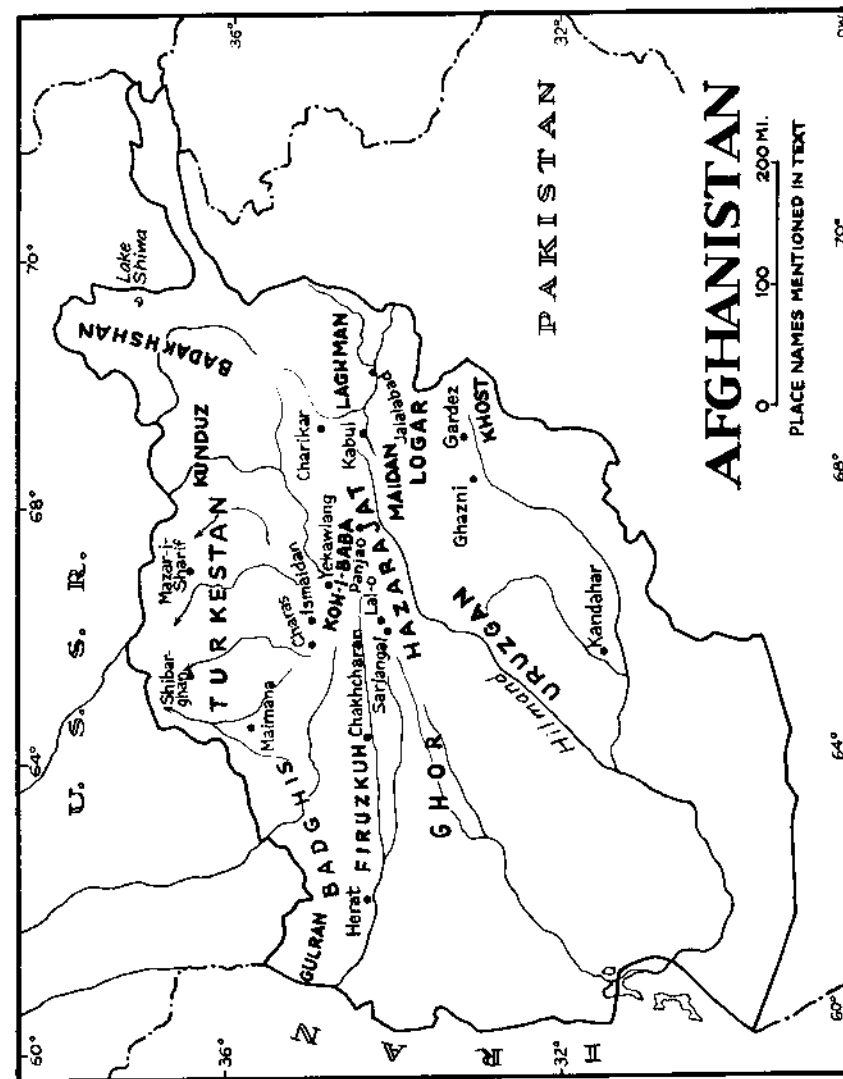
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Nomadism as a way of life is fast receding in most countries where it still exists today. An exception to this process is Afghanistan where, in terms of numbers at least, the nomads appear to be holding their own if not expanding.¹ This fact alone, apart from any practical objections to nomadism, constitutes a problem for a country intent on a program of modernization. In conformity with other nations, Afghanistan has long determined on the solution of sedentarization,² although the government recognizes that such a policy cannot be implemented overnight and must take account of the diversity in character and situation of the various nomadic elements in the country. This chapter seeks to survey the role played by the nomads today and assess how far Afghanistan can regard them as an anachronism to be eliminated rather than an asset to be developed.

THE NOMADIC POPULATION

In the Afghan context, the term "nomad" evokes a picture of steppes and mountains, flocks of sheep and goats, camel trains, black tents, and tribally organized societies. But there are pastoralists without tribal organization who have no tents and do not nomadize; there are both tent-dwelling nomads and sedentary tribal groups without pastoral interests; and of the tribally organized, tent-dwelling pastoralists, there are those who migrate hundreds of miles with the aid of camels and those who move short distances only, using donkeys to carry their tents.

Estimates of Afghanistan's nomadic population vary widely and rarely specify which kinds of nomads are included. Generally quoted



is a figure of between 2 and 3 million nomads out of a population of over 15 million persons, but specific estimates of "full-nomads"—that is, tent-dwelling pastoralists with no agricultural occupation—vary from 200,000 to 2,741,488.³ For nomadism so defined, the former figure is more realistic while the latter would probably be exceeded by the number of nomads defined by the broader criterion, which I shall use, of tribally organized, tent-using transhumants with a primary interest in pastoralism.⁴ By either definition, the great majority of these nomads are Pashto-speakers of a variety of groups.

In spite of this uncertainty over numbers, there is now, thanks largely to the publication of Klaus Ferdinand, a considerable amount of information available concerning the distribution and basic social and economic characteristics of Afghan nomads.⁴ More detailed studies of the social organization of individual groups have recently been carried out, but so far only Ferdinand's articles on certain Ghilzai groups in east Afghanistan have been published.⁵

The nomads' winter quarters are spread over three different natural regions: the arid semideserts and foothills of the southwest and west, stretching from east of Kandahar to Herat; the steppes and foothills of Badghis and Afghan Turkestan in the north, comparatively well-watered, mainly agricultural areas, occasionally subject to harsh winters; and the wetter, monsoon-influenced paleotropic regions of the east and southeast, along and across the Pakistan frontier.⁶

Western Groups

Most numerous among the nomads are those associated with the southwest, speaking the Kandahari dialect of Pashto and distinguished by their "ridge-pole" tent and certain other cultural features. Largely from the Durrani tribes nomads of this category are also drawn from various small tribes, such as the Taimuri and Moghol, that share much of the culture and often the Pashto of the Durrani. Some of the Baluch of the southwest are nomadic, and many have moved into Durrani lands and taken on Durrani culture and language. There are also several small Ghilzai groups—Tokhi, Taraki, Hotaki—that, in Ferdinand's view, have become "Durrvanized."⁷ These nomads have expanded all over the west, and since before 1900 into the northern steppes too, where they are now found in large numbers from Gulran to Kunduz. Although initiated and encouraged by the government,⁸ this northward movement would seem to have received constant impetus from the gradual dessication and overgrazing of the southwest.

The pastoral economy of the western nomads is based on sheep and a few goats. The animals are herded in flocks of some 500 head by two shepherds: One is hired on an annual contract for a fixed

share, usually ten percent, of the produce; his assistant is paid a monthly wage of up to 500 afghanis; and both also receive subsistence food and clothing from their employers. Most of these groups have some stake in farmland in their winter quarters. There is a fine gradation among them, from "pure nomads" with no cultivation, through groups that have farmlands but abandon them in summer for the mountains, to those who have settled village bases and permanent dwellings and send only part of the community—or of individual households—with flocks and tents to the mountains.

In mid-March, the large winter camps break up and small herding units scatter over the new spring grazing in the steppe to concentrate on important husbandry activities, especially lambing, shearing, milking, and milk processing. The spring migration begins in late April or May. Distances traveled between winter and summer quarters range from a few days' journey to a month's trek of 200 to 300 miles. Summer quarters of the western nomads cover the Band-i-Bayan, Firuzkuh, and Koh-i-Baba ranges, known collectively to the nomads as "Siyah-Band," and extend into western parts of the Hazarajat in the regions of Uruzgan, Lal-o Sarjantal, and Yekawlang; an increasing number now spend the summer in Badakhshan, especially in the vicinity of Lake Shiwa.

Between March and July the women process the milk into clarified butter and dried whey, basic items in the nomads' diet, and at the end of the two months' stay in the mountains they make felt from the summer wool-clip. Apart from the shearing, the men of the camp, and often the women, too, conduct extensive trade relations with Aimaq, Tajik, and Hazara mountain villagers, exchanging their own sheep and wool, and tea, salt, and other commodities brought from the plains, for grain and even for clarified butter, of which nomad families often cannot produce enough for their own annual consumption. Men may take their surplus stock to the nomad bazaars at Chakhcharan and Charas or even to Kabul. Poorer nomads often take on harvesting or other work in the mountain villages, while the wealthier have acquired land near their summer quarters. The nomads start their return to the plains in July or August, leaving their flocks for up to a month more with the shepherds in the mountains. Half the year is spent in and around the winter quarters, which they commonly refer to as "homeland" (*watan*), and here, where both men and women are less busy than at other times, most of the ceremonial and festive activities take place.

Eastern Groups

The other major category of the nomadic population, associated with the better watered, lush grazing grounds of the east, is drawn

from various Ghilzai tribes, Kakar, and Shinwari. Here Ferdinand distinguishes the short-range nomads, pastoralists based in villages in the area of Laghman and Kabul, from the more numerous long-range "full-nomads" who penetrate the Hazarajat mountains. The latter winter in camps comprising up to a hundred families in the Jalalabad region, in Khost, and also over the frontier. These groups construct huts of straw and branches, while another branch, some Ghilzai near Kandahar, use black tents in winter. Only the wealthy own farmlands, cultivated by share-croppers.

During the winter, the herds of sheep and goats graze near the camp, while the men may use their camels for commercial transport. In mid-March the winter camps and settlements break up; the Kandahar Ghilzai spend up to two months in small camps in the steppe pastures, while the groups from Pakistan come slowly up the passes to their spring camps. In May to June the nomads reach their summer pastures, ranging from the mountains north of Kabul to those around Gardez and Ghazni, and into the Hazarajat in Uruzgan and the Koh-i-Baba. In August they come down to camp near Kabul or Logar for a further two to three months before returning to winter quarters, to complete a yearly movement of sometimes more than five hundred miles. These nomads also spend spring and summer making dried whey and clarified butter. Their pastoralism is highly specialized and even less self-sufficient than that of the westerners; they depend on settled society not only for grain but also for a wide range of utensils, saddles, tent cloth, and so forth, and they sell their animals and other pastoral produce to acquire these.

Wealthy eastern nomads, especially from the Ahmadzai, Sulaiman Khel, and Niazi tribes, leaving their families in their summer camps, take camels and small canvas tents westward to the bazaars of Panjao, Chakhcharan, Charas, Ismaidan, and elsewhere, where they trade with local Hazara and Aimaq villagers and with nomads from the west, southwest, and north. They bring goods from the bazaars of Pakistan and Kabul, cloth, used American clothes, guns, sugar, and tea; sell these for cash or credit; and take back with them grain, clarified butter, and animals. Throughout the summer there is a constant eastward flow of animals through the central mountains, by truck and bus and on the hoof, although nowadays the nomadic stockmen from the west often accompany their animals personally to Kabul.

Other nomads of these eastern groups, from settlements near Jalalabad and the Pakistan frontier regions, bring tents, a few sheep and goats, milking cows, and donkeys to spend the spring and summer working on the harvest in villages in the area between Maidan and Charikar. Their employers, to whom they usually return each year, pay them 5 percent of the crop, and the straw and chaff for their

animals. Few of these harvesters own land themselves. They return home in summer in time to work on the rice harvest.

For all the eastern groups, existence has been much complicated by restrictions placed on the Pakistan frontier. For some years there has been serious overcrowding on the Afghan side, leading to processes of settlement and emigration to other areas of the country.⁹ As with the westerners, northward movements date from the beginning of the century. Many groups of eastern nomads have settled on arrival in the north, but others—Ahmadzai, Kakar, Shinwari—have continued to nomadize there, as far east as Kunduz and as far west as Shibarghan. Other Ghilzai nomads of the Tokhi, Taraki, and Hotaki tribes, in the Maimana and Badghis area, came with the Durrani from the west before 1900. Throughout the north, from Badghis to Badakhshan, nomads of western origin are more numerous than easterners, but all nomads there belong as Pushtun to an ethnic and linguistic minority.

Other Groups

The various groups of nomads so far discussed have fallen within the definition proposed—tribally organized, tent-using transhumants with a primary interest in pastoralism. The great majority of these are Pashto-speakers using black goat-hair tents. Other groups with some of the essential characteristics need to be mentioned. Although they are not usually seen as part of the "problem," they are likely to be affected by measures taken to deal with it.

Of the Turkic-speaking groups, there are tribally organized pastoral nomads or seminomads living in yurt-type tents among the Kirghiz in the northeast and the Turkoman in the northwest; Uzbek peasants often spend the summer months in yurts but rarely with any major pastoral preoccupation. Persian-speaking Arab pastoralists nomadize in black tents in the Jalalabad region, while in various parts of Afghan Turkestan other Persian-speaking Arabs, not always pastoralists, have yurts with which they move small distances only. The Aimaq tribal groups of the west and northwest are more or less involved in pastoralism and often live at least part of the year in tents—black in the southwest, felt-covered yurts among the Jamshidi and Firuzkuhi toward the northwest. Other Persian-speaking nomadic groups of Aimaq origins—Taimuri, Tahiri, and Zuri, for example—live in the Durrani style, and some (such as Maliki) have adopted the Kandahari Pashto dialect. In parts of the mountains, Tajik and Hazara villagers, with or without flocks, move short distances from their villages to spend the summer in tent-like huts.

NOMADS AND THE REST OF THE POPULATION

In present day Afghanistan the nomads continue to fill an important ecological niche by using pastures not otherwise accessible to exploitation, particularly in arid, nonarable regions and high mountain ranges far from settlement. Their flocks are closely adapted to such conditions. Although mountain villagers can produce high milk yields from their flocks, this success depends on winter foddering and they have to maintain a balance in their cultivation between fodder and other crops. With such limitations on their growth, local flocks can exploit only small areas of mountain pastures and vast ranges are left for the nomads. Similarly, villagers in the arid steppes are limited in the size of the permanent flocks they can maintain in their vicinity. In both contexts, the nomads are able to exploit the surplus pasture, although two critical frontiers are erected: between the nomad and local flocks, and between nomad flocks and local farmland.¹⁰ A further service performed by the nomads, in more isolated regions, is as suppliers not only of goods but of information about "the outside world."

However nomads are defined, whether as simply the comparatively small number of "full-nomad" pastoralists or in the wider definition I have adopted, whether the term includes only Pashto-speakers or all the groups catalogued above, it is difficult to pick out basic social and cultural characteristics that distinguish them as nomads from the rest of the rural population.

For the majority of the nomads, those of the Durrani and Ghilzai tribes, the only differences between them and their sedentary fellow-tribesmen are related directly to their pastoralism and their mobility, and they share major cultural features such as language, customs, and traditions. Moreover, the nomads have always been liable to sedentarization, in various ways and for various reasons. In spite of high infant mortality, the nomadic population increases naturally and often at a greater rate than the settled village population. Overgrazing frequently occurs, and its effects on the pastures may well be compounded by a gradual dessication of many of the nomadic areas, particularly the southwest. In all, there is great pressure on the nomads to "shed" surplus members into settled, nonpastoral society.

Temporary or permanent settlement may occur as a gradual process or as the result of climatic extremes when nomad flock losses can be catastrophic, as in the harsh winters of 1963-64 and 1971-72 or drought summers like 1970 and 1971. In either case, the process reported by Barth for south Persia is confirmed by Ferdinand for east Afghanistan and by others elsewhere in the country: Sedentarization

occurs at the extremes of the socioeconomic spectrum.¹¹ A pastoral family is viable only if it owns a certain minimum of animals; below this level a nomad can survive as client or shepherd, but not for long as he cannot support a family, and his only alternative is to leave the nomadic group and become a client-share-cropper or farm laborer in a village or to disappear into the urban labor market. A rich nomad, on the other hand, may find that more than a certain number of animals brings diminishing returns; he may therefore convert his surplus into the more secure investment of farmland or into trade. He sooner or later builds a house and "retires" from the nomadic scene, entrusting his flocks to supervisors.

Nomads prefer to acquire land already under cultivation but recently, with the government encouraging farmers to open up new lands, the nomads, too, particularly in the north, have taken to ploughing and sowing crops on their pastures before someone else can do so. As landowners they avoid working the land themselves, instead employing settled peasants. Their traditional view of village life springs largely from this process. They scorn farming unless they can be landowners and employers. Nonetheless, nomads throughout the country now see the virtues of mixed farming, of combining their pastoralism with cultivation from a settled base even if they do not farm themselves. Many tribal communities include sedentary households occupied with cultivation and others that pursue a transhumant pastoral life in tents, spending only the autumn and winter with their kinsmen. Families often divide into two parts for this purpose, one specializing in pastoralism and the other in farming, and occasionally members of such a family take turns in doing the transhumance.

The sedentarization process is thus familiar to the nomads, who are generally eager to welcome it, on their own terms. The foregoing sketch of nomadic society has also shown that the nomads are not isolated, primitive tribes of savages. They are, as they have always been, closely bound with the rest of the population in economic, political, social, and cultural relations. They cannot be left out of any programs of modernization.

MODERNIZATION AND THE NOMADS

The aims of modernization and the methods by which it is approached have been variously conceived; in the case of Afghanistan, the following programs are currently being pursued with some consistency. Traditional economic relations are to be transformed by the development of the country's resources and the establishment of rationally based industry, finance, commerce, communications, public

works, and agriculture. In terms of the wider aims of nation-building through political integration and social consensus—of importance to a country of such geographical, ethnic, and linguistic diversity—secular positivist values are to supersede tribal and ethnic loyalties and conflicts and traditional religious attitudes. To these ends are directed current social programs of education and communications, health and welfare, rationalization of the judiciary and the administrative bureaucracy, and more explicitly political measures of improved security through a modernized army and universal conscription. The programs are intended to affect all the population.

The nomads, too, are Afghans; they owe the state their loyalty and obedience to its laws, their taxes, and their young men for conscription, and they are also eligible for the services it provides in education, health, and employment. One aim of the government's sedentarization policy is to bring the nomadic population within reach of these modernization programs; this is a laudable aim, but it is debatable whether the means chosen will in the long run prove either practicable or economically advantageous. There are, however, a series of other factors that are held to justify the sedentarization of nomads, and these should be examined in more detail.

Nomadism and Tribalism

In many countries with substantial nomadic populations, such as Iran, nomadism and tribalism have been regarded with some justification as aspects of a single political problem. Military forces were traditionally based on tribally organized nomadic populations, and now the nomad tribes, mobile and militarily effective, with a reputation as "proud setters-up and pullers-down of kings," were seen as a hindrance to national unity and stability. Sedentarization policies had largely political aims; where carried out effectively, they have usually led to detribalization.

But such an identification of nomadism and tribalism has little validity in Afghanistan, where the majority of the tribally organized population are not nomads at all, and where tribal revolts and disturbances most often come from settled groups. Little is yet known of the nature and forms of tribal organization among the Pushtun, whether villagers or nomads, but there seems no reason to think the latter any more likely to offer concerted military action than the former. Nomads form a mobile society, armed and capable of concealment when pursued, yet their homes and property are particularly vulnerable to attack, by human or animal predators; most important, their arms are now usually antiquated and certainly no match for the modern Afghan military. The nomads today are no more capable of

armed revolt than any other element in the population. Insofar as they are armed and tribally organized, they constitute no more of a political problem than their settled fellow-tribesmen.

Administrative Problems

Administratively, on the other hand, the nomads cause well-known and undeniable difficulties. On the frontiers of both Iran and Pakistan, nomads continue to pursue smuggling activities of various kinds to the detriment of Afghan local producers and customs receipts, introducing forbidden goods and avoiding duty on others (such as guns, cloth, and other trade goods) and exporting livestock and other produce without authority. Inside the country, they frequently manage to avoid their two main obligations to the state—taxation and registration of males for conscription purposes. They travel unchecked across provincial frontiers and penetrate into outlying valleys several days' journey from administrative centers. Further, by avoiding internal and external frontier controls, the nomads are liable to spread both human and animal diseases.¹²

Nomads are also notorious traditionally for raiding settled people, and more recently for exploiting them through an extortionate credit system, but this is nowadays confined to the capitalistic trading nomads. On the whole, the pastoralists operate stable, mutually beneficial relations with settled society. Only when traders or land-hungry khans intrude do we find villagers being dispossessed or impoverished. These khans and traders may have a basis in pastoral nomadic society, but they are not essential to it.

The nomads are prominently, but by no means uniquely, involved in these problems, which do not arise out of pastoralism per se. They can all be solved by increasing the scope and efficiency of administration, by improved communications and much better knowledge of regional geography, population, and conditions. Increased and improved controls will facilitate taxation of the nomads, registration of their births and deaths, conscription of their young men, suppression of their smuggling and disease-bearing activities, and correction of their unruliness. Moreover, they can be educated and informed, vaccinated and provided with medical facilities, and brought within the range of improvements in social and economic conditions.

ATTITUDES TOWARD THE NOMADS

A further objection to nomadism, rather intangible but undoubtedly influential, is largely a matter of image, of national prestige.

In official view, the nomads, with their wandering habits, their unruly behavior, and their primitive way of life, are anachronistic, the epitome of backwardness, survivals of a past that Afghanistan as a developing nation is struggling to leave behind. In all respects—social, economic, political, and administrative—the dogma runs, nomads are obstacles to modernization. This view begins with politicians and development agencies, which have only recently begun to appreciate the nomads' economic role as producers and as exploiters of a marginal habitat; meanwhile, in countries like the Soviet Union, Iran, and some Arab nations, they have managed to eliminate or at least curtail nomadism. The general acceptance of this view has been a strong argument for its adoption in Afghanistan, too. Here the numbers and diversity of the nomadic population make the problem particularly acute, and besides, for those Afghans who take the official attitude, the persistence of the nomads, conspicuous along the main roads, is a source of shame and embarrassment.

This near-Hobbesian abhorrence of nomads is countered by the contrary romantic view, in the tradition of Rousseau. Originating partly in the nomads' own affirmations about their way of life, much embellished by generations of European travelers, now propagated in many of the more popular books about Afghanistan, and also fostered by the Afghan Tourist Organization, this view sees nomadic life as attractive, leisurely, free, independent, close to nature, and favored by season and climate.

There is reality in both views. The nomads are among the "backward" elements of the Afghan people, displaying the symptoms of illiteracy, ignorance of the world, poor health and susceptibility to disease, high birth and death rates, and frequently material and consequent cultural poverty, all of which are features of the "low standard of living" associated with the rural populations of underdeveloped countries. But the nomads are in many of these respects better off than the traditional settled peasants; their main disadvantage is their comparative inaccessibility to programs of state aid and development.

Of the qualities attributed to the nomad by the romantics, his independence and freedom clearly derive from his mobility compared to the peasant tied to the land—his ability to change residence and to avoid official constraints. Nonetheless, the choices open to him are few, and he too is bound, if not to the land then to the demands of his animals. His closeness to nature amounts to extreme insecurity in the face of natural variations. His seasonal movements enable him to enjoy a prolonged spring and summer in idyllic conditions, but the rest of the year is often a hard struggle to feed family and flocks, to survive drought and cold. The nomad may be handsome and his sister beautiful, but her beauty is liable to be marred in Afghan eyes

by a suntan, and it is short-lived; she marries early, works endlessly at producing and raising children, at keeping her household, and at processing the pastoral products; she is lucky if she lives long enough to see her sons married and her daughters-in-law take over her chores, enabling her to retire in a position of relative leisure and authority. With these obstacles, the strength of nomadic values and resilience is remarkable.

Attitudes to nomadism vary in different parts of the country, and they are changing. Undoubtedly rural conceptions of nomadism are now much influenced by official attitudes. Along with modern notions of education and civilization, the Afghan authorities have propagated their view of nomads as an anachronism, and this view has pervaded the administrative bureaucracy and the educational system to reach the peasants and the nomads themselves. The nomads thus not only become aware of their "deprivation," the relative discomfort and inconvenience of their way of life, but they are also persuaded that its symbols—tents, customs, and independent values—although in no sense the causes of their deprivation and backwardness, are nonetheless unacceptable to the nation and the world. They begin to superficially assimilate the city-focused culture and to enter the national social system on the bottom rung of the ladder. Thus in predominantly Pushtun regions where, as in Khost, the nomads are mostly from outside the region and are not tribally allied to the local people, the villagers place nomadism at the bottom of the socio-economic scale.¹³ Nomadism is not so stigmatized in other Pushtun areas where nomads and settled are of the same tribal groups. In regions of the north, where the Pushtun are in a minority that includes not only nomads but also government officials and dominant khans, Tajik, Aimaq, and Uzbek peasants may profess to despise the nomads' primitive way of life yet they have to respect their political ascendancy.

To a great extent, the nomads are coming to be seen as a pariah group; their obvious particularist interests attract the blame for failures of modernization schemes, where these are more likely due to the persistence of tribal and ethnic loyalties within the modernizing elite. On the whole, however, the government does not seem unduly concerned by the "nomad problem," which does not form a major preoccupation with any ministry. The problem tends to be ignored wherever possible; the aim of sedentarization at some future date is talked of, but when more immediate development programs are considered the nomads are treated simply as a part of the rural population specializing in pastoralism.

However backward the nomads' way of life, however difficult they are to administer and to integrate into the modernizing state, the case against them in the eyes of the policy-makers stands or falls by their role in the national economy, in the widest sense. There has long been a debate here between those who stress both the nomads' significant economic contributions and their positive function in exploiting vast areas of otherwise unusable country and those who doubt the nomads' productivity and point rather to the inefficiency and destructiveness of their livestock-raising.

To take the latter point first, it is certainly true that, under traditional conditions, nomadic pastoralism is an uncontrolled, inefficient, and destructive way of exploiting grazing lands—although in the more arid areas this can also be said of villagers, whose livestock may well heavily overgraze the local pastures while nomadic flocks and shepherds can at least move on and let the pastures recover. In the east, overgrazing is not a problem and the pasture and water are adequate for the nomads.¹⁴ Elsewhere in the country, however, overgrazing does occur, and climatic extremes of drought and cold can be disastrous, as when failure of the rains in 1970 and 1971 forced nomads of the west and northwest into heavy sales of livestock at rock-bottom prices in the summer of 1971; what stock they retained was largely killed off the following winter by cold and hungry, so that barely a tenth of the original flocks was left in 1972.

Highly vulnerable and inefficient as it is, traditional nomadic pastoralism plays a valuable role in the national economy. According to Humlum, the nomads account for less than half the pastoralism in Afghanistan, which would not be surprising given that they are only a sixth of the total agricultural population, but it seems more likely that the pastoral nomads own most of the nation's 35 million livestock and greatly predominate in the supply of livestock, particularly ovine, products.¹⁵ The latter, one might add, earn over half Afghanistan's foreign exchange. Majruh, on the other hand, sees nomads as consumers rather than producers, using all their surplus for acquiring village produce and thus causing higher grain prices in the markets in towns and cities. There is much truth in this, and it is reported from various parts of the country that the advent of the nomads stimulates grain production and raises prices.¹⁶ Moreover, the nomads not only depend on settled peasant cultivators for grain but many have to buy clarified butter, a product in which they might be expected to be self-sufficient. On the whole, only eastern groups, such as the "cheese-nomads," can supply milk products for exchange.

Whatever their shortcomings in the dairy sector, the nomads, at least in the north, west, and south, do supply the towns, especially Kabul, with meat, and their wool surplus is exported, while many of those in the north have joined the local settled stockmen in specializing in qarakuł pelt production. In terms of wool, meat, and skins, the nomads' contribution to the national economy is considerable.

Another criticism of the nomads' pastoralism is in terms of unused manpower. Majruh comments that nomad labor still plays an insignificant role in industry and public works.¹⁷ The hired shepherds are on duty virtually a 24-hour day throughout the year, while for much of the year the flock-owners and their families are as busy with their husbandry as any farmer, but at other times the poorer men constitute a mobile labor pool, which is in fact much used, especially in late summer and autumn for harvesting.¹⁸ It is certainly true that nomadic pastoralism is "wasteful" of manpower, in modern industrial terms, and that it could well be made more efficient in this as in other respects, yet the same argument could be applied to all forms of traditional agriculture in the country.

In sum, the traditional pastoral nomadic way of life has many shortcomings that, together with the difficulties nomads cause the administration, pose a real problem for the modernizing state. The government sees nomadism less as an asset than as a social, economic, and political anachronism, a problem rooted in the nomads' mobility, for which it favors the negative solution of complete sedentarization. The lessons of Nad-i-Ali and the Hilmand settlement schemes have been learned, but it is still intended that the nomads should take up agriculture and leave pastoralism to the specialists—modern, efficient, large-scale livestock raisers. The latter receive priority in any development plans for pastoralism, and in neither economic nor social matters is the government willing to make efforts to extend aid to the nomads—it does not wish to seem to encourage the persistence of the nomadic way of life.

DEVELOPMENT AND THE "NOMAD PROBLEM"

But there can be a more positive solution to the problem, one based on economic realities. It is estimated that two-thirds of the country can in the foreseeable future be used only for seasonal grazing, by transhumant herds. The economy has certain requirements of its livestock sector, in meat, wool, skins, milk products, and so on, that cannot be met without using these marginal seasonal pastures. The nomads' knowledge and skills have enabled them to exploit these resources and to contribute to pastoral production but, as should have

become clear, their social and economic organization is by no means incapable of adapting to new conditions. A comparatively small investment of money and resources could provide facilities and controls that would not only greatly increase the nomads' productivity and improve their living conditions but also solve the "nomad problem" by meeting the government's main objections to their unruly and primitive way of life.

The nomads are modernizing their own way of life in many ways; the move toward settled bases and the mixing of agriculture with pastoralism have already been mentioned. They are increasingly providing fodder for their animals, both by growing special crops and using straw and stubble from the harvested fields and also by mowing the spring pastures for hay. The use of trucks for transporting flocks and families between pastures is no longer a novelty. In the north at least, seeing the Oil Exploration Company teams drilling in their pastures, nomads have themselves asked for help in drilling deep wells for water.

In other respects government aid has made itself felt; improved communications greatly reduce the threat of major flock disasters through epidemics or climatic extremes, as when nomads near the surfaced road network were able to provide their animals with fodder introduced by truck in early 1972. In some areas, the authorities are protecting the nomads' grazing land from unnecessary and unprofitable inroads by would-be farmers. In the spring of 1973 plans were announced for a slaughterhouse complex at Herat, which should benefit vast numbers of western nomads. Veterinary services, on the other hand, have affected the nomads little and have often proved unreliable. So also the qarakuł cooperatives in the north, in which many nomads have been involved, have sometimes failed through embezzlement and other deficiencies.

But the nomads have indirectly been much influenced by government encouragement of large-scale livestock operations in the north. These stockmen, often raising thousands of animals by quite modern and efficient methods, include some former nomads, and some present nomads can be reckoned among them; many of them send their flocks to seasonal pastures in the care of hired shepherds. The sheep are not normally milked; the emphasis is on market production of lambs, qarakuł pelts, and wool; intensive husbandry jobs requiring extra hired labor, such as shearing, are done near the owner's base. The system has the advantages of efficiency and productivity, but two main drawbacks prevent its immediate general adoption. First, there is no provision for meeting national and local requirements in ovine dairy products, which continue to be supplied by village and nomadic family flocks; second, it is far less labor-intensive than nomadic pastoralism, and there is not yet alternative employment available

to which nomadic manpower can be redeployed. However, in many areas the nomads are developing their own compromise. Having established settled bases where work is available on the farms or in nearby towns, the flock owners send animals to the seasonal pastures accompanied by only one or two families from among them, enough male and female labor for the necessary husbandry jobs of spring and summer.

Whether the priority is to settle the nomads or to extend aid and improve their present living conditions, the government should invest in a good deal of social, economic, and demographic research. Much information is needed on the ecological potential of various regions; on the different local animal breeds; on optimal conditions for producing the different requirements of the livestock sector; on the nomads' own view of the present and expectations of the future; and on regional variations in the nomads' pastoral practices and social organization and their role in local and national contexts. The government already disposes of considerable statistical information on the nomads in some parts, but in much of the country not even the local authorities responsible for the nomads know anything about them, seeing their administrative center as surrounded by wild savages.

The nomads are both an anachronism and an asset. Their traditional way of life, full of color and value though it may have been, had disadvantages they themselves now feel, and in fact it has now changed irreversibly and must and will continue to change. But the nomads can still fill a valuable ecological niche and play an important role in the economy. If its aims are optimal exploitation of the available resources, increased productivity in the agricultural sector, and integration of the nomads into the national social system, then the government would do well to encourage the nomads to pursue their own course of development, at least in the immediate future.

Most objections to the nomadic way of life are overcome by the first step of establishing fixed bases, but the government can do much more than that to assist them in improving their pastoralism. Detailed suggestions have been made by others to the effect that help can be offered with foddering and water supplies, transport, grass-land management, insurance schemes, and marketing procedures, while stocking and grazing practices, relations with the flocks and crops of the settled population, and the possibility of spreading diseases can all be controlled more effectively.¹⁹

A most important general point is that the modernization of pastoralism and nomadism must be preceded by research and planning and must be coordinated with the development of industry and services in the same area. The nomads in Iran, and the problems they present, are different in many ways from those of Afghanistan, but the Afghan government might profitably watch the outcome of recent agrobusiness

schemes for livestock in nomadic areas such as the Dasht-i-Mughan in Iranian Azerbaijan.

NOTES

1. Xavier de Planhol, Les fondements géographiques de l'histoire de l'Islam (Paris: Flammarion, 1968), p. 66.
2. Vladimir Cervin, "Problems in the Integration of the Afghan Nation," Middle East Journal 6 (1952), p. 407; Wolfram Eberhard, "Labor Sources for Industrialization: The case of Afghanistan," in Wolfram Eberhard, Settlement and Social Change in Asia (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1967), p. 434; Klaus Ferdinand, "Ost-Afghanische Nomadismus—ein Beitrag zur Anpassungsfähigkeit der Nomaden," in Willy Kraus, ed., Nomadismus als Entwicklungsproblem (Bertelsmann Universitätsverlag, Reinhard Mohn, Bielefeld, 1969), pp. 110, 126; Sayd B. Majruh, "Aktuelle Fragen des Nomadismus in Afghanistan," in Kraus, op. cit.
3. Majruh, op. cit., p. 156; Leon Poullada, "Problems of Social Development in Afghanistan," Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society 49 (1962), p. 35; M. Akbar Shurmach Nuristani, Jughrafiya-yi umumi-yi Afghanistan (Kabul: Zuri Publishing House, 1350-1971-72).
4. Klaus Ferdinand, "Les nomades," in Johannes Humlum, ed., La géographie de l'Afghanistan (Copenhagen, Gyldendal, 1959); Ferdinand, "Preliminary Notes on Hazara Culture," Kongelige Danske Videnskabsbernes Selskab. Historisk-Filosofiske Meddelelser 35, no. 5 (1959); Ferdinand, "Nomad Expansion and Commerce in Central Afghanistan," Folk 6 (1962). Other useful information can be found in Louis Dupree, "The Green and the Black," American University Field Staff Reports, South Asia Series 7, no. 5 (1963); Dupree, "Aq Kupruk, a Town in Northern Afghanistan," American University Field Staff Reports, South Asia Series 10, nos. 9, 10 (1966); Alfred Janata, "Die Bevölkerung von Ghor: Beitrag zur Ethnographie und Ethnogenese der Chahar Aimaq," in Archiv für Völkerkunde 17-18, (1962-63); Ahmad Ali Motamedi, "Nomadism in Afghanistan," Afghanistan 12 (1957); Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark, "The Abul Camp in Central Afghanistan," Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society 41 (1954); H. F. Schurmann, The Mongols of Afghanistan ('s-Gravenhage: Mouton, 1962); Hermann-Josef Wald, Landnutzung und Siedlung der Pashtunen im Becken von Khost (östl. Afghanistan) (Opladen: C. W. Leske Verlag, 1969). See also G. C. Castelli Gattinara, I nomadi Kuci dell'Afghanistan (Rome: Edizione Abete, 1970); Danielle and Jean Bourgeois, Les Seigneurs d'Aryana (Paris: Plon, 1971).
5. Klaus Ferdinand, "Nomadisme," KUML, 1963; Ferdinand "Ost-Afghanische Nomadismus," op. cit.; Ferdinand, "Nomadism in Afghanistan," in L. Foldes, ed., Viehwirtschaft und Hirtenkultur.

Ethnographische Studien (Budapest: Akademiai Kiado 1969). Recent field studies have been carried out by Bernt Glatzer in the northwest in 1970 and Richard and Nancy Tapper in the north in 1971.

6. Humlum, op. cit.; Otto Heinrich Volk, "Ökologische Grundlagen des Nomadismus," in Kraus, op. cit.
7. Ferdinand, "Nomad Expansion . . .," op. cit., p. 124.
8. Nancy Tapper, "The Advent of Pashtun maldars in North-western Afghanistan," Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 36 no. 1 (1973).
9. Peter G. Franck, "Problems of Economic Development in Afghanistan," Middle East Journal 3 (1949), p. 306; Ferdinand, "Ost-Afghanische Nomadismus," op. cit., p. 111; Majruh, op. cit., p. 157; Dieter Fröhlich, Nationalismus und Nationalstaat in Entwicklungsländern, Probleme der Integration ethnischer Gruppen in Afghanistan (Meisenheim am Glan: Verlag Anton Hehn 1970), p. 211.
10. Ferdinand, "Nomadic Expansion . . .," op. cit., p. 129; private communication from Martin Kuhn on the Aimaqs of Chakhcharan.
11. Fredrik Barth, Nomads of South Persia (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1961); Ferdinand, "Nomadisme," op. cit., pp. 146-47; Ferdinand, "Ost-Afghanische Nomadismus," op. cit.; personal information.
12. Ludolph Fischer, Afghanistan, Geodetical Monograph Series No. 2, (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1968).
13. Wald, op. cit., p. 103.
14. Ferdinand, "Nomadisme," op. cit., p. 143; Ferdinand, "Ost-Afghanische Nomadismus," op. cit., p. 110.
15. Humlum, op. cit., p. 264; Volk, op. cit.
16. Monič, "Afganskij Turkestan (Pis'mo iz Afganistana)," Novyj Vostok (1927), translation in Schurmann, op. cit., p. 408, on Turkestan; Wald, op. cit., p. 50, on Khost; Janata, op. cit., p. 101, on Ghor; personal information on the Hazarajat.
17. Majruh, op. cit., p. 158; see Franck, op. cit., p. 425.
18. Ferdinand, "Ost-Afghanische Nomadismus," op. cit., on the east; Janata, op. cit., p. 102, on the center and southwest; personal information on the north.
19. See Ernst Albrecht von Renesse and Hans Christoph Graf Sponeck, "Nomadism in Afghanistan: An Attempt to Analyse the Bochum Conference," in Kraus, op. cit.; Nuristani, op. cit., pp. 150-51, 232-33.