

# GOLDEN TENT-PEGS: SETTLEMENT AND CHANGE AMONG NOMADS IN AFGHAN TURKISTAN

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## Introduction

Pastoral nomadism, the tending of livestock by communities living in portable tents or huts, is the traditional occupation of a variety of peoples in the drier parts of Asia and Africa. Typically, the nomads are scattered thinly over vast stretches of steppe and mountain so arid that they cannot be exploited by any form of agriculture unless as seasonal pasturage for livestock.

During the twentieth century, nomadism as a way of life has fast receded in most of these areas, mainly as a result of government policies: for example the closure of frontiers to migrations across them, sometimes direct military action to stop nomads from moving, sometimes the provision of settled bases for pastoralism. Meanwhile, an improved agricultural technology has allowed the expansion of cultivation into former nomadic pasturelands.

In Afghanistan until 1978, nomadism did not decline in the same way as in many other countries — largely because of a *de facto* liberal government policy. It is likely indeed that the numbers of nomads increased rather than declined. This alone, apart from any practical objections to nomadism, constituted a problem for a country intent on a programme of modernisation. In conformity with other states, Afghanistan had long determined on the solution of settlement, though it was recognised that such an aim could not be achieved overnight, and must take account of the diversity in character, and situation

of the various nomadic elements in the country. What was not widely recognised, however, was the degree to which the nomads in many areas have for long been settling of their own accord, with only indirect help from government.

In this chapter I argue that it is better to understand Afghan nomads as they see themselves: as 'pastoralists', whose interest in nomadism is mainly economic and ecological rather than cultural, ideological or psychological. They recognise farmland as a more secure resource — a 'golden tent-peg' — and may be tempted by cultivation when it is also shown to be as profitable as stock-raising. Apart from their economic commitment to pastoralism, Afghan nomads identify ethnically and tribally with their settled fellows. Settlement and the acquisition of land of themselves involve no major change of identity, rather, it is only when population growth, pressure on resources and the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few bring political inequality and conflict into the tribal community (nomad or settled) that ethnicity and tribalism begin to shift towards class awareness. These processes are examined through the case of a particular group of Durrani Pashtun nomads in the course of settlement.

The tragic circumstances of the past ten years or so have pushed the question of nomad settlement far into the background, but it is not a problem that will be solved automatically by any conceivable conclusion to the current struggle between the resistance movement and the Soviet-backed Afghan regime. Although my remarks here derive from field research in the early 1970s, (to which my 'ethnographic present tense' refers), and although I do not believe the outcome of the war will be any sort of return to a *status quo ante* (whatever that might have been), the issues and processes I describe retain considerable relevance for the future of Afghan rural society.

## Nomadism in Afghanistan

Who are the nomads in Afghanistan? The term evokes images of steppes and mountains, caravans of camels, black tents, flocks of sheep and goats, tribally organised society. But the variety of forms of nomadism is considerable. There are pastoralists who have neither tribal organisation nor tents and do not nomadise; there are both tent-dwelling nomads and settled

tribal groups who have no pastoral interests at all; and among the tent-dwelling, tribally organised pastoralists there are those who migrate many hundreds of miles during the year with the aid of camels, and those who move only a mile or so with donkeys to carry their dwellings.

Estimates of the numbers of nomads vary widely, and rarely specify which kinds of nomads are included. There are perhaps 2 to 3 million Afghan citizens who, for at least part of the year, live in tents tending their flocks. With a narrower definition — people who have no fixed dwellings at all and no other occupation than pastoralism — the numbers would not exceed a few hundred thousand. By either definition, the majority of nomads are Pashto-speakers of a variety of tribal groups, mainly Durrani and related groups in the southwestern parts, and Ghiljai and others in the east. But nomads by the broader definition include members of almost all the other linguistic and cultural groups in Afghanistan: Baluch, Brahui, Moghol, Kirghiz, Turkmen, Uzbek, Arab, Aymaq, Tajik, Hazara. It should be remembered that though these are not usually seen as part of the 'nomad problem' (which concerns the Pashtuns), they are likely to be affected by any measures taken to deal with it.

In the 1970s it was reckoned that two-thirds of the country could, in the foreseeable future, be used only for seasonal grazing by mobile pastoralists; that is, in present-day Afghanistan, the nomads will continue to fill an important ecological niche, by using pastures that are not otherwise accessible to exploitation, particularly in arid, uncultivable lowland regions and high mountain ranges, far from settlement.

Thus, although villagers in the mountains can raise flocks with a high milk yield, they depend on the provision of winter fodder, and in their necessarily restricted cultivation they must maintain a balance between growing fodder for the animals and other crops for human consumption. With this winter limitation on their growth, local flocks are large enough to exploit only small areas of nearby mountain pastures in summer, and vast ranges are left for seasonal visitors — the nomads. In the same way, in the lowlands, villagers are limited in the size of flocks they can maintain throughout the year in the arid steppe and desert country of the vicinity. In both lowland and highland contexts, the nomads exploit the pas-

tures left over, by seasonal movements between them. Their flocks are closely adapted to such conditions.

But there is a sensitive and fluid frontier between the grazing of the nomads' flocks and that of the local flocks; and another between the nomads' flocks and the farmland of the villagers. So long as each side remains behind its frontier, good relations prevail, and useful exchanges of produce can take place. Moreover, in more isolated regions, the nomads bring in not only goods but information from 'the outside world'. Historically, such mutually beneficial exchanges have on many occasions alternated with periods in which one side — usually the nomads — has dominated and exploited the other.

In terms of their role in the national economy, the evidence is not clear, and there are strongly opposed points of view: some see nomads as unproductive consumers of valuable grain supplies; others, more reliably in my view, estimate that the nomads' livestock (over half the nation's total) make a considerable contribution of wool, meat and skins to the economy.<sup>1</sup>

In what way are the nomads different from anybody else? Is there any justification for the notion that in Afghanistan the nomads live in a world apart, have customs, traditions and attitudes that distinguish them from the rest of the population, that they are implacable enemies of settled society and would die rather than abandon their tents, their flocks and their migrations? This seems to be a popular view, and it has been perpetuated by Louis Dupree in his authoritative book on Afghanistan, when he writes:

Show me a nomad who wants to settle down, and I'll show you a man who is psychologically ill . . . Many Afghan officials believe that nomads genuinely desire to settle down if given the opportunity. Nomads, however, look on themselves as superior beings, envied and feared by the villagers. Any nomad desiring to settle down would be considered psychopathic by his peers (1973: 168). The nomad continues to look on the farmer with contempt. Even after he becomes semi-nomadic, semi-sedentary, and eventually fully sedentary, his pride of nomadic ancestry makes him feel superior to his agelong farmer neighbours (1973: 179).

I believe these remarks to be unfounded for most if not all the nomads in Afghanistan. As Klaus Ferdinand, the main authority on the nomads, has pointed out, the very word for 'nomad' used in most of the country makes no clear distinction between nomad and villager. In south, west and north, the standard term is *maldar*, literally 'flock-owner', but the term can also apply to fully settled pastoralists. More specific to nomads is *powinda*, but this too appears to refer to their pastoral activities rather than to movement. Pashtuns, whether nomads or settled, are commonly called simply 'Afghan'. In other words, the identity of the nomads, as of other people, is marked most clearly by either occupational or ethnic criteria, without reference to movement or tents. It is true that in eastern parts of the country the Pashto term *kuchey* (Persian *kuchi*) is widely used by and of the Pashtun nomads (and has been adopted into the vocabulary of Kabul-based foreigners), but here too tribal or local identity is more important than the easily changed status of nomad or villager. There are undoubtedly some countries (e.g., Iran) where tents and a mobile way of life are of crucial ideological and symbolic importance to the nomads — but the historical and cultural background of nomadism is very different there from Afghanistan, where this is not the case (R. Tapper 1984a).

However the nomads are defined, whether simply the comparatively small numbers of fully nomadic pastoralists or in the wider terms I have suggested, and whether they include only the Pashto-speaking majority of all the different groups with tents and pastoral interests, it is difficult to find any basic differences of custom and social life that distinguish them as *nomads* from the rest of the population; certainly not on the scale of the differences of custom, tradition, language and so forth that distinguish one ethnic group from another. For the majority of nomads, those of the Durrani and Ghiljai Pashtuns, the only differences between them and their settled fellow-tribespeople are related directly to their pastoral occupation and their mobility, and they share with them other features such as language, customs and traditions.

In other words, neither from the perspective of popular discourse, nor in terms of objective criteria, is it possible to find any reality that corresponds with the conventional — and official — notion of 'nomad'. Moreover, nomads, particularly

Durrani, have always been liable to settlement in various ways and for various reasons. In spite of high infant mortality, nomadic populations increase naturally and often at a faster rate than settled village populations. Overgrazing of the pasture occurs and its effects may well have been worsened by a gradual climatic dessication in many nomadic areas, such as the southwest. In all, there is great pressure on the nomads to shed surplus members into settled non-pastoral society. Usually it is the richer and the poorer nomads who settle first: the rich find that the risk of keeping too many animals with the chance of climatic disasters is too great, so they invest in trade or farmland, sooner or later build a house, and 'retire' from the nomadic scene, leaving their flocks to supervisors. As for the poor, when their flocks fall below a certain minimum they cannot support a family and may have to seek outside employment, probably as labourers in village or town.

Nomads prefer to acquire land already under cultivation, but in the 1960s and 1970s, with government encouraging farmers to open up new lands, the nomads too, particularly in the north, took to ploughing and sowing crops on their pastures before someone else could do so and thereby claim rights to the land. As landowners, they avoid working the land themselves and instead employ settled peasants. In so far as nomads do have a characteristic view of village life, it springs largely from this process: as pastoralists, they scorn farming unless they can be landowners and employers. None the less, nomads throughout the country see the virtues of mixed farming, of combining pastoralism with cultivation from a settled base, even if they do not farm themselves. As I was told by nomads in the north, *zamin mikh-i zarin*, land is a golden tent-peg.

Many village communities include both settled households occupied with cultivation and others who pursue a nomadic life in tents, spending only the autumn and winter with their relatives in the village. Families often divide into two parts for this purpose, one specialising in pastoralism, the other in cultivation — on the pattern of Cain and Abel. Occasionally members of such a family take it in turns to accompany the flocks to the mountains — 'nomads' for a season.

Afghan nomads are not isolated, primitive tribes. On the contrary, they are one of the most dynamic elements in the

population, open to innovation, investment, enterprise. They are, and always have been, closely bound up with the rest of the nation in economic, political, social and cultural relations. Many of them are too highly specialised, vulnerable to years of drought and disaster like 1970-2. They pose undoubted problems for administration and welfare to a government which has limited resources for controlling a large country with a formidable terrain. But the nomads are far from inveterate opponents of the idea of settlement: it is a process familiar to them and they are generally eager to welcome it — on their own terms.

### Durrani Nomads and Settlement in Afghan Turkistan

Towards the end of last century, northern Afghanistan was considerably underpopulated. There were rich pastures, used only by a small number of Arab and Turkmen nomads, while settled Uzbek and Tajik farmers barely kept going the irrigation systems along the river valleys. As the area came under the control of Kabul, there was a massive influx of population, from the east, south and west, encouraged and promoted by government, which had also opened up the central mountain regions of Ghor and the Hazarajat for summer grazing by the nomads. Among the immigrants to the north around 1900 were many groups of Pashtun nomads, especially Durrani from the southwest, spurred by arid conditions in their homeland and by a Durrani government keen to have its northern frontiers repopulated and defended by loyal tribespeople (N. Tapper 1983, Kakar 1979).

In the early 1900s, these newcomers thrived in the lush pastoral conditions. In summer they migrated to the central mountains, where they sold their surplus stock, traded and brought back cloth to the north. In Afghan Turkistan (the area between Badakhshan in the east and Faryab in the west), much of the best and most convenient irrigated land, cultivated by local villagers, came into the ownership of the Pashtun nomad leaders, who quickly settled down to live in comfort on the income from their lands. They became khans, dominating economic and political life in most parts of Turkistan. Other farmlands, of great potential, remained for some time uncultivated, the extensive irrigation networks temporarily out of use, but

many of these lands too were gradually acquired by other Pashtun nomads.

In the 1920s and 1930s, further developments occurred. Turkmens introduced the karakul breed of sheep, and many of the Pashtuns took this up too. The nomads had formerly gone to the mountains to market their main produce — live-stock — but the valuable karakul lambskins were sold in Turkistan to dealers who took them to Kabul by road, so now the nomads had less reason to visit the mountains.

Meanwhile, population expanded rapidly. By the 1950s, the pastures were filling up, and all the irrigable land was coming back into cultivation. Gradually those nomads who owned farmland saw profits from it coming in with greater regularity and less hardship than from their flocks. Wherever possible they built houses and adopted a fully mixed economy. Large numbers of pastoral nomads in the north have not managed to acquire farmland — but they are experimenting, not very successfully as yet — with dry farming in the steppes. The other main trend is that wealthy settled pastoralists are increasingly sending their flocks out to seasonal pastures accompanied only by hired herdsmen and supervisors in white canvas tents.

In the Saripul region of Jouzjan province, where Nancy Tapper and I did field research in 1968, 1971 and 1972, most Pashtun nomads belong to the Ishaqzai, one of the major Durrani tribes. In the region at that time, out of a population of about 150,000, there were 30-40,000 Pashtuns, of whom 15,000 were Durrani, mainly of the Ishaqzai tribe. The rest of the population were Uzbeks and Turkmens (about 60,000), Aymaqs and Tajiks (about 30,000), Arabs and Sayyids (5-10,000) and Hazaras (15-20,000).

The Saripul region is dominated economically and politically by members of the Nazarzai subtribe of the Ishaqzai, leading members of which — the khans — are near descendants of the leaders of the Durrani migration to the region at the turn of the century. Nazarzai khans conduct extensive pastoral activities but base their power partly on control of immense areas of farmland and partly on privileges granted them by successive Afghan governments. The head of the khan family lives in Saripul town, and other branches of the family live on and supervise their estates, scattered throughout the region.

The fourteen subtribes of the Saripul Ishaqzai vary widely in situation and character, falling into three main categories. The largest, with 5-6,000 people from seven subtribes, comprises pastoralists with winter tent-villages in the dry hill-steppes west of the Saripul river valley. They are comparatively isolated from other ethnic groups and from administrative controls: only during their summer transhumance to the central mountains do they have individual economic contacts with Aymaqs and Tajiks.

In the second category are a few thousand tent-dwelling pastoralists from four subtribes, who camp most of the year beside the fertile Saripul valley. They have greater contact with local Uzbeks, Hazaras, Arabs and Aymaqs, both in the valley and during the transhumance to the mountains. Few of them own any valley farmlands, though they often dry-farm the neighbouring pastures.

The third category comprises about 5,000 people from five subtribes, including the Nazarzai. These groups are semi-settled, having villages in or on the edge of the valley where they own lands and have mostly built mud houses; half or less of the population make the summer transhumance to the mountains, though all are in regular contact with members of a whole range of other ethnic groups.

### The Madozai of Saripul

One such subtribe is the Madozai. In the early years of the century, severe droughts in the southwest of the country drove some farmers off the land and some nomads to seek new pastures; one group that came north in about 1915 comprised about 65-70 families led by Hajji Afzal of the Madozai. The group was heterogeneous in composition, a bare majority being from the Madozai themselves; some had owned land, but all came north as pastoral nomads; none of them were wealthy, and no one exercised authority over any but his immediate relatives; in the years after their arrival, many families left and others joined. In 1920 they numbered about 70 families (500 people), of which 14 belonged to three core lineages and the rest were from a variety of Durrani tribal groups and others.

After their arrival in their present habitat (about 1917) the

Madozai prospered. The area was underpopulated, and land, water and food were plentiful. Moreover the leaders of the two main lineages were offered very cheaply some 2,850 jeribs (570 hectares) of irrigated valley land. Initially there was little interest in this offer; the Madozai leaders were disillusioned with farming after the disasters in the southwest and were content with the easy life pastoralism offered in the north; but the land was bought, and was divided, together with the associated water rights, into equal shares among the five leading men of the two main Madozai lineages; eventually the shares were further divided and distributed among all 41 households of the three core lineages.

The two decades following the Madozai arrival in Saripul were relatively uneventful for them (apart from a brief inter-ethnic war in 1929, at the time of the Bacha-Saqao revolt). They learned karakul sheep husbandry and in general their pastoral enterprises thrived in the abundant grazing. Meanwhile, and at a pace that coincided with the increase in population in the region, the Madozai began to farm their rich valley lands and to learn the techniques of intensive irrigated agriculture. In the early 1930s the first dwellings were built in their winter settlements.

Despite the initial lack of interest in the purchase, and the fact that the land for many years lay underexploited, the land distribution was a crucial factor in defining relations within the subtribe. In essence, there emerged a sharp division between the landowners and the rest who became, to a greater or lesser extent, their clients (*hamsaya*). Incipient cleavages, both between and within the main lineages, were reified. The first major conflict was the outbreak, in 1936-7, of a feud between the two main lineages, resulting in men killed and wounded on both sides. Peace was made with difficulty by the Ishaqzai khan, who arranged the customary exchange marriages between the sides; but the hostility, with its roots in events and relations in the southwest, continues today between the two lineages, whose settlements are distinct and whose camps rarely move together to the mountains.

### The Madozai Economy

The Madozai subtribe today (1972) comprises about 1900 people in 272 households, occupying two villages and several hamlets and tent-camps. Over 75 per cent have mud dwellings, though this in itself is no index of sedentarisation. The Madozai speak of themselves as *maldar*, pastoral nomads, but acknowledge that the uncertainty of the national and world markets in karakul skins, their main pastoral product, has encouraged them to look elsewhere for economic security.

The three landowning lineages number 162 households, whose heads all descend from the original migrants; another 15, from a closely related Madozai lineage that did not get shares in the original lands, have bought land elsewhere; the remaining 95 households are more or less transient, landless 'clients'. Although many of the 177 households from the landowning lineages have already lost their land, sold or usurped by more powerful relatives, about half the Madozai households own and benefit directly from shares in irrigated lands, totalling over 1,000 hectares; others also farm dry lands nearby. The leader of one lineage, the wealthiest man in the subtribe, is reckoned a 'khan' himself; his main rival in wealth and power is the leader of the other lineage. Both these men inherited substantial shares of land, but managed to buy additional large holdings elsewhere.

In 1970 the Madozai were still heavily involved in pastoralism, owning around 10,000 ewes, and half the households had between twenty and several hundred head of animals. Between September and early May the flocks are kept in the hill-steppe pastures to the east of the valley. From early March until May, while the lambs are born and the spring wool is shorn, about three-quarters of the Madozai go out to camp in their pastures to provide the additional labour required, to supervise the collection of lambskins, and also to get away from the villages and enjoy the festive spring atmosphere and the best season in the pastures. In mid-May usually about a third of the households send tents to accompany the flocks on the 300-km migration to spend the early summer months in the central mountains; the rest return to the villages to supervise or take part in the summer's agricultural activities.

However, 1971 was the second year of a severe drought in

northern Afghanistan, affecting both pastures and crops.<sup>2</sup> Many Madozai suffered sheep losses and many who previously used to accompany the flocks to the mountains did not bother to do so, or sent only an unmarried son to supervise them, living with friends or kin, in a canvas tent or in the open. That year, of the 177 core households of the Madozai, 124 (70%) went (in whole or in part) to the spring pastures (43 camps), and only 35 (21%), accompanied by young supervisors from 9 other households, went on the summer migration to the mountains.

The following winter was very harsh and the flock losses were terrible; by summer 1972 many families had abandoned pastoralism, most of them temporarily, some of them perhaps for good. Few families joined the remaining animals in spring pastures, and none went to the mountains that year.

The Madozai subtribe as a whole operates in a surplus economy, that is, the grain grown on the irrigated valley lands owned by members of the subtribe is usually adequate for the needs of the total population; similarly the wool and meat from the Madozai flocks are on the whole adequate for all the subtribe, while deficiencies in milk products and wheat are far more than made up by proceeds from the sale of lambskins and cash crops such as cotton.

In general and in brief, a flock of 60 ewes could produce milk and meat sufficient for the expected annual consumption of the average family of three adults, and four children, while income from skins (c. 10,000 Afs., £50 at that time) and fleeces (c. 1,000 Afs.) would allow them the bare minimum of bought goods; flour, rice, fat and incidental items. Thus, 60 ewes, allowing a cash income of 11,000 Afs., would seem the breakeven point for the budget of the 'average' pastoral household owning no land. Ownership of 10 jerib (c. 2.5 hectares) of irrigated land would allow for similar consumption patterns in a household with no herds.

In 1972 a day labourer was paid 50 Afs. a day (800 Afs. a month), but employment was very seasonal. A domestic servant or herding assistant was paid 200-500 Afs. a month, as well as food and clothing; even the maximum annual wages of 6,000 Afs. were insufficient to keep a family of two adults and two children, particularly in years of very <sup>high</sup> grain prices like 1970-71. Such jobs are usually taken by men without

dependents, who can save almost the full cash wage. A man with dependents who becomes a servant survives only on charity. A shepherd receives food and clothing and 10 per cent of pastoral produce; his average income is worth probably about 10,000 Afs., though it can range from nothing to more than 20,000 Afs. in a good year. A man who sharecrops in the valley, providing only his own labour, may gain produce worth more than 10,000 Afs., but even if the crop fails completely he is guaranteed around half a ton of wheat, on which a family of four could just live for a year.

Although they had known extreme differences of wealth in the southwest, members of the group that came north — at least the core lineages — were relatively homogeneous in this respect. With the acquisition of irrigated valley lands, their eventual exploitation and most recently their rapid growth in value, wealth differences have once more widened, between those who own several hundred head of animals and a hundred or more jeribs of land, and those who have no such capital at all and depend on selling their labour.

Table 1 shows the distribution of wealth in the 67 households of one of the main lineages.<sup>3</sup> I have grouped them into four quartiles of wealth (based on units of 1000 Afs. = 1 ewe or 1/10/ jerib). The wealthiest quartile owned 65 per cent of all the wealth; all had sheep and went to spring pastures, and their tents and flocks comprised the large majority of those going to the mountains. Most households in the two middle quartiles had sheep (23 out of 34) and went to spring pastures (22), while most in the poorest quartile (11 of 17) went to spring pastures though only 3 had sheep. All in the top two quartiles had land, and so did most of the third (14–17), though none of the fourth did. Altogether 47 of the 67 households had land, and holdings averaging over 20 jerib (4 hectares). 42 households had sheep, flocks averaging 111 head. Fourteen households had no capital at all, though some of them had expectations of inheriting land in due course.

There is a clear correlation of household wealth and size; but it is striking that the top two quartiles have roughly similar average holdings of irrigated land per person, while the top quartile has much larger average flocks. In flock sizes, on the other hand, the second quartile differs little from the third, which has a much lower average land holding. The main impli-

Table 1 Household wealth and size

Wealth quartiles	I	II	III	IV	totals
Number of households	16	17	17	17	67
Units of valley land (10 × jeribs)	5895	3180	745	0	9820
Ewes	(16)	(17)	(14)		(47)
	3560	635	414	54	4663
	(16)	(13)	(10)	(3)	(42)
Total, land and ewes	9455	3815	1159	54	14483
	(16)	(17)	(17)	(3)	(53)
Household mean	591	224	68	3	216
Percentage of total wealth	65	26	8	0	99
1971 hh. (all or part) in spring pastures	16	12	10	11	49
summer pastures	11	4	1	(1)	16(+1)
Hh. with members employed outside	4	6	15	17	42
Population	217	130	109	84	540
Mean hh. size	13.6	7.7	6.4	4.9	8.1
Land per person	27	24	7	0	18
ewes per person	16	5	4	1	9

cation of this is that large-scale pastoralism is now chiefly an enterprise for the wealthy household with labour in excess of agricultural requirements; indeed, very few Madozai households now depend exclusively, or even predominantly, on pastoralism alone.

On the basis of expected income from capital holdings, households in the two wealthiest quartiles are all fundamentally self-sufficient. Such prosperous households are said to be 'full' (*sir, mor*). They are well-off and secure (*tayar*), while this is certainly not the case for many households in the third quartile and all those of the fourth, who are known as 'hungry'; other terms for households without capital are 'poor' (*khwar, gharib*) and 'light-weight' (*spak*). In fact only 25 households depend entirely on production from their own land and/or flocks, so that 42 gain some or all of their income from

various kinds of employment or by engaging in small-scale trading activities.

The Madozai in many ways remain pastoralists at heart, and the pastoral sector of the subtribe economy continues to be of great importance, but it is nonetheless the case that they are basically settled, and most people spend most of the year in winter villages in the river valley. The village communities and the camps form a single arena, and political and economic decisions made in the villages, for example, over agricultural concerns, are likely to have a direct effect on relations in the pastoral arena, and vice versa. At the same time, the dual economy of the Madozai affords them a wider range of solutions to political and economic problems than those available to other local groups which are more exclusively pastoral or agricultural. The Madozai are well aware of this advantage and are likely to continue their dual economy for the foreseeable future.

#### The Effects of Settlement

Madozai ethnic identity as Durrani is defined principally in terms of descent and a strict ban on giving their women in marriage to non-Durrani. Within the Durrani ethnic group, on the other hand, there is no formal differentiation by descent or marriage rules. A strong egalitarian ethos pervades Durrani social organisation, corresponding with their religious ideals. No intrinsic social differences are admitted among Durranis, who are held to be equal by virtue of common descent.

For Madozai, like many Durrani in Saripul, their ability to approximate these ideals has changed dramatically in recent decades. The growing importance of the control of farmland and the expansion of local government bureaucracy have made economic and political inequality an established fact of life, both within the local communities and between the powerful khans and the ordinary tribespeople. The egalitarian ethic has been transformed into ideals of independence and self-sufficiency, adherence to which is expressed at the local level in a highly competitive form of *laissez-faire* capitalist political economy.

In the 1930s, when the Madozai feud occurred, the rules of tribal co-responsibility and blood compensation were still in

full operation. When talking of those events today, which they do with reluctance, Madozai express a combination of regret and relief that such a succession of killings would be almost impossible now. Violence occurs, but 'there are two things the government will not tolerate now: sheep theft and homicide', and revenge killings are nowadays rare in the Saripul area.

The rights and duties involved in agnatic kinship of itself are nowadays few and rarely invoked in practice. There is a fairly strong ideal that descendants of a common ancestor should be neighbours and politically united, and the strength of this ideal is greater the closer the ancestor, but people continually express regret at the degeneration of the times, such that nowadays even one's agnates cannot be relied on, brother fights brother, father fights son — all moreover regarded as signs of the impending end of the world. It is, of course, impossible to be sure that the Saripul Durranis did not always have this attitude to agnatic relations, but some of the evidence to hand does indicate that in practice the strength of agnatic ties is not what it was.

Some reasons why this might be so have already been suggested. Increased government intervention has reduced the possibility of interethnic warfare and consequent demands for solidarity at that level. Similarly, improved security has lessened the need for migrating nomads to move together in large, lineage-based groups. Settlement, on the other hand, has deprived groups like the Madozai of the flexibility of movement and camp association which they had as nomads, and competition and conflict among close kin have intensified as a result. Finally, individual ownership of, and now pressure on, agricultural land have led to widening inequalities among close agnates and provided them with further grounds for quarrelling. Madozai families are now ruthlessly competitive with each other. The evidence indicates that this was not always so. The particular character this competition now takes among the Madozai is related to the value now set on household independence.

Madozai tribespeople are well aware of all this. They see clearly that when there was an abundance of land and pasture, 'everybody had adequate means, people had means and *qaumi* (tribal solidarity)'. Even more fundamentally, the tribespeople recognise the major difference as having come from the fact



of landowning itself. As one man put it, 'In the old days there were no khans and no inequality; such leaders as there were were called *malik* and were *khan bisterkhan*', literally, khans without tablecloths; that is, wealth and lavish hospitality played no part in the relations between a leader and his followers. 'It was before the people had land,' he explained, 'and a man's opportunities were the same as his father's. Now land enters the question, and inheritance, and power and wealth pass from father to son.'

I have described elsewhere (R. Tapper 1984b) how the Nazarzai khans, having both vast land holdings and support from government, dominated the region, oppressing the local Uzbek and Aymaq population, especially after 1930. This oppression did not go unopposed, meeting a series of revolts throughout the region. Pressure on resources, and the dominant position of the Pashtun khans, focused competition and hostility generally into a common opposition to the Pashtuns on the part of the rest. Confrontations with the khans were perceived as interethnic disputes, evidence of the polarisation of Pashtuns and the rest in local political affairs.

By 1970, however, perceptions were shifting; with increasing population, scarcity of resources and the growth of material inequalities, a fourfold class structure was emerging in the region, comprising an elite, a bourgeoisie, a proletariat and an intelligentsia, which cut across ethnic divisions. The khans had a series of disputes with fellow-Pashtuns, and had been meeting resistance from their own Ishaqzai tribespeople. Violence in such cases may be perceived as part of intra-tribal, factional feuds, but the major regional conflict was increasingly recognised as oppression by Pashtun khans of non-Pashtun peasants; Pashtun peasants and nomads faced a growing contradiction between their ethnic loyalties and their class position, particularly when they found themselves liable to oppression by the khans.

In the early 1970s ethnic and tribal identity (*qaumi*) still provided the basic framework and language of social and political interaction in the region; 'class' (for which there was no term in common speech) was not explicitly recognised except by newly educated urban youth. Among Pashtun nomads and villagers, the term *wolus* (originally a Turkic term for 'people') was in constant use to describe the power of united community

effort, especially against the tyranny of both khans and government, and was justified in both religious and tribal terms, in maxims such as *da wolus zur da khuday zur*, the people's power is God's power.

At that time, although neither the concept of class nor the notion of class unity were explicit in discussions of political identity and interest, nonetheless ordinary Pashtun nomads and villages were becoming aware of their economic class interests and weakening in their ethnic and tribal allegiances; class consciousness was particularly evident among those without property, who were used to travelling throughout the region as petty traders and labourers.

Whatever has happened since, or may happen in the future, the story of nomads in northern Afghanistan, particularly in the case of the Madozai, shows how little can be understood about their role in the wider society simply by assuming that their nomadism is central to their culture and identity. More important to them are pastoralism and tribalism. Settlement in villages on the one hand is little more than an alternative economic and ecological strategy of 'adaptation and response' (Salzman 1980); on the other, of itself it involves little cultural and social change, which follow only when settlement is accompanied by population pressure on resources and consequent extreme inequalities of wealth and power.

### Notes

- 1 Studies of nomads in Afghanistan include: Ferdinand (1962, 1969), Kraus (1969), Jentsch (1973), Korgun (1973), R. Tapper (1974), Janata (1975), Glatzer (1977, 1983), Sandford (1977), Shahrani (1979), Barfield (1981), Balland (1982), Tavakolian (1984).
- 2 On the effect of the drought on nomads elsewhere in Afghanistan see Balland and Kieffer (1979).
- 3 These households were the major, and more permanent, part of the population of one of the villages; the 'sample' is skewed in favour of the better-off members of the community, in that it does not include the dozen or so transient 'client' households living in the same village and camps; but the village was not that of the 'khan' and his family, the wealthiest in the subtribe, so perhaps the sample does represent the middle range of tribespeople; and it certainly depicts a population in the process of settlement.

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