

“eat this, it’ll do you a power of good”: food and commensality among Durrani Pashtuns

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introduction

The anthropological study of symbolism, ritual, and beliefs in the Muslim Middle East has been inhibited by a general prejudice that they are relatively unelaborated in this area of the world, a prejudice due in turn to the overwhelming dominance of Islam and no doubt to Western (“orientalist”) attitudes toward Islam (Antoun 1976; Digard 1978). For a long time, accounts of religious ideas and behavior in Middle Eastern communities were presented simply in terms of degree of deviation from Islamic prescriptions and syncretism with “non-Islamic” or “pre-Islamic” local traditions. Approaches in terms of a distinction between “mosque” and “shrine” religions (Spooner 1963), or a pendulum swing between urban and rural forms of Islam (Gellner 1968), or an accommodation between Great and Little Traditions (Gulick 1976) have proved quite useful, but it was not always made clear how far perceptions and constructions of the Islamic Great Tradition vary in different parts of the Middle East.

Liberation from acceptance of a monolithic “Islam” as the central “Great Tradition” has led to a much more illuminating focus on the rich diversity of forms and transformations of Islam within different social contexts (El-Zein 1977; Eickelman 1981; Gilsenan 1982). The notion of a “Great Tradition,” in the sense of a cultural system shared by several classes and/or ethnic groups, continues to be useful, but only if treated as a complex, in which Islam, or its local construction, is only one of a number of elements. This is particularly important in the analysis of those aspects of culture that, while not essentially religious, nonetheless tend to be “covered” by the dominant religious ideology. A realization of this is beginning to produce studies—for example, of food systems, health and the treatment of disease, and the construction of personal identity—showing that, by comparison with, say Hindu or Buddhist cultures, such aspects of Muslim cultures are no less rich, but involve symbols and meanings that are far less consciously and explicitly elaborated and hence less accessible to anthropological analysis.

In this article we examine one such aspect of one particular Muslim Middle Eastern culture: the food system of Durrani Pashtuns in northern Afghanistan. We analyze the evaluation and use of food in terms of a number of domains of discourse, which we term the Koranic, the Tribal, the Humoral, and the Magical. Analytically these domains are distinct: each refers to a discrete

Food, eating, and commensality among the Durrani Pashtuns are discussed in terms of four domains of discourse: the Koranic, the Tribal, the Humoral, and the Magical. Each domain is related to a distinct section of the Afghan-Islamic Great Tradition. The domains offer alternative frames of reference between which actors switch according to context, in order to preserve recognition of the ultimate priority of Islam and to conceal relations of power. Semantic shifts are made possible by links between the domains, especially the ambiguities inherent in the pervasive values of “goodness” and “power,” the symbolism of blood, and the ritual of sacrifice. [food classifications, health, power symbolism, sacrifice, Islam, Afghanistan]

social context in which Durrani evaluate and use food in quite different ways—the contexts, respectively, of formal religious belief and action, political and economic competition, personal health and nutrition, and coping with misfortunes caused by occult powers. Each domain is the province of a different type of specialist, through whom it is linked to a distinct part of the Afghan-Islamic Great Tradition. We discuss the different logics inherent in their discourses, the links, ambiguities, and inconsistencies between them, and how these may be used by actors to compel acceptance of the dominant Islamic ideology and to conceal the relations of power involved.

As a contribution to the anthropology of food systems (which is virtually nonexistent for the Middle East), this article clearly owes something to the approaches and concerns of Lévi-Strauss (for example, 1963), Douglas (1972), and Bourdieu (1977). Goody's more recent discussion of cuisine and class is not, however, directly relevant, except insofar as we heed his warning that "the sociological analysis of meaning must also take into account the social dimensions of the actors involved" (1982:214). We hope rather that further studies such as ours, clearly distinguishing Islamic and other elements in the food systems of Muslim cultures, will ensure that future comparative surveys such as Goody's generalize about the Middle East on the basis of more than medieval texts and avoid the solecism of referring to Middle Eastern cultures as Arab.

The ethnographic starting point for our analysis is the ubiquity and ambiguity, in Durrani culture generally (as in many others) but here specifically in relation to food, of moral and political evaluations in terms that translate easily into "goodness" and "power." When Durrani describe food as "good" (*sha*), this may be an evaluation in any one (or more) of three distinct modes or systems of classification. They may elaborate by explaining the evaluation with another term that will identify the mode in which it was intended. Thus, they may say that the food is good because it is *pak* (clean, pure) and *rawa* or *halal* (permitted), indicating that it is approved, if not recommended, by the Koran or by the Prophet Muhammad. Or they may say the food is good because it has good *khwand* (taste), referring to aesthetic perceptions that are also culturally linked with ideas of economic and political status. Or, third, they may declare the food good because it is *munasib* (suitable), that is, appropriate food for the health of a particular person in particular conditions. Implicitly or explicitly linked with "goodness" is the much more operational term *zur* (power),¹ which is also associated with the three distinct modes of classification. The nature of power and the effects it can bring may be specified again by way of elaboration or explanation: by the terms *barakat* or *kheyr* (religious power, grace, blessing) or *suwab* (merit), or *khoshali* or *khwashhi* (pleasure, happiness, enjoyment) or *mor* or *sir* (full, satisfied, prosperous), or *mafad* or *fayda* (physical or medical profit, benefit).

These three modes of evaluating food belong to three complementary domains of discourse: the Koranic, the Tribal, and the Humoral. Each domain comprises a system of knowledge and meanings as well as an operational program for maximizing "goodness" and "power." There is a fourth domain, of rather a different order from the others: this we term the Magical. In some ways the Magical domain is residual, with a semantic structure and operational program largely derived from those of the other three domains. Its distinctiveness lies in the way it closes the entire system.

Though the domains are analytically distinct and contextually discrete, for Durrani actors they exist rather as alternative frames of reference between which they switch according to context. Shifts between domains are facilitated by the breadth and ambiguity of the values we translate as "goodness" and "power" and by the central role played in all domains by blood as a dominant symbol and by the rituals of commensal sacrificial meals. Within each domain, the meanings of these values, symbols, and rituals can be seen as distinct and even inconsistent with their meaning in other domains, but their polysemy and ambiguity, revealed in different social contexts, give the system its practical coherence while allowing one domain—the Koranic—to appear to dominate the rest.

We discuss each of the four domains in turn, in each case beginning with a brief account of

the elements of the local Great Tradition associated with the domain before dealing with the specifically Durrani evaluations and uses of food that are relevant to it. But first we must introduce the Durrani.

the Durrani Pashtuns

Approximately 2 million Durrani, Pashto-speaking Sunni Muslims, are scattered throughout most parts of Afghanistan. In the north-central region of Saripul, some 15,000 Durrani live in local communities of about 150 households.² The region is one of considerable ethnic and linguistic diversity, in which Durrani Pashtuns are a recently arrived minority of about 10 percent, but they can claim political superiority to Turkish-speaking (Uzbek and Turkmen) and Persian-speaking (especially Aymak and Hazara) groups because of their tribal association with the elite who rule the country (or did until 1978). In practice, however, ordinary Durrani occupy no distinct geographical or economic niche but are in continuous competition, both as pastoral nomads and as newly settled farmers, with members of other ethnic groups. The data for this article are drawn mainly from one Durrani community, whose members operated a dual economy, based on sheep pastoralism and irrigated agriculture.

Durrani diet is simple: staple foods are bread made from wheat flour, and milk products, especially ghee and dried whey. Other milk products, vegetables, and fruits are highly seasonal; rice is something of a luxury, and fresh meat is eaten regularly only by the rich, except in spring when karakul lambs are killed for their skins. Three "meals" are eaten each day: for most people the first two consist of bread and tea and some milk product; in the evening most people manage some sort of a cooked meal—a stew, soup, or perhaps a rice pudding—and the indispensable bread. Nutritionally the diet of ordinary people is probably barely adequate, while poorer Durrani often go hungry. Such a description of Durrani diet presents a stark picture, but this does not preclude the existence of complex ideas about food: people enjoy food, and some people eat well most of the time, while all people do so some of the time. Except in hard years, there is a succession of feasts, both for regular religious festivals and for weddings and other personal celebrations, at which all members of the community and indeed outsiders of any ethnic group are always made welcome. Anyone who hears the sound of shawm and drum announcing a feast may attend and eat. It is said that the poorest members of all ethnic groups would starve in winter were it not for such feasts.

The Durrani term (Pashto *khwaral*, cognate with Persian *khordan*) that translates the English "eat" has a range of meanings better covered by the term "take," being used of food, medicine, poison, oaths, bribes, blows, and fright; in addition it means "embezzle," "hit" (a mark), "suffer" (misfortune); there is no explicit connection with copulation, though customary rules of commensality and sexual availability are used together in defining important social boundaries (N. Tapper 1980).

Durrani are ideally egalitarian. Membership in groups such as the community is fluid and changing, while the important and rigid rules that govern Durrani social life concern membership, not in the community, but in the ethnic group on the one hand and in independent households on the other. The boundaries of these groups—household and ethnic group—are defined by rules relating to commensality and the control of women and productive resources. As elsewhere, individual householders are preoccupied with the acquisition of food, health, religious merit, and protection from misfortune, but increasing competition between households is producing growing economic inequalities, which are hard for Durrani to reconcile with their ideals of political and status equality, while the whole ethnic group is concerned with solidarity in a competitive and hostile environment.

In this domain, food values and commensal practices are part of a wider system which is held to locate all Muslims cosmologically and to afford them contact with the supernatural and the possibility of an afterlife in paradise. The system is derived from interpretations of the Koran, which for Muslims has the status of divine revelation; from sayings attributed to Muhammad and traditions associated with his life; and from the judicial elaborations of Sharia law. Doctrines and practical obligations based on the Hanafi version of these sources constitute the "Great Tradition" for Afghan Muslims. In this tradition there is a major opposition between that which is permitted and lawful (*halal*) and that which is forbidden (*haram*); this binary classification is comprehensive in that all that is not explicitly forbidden is permitted, though there are subsidiary gradations of each of the major categories (Anon 1961:133). The primary importance of faith and piety is clearly evident in the canonical injunctions. Thus, true believers are enjoined to "eat of the good things which we have bestowed on you for food, and return thanks unto God if ye serve him" (Sale n.d.:24). Good food for Muslims is virtually identical to that allowed the ancient Hebrews in Leviticus, though no flesh is permitted to Muslims unless the name of God has been invoked at the killing. Forbidden food includes implicitly the classificatory anomalies of Leviticus, and explicitly the flesh of animals that die other than by human hand, the flesh of swine and the fluid blood of slaughtered animals.

Concepts of ritual purity and pollution are more or less coincident with notions of what is permitted and forbidden, but they provide the basis for further comprehensive discriminations. "Purity is half the faith" is a saying attributed to Muhammad (Tritton 1961:559). An elaborate taxonomy of pollution is part of the theological tradition; for example, sexual intercourse, menstruation, and childbirth are "religious impurities," while "actual impurities" include wine, pigs, dogs, and some body products. The notions of purity and pollution also call for the readjustment and correction of one's ritual condition: elaborate rules for purification are laid down in particular cases, while the purification process itself involves four stages which are intended to cleanse the heart and spirit of all that is not God. Most importantly, ablution before prayer is strictly enjoined to purify the worshipper who gives thanks for God's favor. This injunction covers all contexts in which food is prepared or eaten. Proper table manners are also specified in detail.

As is the case with the classification of permitted foods and their purity, obligatory acts of devotion such as the fast during Ramazan and the sacrifice during the pilgrimage to Mecca unite Muslims as a single egalitarian community of believers. The fast is a time of thanksgiving when Muslims should fear and glorify God. The Minor Festival (Id al-Fitr) marks the end of the month of fasting and is one of the two canonical festivals of Islam. The other is the Great Festival (Id al-Adha), timed to coincide with the sacrificial offerings of sheep and camels during the Hajj pilgrimage that commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Ismail. All Muslims who can afford it are enjoined to sacrifice a beast on this day and to distribute portions of the meat to the poor and to kinfolk and neighbors. The merit of the sacrifice itself is compared both to attendance at Friday prayers and to the blood of martyrdom (Wensinck 1961:286). The condition of the victim and the accompanying ritual are both prescribed in some detail. In the Koranic system the religious merit associated with eating the flesh of a sacrificial animal (and a horror of eating its fluid blood) is given a central place.

Let us now turn to Durrani evaluations and treatment of food within this Koranic domain. Among Durrani, a version of the Koranic system of food classification and practices is promulgated by mullahs. Each community sees to the training of its own mullahs, while other types of religious leaders (Sufis or Sayyids) are either Durrani or members of local Pashto-speaking holy lineages. The interpretations of Koranic dogma offered by Durrani mullahs are inextricably linked with Durrani custom. They rarely make a distinction between custom and religious law, and are often unable to do so. Things Durrani and things Muslim are held to be identical.

The main duties of mullahs are associated with the mosque, though they also sometimes act privately as herbalists, as purveyors of religious charms, and as exorcists. Ordinary Durrani can be scathing about what they see as their mullahs' incompetence, particularly in these latter areas, but they treat the Koranic system they know as absolute and axiomatic, as prior and superordinate to the other domains discussed below. This means that in practice the treatment of food in this domain is to a considerable degree simply taken for granted. This unquestioned status derives in part from the binary logic of the system itself, particularly in Durrani usage, where gradations of the major categories of *halal* and *haram* are largely unknown or disregarded. Virtually all social actions, states of mind, and material objects can be classified as good or bad in moral terms (*halal/haram*, *rawa/narawa*), or as pure or impure (*pak/napak*) or corrupted (*fasad*, and a whole string of virtual synonyms). So permitted food is all that is not explicitly forbidden, while forbidden food not only includes substances prohibited in the formal classification but also foods contaminated by their association with other forbidden activities, for example, any foodstuff acquired with stolen money or by extortion.

Durrani adhere closely to the orthodox classification of foodstuffs in which meat is the principal focus. They elaborate this emphasis by valuing meat dishes above all others as conveying *barakat* or *kheyr* (religious power, grace, blessing). Only a few other foods, notably bread and salt, are explicitly characterized in the orthodox system, and in these cases too Durrani single them out for special attention, with rules for treating and sharing them. Thus *dodey* (bread) also denotes food in general (other nonspecific terms for food are *khoraq*, *ta'am*). Bread has power. A chance visitor will be offered "dry bread," that is, any unprepared meal, excused as the best the host can produce in the circumstances though he would wish to have honored his guest with a cooked meat dish. A single piece of bread is given to mollify a stranger inadvertently injured (by a dog-bite or a fall) near a Durrani home. A scrap of bread dropped on the ground will be kissed and pressed to the forehead before being put back on the meal-cloth. Salt is similarly governed by rules, for example, as to the time of day when it may be loaned to neighbors.

By and large, however, all food is relatively undifferentiated in the Koranic domain by comparison with the others. As in the "Great Tradition" dogma, Durrani see all food as God's gift, and insist that any food offered by a Muslim must be accepted. In the Koranic domain it is not the kind, quality, or quantity of food that is important, but its proper, reverent treatment. In all contact with food, God's name must be invoked to ward off theft by jinns (see below). All who handle food must be in a ritually pure condition: *chatal-khor* (dirt-eater) is a common insult. Finally, no food is ever simply thrown away; scraps of stale bread or rotten meat are given to the dogs as an act of "charity" to the animals; to do otherwise would be to feed the jinns.

The main social context in which food is evaluated and used in this domain is that of large-scale meals shared by the whole community. For Durrani, as for other Muslims, the two Festivals are high points of the religious year. For the Great Festival of Sacrifice (*loy akhtar*), Durrani expect every householder to sacrifice an animal, usually a sheep. The raw meat is distributed to neighbors, mullahs, and the poor. Since most families are sacrificing and meat is plentiful, there is no particular concern about the quantities being sent round. All men of the community then gather at the mosque, greet each other, obviously and determinedly smooth over quarrels, and pray together. Meanwhile women have prepared the meat and other food, and substantial portions of the dishes are then taken by the men to the mosque to be shared with others. Over the next 3 days the men and their families visit houses of kin and neighbors and are visited in turn; all guests, male and female, are offered portions of the sacrificial meat. Another regular sacrifice is the *dwalasey*, on the Prophet's birthday, when most families sacrifice an animal and distribute the meat, but on a smaller scale than the Festival. At the Minor Festival concluding Ramazan (*kuchney akhtar*), men again congregate at the mosque, greeting each other and smoothing over quarrels. On this occasion there is no communal meal in the mosque; instead, men return home to feast with their families, though they again spend the ensuing 2 or 3 days

visiting friends, kin, and neighbors, when guests are offered food, usually sweets this time. Public celebrations at both Festivals, after the main religious rites are over, include games such as *buzkashi* and dancing in a public place where people from surrounding villages get together.

Apart from Festivals and other calendrical occasions, sacrificial meals (*kheyrat*) may be offered as part of the making of a vow (*nazr*) or a prayer to God, directly or through a saint or shrine; or as part of the fulfillment of a vow. In all cases, the basic features of the ritual follow the same pattern: an animal must be killed (*halal kawel*, lit. to make clean, permitted) in prescribed fashion, which involves the statement of intention (*niyyat*) and dedication of the victim (*qurban*) to God by or on behalf of the sponsor, the elimination of the blood from the meat, and the distribution (*kheyrat*, *khodai*)³ of the meat to others, all of whom acquire merit (*suwab*).

In all sacrificial rituals, Durrani are very clear that it is the intention, not the performance, that is important. A poor householder, in a relation of dependence on a wealthier kinsman or patron, will try to show his independence and equality during the religious Festivals, and his efforts on these occasions will be respected. If he cannot afford to sacrifice a sheep, he may substitute any animal or vegetable food; indeed, some foods associated by Durrani with privation or poverty are held to be imbued with *barakat* or *suwab* (religious merit). This relation is particularly clear in the case of bread and other dishes made from flour, such as *wegrey*, the hand-ground wheat used by the very poor for their sacrifices. The emphasis on intention is consistent with the Durrani attitude to all obligations in the Koranic domain, and adds a potentially qualitative element into the fundamentally binary system of evaluation in this domain. However, Durrani use the notion of individual intention in a limited, almost binary way, to reconcile economic inequality within the community with their ideals of social and political equality. Thus a man who has gained wealth through ruthless and oppressive action may be disparaged as having flawed, false intentions; he is expected to suffer retribution after death. Conversely, as we have seen, poverty does not prevent the fulfillment of Koranic obligations. As might be expected, most often it is the socially disadvantaged whose intentions are said by the better-placed to come from "pure hearts," an attribution that is clearly both compensatory and exploitative.

Sacrificial rites, especially at the Festivals, condense the essence of the Koranic system of food symbolism. By killing an animal, Durrani explicitly acknowledge their debt to God for their lives and livelihood. During these celebrations they may apply henna, with its strong symbolic association with blood, to their hands and feet, suggesting an implicit identification between sacrificers and victim.⁴ The communal meals emphasize a rather different aspect of individuals' relations to the supernatural, that mediated by social action within the community, whether the local congregation or the widest community of Muslims. Individuals are required to subordinate private interests and to strive for harmony; food-sharing is the key symbol of their social and political equality.

It is notable that the only social discriminations made at the communal meals are between men and women and children. Within orthodox dogma, women and children are held to be subordinate to men in a variety of contexts and for a variety of reasons. Among Durrani the gender distinction is expressed, among other ways, by forbidding women access to the mosque and by customs that ensure that men and women eat apart in all public contexts.

the Tribal domain

The context of the Tribal domain is that of economic and political affairs, and it relates to a further distinct element in the Afghan-Islamic Great Tradition. The influence of Islam on the governmental system of Afghanistan is (that is, before 1978) very pronounced, and Sharia law as interpreted according to the Hanafi school forms the basis of all judicial and legislative processes from the level of local courts to parliamentary assemblies. But another set of traditions

known as Pashtunwali or Pashtun customary law is also pervasive in the economic and political life of Afghanistan. This "tribal code" has been formalized and elaborated in poetry and other literature over several centuries and has become an implicit part of judicial and administrative structures, which have always been dominated by Pashtuns.

Certain tensions exist between the Pashtun tribal code and Hanafi law, but in most areas the code serves as a model for social interaction at all levels, at least among Pashtuns. The idiom of honor and shame, and the ambiguities of interpretation this offers, are the medium by which conflicts between the tribal code and Hanafi law are resolved.⁵ For our purposes, relevant features of the tribal code include those relating to obligations of hospitality, sanctuary, and blood revenge.

Contacts between ordinary Durrani and judges and administrators are mediated by local khans, who dominate the Saripul region economically and politically. The behavior of the khans is a model against which action in the Tribal domain is measured. Competition between households of ordinary Durrani for access to and control of productive and reproductive resources is intense; hospitality and feasting in particular are means by which success or failure in such competitions is assessed. Other Pashto-speaking tribal groups in Afghanistan make this association explicit; Anderson writes of Ghilzai:

Many individuals compete for influence on grounds of wealth, wisdom, piety, political and economic connections, oratorical or other abilities, but Ghilzai assert that *khans*, properly so called, are distinguished as those who "feed the people" and "tie the knot of the tribe." . . . "Feeding people" covers all conversions of personal wealth into social relations through hospitality, occasional gifts and favors, providing employment, and other less clear-cut patronage (1983:134, see also 135).

Evaluation and treatment of food in the Tribal domain are based on "taste" (*khwand*, *mazza*) and can be characterized as essentially aesthetic and qualitative. Kinds of food and contexts of eating are described as having more or less good taste or strength.⁶ What is significant is the extent to which political and aesthetic evaluations coincide in this domain, where relations of political inequality among Durrani can be expressed despite the strongly egalitarian Islamic and tribal ideologies to which Durrani fervently subscribe.

This contradiction between egalitarian ideals and real political inequality is resolved in various ways. One key is to be found in hospitality (*melmastia*), the main context in which food and eating are evaluated in the Tribal domain. In his language and solicitous behavior the Durrani host humbles himself before his guest (it would be religiously forbidden (*haram*) to do otherwise), accepting that the guest has the right to demand and receive anything. The guest's apparent superiority is illusory, however, for by putting himself in a position to receive hospitality he, too, is humbled: he honors his host and implicitly acknowledges the latter's ability to fulfill his every request. It is important to note that such hospitality, though private, is commensal: host and guest must eat from the same bowl. Both men and women offer hospitality to others. Parties (*melmani*) are held on many occasions: out of friendship, to thank members of a cooperative work-party, to welcome a new bride or a non-Durrani guest into a community, to mark the settlement of a dispute, and so forth. In all cases, *melmani* express status relations of both equality and inequality. They include the assumption that the host-guest relation may be reversed at a later date (cf. Pitt-Rivers 1977:109). In effect *melmani* are treated as delayed reciprocal exchanges.⁷

There are, however, other ways of expressing both equality and inequality in the Tribal domain. Gifts of uncooked food, among the commonest forms of charity, signify the giver's claim to political superiority over the receiver (yet those who receive uncooked food are often associated with supernatural power of some kind: religious leaders, mendicant sayyids, local paupers). Only cooked food is acceptable as a gift between political equals or from an inferior to a superior. Cooked foods, particularly meat dishes, are said to "taste" better. Mutton or lamb cooked in clarified butter and served with rice is the most prestigious meal one can offer or eat; it is also the most expensive. There is also a clear notion that the amount of food served, and

the numbers fed, indicate the status of the host. High status and lavish hospitality are closely linked. This is particularly so when a host feeds his guests but does not share the meal with them. At meals celebrating or representing the host-sponsor's achievement, boiled sweets are distributed to participants to allay envy and "sweeten" their acceptance of their host's success.⁸

These elements are particularly clear in the prestations and festivities associated with marriage. Among Durrani the institution of marriage plays a central role in political and economic relations between households, and also in ethnic identity (N. Tapper 1981; Tapper and Tapper 1982), and it is this role, rather than aspects of gender relations, which is emphasized in marriage ceremonial. At all those private occasions when the participants in a marriage must meet to arrange the contract, a *melmani* meat meal is shared between them. In the final exchange of the wedding, the bride carries cooked meat both ways between her agnates and affines; this transfer is to the undoubted detriment of the food, but "people would laugh" if a live animal or raw meat were sent instead on this occasion. Such exchanges signify the equality between principals on both sides. At the public festivities sponsored by the groom's side, however, both the quantities of food involved and the manner in which it is served are evaluated so as to differentiate between competing households. These feasts are held out of doors where everyone may gauge the character and scale of the celebrations, among other ways by the number of cauldrons of food cooked and the amounts of meat and of extras like raisins that are mixed in the rice palao.

Another dimension of differentiation is introduced in the structure of the feast. If they can afford it, the groom's side hires a specialist male cook, usually a non-Durrani.⁹ The meal is then served to men first, often in a series of sittings, the more important eating first. All guests at any sitting are treated quite uniformly. Sittings for women and children come after those of the men but follow an identical pattern. What is distinctive about such feasts is that a stranger cooks the meal that is fed to guests, while the host and his family do not eat. In this respect the commensal aspect of the meal unites the guests but differentiates them from their host. Clearly, particularly in a politically important marriage, guests are being fed in return for their recognition, support, or allegiance. Durrani say that a big feast, which for local khans may involve feeding upwards of 2000 people, "tastes good"; it is also a clear sign of both economic and political success, and is likely to bring yet further success in the future.

The structure of meals associated with marriage is replicated in those associated with *buz-kashi* games¹⁰ and dispute settlements. In the latter case, if disputing parties can resolve their quarrel privately, whether at the Islamic Festivals or some other time, the settlement may be marked by a *melmani*. But if the settlement follows a *jirga* or *maraka* council of household heads, or the intervention of a local elder, the compromise is signaled by the participation of both parties at a commensal meal for which each has provided an animal for sacrifice. If a dispute escalates (usually because of a wounding or killing) to involve a Durrani khan, the khan will attempt to force the two parties to some settlement in an effort to maintain the solidarity of the local ethnic group. In such cases it would seem that the khan provides the animal for sacrifice, though whether, like a wedding sponsor, he feeds his guests and refrains from eating, is unfortunately not clear from our data.

In other cases competitors may use the idiom of commensality to force a settlement. One of the gravest insults a Durrani can offer is to refuse a meal prepared by another: if a guest does so, he is openly claiming superiority to his host, and unless the host accepts the claim the life of the guest is in danger. In extreme cases a political competitor confident of his strength and honor but temporarily deadlocked with his rival may enter the latter's house only to refuse to eat or drink until some compromise measure has been agreed.¹¹ The opposite extreme is evident in the Durrani custom of *nanawatey*, when a killer, acting from weakness, may ask and receive sanctuary even from his victim's own kin, from whose house he will be given safe conduct to another house after 3 days. Such a "guest" is granted the most valuable gift of all, his

life, but only by actually placing it in the hands of his host and trusting the latter's honor, piety, and power to protect him.¹²

Disputes are feared as occasions when blood may be spilled, with further inevitable consequences. In the Tribal domain there is little ritual focus on blood, which is used rather as an idiom for political and economic values. A "martyr," killed "unjustly" by raiders or in a feud (or in holy war), will be buried unwashed on the spot where his blood was spilled, and his grave may become a minor shrine. But in marriage, the few references to sexuality are made through the use of henna (symbolic blood), and no attention whatever is paid to the bride's virginity or the spilling of hymenal blood. Tribally important ideas of procreation, descent, homeland, and feud are all couched in the idiom of blood, but the focus here is never literal and the idiom is not greatly elaborated. It is as if blood is so basic to concerns in the Tribal domain that it is taken for granted and unmarked, whereas relations between households are perpetually ambiguous and changing and it is these that receive symbolic elaboration and are managed through the idiom of food.

the Humoral domain

The origins of Islamic natural philosophy go back to Hippocrates, Aristotle, Galen, and other Greek/Hellenic masters, and the system familiar to us as the basis of European science and philosophy until at least the Renaissance. The cosmology and symbolism offered by the classical tradition were modified by Islamic scientists, philosophers, and theologians from the earliest period of Islam, but the system is still known, in Afghanistan and elsewhere, as "Greek" (Yunani). Byron Good is one of the few anthropologists to have examined the current operation of the system in detail in a particular community. He summarizes the characteristics of Islamic cosmology as drawn from Greek sources in an Iranian town: they include

The Ptolemaic structure of concentric spheres; the Aristotelian elements of fire, water, earth and air; and the Plotinian emanations of pure intelligences and souls. These were conceived in a unified hierarchy of being, a series of oppositions and correspondences, and an analogical system with the Universe as Macrocosm and Man as Microcosm, all united in a Great Chain of Being. These Greek elements were combined with distinctively Islamic convictions (intense monotheism, elements of a Quranic cosmology), with mystical and Quranic elements, and with the Middle Eastern Hermetic or wisdom (*hikmat*) tradition, to create a uniquely Islamic synthesis [Good 1977:174-175].

The elaborations of this tradition are both complex and diverse. For our present purposes a brief and simplified outline of the role of food must suffice.¹³

In the temporal realm, form and matter are seen as ever-changing relations between the four elements (fire, air, water, and earth) and their associated qualities (pairs of hot, cold, moist, and dry). All beings and objects of the material world are compounds of these elements and are ranked according to their composition. There are three types of soul, each associated with particular faculties and located in particular organs of the body: vegetative or natural, located in the liver, the animal or vital, located in the heart, and the rational, located in the brain. Only mankind, among living creatures, possesses the rational faculty. Mankind was created of congealed blood, but the body is made up of four humors (blood, yellow bile, phlegm, and black bile), which result from processes of digestion of food and are essential to bodily functions. The humors combine with the primary elements and their associated qualities, and interact with both the natural and the supernatural environment, to form the temperament of the individual, which locates the individual cosmologically.

Good health is a function of an operational balance between environment, human faculties, and humors, while sympathetic action is the main mechanism by which changes in the circumstances of an individual can be effected. In this system, blood is understood as the prime agent of nutrition, while all food is classified by its qualities (hot, cold, moist, dry) and its strength. Transformations effected by cooking or, conversely, rotting, are used to explain virtually all

physiological processes. Islamic idioms of purity and pollution are intrinsic to such explanations of nutrition and disease.

In northern Afghanistan local specialists in this “Greek” system of nutritional and medical knowledge operate as herbalists (*attar*) in the local market towns, where they are in competition with government-approved drug stores which sell expensive (and often out-of-date) Western patent medicines. Herbalists diagnose and prescribe for excesses and imbalances of the humors, recommending substances they sell themselves, as well as diets or operations such as bleeding, cupping, cauterization, or diaphoresis, which may be performed by other specialists such as barbers (*salman*, *dallak*). All these specialists are local representatives of the “Greek” Great Tradition, to which they maintain access through a variety of standard texts, mostly originating in Pakistan or Iran. Durrani local communities also have their own specialist doctors (*tabib*), both men and women. They learn their knowledge and skills from older kin, but some men at least have copies of the “Greek” texts which they sometimes consult.¹⁴

In spite of their access to the Afghan version of the Galenic-Islamic Great Tradition, Durrani simplify the humoral system and qualify it with evaluations from other domains. Prescriptions and treatments from whatever specialist is approached—whether community herbalist, mullah, or (in rare cases) doctor of cosmopolitan medicine in the provincial capital—are all expected to include dietary recommendations appropriate to diagnoses in humoral terms. Among Durrani, the four qualities are commonly reduced to two—hot and cold—while the only humor whose lack or excess is common talk is blood.¹⁵ For the purpose of diagnosis and treatment of humoral imbalances, individual temperaments are reckoned to be either hot or cold or strong or weak, as are the seasons, diseases, and foods.

The Humoral domain of knowledge and evaluation of food is confined almost entirely to the household context. Generally, in ordinary diet, Durrani favor foods they classify as “hot.” They say that Luqman Hakim, the wise man, visited northern Afghanistan and declared it a “cold” place, advising people there to eat hot and dress hot. The hottest meat is chicken, and chicken stew and soup are much favored winter foods by those who can afford it. Chicken is opposed to beef, which is cold, the meat of the poor, despised by the rich. Other common foods are placed in hot/cold oppositions too: sheep versus goat meat (and associated milk products); wheat versus barley bread; black versus green tea. Hot foods are almost always more expensive than their cold opposites (whether as a consequence of supply or demand is unclear), and associated with wealth and prestige; the exception is rice, an expensive luxury yet cold, while corn bread is cheap and popular but hot.

By and large the kinds of food eaten are determined by the season and expense. The hot/cold classification is important, however, in matters of individual good health, which demands an appropriate diet, and in cases of illness treatment is by opposites of appropriate strength. People’s temperaments reflect their possession of reason (*aqil*), the ability to control themselves. Men are said to have reason and generally to be cooler than women, who are hot and lack reason. But reason and coolness do not correlate simply with either physical strength or sexual activity or potency: coolness comes with the ability to control all emotions and desires, including sexual, and to resist spirit possession. In practice it is a matter of more or less, depending on the general circumstances of the individual, and on age as well as gender. Children of both sexes are hot and lack reason; young men are expected to acquire reason and to cool much sooner and more completely than women. Old people generally are cold and possess reason. Those who are hot are unable to control passions, betray an excess of blood, and are liable to spirit attack—for the spirits desire blood (see below); while those who “lack blood,” like albinos, are shunned and associated with sin (*gunah*).

The system offers scope for interpretations based on a wide variety of criteria. Certain characteristics may be ascribed to categories of individuals, who are then treated more or less uniformly; for example, menstruating women are hot, have an excess of blood, and must eat cold foods, while postpartum women are cold and must eat very hot, strengthening foods to restore

their blood. In other circumstances individual characteristics are subordinated to consideration of the nature of an affliction. Imbalances, diagnosed in cases of "internal ailments" (*khozhi*) of various kinds, are first treated by simple opposites of appropriate strength: food, herbs, or skins (to sweat out excess heat), or extra clothing (to bring heat; for example, for a cold in the head the head is covered). Measles is understood as a hot, red disease, and victims will be treated with cold foods. In other cases the relation between nutriment and survival is seen as so acute that a drastic remedy is tried; for *aman*, a category of illness that covers symptoms of diphtheria, tetanus, and plain starvation, a beast is sacrificed and its blood allowed to drain down the sufferer's throat.

The effect of the system on social interaction is relatively limited. Individuals suffering from some particular illness or disability may eat alone, while menstruating women do not cook and postpartum women are surrounded by yet more complicated taboos that restrict their contact with others. In essence the system is personal and domestic and an individual's special diet (*pariz*) is never allowed to intrude on public communal religious meals or wedding feasts.

The logic of the classificatory and operational system of this Humoral domain is essentially binary, though linked to an equilibrium model of the ideal state of health and how to achieve it. The explanatory system itself precludes diagnoses or treatments based on unambiguous causal chains: in practice Durrani understanding of personal misfortunes is contextual. Some may be explained in terms of correct humoral balance, others in terms of the association between blood and weakness and evil spirits, still others in terms of personal sin or contact, via food, with the sins of others. Ultimately, however, all misfortunes may be explained in terms of the unknowable will of God. Individuals make automatic medical evaluations of food in everyday life, but in cases of ill health or disability, operations within the Humoral domain are often limited to initial and inexpensive treatment, while to counter acute illness or misfortune more expensive alternative therapies are sought.

the Magical domain

The Magical domain—the term is unsatisfactory—refers to dealings with several kinds of occult power (such as evil eye) that people may possess, but particularly with jinns (*perian*), a range of supernatural creatures that may possess people.

At the level of the Islamic "Great Tradition," demonological studies have an independent status. The existence of jinns is accepted (one chapter of the Koran is so entitled), and the consequences of this are worked out to the end. For Muslims, jinns are airy and fiery bodies, created out of smokeless flame, unlike humans and angels, which were created out of clay and light. They are intelligent, imperceptible but capable of appearing under different forms and carrying out heavy labors. They are ranked and classified in a number of ways. Some are Muslims, some are not. They are associated with magic, and Muslim theology has always admitted this association, though not agreeing on its legality. But the legal status of jinns has been established, and the possible relations between them and humans, such as in marriage and property, have been examined, although some important commentators like Ibn Sina have denied their reality, while others like Ibn Khaldun held that knowledge of them was for God alone. Books describing the classes of jinns and the methods by which they can be controlled are available, as are books of popular stories concerning them (MacDonald 1961:90).

Durrani conceive of the actions of jinns as random and unknowable, and even the Muslim ones are dangerous. In practice the classification of supernatural spirits and powers and their activities is ad hoc, contextual, and ultimately dependent on the discriminations made in the other three domains. Indeed, the semantics of the Magical domain are based on extensions of important elements in the other three. Given the subordination of the Tribal and Humoral domains to the Koranic, it is not surprising that these extensions are most clearly seen in relation to the Koranic domain.

Three particular extensions may be mentioned. Blood, prohibited to human beings as food in the Koranic domain, is the main food of jinns, whose greed is considered a motive in many of their evil activities. The associations between blood and jinns are extensive: one of the most common is the link between jinns and menstruating or postpartum women; one of the more extreme is the notion that some jinns drink the blood and eat the internal organs of their victims, others are said to be necrophagous, while occasionally a possessed person may be said to dig up corpses in a graveyard to eat them.

A second extension concerns food-sharing. In sacrifice in the Koranic domain, the blood is eliminated altogether, God receives the intention and dedication as his right, and commensality is a confirmatory ritual, indicating communal solidarity and equality. In the Magical domain, sacrificial meals are part of piacular rituals in which the jinns receive the blood, God receives the dedication as a request for his favor, while the distribution of food is a singular act by an individual sponsor to other people.

A third extension concerns the power of words. Although the Koran—the collected revelations of God to Muhammad in definitive written form—is, in a Turnerian sense, the most important dominant symbol in Islam, in most contexts Durrani regard even Koranic words, like religious acts, as less important than the intention that lies behind their use. In the Magical domain, however, words and prayers of all kinds are treated as if they have intrinsic power. One of the most common curative charms involves a mullah writing Koranic verses on a paper that is then eaten or the ink washed off and drunk. It is said that a person who dared eat the Koran would become the most terrible of black magicians.

All these elements are particularly clear in the ritual of exorcism. Local mullahs privately treat misfortunes considered to have been caused by jinns, but their motives and skills in this area are often questioned, and consultations with them are usually confined to seeking diagnosis. Durrani consider that committed Sufi leaders (*aghas*) are much more successful against jinns and in magical matters generally. Sufi lodges are found throughout Afghanistan, but leaders travel around the settlements of their followers every year, holding *zikr* rituals in which ecstatic states may be achieved. Although leading men of a community, indeed most household heads, do not participate in these Sufi performances, they tolerate them, saying that they have “good taste” for the observer. Participants are mainly younger, poorer men; women may become associated with a Sufi order after a successful jinn exorcism. In an exorcism, the Sufi leader recites Arabic prayers over the victim to “raise” the jinn and make it declare who it is, what harm the victim has done to it, and what kind of sacrifice it wants, for example, a cow, goat, or black ram. The jinn is then forced to recite the Muslim profession of faith and to swear an oath to leave the victim alone. The exorcist does not ask for payment, but will take the animal promised to the jinn; he is then responsible for the sacrifice. It is the blood of this animal that is offered to placate the jinn, while the animal’s life, as in other sacrifices, is dedicated to God (who ultimately controls the jinn); the meat becomes *halal* and is eaten in a sacrificial meal by the exorcist and his followers, who acquire merit and offer prayers which are felt to be an effective form of intercession on behalf of the sponsor.¹⁶ If the animal gift is not paid and repeated annually, the Sufi leader may withdraw his power (*zur*) and the possession may recur.

In spite of the Great Tradition status of demonology and magic, the character of the Magical domain is derivative to the extent that the magical frame of reference is employed by Durrani only when the explanatory and operational limits of the other three domains have been reached. In other words, it is analogous to a system of witchcraft beliefs and practices, and it is used to explain misfortunes that cannot be adequately understood or countered in terms of the moral, medical, or politico-economic frames of reference which all focus in positive ways on the maximization of “goodness” and “power.” Thus, a failure to fulfill Koranic obligations, cases of chronic ill-health, and politico-economic disasters are all likely to be blamed on jinns. In the Magical domain, the rituals are designed either to confront the intrusion of jinns into

everyday life, or to cope with misfortune in such a way that badness or weakness may be eliminated and a "good" moral, medical, or politico-economic condition can be recovered.¹⁷

summary

We have outlined the way in which Durrani use and evaluate food in four domains of discourse. These domains offer alternative frames of reference for relations between individuals and their total environment, and alternative operational programs for dealing instrumentally with situations and for remedying misfortunes. The terminology and semantic structure of each domain are maintained by the sayings and actions of different specialists representing distinct elements of the Afghan-Islamic Great Tradition. Each domain is located contextually, but they are not mutually exclusive. There is a large degree of consistency between them, evident in certain classificatory categories, operational concepts, symbols and rituals that allow actors to shift between the domains while acknowledging the ultimate priority of the Koranic domain over the others.

The Koranic domain, as maintained by the mullahs, is comprehensive, even universalistic, and sets a broad framework of rules for social behavior. The essentially binary logic of the discourse is used to project an ideal standard of the "good Muslim" and the purity of intention for which everyone should strive. The major context in which food and eating are evaluated in this domain is that of communal religious festivals, with their stress on the equality of men. The classifications of food are unambiguous but very broad. Further discriminations within the Koranic categories are made in terms of the other domains, especially the Tribal and the Humoral. These are not opposed to but complement the Koranic domain: in some contexts they operate as separate discourses and offer alternative frames of reference for social action and belief, but their independent status is contextual; ultimately, they are subordinate to the moral strictures of the Koranic system as the Durrani understand it.

The Tribal domain is eminently social, operating in economic and political competition between independent households in the tribal community. The regulative values are those of honor and shame, holding up a model of success represented by the khans. Food is evaluated qualitatively by aesthetic and politico-economic standards of taste and enjoyment, particularly in the main public context of hospitality, especially in life-cycle feasts.

The Humoral domain, by contrast, is relevant only at the level of the individual and his or her diet and in the private context of the household. A simplified version of the "Greek" medical and physiological system propagated by local herbalists and other specialists, it provides Durrani with a mode of evaluating food nutritionally. It combines the binary logic of the hot/cold classification of foods and human temperaments with an equilibrium model of the ideal state of health.

The Magical domain, finally, concerns dealings with the jinns, particularly in exorcism and expiation rituals conducted by Sufi leaders, in which evaluations of food, eating, and commensality are to a great extent derivative of the other domains. It operates as a sort of dark inverse of the Koranic domain, but in a residual fashion, when other schemes fail.

Important links between the domains ensure their mutual consistency and the possibility of shifts between them. For example, the coolness of temperament ideally characteristic of a mature man implies both religious piety in the Koranic domain and political honor in the Tribal domain, even though piety and politics are normally seen as opposites. Women by contrast are characterized by both sexes as lacking reason, religion, and, often, honor. By this logic, foods medically appropriate for mature men are "hot." "Hot" foods also have the best "taste" and are relatively expensive luxuries much valued in the Tribal domain: mutton, sweet and fatty things. By association, hot, tasty foods are also religiously favored (and of course this sequence of associations has its converse). The system clearly discriminates against women and children,

allowing older men to deprive them, on health and religious grounds, of foods that all ages and both sexes value highly for aesthetic reasons (cf. O'Laughlin 1974).

Further kinds of semantic and practical shifts between domains can be made by manipulating evaluations of "goodness" and "power" and their various synonyms. Thus, to recapitulate, to describe food simply as "good" (*sha*) allows it to be inferred that it is morally, aesthetically, and nutritionally/medically approved. The sense can be specified by way of explaining or elaborating the basis of "goodness," to imply religious/moral approval, or an aesthetically enjoyable experience, or appropriateness for the health of any individual according to his or her particular temperament. But implicitly or explicitly linked with "goodness" is the much more operational term *zur* (power), which also crosses the three main domains and penetrates the fourth. Here the nature of the power and the effects it can bring may be specified again by way of elaboration or explanation: by the terms *barakat* or *kheyr* (religious power, grace, blessing), or *suwab* (merit); or *khoshali* or *khwashi* (pleasure, enjoyment) or *mor* or *sir* (full, satisfied, prosperous); or *mafad* or *fayda* (physical or medical profit or benefit). *Zur* has other meanings, however, including the ability to make creatures do things they don't want to do; and a "powerful" Sufi leader is one who can control jinns.

Goodness and power are evaluative concepts that allow shifts between the domains. Similar, at a different level, is the use of the central symbol, blood. In the Koranic domain, particularly in the regulation of food, blood is one of the most polluted substances, while by opposition in the Magical domain the jinns are strongly associated with a desire for blood. In the Tribal domain, too, blood is a central symbol involved in much of the Pashtun tribal code, which is concerned with the regulation of the conduct and conclusion of blood feuds and payments for spilt blood. In the Humoral domain, blood is the humor most basic to life and most indicative to individuals of their state of health, and the focus of most attention in remedying illness through diet or other means.

The spilling of blood, moreover, is central to the ritual of sacrifice, where the elements of ambiguity and the dominance of the Koranic domain are perhaps most clearly revealed. The ritual is explicitly religious, and religious meanings dominate others. For Muslims, as for others, not only all food but all life come from God, but their understanding of this gift differs from, for example, Christian notions in which Christ offers himself in sacrifice and communion. Leach recently noted that the treatments of sacrifice in the Hebraic and Christian traditions represent transformations of each other.¹⁹ As they are part of the same cultural milieu, it is not surprising that Muslim ideas constitute a further variation. For Hebrews the blood of a sacrificial animal is for God, and the flesh for the people; for Christians the flesh and blood of Christ consumed in the communion are both of God and for the people; for Muslims, God receives the intention of the sacrifice while the blood must be removed for the flesh to be edible by the people. Perhaps because Muslim ideas of God are unmediated by an anthropomorphic figure, the return for God's favor can only take the form of thanksgiving by utterly dependent creatures. God, on the other hand, is in no way dependent on human actions. Thus, in sacrifices Durrani may implicitly identify with the victim, whose life, like theirs, is dedicated to God, but it is the spirit of dedication that is important. It would be an alien blasphemy for Durrani to consider sharing the meat of a sacrifice (or any food) with God. Nor is there any sense in which God is present in the food, which is understood as a manifestation of God's blessing. Rather, in this frame of reference, a sense of *communitas* is achieved through commensality, signifying the equal dependence on God of all participants in the meal.

Within this all-pervasive and unambiguous framework, sacrifices can be used and interpreted in a variety of ways in different contexts. In the Koranic domain the main context is the canonical sacrifice at the Great Festival, as well as other confirmatory rituals such as the harvest thanksgiving. An integral part of sacrifice as a religious ritual is a charity gift of a portion of the meat (or whatever) to others, especially the poor and the mullahs. Sacrifices may be offered on

the settlement of disputes, and preceding the distribution of patrimony; they are also given after recovery from illness; and they are essential parts of the ritual of exorcism.

The major ambiguity in the meaning of sacrifices is over whether the intention is pious or political. Here the raw/cooked dimension mentioned earlier serves as a marker. Distributions of raw meat are a sign of particularly pious and charitable intent on the part of the sacrificer: there is no element of "feeding." Sacrificial distributions associated with private vows and recovery from illness may consist of raw meat. If a large animal is sacrificed, some pieces, notably the head and heart, may be given raw to the mosque, to be cooked and eaten by the mullah and his students, or to any passing beggar. The rest of the raw meat is cut into small anonymous pieces and distributed by weight, with scrupulous fairness, to each household of the community, in proportion to the number of persons in the household. The meat is then cooked and eaten privately in the home. But politically ambitious householders scorn raw-meat distributions. For them the preferred form is one that resembles a wedding feast, which does feature "feeding" of cooked food in one's home to guests who thereby acknowledge the sacrificer-host's political claims. In other words, sacrificial distributions can be used politically, although their explicit religious meaning is disinterested charity. The difference in emphasis can be clear in those sacrificial feasts that commemorate the death of a near relative. If the latter died a "martyr," in an accident or a feud, the meat of the sacrificial animal is distributed raw to the households of kin and neighbors; but if a feast is given to mark the "natural" death of a successful man, his heirs are likely to invite people for a cooked meal.

Sacrificial distributions are a pervasive and central ritual among the Durrani. As Peters has put it, "sacrifice is the core of Islam" (1984:214), but the polysemy of the ritual and its associated symbolism make inadequate any interpretation simply in "Great Tradition," Koranic terms. The same is true of other aspects of symbolism, ritual, and belief in Muslim societies. In this article we have focused on the semantics and politics of food in one Middle Eastern community, by analyzing domains of discourse and the links among them and between them and the different elements of the local Great Tradition. We have shown how the rules and evaluations attributable to Islam, however dominant, are only part of the local complex. We suggest this approach will bear further fruit when applied to a wide range of other cultural features in Muslim societies.

notes

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¹This is not the place for a semantic analysis of *zur* and related terms that might be translated "power." I note only that *zur* is the most general and abstract, implying something intangible and irresistible; it glosses all kinds of "power" and is used in all contexts discussed here. By comparison, *qudrat* (with its close cognates *quwat* and *tawan*) is more tangible and visible in its sources and effects, and is often better translated "strength" or "authority."

²Fieldwork was done jointly in 1971–72 as a Social Science Research Council Project, Richard Tapper being also supported by the School of Oriental and African Studies. For further information on the Durrani of northern Afghanistan, see N. Tapper (1981) and R. Tapper (1984). The present tense in the article refers to the fieldwork period.

³*Kheyrat* (lit. goodness, blessing) is the Persian, and *khodai* (lit. godly) the Pashto equivalent of the Arabic *sadaqa* or voluntary gift of alms. The terms have the same potential wide range of reference to charity of all kinds, though Durrani most often use them to refer to gifts of food.

⁴This identification is explicit in Abraham's offering of Isma'el, and is made clear in animal sacrifices elsewhere in the Muslim world, see, for example, Barclay (1964:155), Jamous (1981:212), and Tapper fieldnotes on the Shahsevan of Iran and townspeople of southwestern Anatolia. In other contexts, however (for example, among Mevlevi dervishes of Konya), the ritual may separate sacrificers from their victims and emphasize the superiority of the former (Andrew Moyer, personal communication). In this case, and perhaps in that of the Durrani and others where an identification is not made explicit, the achievement of

oneness with God (and by implication distance from animals) in the Sufi *zīkr* makes the idea of identifying with a sacrificial victim both unnecessary as an approach to God and somewhat ludicrous. The essence of the sacrifice remains the intention and the commensality.

⁵See N. Tapper (1981: 390–391), also Anderson's very useful chapter on "Pakhtunwali and Islam," in which, among other things, he examines the stigma that attaches to political activity on the part of the clergy (1979).

⁶There is, of course, a whole set of further categories of taste (sweet, sour, and so on), as well as of modes of preparing and processing food, most of which have metaphorical uses in describing the character and behavior of people; unfortunately they must be passed over here.

⁷As Ghilzai Pakhtuns say, "Guests are said to have a [continuing obligation] to their hosts such that to betray a man when one has 'eaten his salt' is a sin (*gonah*) akin to the Fall, the crudest asociality—'returning shit for food,' as one tribesman put it" (Anderson 1979:103).

⁸Sometimes these sweets are presented in a large cloth container (*bani*) sewn to resemble the carcass of a sheep. *Bani* are also used on other occasions to present a luxury food like rice as a gift to a superior. Both sweets and rice signify success and happiness.

⁹Uzbek and Turkmen male cooks are often hired; their cooking is admired and enjoyed by Durrani, but never imitated by women at home.

¹⁰See Azoy's account (1982) of this key Afghan institution, in which the political and economic standing of a would-be leader may be legitimated or destroyed.

¹¹A much elaborated form of such a peacemaking strategy occurred among Pashai people of northeastern Afghanistan, when a leader and his followers undertook a ceremonial visit (*marat*: the word derives from a verb meaning to slaughter animals) to another community. Ovesen writes, "We may regard the *marat* as a kind of inverse feast of merit; the merit was accorded to the man who could make others give a feast for him and his following, and it was partly determined by how well he could live up to the expectations that the feast givers had of him" (1981:232). Compare also Yapp (1983:167). See Jamous (1981:213) for a description of a kind of animal sacrifice in Morocco with a similar function.

¹²The principle of sanctuary is extended to a game bird or animal which strays onto a campsite and is given sanctuary there, not being killed for food by its "host." It may be noted that among Ghilzai, all the various compromise meals, including those for which foodstuffs are provided by both sides, are known as *nanawatey* (Anderson 1979:101), while the Durrani use this term only to refer to those occasions when the eater is significantly weaker than the feeder.

¹³The following paragraphs, too, rely heavily on Good's excellent chapter on "The Cultural Structure of Health Care in Maragheh" (1977:172f.). See also Myntti (1983) and, on northern Afghanistan, Centlivres (1971) and Poulton (1979). Bürgel discusses the relations between Galenic humoral and Islamic systems with respect to medieval Arabic medicine, but his account is quite asocial. He sees the two systems as antithetical: the Galenic is described as rational, empirical, and ethical {sic}, while the "medicine of the Prophet" is characterized as "quackery piously disguised" (1976:50), even though some of the historical and other material he himself presents suggests that in any practical context his "two systems" constitute alternative or complementary elements in explanations of misfortune.

¹⁴Unfortunately, we were not able to examine or compare these texts in any detail; they are written in Persian, and are undoubtedly part of what Good calls "the literature of popular culture medicine"; they "bridge the gap between the high texts and popular practice and support the oral tradition in the maintenance of Galenic-Islamic medicine" (1977:211).

¹⁵For a detailed discussion of Durrani conceptions of the body and the self, see Tapper and Tapper (n.d.).

¹⁶Here henna is not used by the sacrificers, and the extent to which they identify with the victim is ambiguous; see note 2 above, and compare, for example, *zaar* practices in the Sudan in which animals killed are explicitly not offered to God, though their flesh is eaten and the blood has an important ritual role (Barclay 1964:199f.).

¹⁷For further information on jinns and other sources of misfortune, see Tapper and Tapper (n.d.).

¹⁸In another contribution to the S.O.A.S. "Commensality and Communion" seminar series.

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