
BACKGROUND BRIEF



Afghanistan:

Cultural Appreciation

Booklet

(S.40)

January 2007

AFGHANISTAN: CULTURAL APPRECIATION BOOKLET

This booklet provides some basic facts about Afghanistan and describes the principal social customs of Afghan culture. It is intended to act as a guide to social interaction and to aid in the interpretation of social relations between Afghans themselves. The booklet also contains information on wider aspects of the society, such as demographics, languages and the economy.

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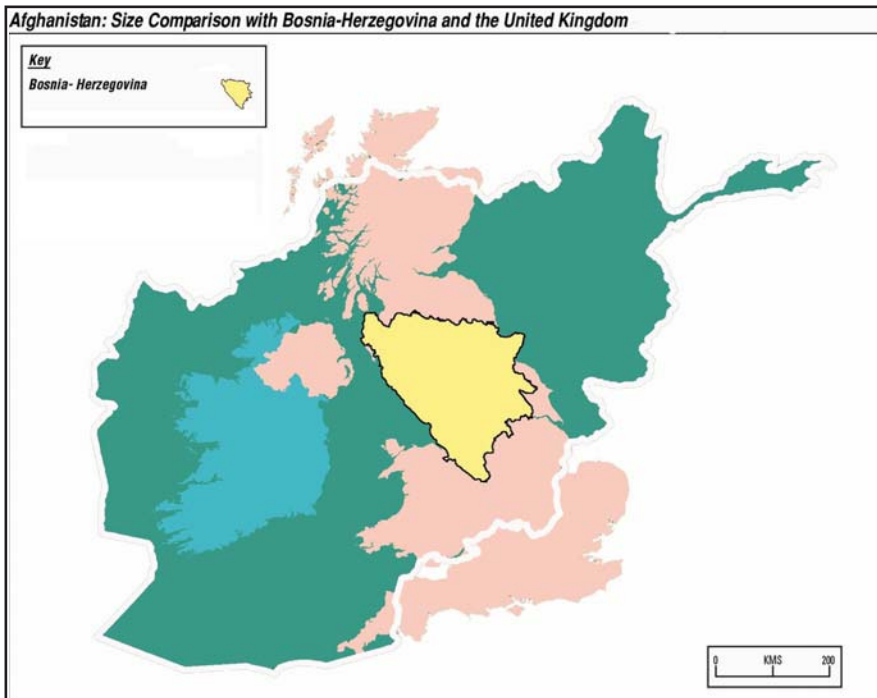
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AFGHANISTAN: CULTURAL APPRECIATION BOOKLET

AFGHAN HISTORY

- Between the 10th century BC and the 8th century AD, the region corresponding to modern-day Afghanistan was variously part of Persian, Turkic and Greek empires.
- Islam was introduced in the 7th century AD and the region became a major centre of Islamic power and learning in the 10th and 11th centuries.
- The Mongol invasions of the 13th century under Genghis Khan devastated much of the region.



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- Between the 16th and 18th centuries, Afghanistan was divided between three regional powers: the Persian Safavid Empire controlled the western region, the Mughals of India presided over the region around Kabul and the Uzbeks ruled the northern areas.
- The birth of Afghanistan as a nation is usually traced to the mid-18th century, when Ahmad Shah Durrani proclaimed himself King and created the Kingdom of Afghanistan.
- The 19th century was dominated by conflict with the British, in two major wars (1839-42) and (1878-79), both of which ended in British withdrawal.
- In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Afghanistan became a buffer state between the British and Russian empires and a pawn in the rivalry between the two super-powers. This period became known as the “Great Game”.
- The Third Afghan War in 1919 again resulted in the withdrawal of the British from Afghanistan, an event which remains a source of national pride and is celebrated on Afghan Independence Day each year on the 19 August.
- A period of inter-tribal and inter-ethnic conflict in the early years of the twentieth century was halted with the accession of Zahir Shah to the throne in 1933. He ruled until 1973, presiding over the most stable period in Afghan history, until being deposed by his cousin Sardar Mohammad Daoud.
- Daoud and his family were murdered in a communist-backed coup in 1978, an event which precipitated an invasion by the Soviet Union the following year.
- A guerrilla war against the Soviets, inspired largely by Islamist Mujahaddin militants, gradually gained in intensity during the 1980s and this, combined with international pressure, finally persuaded the Soviets to withdraw in 1989. The pro-Soviet government of Mohammad Najibullah collapsed in 1992 to the Mujahaddin.

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- Concerns about the apparent expansionist aims of the Mujahaddin persuaded Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to back a rival Pashtun Islamist movement, the Taliban (meaning ‘students’) centred on the southern city of Kandahar and Afghan refugee camps and religious schools (*madrassas*) in Pakistan. Over the next six years, the Taliban gradually gained control of much of the territory, so that by 1998 the movement ruled over all but a handful of northern provinces.
- The Taliban imposed a strict interpretation of Shari’a Law on the population, banning girls from attending school and women from working, as well as prohibiting all sports and recreational activities. The regime also provided a safe haven for Al Qa’eda operatives, including Osama Bin Laden.
- The Taliban were overthrown in late 2001 by the Northern Alliance, a group of Tajik and Uzbek militia, in conjunction with UK/US forces following the events in the US on September 11th of that year. Despite no longer being a credible force nationally, Taliban elements and sympathisers have remained active in many parts of southern Afghanistan.
- A national *Loya Jirga* (traditional tribal council) in 2002 created Afghanistan’s first multi-ethnic government. Its interim President, Hamed Karzai, a Pashtun (see below), was elected as President in 2004 in the country’s first nationwide poll under universal suffrage. Turn out was estimated to be around 70%. Parliamentary and provincial elections were held in September 2005.

SOCIAL VALUES AND INTERACTION

Social Values

- The value system of Afghanistan is rooted in a number of fundamental cultural codes, the observance of which has an important bearing on the social status of an individual as well as his or her family and is therefore considered to be a basic duty of all.

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- The most important code is called *Pashtunwali*, which means ‘the way of the Pashtuns’. Although associated with the country’s largest ethnic group (see below), it represents a general ideological framework underpinning social behaviour among all Afghans. The concept defines relations between kin, regulates social and political relations between families, tribes and ethnic groups, and provides a quasi-legal structure for resolving disputes and administering sanctions. It also encompasses a coherent system of social norms. At the heart of *Pashtunwali* is a recognition of the importance of honour (*nang* or *wiyâr* in Pashtu, *zat* in Dari), and it is from this that most other Afghan cultural values flow.
- **Honour and Shame.** The need to uphold one’s honour and that of one’s kin group is a core value underpinning all social relations in Afghanistan. Honour may be lost through the violation of a social or behavioural code, and may also be compromised should one be subject to shame or humiliation at the hands of others.

Honour for Afghans is sometimes described as being “more important than facts”, a phrase which implies a general tendency to exaggerate or tell a listener what they wish to hear, particularly if the consequences of not doing so would be a loss of honour.

The application of a number of other cultural codes, listed below, ensures the preservation or restoration of honour.

- **Hospitality (*melmastia* or *mehrmāpalineh*).** Afghans place great emphasis on the provision of hospitality and generosity. A refusal to provide or accept hospitality is likely to cause serious offence, and in any social situation it is important not to refuse food, tea or gifts offered by Afghan hosts*. However, it is not a good idea to accept invitations to private functions, as this may give the impression of favouritism of one (tribal/ethnic) group over another as well as potentially leading to an expectation of return. One should politely decline and, if appropriate, arrange to meet someone socially in a public setting such as a café or market place.

* Although, in the case of gifts, it is polite to refuse once or twice before accepting.

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- **Justice (*badal*)**. An individual whose honour or that of a member of his family or clan has been compromised in some way will usually seek some form of redress from the wrongdoer and/or his family. Although often interpreted as an ‘eye for an eye’, *Badal* is actually a more complex notion which describes the restoration of balanced social relations following a dispute. A closely related concept is that of ***ghach***, meaning revenge.
- **Loyalty (*sabat*)**. Loyalty to one’s kin group, clan, tribe, community or ethnic group is a critical component of the value system. Deviation from this norm automatically means a loss of honour on the part of both parties, and is likely to lead to the administering of punitive sanctions.

Also significant in this context is the concept of ***nanawati***, which usually means the right to shelter or asylum, and has additional connotations of forgiveness.

- **Defence of female honour (*namus*)**. The need to protect the virtue of females is a duty of all, since the deleterious implications of any transgressions impact on all members of a family. Maintaining strict gender segregation (*pardah*) is one way in which this is achieved. It should be noted that men are bound by the rules of *namus* as much as women; a man behaving inappropriately to a female or entering an exclusive female space without invitation, for example, is likely to be severely dishonoured in the eyes of the community. (*Namus* is also applied to mean honour in more general terms.)
- Other important values include ***tureh*** (bravery), ***ghayrat*** (defence of property or homeland), ***isteqamat*** or ***istiqamah*** (persistence) and ***imamdari*** (righteousness).

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SOCIAL INTERACTION

Greetings

- The usual form of verbal greeting is *Salaam alay-kum* (“peace be upon you”), which elicits the response *Alay-kum salaam* (“and upon you peace”).

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- Hand-shaking (with the right hand) is the most common form of physical greeting, which is often followed by the placing of the right hand over the heart (a

symbol of sincerity). A failure to shake someone’s hand when meeting them may cause offence. Close male or female friends may also embrace, exchange kisses on the cheek and pat each other on the back.

- Men must not shake hands or engage in any physical contact with women in public, and it is also considered respectful for a man to avoid making eye contact with a woman when meeting them for the first time.

Food and Drink

- Food is usually served in communal dishes and is always eaten with the right hand. In the domestic environment, most Afghan families eat together unless there are male guests present, in which case women will eat alone.

- The importance of hospitality in Afghan society means that it is incumbent not to refuse second helpings when offered. However, it should be noted that Afghans will invariably offer food to visitors or guests even if this will leave little for themselves. It is good practice, therefore, to be frugal when eating with locals, and to ensure that some food is left in communal dishes at the end of a meal.

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- Tea is the most popular drink. Afghans very rarely drink alcohol, and its sale to Muslims is illegal. However, anecdotal reports suggest that alcohol is becoming more readily available in northern provinces and in Kabul.

Photography

- It is considered extremely rude to photograph someone without first asking their permission. Cultural norms also prohibit the photographing of women in Afghanistan.

Conversation and Meetings

- It is accepted practice to stand up when someone - especially a senior man or a woman - enters a room.
- Afghans usually sit on the floor in their own homes, and it is important when interacting with locals to cross one's legs rather than stretch them out. Women should be careful to cover their legs, ankles and feet with a scarf or shawl when sitting on the floor.
- It is considered respectful to maintain an upright posture when addressing someone in a formal situation such as a meeting or conference. Pointing the soles of one's shoes towards someone else may also cause offence. Shoes are regarded as defiling, and should be removed when entering someone's home or a mosque.
- Certain subjects are viewed as inappropriate topics of conversation; asking someone which ethnic group they are from is regarded as impolite, and questioning another man about female members of his family is especially taboo.

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Sport and Recreation

- The national sport in Afghanistan is Buzkashi, which is variation of polo. Football, wrestling and kite-flying are also extremely popular. Cricket has been re-introduced to the country in recent years by refugees returning from Pakistan.



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Buzkashi game

- Although banned under the Taliban, music has a rich heritage in Afghanistan and is an intrinsic component of Afghan culture. Traditional musical instruments include the *'armonia*, a hand-pumped Indian harmonium, the *surnai*, a clarinet-like instrument, and the *rubab*, which is a stringed instrument similar to a lute and the national instrument of Afghanistan. Music is usually accompanied by singing in styles which vary across regions and ethnic groups.
- Indian 'Bollywood'-style songs and dances are reportedly popular among the urban youth, although the government passed a law prohibiting the showing of Indian and western music videos on Afghan television in late 2004.

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- Afghanistan also has a proud literary tradition. The public recital of poetry remains extremely popular, and the low level of literacy means that story-telling has traditionally been an important educational tool.

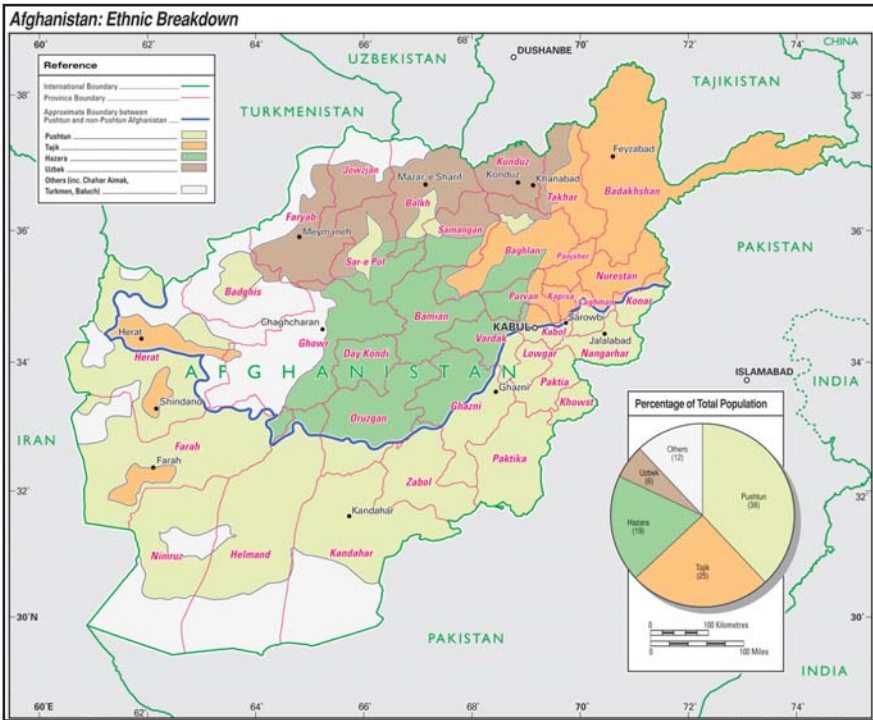
RELIGION AND ETHNICITY

Religion

- The overwhelming majority of Afghans are Muslims. Muslims follow the Qu'ran (the proclamations of God dictated to the Prophet Mohammed) and the Hadith (the sayings of the Prophet).
- Islam has five 'pillars' (central tenets):
 - Reciting the Declaration of Faith
 - Praying five times per day (at dawn, midday, in the afternoon, at dusk and at night)
 - Giving alms (charitable donations) to the needy
 - Fasting during the holy month of Ramadan
 - Performing the Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca) if means and health permit
- Most Afghans adhere to the Sunni sect, with about 14% following Shi'a Islam. Of the latter, the majority follow the *itha 'ashari* (Imami or 'Twelver') doctrine. Non-Muslims are estimated to constitute only about 1% of the country's population.
- Sunnis and Shi'as have differing beliefs regarding who was the true heir to the Prophet Mohammed. The two groups have different religious leaders, attend different mosques and have different calls to prayer. The majority of Muslims globally are Sunni. Most Afghan Sunnis follow the Hanafi legal school, which is one of the four main Sunni schools of Islamic jurisprudence.

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Ethnicity



- Ethnically, Afghanistan is highly diverse. Its population is composed of a multitude of different ethnic groups, many of which are represented in a number of different countries in the region. For the majority of the population, Afghan nationalism is therefore a relatively weak reference point as a source of identity; ethnic affiliations are far more important in most areas, with the possible exception of Kabul.

- Ethnic groups broadly correspond with linguistic communities in Afghanistan, one of the primary reasons for their relative lack of integration.

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Ethnic Group	Approximate Population (2005, est.)	percentage of total population	predominant language
Pashtun	12,570,175	42	Pashtu
Tajik	8,080,826	27	Dari
Hazara	2,693,609	9	Dari (Hazaragi dialect)
Uzbek	2,394,319	8	Uzbek, Dari
Aimak/Aibak	~950,000	3-4	Dari
Turkmen	~900,000	3	Turkmen
Baluchi	~600,000	2	Baluchi
Nuristani	~250,000	1	Nurestani
Qizilbash	~70,000	<1	Dari

Pashtuns

- The Pashtuns represent the largest single ethnic group in Afghanistan and have been the country's dominant political group for many generations.
- The Pashtuns are a transnational ethnic group, with many residing in the North West Frontier and Baluchistan provinces and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan. In this region, they are known as Pathans or Pukhtuns.
- The community is composed of two sub-groups, the Ghilzais and the Durranis. The Ghilzais reside predominantly in the eastern mountainous region of the country, and the Durranis in the southern region centred around the city of Kandahar.
- Relations between the Pashtuns and members of other ethnic groups tend to be harmonious on an everyday level, particularly in large cities such as Kabul. However, historical enmities do prevail in many areas, which often lead to social tensions. Members of other ethnic groups tend to view the Pashtuns as using their dominance of the Afghan state to discriminate against non-Pashtun communities.

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- The Taliban were drawn principally from the Pashtun community.
- It should be noted that the Pashtuns are perhaps the most fractured ethnic group in Afghanistan, composed of many competing cultural, social and tribal ideologies and traditions, and it is therefore difficult to treat them as a homogenous entity.
- Pashtuns are largely Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi School.

Tajiks

- Tajiks consider themselves to be the earliest inhabitants of the region, pre-dating the Islamic conquests. The group is concentrated in the relatively densely populated northern part of the country as well as in the cities of Kabul and Herat, where they are sometimes referred to as Farsiwan ('Persian speakers'). Like most Afghans, Tajiks are predominantly agriculturalists.
- Until the formation of the Afghan Transitional Government in 2002, Tajiks were largely excluded from power in Afghanistan. Relations with the Pashtuns have traditionally been beset with tensions.
- The vast majority of Tajiks follow Sunnism, of the same Hanafi doctrine as the Pashtuns.

Hazaras

- The name 'Hazara' means 'thousand' in Persian. This is thought to refer to the population's possible descent from the army of Genghis Khan - organised in groups of one thousand - which invaded Afghanistan in the 13th century.
- The traditional homeland of the group is in central Afghanistan, and is often referred to as the Hazarajat. Hazaras make up approximately one-third of the population of Kabul.

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- Most Hazaras are Shi'a Muslims, of the Imami ('Twelver') school. There is also a small minority of Ismaili ('Sevener') Hazaras.
- Hazaras have often felt discriminated against by members of other ethnic groups. This, combined with their minority religion and distinctive culture, means that the Hazaras are perhaps Afghanistan's most 'independent' population.

Uzbeks

- Uzbeks live throughout northern Afghanistan, particularly in the Faryab and Jowzjan provinces. Afghan Uzbeks and Afghan Tajiks have often joined forces against the Pashtuns.
- Afghan Uzbeks speak a dialect of the Uzbek language, although most are also fluent in Dari.
- Like the Hazaras, the Uzbeks have never held political power in Afghanistan. Relations with Pashtuns are often antagonistic, and the Uzbeks have generally demonstrated little loyalty to the Afghan state.
- The overwhelming majority of the Uzbek population are practicing Sunni Muslims.

Baluch (Baloch, Balach)

- The traditional homeland of the Baluchis is in the south western desert region, and the group is particularly numerous in Helmand and the northwestern area of Farah provinces. An estimated 70% of Baluchis reside in Pakistan.
- The majority of Baluchis speak a language of the same name, which is related to Farsi. Up to half of the population speak a language called Brahui. Some commentators regard these speakers as a separate ethnic group. Most Baluchis are also fluent in Dari and Pashtu.

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Aimak/Aibak

- The Aimak are a partially nomadic population inhabiting the mountainous areas of the central northwest. Estimates of the total population vary from 350,000 to over one million.
- The Aimak are closely related to the Hazara, although the majority follow Sunnism.

Turkmen

- The Turkmen population represents approximately 2-3% of Afghanistan's total population, and resides largely in the Turkmenistan border area in the provinces of Faryab and Badghis. The group shares much of the same cultural heritage as the Uzbeks.

Nurestani

- The Nurestanis are concentrated in the mountainous area to the north east of Kabul, particularly in Nurestan province. Estimates of their numbers vary from about 100,000 to 350,000.
- Nurestanis speak a number of languages broadly grouped as Nurestani, which are only partly mutually comprehensible.

Qizilbash

- The Qizilbash are Shi'a Dari speakers numbering between 50,000 and 100,000 and residing throughout Afghanistan. They tend to be well-educated and have traditionally been represented at senior levels in the Afghan civil service.

Other Ethnic Groups

- Other ethnic groups in Afghanistan include the Eshkashimi, Gujar, Jalali, Kabuli, Kirghiz, Munjani, Ormuri, Qazaq, Pasha'i, Pikraj, Rushani, Taymuri, Yahudi and Wakhi. Most of these encompass only a few thousand people.

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DEMOGRAPHICS

- Population figures for Afghanistan are of highly questionable reliability. The demographic data provided here are estimates compiled from the best available information, and should be treated with caution.

Basic data (2005, est. unless otherwise stated)

Total Population: 29,928,987

Population growth rate: 4.77%/year

Mean life expectancy at birth: 46.2 years (2003) (UK: 78.3)

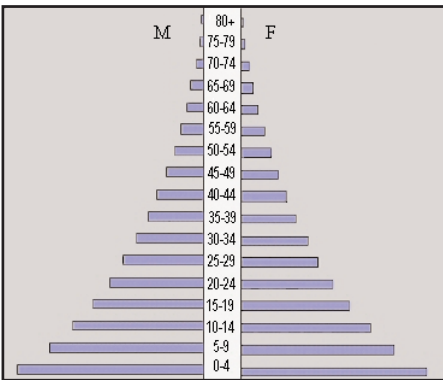
Total fertility rate: 6.75 children per woman (UK: 1.66)

Infant mortality rate: 163 per 1000 live births (UK: 5.4 per 1000)

Urban population: 27%

Nomadic population: 2% to 10% *(Sources: UNDP; World Factbook)*

- Afghanistan has an extremely youthful demographic profile. 45% of the population are under 15, and almost two thirds are under 25.



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City	Population, 2004 (est.)
Kabul	2,967,056
Kandahar	381,167
Mazar e-Sharif	291,950
Herat	267,448
Jalalabad	192,043
Kunduz	157,093
Gazni	136,338
Bamiyan	119,556
Baghlan	105,090
Balkh	104,376

Province	Population, 2004 (est.)
Badakhshan	923,144
Badghis	413,254
Baghlan	991,627
Balkh	1,169,301
Bamian	499,537
Daikondi	350,000
Farah	487,000
Faryab	1,123,576
Ghazni	1,307,868
Ghowr	463,000
Helmand	1,086,406
Herat	1,450,000

Province	Population, 2004 (est.)
Jowzjan	1,350,000
Kabul	2,980,516
Kandahar	1,650,000
Kapisa	556,347
Khowst	315,000
Konar	518,660
Kunduz	1,316,243
Laghman	658,402
Lowgar	445,852
Nangrahar	1,524,513
Nimruz	209,554
Nurestan	117,600

Province	Population, 2004 (est.)
Oruzgan	650,000
Paktia	977,306
Paktika	518,375
Panjshir	307,620
Parvan	964,842
Samangan	624,488
Sar-e Pol	491,400
Takhar	887,662
Wardak	766,481
Zabul	367,458

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FAMILY AND TRIBE

- The bedrock of Afghan society is the extended family. It is this group which defines an individual's social status and life chances, acts as a corporate body in dealings with other families and the state, regulates disputes between individuals, determines and arranges all marriages of its members and provides most welfare functions.
- Extended families tend to be co-located, although nuclearisation is becoming more common in urban areas. Traditional marriage preferences is with paternal parallel cousins (father's brother's sons or daughters), although other forms of marriage are widespread and may include cross-ethnic ties, particularly in non-Pushtun communities.
- Gender roles are strictly defined, with men representing the 'public face' of the household in its dealings with the outside world, while women are largely confined to the domestic environment. Although only men are able to participate in local political life, such as tribal councils (jirgas or shuras - see below), women are usually influential behind the scenes. Women also have the most say in the upbringing of children and their decisions are instrumental in the determination of their childrens' marriage partners.
- Traditionally, Afghanistan is a highly tribal society, and tribalism continues to impinge on many areas of social and economic life in the country. However, its importance varies between ethnic groups; rural Pashtuns tend to have the strongest tribal structures whereas among most Tajik communities, tribalism has virtually disappeared.
- Afghan tribes are an extension of the family, being patrilineal kin groups (tracing descent through the male line) composed of a group of related and usually co-located males who recognise a single male ancestor. Although genealogy therefore represents the guiding principal for tribal solidarity, tribal membership is also partly a product of politics, with affines (marital relatives) and members of other tribes often incorporated into the group through fictive kinship.

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- The Arabic term for tribe, *qawm* - extensively used in Afghanistan - often has a rather loose definition, referring in many areas of the country simply to a socially and spatially-united group of people. The meaning of the term is also sometimes equated with an ethnic group itself, without any kin-based connotations.
- In practise, a tribe or clan will operate together as a political and military unit, will share responsibility for offences carried out by members of the group, will normally practise endogamy (marriage within the group) and may in some cases act as a single economic body (sharing agricultural resources, for example).
- It is common for tribes to have no recognised leaders; this is particularly true of the Ghilzai Pashtuns. The *jirga* or *shura* – a traditional tribal council – represents the main decision-making body for many rural tribes, and was also used successfully on a national scale in the 2002 *Loya Jirga*.
- The principle of equality is an important adjunct to tribalism in many areas, and the leaderless nature of many tribes is often a source of tension between them and political bodies.
- Tribalism permeates most aspects of local politics, creating further divisions between the regions and the Afghan state. In Helmand, for example, the political scene is dominated by the rivalries between the main Durrani Pashtun tribes, the Achakzai, the Alikozai, the Alizai, the Barakzai, the Ishaqzai, the Noorzai and the Popalzai.

LANGUAGE

- There are estimated to be at least 20 distinctive languages spoken in Afghanistan, plus many more dialects. The two official languages are Dari and Pashtu.
- Afghanistan's principal language is Dari, spoken by an estimated 45% to 50% of the population. Dari is a dialect of Persian (also known as Farsi), the language of Iran.

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- Pashtu, the language of the Pashtuns, is also widely spoken in the southeast of the country, and is the first language of an estimated 35% of the total population. The two main Pashtun sub-groups, Ghilzai and Durrani, speak different dialects of the language.
- Dari and Pashtu use the Arabic script, and are similar in written form. Although mutually unintelligible in speech, most educated Afghans can speak both languages. Dari is considered to be the language of urban life, and is the usual medium for the conduct of business. Schools use the language most common to their region and teach the other as part of the curriculum.
- In the northern regions of the country, Turkic languages such as Uzbek and Turkmen are spoken.
- The Hazaras speak a form of Persian known as Hazaragi, which is differentiated from Dari by its incorporation of Mongol terms.
- Smaller ethnic groups usually have their own languages, which are often dialectical variations of one of the major languages.

THE AFGHAN ECONOMY

- According to the UN Development Programme, Afghanistan was officially the fifth poorest country in the world in 2004. Economic activity is dominated by subsistence agriculture and nomadic animal husbandry, with the black economy making up a significant proportion of the country's GDP and many people dependent on foreign aid. Opium production accounts for a substantial percentage of the country's (illegitimate) export earnings. The taxation and banking systems are rudimentary and the country has only a very poorly developed tertiary sector.
- Landholding also contributes to the population's impoverishment. The majority of the population either has no access to land or hold plots which are too small adequately to support a family's subsistence needs. Legal entitlement to land is also difficult to establish, because of the weakness of the Afghan judicial system and the existence of many competing tribal laws.

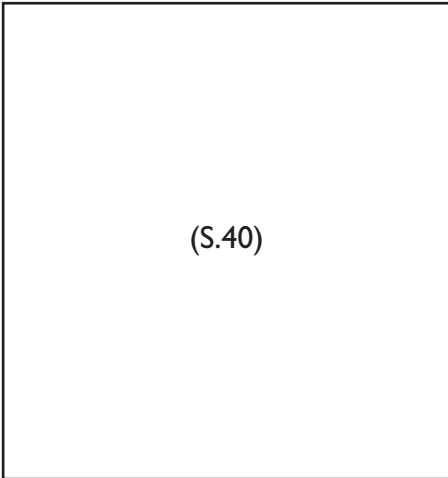
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- Development indicators:
 - 70% of the population survive on less than US\$2 per day
 - 20% of children die before the age of five
 - Maternal mortality is 60 times higher than in industrialised countries
 - 77% of the population has no access to safe water
 - 94% of the population has no access to electricity
 - The adult literacy rate is 36%, one of the lowest in the world

(Sources: UNDP; World Factbook; World Bank)

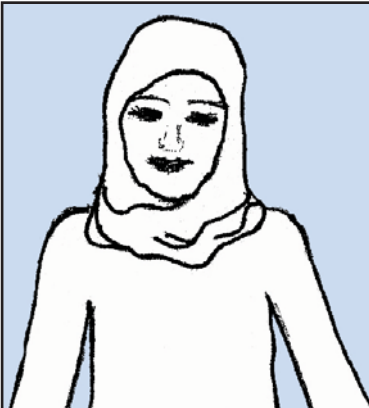
DRESS

- The most common form of clothing for men is a knee-length shirt called a *perahan tunban*. This is worn over baggy cotton trousers, and is often accompanied by a sleeveless waistcoat, a jacket or dress coat (*chupan* or *chapan*). The *chupan* is particularly favoured in Mazar e-Sharif, where it is worn all year round.
- A variety of different types of headgear is worn. Large turbans are most common, but men also wear woollen knitted hats (*chitralli*) and sheepskin hats in winter. Both children and adults tend to wear open-toed sandals or leather boots in rural areas.
- Western males are advised to wear long sleeve shirts and long trousers when in Afghanistan. The wearing of shorts in public should be avoided, except in the international compounds in Kabul.



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- Although western-style clothing is becoming more popular in urban areas, female attire in Afghanistan tends to be highly conservative. All women cover their hair - and many their faces - in public. The colour of headscarves (*hijab*) often reflects the particular ethnic group or tribe to which a woman belongs. The most common form of clothing is a two-piece outfit consisting of long trousers and a long-sleeved, high-necked tunic, known as *shalwar-kameez*. Other women wear the *chador* (or *shadri*), which is a head to toe cloak fastened under the chin and designed to conceal all bare flesh. The *burqa* is a form of *chador* that also covers the face and incorporates a latticed slit for the eyes. Compulsory under the Taliban, the wearing of the burqa remains prevalent among rural Pashtun communities.
- Western females are advised to wear loose clothing with long sleeves, ensuring that the legs and ankles are covered, and to cover the head with a *hijab*, long shawl or *chador*. This is especially important when visiting more conservative rural districts.



Hijab



Chador

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ANNEX A
USEFUL TERMS AND PHRASES

Conversation

[Note: as far as possible, the Dari and Pashtu translations reflect the phonetic pronunciation of the words.]

English	Dari	Pashtu
Hello	Salaam alay-kum	Salaam alay-kum
Goodbye	Khoda hafiz/Ba'aman-e khoda	Pe aamaan
Yes	Bale	Wuh
No	Na/Ne	Na
Stop	Baash/Estawda sho	Wodarega
Wait	Deita entzar wubaasai	Sabr wokar/intizar wokar
Sorry	Mo'azerat mekhaham	Wo bakhe/Bakhshena ghwaram
Please	Lotfan	Lotfan
Thank you	Tashakor	Dar manena
How are you?	Shoma chetor asti?	Senga ye?/Se haal lare?/ Jor ye?
Do you speak English?	Englisi gap mezaned?	Pe Inglisi pohezhe?
I understand	Man Fah-mam	Ze pohezham
I don't understand	Man na fah-mam	Poh na shwum
What is your name?	Naam shuma chi ast?	Sta num se dai?
My name is...	Naam-a man...	Zama num...dai
Where are you going?	Kauja miyirin?	Chirta zee?
Is everything alright?	Sahi ast?	Khairat day?
I am a soldier	Man askar hastam	Ze pauzi yam/Ze fauzi yam

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Numbers

Number	Dari	Pashtu
1	Yak	Yawa
2	Du	Dua
3	She	Dre
4	Chor	Salor/Chalor
5	Panj	Penza
6	Shash	Shpag
7	Haft	Owe/Wuh
8	Hasht	Ata
9	Nuh	Nah
10	Dah	Las
20	Bist	Shal
30	See	Dersh
40	Chel	Tsal wesht
50	Pan-ja	Pandzos
60	Shast	Sh-pe-te
70	Haftaad	Aw yaa
80	Hashtaad	At yaa
90	Navad	Nawi
100	Sad	Sel
1000	(Yak) hazaar	Zer
10,000	Dah hazaar	Las zer
100,000	Yak lak	Yaw lak
1000,000	(Yak) milioon	Yaw krór*

*Pashtuns don't generally use million

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Days of the week

English	Dari	Pashtu
Monday	Do shanbe	Do shanba
Tuesday	Se shanbe	Se shanba
Wednesday	Chaar shanbe	Chaar shanba
Thursday	Panj shanbe	Panj shanba
Friday	Juna	Juna
Saturday	Shanbe	Shanba
Sunday	Yak shanbe	Yakshanba

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ANNEX B
KEY DATES IN 2007-9

The official Afghan calendar is the ‘Afghanistan Solar Calendar’, which is essentially the same as the Persian calendar used in Iran, but uses different names for the months. Like the Islamic calendar used in much of the wider Muslim world, it started in AD 622, the year of the Prophet Mohammed’s migration from Mecca to Medina. The year 2006-7 in the western (Gregorian) calendar is therefore equivalent to 1385 in the Afghan calendar.

NUMBER	AFGHAN MONTH	START DATE	END DATE
10	Jeddi	22 December 2006	20 January 2007
11	Dalua	21 January	19 February
12	Hut	20 February	20 March
1	Hamal	21 March 2006	20 April
2	Saor	21 April	21 May
3	Jowza	22 May	21 June
4	Saratan	22 June	22 July
5	Asad	23 July	22 August
6	Sunbala	23 August	22 September
7	Mizal	23 September	22 October
8	Aqrab	23 October	21 November
9	Qaus	22 November	21 December

Most Afghan public holidays and festivals are religious, and therefore fixed to the Islamic calendar. This is a lunar calendar based on the phases of the moon, and is 11 days shorter than solar calendars. Dates of these occasions (*) therefore vary year to year. However, some festivals (such as the Afghan New Year, Nowruz) are fixed to the Afghan calendar and remain the same each year.

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Because the start of the month in the Islamic calendar is determined by the sighting of the moon, some dates given below (*) are subject to change of (+ or -) one day.

2007:

- 30 January Ashura Festival* (Shi'a)
- 21 March Nowruz (New Year)
- 31 March Milad al-Nabi* (Birth of the Prophet Mohammad - Sunni)
- 5 April Milad al-Nabi* (Birth of the Prophet Mohammad - Shi'a)
- 18 April Liberation/Victory Day
- 28 April Revolution Day
- 10 August Isra al-Mi'raj* (Commemorating the Prophets's ascension to Heaven, also known as Lailat al-Mi'raj)
- 19 August Independence/National Day
- 13 September - 12 October Ramadan* (Holy Month)
- 8 October Laylat Ul-Qadr* (Night of Power)
- 13 October Eid al-Fitr* (Celebrating the end of Ramadan)
- 19 December Hajj* (Mecca)
- 20 December Eid al-Auda*

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2008:

- 19 January Ashura Festival* (Shi'a)
- 19 March Milad al-Nabi* (Birth of the Prophet Mohammad)
- 21 March Nowruz (New Year)
- 18 April Liberation/Victory Day
- 28 April Revolution Day
- 31 July Isra al-Mi'raj* (Commemorating the Prophets's ascension to Heaven, also known as Lailat al-Mi'raj)
- 19 August Independence/National Day
- 2 September - 1 October Ramadan* (Holy Month)
- 26 September Laylat Ul-Qadr* (Night of Power)
- 2 October Eid al-Fitr* (Celebrating the end of Ramadan)
- 8 December Hajj* (Mecca)
- 9 December Eid al-Auda*

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2009:

- 7 January Ashura Festival* (Shi'a)
- 8 March Milad al-Nabi* (Birth of the Prophet Mohammad - Sunni)
- 13 March Milad al-Nabi* (Birth of the Prophet Mohammad - Shi'a)
- 21 March Nowruz (New Year)
- 18 April Liberation/Victory Day
- 28 April Revolution Day
- 19 July Isra al-Mi'raj* (Commemorating the Prophets's ascension to Heaven, also known as Lailat al-Mi'raj)
- 19 August Independence/National Day
- 22 August - 20 September Ramadan* (Holy Month)
- 14 September Laylat Ul-Qadr* (Night of Power)
- 21 September Eid al-Fitr* (Celebrating the end of Ramadan)
- 27 November Hajj* (Mecca)
- 28 November Eid al-Auda*

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