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Content of *paštunwali* – the Pashtun Code of Conduct

Abstract

The military conflict in Afghanistan, in spite of declarations, is far from coming to an end. It influences global issues including the movement of refugees. To understand the nature of this war and look for a real improvement in the situation, we have to know as much as possible regarding Afghanistan's ethnic landscape and its specificity. Expertise on local cultural factors, from the perspective of the Pashtuns as well, is basic and cannot be overestimated or exaggerated. The Pashtun code of conduct, *paštunwali*, is perceived by scholars very often as being passed, exclusively in a verbal manner, from generation to generation and its content as including only a few basic rules. In this paper, for the first time, we present in English more than forty pillars of *paštunwali*, as presented by a Pashtun, Kiyam ad-Din Khadim, from the perspective of the Pashtuns, published in Kabul in 1953 in his Pashto text.

Keywords: *paštunwali*, code of conduct, code of honour, Pashtuns, Afghanistan, Pakistan

The long war in Afghanistan continues. Knowledge regarding the people of this country is still not satisfactory. Not very long ago, in 2013, during an unofficial discussion with an official, it was said, surprisingly, that the international community had only recently started to notice that there are Afghans in Afghanistan. This shows how the crucial human factor is underestimated. It certainly contributes to the unresolved problems, including military issues. The Pashtuns occupy a special position among the various ethnic groups, inhabiting mainly contemporary Afghanistan and Pakistan. Their role in the process of the formation of the independent Afghan state, beginning from the 18th century, is well known. Their importance and even predominance in the history and political life of the country is obvious in recent decades. For this reason alone, their traditional code of conduct, which

is still adhered to by the Pashtuns today, the *paštunwali*¹, deserves particular attention. Moreover, despite the changes and certain modernization of the country, the ancient tribal code is binding, supported by the Afghan ruling elite and taught not only at home but also in schools. Furthermore, the code describes the most proper action in fighting and times of war. Several pillars are devoted to these matters.² Therefore, it was decided to present the most complete Pashtun set of principles of behaviour known to this author, in English for the first time, to make it more accessible.

Until the seventies of the 19th century, there were only mentions of a very few rules of the *paštunwali* and these rules were believed by many scholars to be unwritten. Obviously, all the studies on Afghan customs and collections of Pashtun legends and poetry – and a significant number of them have been published in Afghanistan or Pakistan – indirectly refer to the *paštunwali*. However, the first and, up to now, the only attempt known to this author to describe the code relatively fully is *Paštunwali*, a book by Kiyam ad-Din Khadim, published in Kabul in 1331 AH (1953 CE) by Pashto Academy, publication number 101. Fortunately, this author found the text in Kabul in 1975 and, realizing the importance of the book, decided to present its contents forthwith in the Polish language in an academic paper³ which makes it now possible to make it accessible in this English language publication, after some corrections, extensions and changes. The Polish text was used, understandably, only by researchers familiar with the Polish language⁴, hence the real need for the following text. Moreover, indigenous insights are absolutely necessary and most important.

The code is explained by Khadim in several dozen more or less short chapters – articles, designated by this author as pillars, however, the criteria of division are highly unsystematic. The patterns of conduct are not presented as orders or recommendations but mostly as statements informing what personality traits and attitudes create a true Pashtun. The book is lavishly illustrated with historical examples and Afghan poetry. The same issues are referred to recurrently. Some parts of the book digress from the subject. It is possible that the description of the *paštunwali* unintentionally contains some elements characteristic mainly of the tribe from which Khadim himself came, nevertheless, the majority refers to the whole Pashtun nation. The review below does not pass over any

¹ According to the *Afgansko-russkiy slovar* by M. G. Aslanov (Moscow 1966), the word *paštunwali* (stressed on the final syllable) is a singular feminine abstract noun, derived from the same base as *paštun* (*paštun*, *puštun*) – Pashtun or *pašto* (*pašto*, *pušto*) – 1. a) the Pashto language, the Afghani language, b) *paštunwali*, c) honour, dignity, modesty, honesty; 2. Afghan (adj.). It can be found in dialectical variants *paštənwalay*, *puštunwalay*, *paštənwala*, *paštunwaləy*. The word *paštunwali* can be literally translated as “Pashtunship”. The dictionary mentioned above gives such meanings: customs and habits of the Afghans, the code of honour of the Afghans.

² See Jadwiga Pstrusińska, *On fighting according to Pashtun's code of honour*, T. Gacek et al. (eds), *Miscellanea Afghantica Cracoviensia*, Cracow 2010, pp. 117–122.

³ Jadwiga Pstrusińska, *Paštunwali – afgański kodeks postępowania*, „Etnografia Polska” 1977, vol. XXI, book 2.

⁴ First of all, we should mention here several publications by Jolanta Sierakowska-Dyndo, e.g., *Granice wyobraźni politycznej Afgańczyków. Normatywno-aksjologiczne aspekty tradycji afgańskiej*, Dialog, Warszawa 1998, 2007.

of the chapters by Khadim significant for the *paštunwali*. The unique brevity and the specific style of the individual paragraphs of the code have been maintained in order to render its original character in Pashto.

Sword (*tura*)⁵

The sword in its figurative sense in Pashto is a synonym of courage and valour and has had this meaning since the times when the Afghans did not use firearms, now easily available in Afghanistan.⁶ Khadim writes: “All Pashtuns attach a lot of weight to the *tura* and respect tradition, according to which the Afghan must be courageous, valorous and heroic; he never runs away from the battlefield, never shuns combat and unconditionally either wins on the battlefield or dies”.⁷ This rule is regarded to be so extremely important that if the Pashtun does not adhere to it, he ceases to be a Pashtun. Death during sleep is considered to be the worst way of relinquishing life. One should fall in battle.

Rules of battle (*da džang kawānin*)

The commander heads an attack but sometimes, during battle, the military elders withdraw in order to review the situation and give appropriate orders. Fleeing from the battlefield is punished by death, one should fight till the end by all available means. Thus, for example, if a soldier has lost his arms, then he should tear the enemy’s body with his teeth.⁸ The Pashtuns never leave the bodies of their fallen brothers-in-arms on the battlefield, so that they will not fall into enemy hands and become desecrated. Not only under the cover of the night but also during the most fierce fighting and most vicious attacks do they carry corpses and the wounded. In order to take even one fallen soldier out of the battleground, one should risk the lives of even hundreds of others. The Afghans may win a battle but if the bodies of their comrades should remain in enemy hands then they regard it as a great defeat. The disgrace of a man who has shunned combat or defected to the enemy falls also on his family and passes from generation to generation. A hero is glorified in songs. For an Afghan woman, it is less important whether her beloved man has fallen or not than whether his wounds are on his back or chest (i.e., whether he was wounded while fleeing from or facing up to the enemy).⁹

⁵ The translation of the chapters follows the *Afgansko-russkiy slovar* mentioned above. Wherever possible it is literal.

⁶ After the Saur Revolution (1978), opinions started to be voiced in Afghanistan that weapons should be registered.

⁷ Kiyam ad-Din Khadim. *Paštunwali*, Kabul 1331 AH, p. 14.

⁸ Khadim, op. cit., pp. 13–14, 21–24. See also Mohammed Ali, *The Afghans*, Kabul 1969, p. 30.

⁹ Khadim, op. cit., p. 27.

Attack (*dāra*)

Besides popular fighting methods with firearms and cold steel, the Pashtuns apply *dāra* and regard themselves masters of the technique, called *šabxun* (the night of blood) by the Persian-speaking inhabitants of Afghanistan. It is true that the Turkish are also famous for their masterfully conducted attacks but the Afghans from Roh¹⁰ are so famous and valiant in such kinds of fighting that “from time immemorial, they have always won and destroyed the enemy”.¹¹ If one has limited forces, one should never attack in the daytime but at night, when the enemy are “deaf and blind”. One should devote the day to strengthen one’s own fortifications and attack at night, and in overcoming the fortifications of the enemy, one should oppress the enemy in every possible way.¹²

Seizing property (*baramta*)

When a tribe has a right to make a claim against another tribe, which is not in a position to grant adequate compensation, then *baramta* occurs, that is the seizing of some property (mainly farm animals) and people. The return takes place only upon the fulfilment of obligations. The Pashtuns repeatedly apply *baramta* against state authorities, taking strangers (i.e., men and women of other tribes or nations) hostage and freeing them only upon the release of their tribesmen from government prisons.¹³

Request for forgiveness (*nānawāte*)

In order to stop a long-lasting war or enmity between two persons, when one side has been defeated or does not want to engage in further fights, the ceremony of *nānawāte* should be performed. There are several ways for its performance, with or without mediation. Mediators may be elder men or women, a mullah or any other Muslim priest, whom according to tradition no one dares to refuse approval. When there are no mediators, a person can face his opponent on his own, with a cord bound around his neck, its ends placed into one’s mouth as a sign of humility and a sense of guilt, however, this ignominious way of dealing with the matter is practised very rarely by the Pashtuns. Death is better than *nānawāte*.¹⁴ A request for forgiveness cannot be met with a refusal.¹⁵

¹⁰ A historic mountainous country encompassing part of Afghanistan and Baluchistan.

¹¹ Khadim, op. cit., p. 37.

¹² Ibid., pp. 36–38.

¹³ Ibid., p. 39.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 164.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 40–41, 164–165. According to Mohammad Ali, the term *nānawāte* means granting asylum. Ali, op. cit., p. 26.

Women in fighting (*šadzi pə džang kši*)

Afghan women also take part in fights and help their men. Their duties lie in supplying water, food and other necessary items to trenches and fortifications. Both in domestic fights and those against strangers, women fight alongside their men should the need arise. Women should not be attacked; if that happens then her family should take bloody revenge for the harm. An assault against a woman is considered a token of arrogance and, because the Pashtuns marry women from other tribes, it is possible to meet a woman from one's own tribe or cause the tribe of the attacked woman's origin to join the fight.¹⁶

Obedience to elders (*də məšrāno manəšt*)

Generally, the Pashtuns never listen to anybody and they are disobedient even towards one another. They possess a very strong sense of independence and personal freedom. This does not indicate, however, a lack of obedience to elders. An Afghan soldier must be unconditionally obedient, humble and devoted to his commanding officer. Decisions of tribal elders must always be abided by.¹⁷

To take revenge (*badal existəl*)

Seeking revenge is a very strong custom among the Pashtuns. When they recognize that they have been treated badly, they openly try to take vengeance immediately. They nurse a grudge for a very long time, seeking an opportunity to retaliate. "A Pashtun is as vindictive as a camel".¹⁸ The hardest form of revenge is homicide, the so-called *də sar por* (debt of a head). *Də sar por* may be of a family or tribal kind and accordingly, a man of the enemy family or the enemy tribe is killed. Unfulfilled revenge is hereditary, the obligation is handed down from generation to generation. Years or even centuries may pass and the Pashtuns will never forget an unfulfilled revenge.¹⁹

To repay received goods is equally important. Not rewarding someone for their help ranks among grave offences.²⁰

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 41–42.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 43–46. See also Muhammad Gulab Nangarhari, *Paštun*, in: *Paštane*, vol. I, ed. Mya Khan Apridi, Kabul 1349 AH (1971 CE); Ali, op.cit., p. 48.

¹⁸ Khadim, op. cit., p. 47.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 47–48.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 47–49.

The war for faith (*yaza*)

This differs from other forms of battle in the fact that it is considered holy and it is waged in the name of faith. The Pashtuns hold this kind of war in high esteem, everyone wants to participate in it and fights with great passion. The musicians who have taken part in a holy war and the instrument whose sounds have encouraged soldiers to fight are appreciated very much. It is very honourable to die for faith and according to Islam, *šahid*²¹ goes to paradise after death.²²

Council of elders (*džərga*)

According to Pashtun tradition, the *džərga* is of great significance. In the past, it took decisions in all important matters. Some researchers maintain that it survived from the customs of ancient Arians.²³ The Pashtuns summon it whenever they face a problem of greater importance. An Afghan *džərga* has its own norms, rules and a specific place. If someone takes part in the discussion in an inappropriate way, he is reprimanded by the saying: “you have spoken wrongly, you are guilty”. For a Pashtun this means death. This is the reason why no one takes the floor rashly and the *džərga* is respected. Everybody must comply with the decision taken by the council of elders. The Afghans believe that one of the main reasons for their independence was their eternal ability to solve all their problems autonomously.²⁴

Reconciliation (*roya*)

Two opponents must be reconciled if this is the decision taken by the *džərga* on this matter. It is the so-called *roya*.²⁵

Stone (*tiža*)

As a sign of abandoning further fights and making peace, a Pashtun performs the ceremony of placing a stone. Not respecting a decision of the council of elders, who have decided on the placing of a stone, is considered to be a grave offence. They speak about such a man: “he broke a stone”.²⁶

²¹ A Muslim who has died for his faith.

²² Khadim, op. cit., pp. 49–50.

²³ Ibid., p. 52.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 52–55, 177–179; Ali, op. cit., pp. 53–54.

²⁵ Khadim, op. cit., p. 55.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 56; Ali, op. cit., p. 23.

Promise and faithfulness (*‘ahd au wafā*)

In accordance with the *paštunwali*, every Pashtun is obliged to keep his pledges and fulfil his promises unconditionally. The necessity to honour promises is also discussed repeatedly in the Quran.²⁷

Honesty (*imāndāri*)

Paštunwali demands that one should behave honestly and reliably. One should not be dissuaded from it neither by fear of somebody, nor greed, nor revenge, nor meanness of the enemy. This dictate was adopted by the Pashtuns from the Quran and included into their code of conduct.²⁸

Firm resolution and firmness (*klaka irāda au ŋingtyā*)

Firm resolution and indomitability in the realisation of one’s plans are considered essential and indispensable. In all important matters, Afghans first listen to the decision made by the *džarğa* and then try to carry it out unconditionally. Indomitability and firmness are recommended also by the Quran.²⁹

Endurance and steadfastness (*sābat au istiķāmat*)

These are traits indispensable in battle. They are of great importance for the Pashtuns, who “undoubtedly are men of war”.³⁰ Even facing the more powerful, they are always tenacious.³¹

Chauvinism (*milli γurur*)

“...*milli γurur* is a very noble feeling and can be noticed only in progressive nations”.³² “[...] no Pashtun in the world will regard anyone better than himself or even equal”.³³ “[...] The Pashtuns are very proud of their nationality”³⁴ and chauvinism is not perceived

²⁷ Khadim, op. cit., pp. 57–58. Nangarhari, op. cit., p. h (pages with letter markings).

²⁸ Khadim, op. cit., p. 63. Nangarhari, op. cit., p. h.

²⁹ Khadim, op. cit., pp. 64–65.

³⁰ “... *hic šakk nāšta yaw harbi kaum di ...*”, Khadim, op. cit., p. 66; Nangarhari, op. cit., p. t.

³¹ Khadim, op. cit., p. 66.

³² Ibid., p. 67.

³³ Ibid., p. 68; Nangarhari, op. cit., p. t.

³⁴ Khadim, Ibid., pp. 67, 71, 74; Nangarhari, op. cit., p. z.

as a negative idea. The expression “I am a Pashtun” contains a great emotional charge. It is full of pride, arrogance and a sense of superiority. It guarantees possession of certain personality traits and conduct in accordance with the *paštunwali*. The worst insult to a Pashtun are the words: “you are not a Pashtun”.

A sense of self dignity (*də dzān ‘izzat*)

Out of the conviction of the superiority of their nation arises the sense of dignity and self-esteem. The Pashtuns believe that everyone should treat them with great respect and they avoid matters which they regard as unworthy of themselves.³⁵

Nobleness (*lwaṛ himati*)

Də dzān ‘izzat is inseparably associated with *lwaṛ himati*. No one possessing a sense of dignity will ever behave in a mean and base way since it would harm their pride and nobleness. A man lacking *lwaṛ himati* is told: “you are a dog”. Asking and begging are activities condemned by *paštunwali*. A Pashtun should not ask for alms and *lwaṛ himati* requires also that a great man should never be haughty.³⁶

Liberty and freedom (*āzādi au hurriyat*)

These are the issues Khadim takes considerable notice of and he distinguishes three levels of freedom: freedom of thought, freedom of speech and freedom of action, all three of them are especially dear to the heart of every Afghan.

If anyone doubts the words said by a Pashtun, he will forcibly and even angrily defend his statements. The ultimate argument in a discussion is the standard sentence: “after all, I am a Pashtun”³⁷, which means “my words are indisputable”. In accordance with the *paštunwali*, one should never use flattery but confidently stick to one’s opinion. Although the Pashtuns pay heed to what they say, they never search for any special expressions or titles in any language. They address their friends and acquaintances by their first names. In this respect, the Afghans are very unceremonious. Only when speaking to elders or distinguished men do they add the phrase *bābā* (father).³⁸

³⁵ Khadim, op. cit., pp. 75–76; Nangarhari, op. cit., p. h.

³⁶ Khadim, op. cit., pp. 76–77, 79; Nangarhari, op. cit., p. h.

³⁷ Khadim, op. cit., p. 83.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 80–83.

Equality (*musāwāt*)

Both in speech and in actions, the Pashtuns do not follow ceremony and complicated politeness. Not only do they never practice them but they also do not like or want them. This also concerns people of high rank. This trait was shared even by Pashtun emirs, who, for example, consumed their meals with the common people, sitting on a carpet and not demanding luxury.³⁹

Hospitality (*melmastyā*)

Hospitality is an ancient and deep-rooted Afghan custom. Entertaining guests is considered an indispensable part of a Pashtun's life. He strongly dislikes situations when he is not in a position to receive guests. In each and every village, next to the mosque, there is a place for visitors, more often than not for several dozen visitors. It is an obligation to provide them with bedding and food. Not only acquaintances but also every stranger is given a roof over his head.⁴⁰

On the dignity of the guest (*pə melma ʔayrat*)

Among the duties of hospitality, there is also granting care and shelter to a man on the run. An Afghan should rather lose his life and property than let something bad happen to a person who has taken shelter with him. The homestead becomes a safe retreat and if it should be disturbed and the guest is hurt in any way then the host shall take bloody revenge on the attacker. Even if the charges against the man who has taken shelter are justified, e.g., he has a sentence of the council of elders, he may come to no harm unless he treats the host badly and with hostility.⁴¹

Convoy (*badraga*)

In order to secure a safe journey for a guest to another destination and defend him on the way, a convoy is organized. A man having claims against the convoyed person must honour this kind of asylum as he really can do nothing about it.⁴²

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 88–90.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 90–96; Ghulam Muhammad *Də Paštano doduna*, Kabul 1353 AH (1934/35 CE); Ali, op. cit., p. 30.

⁴¹ Khadim, op. cit., pp. 96–99.

⁴² Ibid., p. 99.

Love and protection of the homeland (*də watan mina au difa*)

The Pashtuns love their home country very much and, while defending it, they are ready to sacrifice their life and possessions. In this regard, both men and women are equally dedicated.⁴³

National independence (*milli istiqlāl*)

The Pashtuns have a very strong sense of freedom and they never yield to anyone; they fight for their independence to the last.⁴⁴

Religiousness (*diyānat*)

“The Pashtuns are favourites with God’s greatness and omnipotence, and such people are truly religious”.⁴⁵ Religion exerts a profound influence upon the conduct and the way of living of a Pashtun. When it comes to faith, they are real fanatics. They should not, however, interfere in the beliefs and religious practices of infidels or persecute atheists.⁴⁶

Chastity and purity (*pāki au ‘ifat*)

The Pashtuns are a chaste tribe and, in general, they care for a woman’s virtue. They avoid illegitimate affairs and all contacts with women who are strangers (i.e., women who are from other tribes or nations) both for religious reasons and out of respect for *paštunwali*. Every man and woman cares about their reputation. If they commit infidelity then, without looking for explanations, they are believed to deserve death, “and the heart of a Pashtun will find relief only if he himself punishes both of them with death [...]. The woman is killed on the slightest suspicion, and the man is also not to be left alive”.⁴⁷

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 100–101; Ali, op. cit., pp. 24, 26.

⁴⁴ Khadim, op. cit., pp. 102–103; Ali, op. cit., p. 20.

⁴⁵ Khadim, op. cit., pp. 106–107.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 111; Nangarhari, op. cit., p. h; Ali, op. cit., p. 30.

⁴⁷ Khadim, op. cit., pp. 111–113.

Unanimity (*ittifāq*)

“It is true that the Pashtuns are at variance with one another to some extent but it does not affect national interests adversely”.⁴⁸ They square up to an enemy unanimously and make a common front against strangers. Obedience to the elders may also be regarded as a manifestation of unanimity.⁴⁹

Simplicity (*sādegi*)

Adherence to simplicity is an inviolable Afghan rule. The Pashtuns disregard formality and ceremony in any sphere. They do not say anything just to please somebody. Irrespective of circumstances, they behave in a simple way and without unnecessary etiquette. Since they do not like trouble, they do not entertain guests in an elaborate way, but in such a way that will always let them entertain guests without ruining themselves. They do not care for refined food, they wear simple traditional clothes and in this respect there is no difference between city and country dwellers or between the rich and less well-off.⁵⁰

Protection of the nation and tradition (*dā nasl au rewayāto sātāna*)

The rules in force among the Pashtuns make them feel strong ties and kinship towards one another. To marry a sister, daughter or mother off to a foreigner is considered improper. The Pashtuns’ attitude towards foreign nations is described as hatred and fanaticism.⁵¹ Tradition is respected in a special way. Elder men and women hand it down by telling heroic stories. Every Pashtun knows in detail the genealogy of several distinguished fellow countrymen.⁵²

The proper age to get married (*pā nikāh kṣi dā ‘umr dā andāze ištīrāt*)

A boy usually gets married between 18 and 20 years of age, a girl between 16 and 18. Until then they have to remain virgins.⁵³

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 117–118.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 117–119; Nangarhari, op. cit., p. h.

⁵⁰ Khadim, op. cit., pp. 120–122.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 124.

⁵² Ibid., pp. 123–125; Nangarhari, op. cit. p. z.

⁵³ Khadim, op. cit., p. 126.

Reputation (*nāmus*)

Paštunwali pays close attention to *nāmus*, especially with reference to women. If somebody does not care for someone else's reputation (which is equally important) then they are not able to care for their own. A Pashtun without *nāmus* is not a Pashtun.⁵⁴

Family duties of a woman (*də šadzo wazāyef pə 'āila kše*)

A woman should fulfil family duties equally with a man and she should not be a burden to him. Among the main duties of a woman are keeping the house clean, preparing meals, sewing and washing clothes, weaving, rearing children, tending cattle, milking cows and processing milk, tending gardens and crops, fetching water. Mountaineers also perform other important duties. It is their obligation to harvest, thresh, gather grain and grind with a quern. Some women are also engaged in handicraft.⁵⁵

Rules of upbringing (*tarbiyawi usul*)

The Pashtuns have their own education methods. Children should not be frightened or have their every whim indulged. They should not be brought up to be cowardly, weak and delicate beings. Even in their early childhood, they should take part in visits and social gatherings in order to get rid of timidity, learn to mix with people, wait on guests and acquire Pashtunship. The aim of placing a child in difficult situations is to teach them responsibility, courage and indomitability. The child should only listen to stories about valiant and fearless heroes. It has to learn to use firearms and other skills useful in battle.⁵⁶

Truth (*rištyā*)

In accordance with the *paštunwali*, it is important to tell the truth and avoid flattery and lies, which result from weakness.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 127–128.

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 129–130.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 131–133.

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 144–145.

Assistance (*mrasta*)

Mutual assistance is an important rule of Pashtun social life. A fellow countryman should be shown interest in and offered help. An asocial way of life is frowned upon. “The Pashtuns always help one another in battle and on the battlefield they give their lives for their nation, tribe or friendship. Against strangers they are like one body [...], like chain links joined one with another”.⁵⁸

Aid (*bəspəna*)

The Pashtuns never abandon their fellow countrymen in need and poverty. It is a general practice that, in such a case, close and distant relatives get together and make a joint collection and everything raised in kind and cash is handed over as aid. Providing material aid and moral support is an obligation.⁵⁹

Alarm (*čiya*)

When an Afghan village is attacked by an enemy, an alarm is raised for everyone from the neighbourhood to come and jointly destroy the aggressor.⁶⁰

Competition (*gundi*)

Competition and fighting of any kind between both individuals and groups are very popular among the Pashtuns. They are believed to be useful exercises to gain suitable fitness to face the enemy.⁶¹

Hostage (*yaryamal*)

When the Pashtuns want to end the fighting, they always take to the enemy camp a given number of their own people as hostages. The hostages are treated as guests and stay there until the desire for fighting dies down among their opponents and afterwards they return to their own tribe.⁶²

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 145–147.

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 147–148.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 148.

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 149–150.

⁶² Ibid., pp. 150–151.

Husband and wife (*šadza au meṛə*)

Afghan women love their husbands truly and faithfully. They consider caring for their husbands' dignity and honour to be their fundamental duty. Even if the husband is poor and crippled, the devotion of an Afghan woman is no less. It happens more often than not that they provide for their sick and unfit for work husbands by spinning and weaving.⁶³

Widowhood (*kwəndtun*)

A widow stays with her husband's family, who provide for her. If she has a son, she does not marry anymore but devotes her life to her offspring. In exceptional cases, she may be married off even with a male descendant. If she is childless then nothing stands in the way of her marrying a close relative of her deceased husband. She has no right to get married to a stranger. However, if this, exceptionally, is the case, then her spouse has to give the family of the deceased a sum of money determined by Pashtuns' national law⁶⁴, as Khadim writes.

Polygyny and dissatisfaction with a daughter (*dere šadzi kawəl au pə lur naxušhaldəl*)

It can happen that the Pashtuns have two, three or even four wives. Polygamy is aimed at procuring more progeny, which is both recommended by the religion and gives a better chance to beget more male descendants and as such guarantees success in fighting. This is the reason why the birth of a son is received with more pleasure than that of a daughter.⁶⁵

The Pashtuns' legal and penal norms (*də paštano hukuki au džāza'i lyāre*)

The Pashtuns have their own legal norms, including a criminal justice system which is respected and functions independently of the judiciary of the states of which they are citizens and this exerts considerably greater impact on their lives. The rules concern mainly punishment for murder, mutilation, abduction of a woman, prohibited relations with the opposite sex and burning somebody's house.⁶⁶ Within the criminal law there are, however, significant local differences. For example, in the Ahmadzai tribe, many

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 151–152.

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 152–153.

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 153–154; Muhammad, op. cit., p. 25.

⁶⁶ Khadim, op. cit., pp. 157–199.

offences can be atoned for with a prescribed monetary equivalent while in the region of Kandahar the compensation can only be bloody revenge.

Every Pashtun is obliged to obey the *paštunwali*. Otherwise, he brings disgrace on himself and his family and can be banished or cursed.⁶⁷ Excerpts of the *paštunwali* are printed in school textbooks⁶⁸ and almost all of Pashtun literary output is pervaded with it. A collection of Afghan legends is titled *The national mirror (milli hindara)*⁶⁹, which is understood as a mirror of Afghan customs, a mirror of the Afghan code of conduct.⁷⁰ Popular Folk poetic forms, e.g., the most popular one *landey*⁷¹ is also considered to be an expression of the *paštunwali*. Classical poetry is full of recommendations and patterns of conduct, too. Many forms of the *paštunwali* are influenced significantly by Islam, to which the Afghans converted starting in the 8th century CE, but undoubtedly a more ancient core has been retained, which the Afghans themselves regard as a legacy of the ancient Aryas.⁷²

Khadim explains what is this code for the Pashtuns and writes “[...] the sweet word *paštunwali* contains everything that is the tribal spirit, historic pride and greatness, root and foundation of national tradition”.⁷³ More on Pashtun associations regarding this concept can be found in the text by Gul Khan Momand included in ‘Selections for studying the official languages of Afghanistan and their literature’ printed at the Jagiellonian University in 1985⁷⁴ and a philosophical interpretation of *paštunwali* was also created by another Polish author in 1993.⁷⁵

⁶⁷ Ali, op. cit., p. 26.

⁶⁸ For example, in Pashto readings for the fourth form *mrasta* is included, for the fifth form – *nənwāte*, *bəspəna*, for the sixth form – *džərga*.

⁶⁹ *Milli Hindara*, collected by Muhammad Gul Nuri, Peshawar, no date.

⁷⁰ A. Gerasimova, G. Gira, *Literatura Afganistana (kratki ocherk)*, Vostochnata Literatura, Moskva 1963.

⁷¹ *Lundaye (Anonymous Pushto Couplets)*, selected and translated to Persian by A. R. Benawa, Kabul 1337 AH (1918/1919 CE).

⁷² Sapi, Muhammad Hasan, an introduction to a collective work *Paštani Doduna*, Kabul 1336 AH (1917/18 CE); Khadim, op. cit., p. 52.

⁷³ Khadim, op. cit., p. 10.

⁷⁴ J. Pstrusińska, *Pašto au Dari. Selections for studying the official languages of Afghanistan and their literature*, Kraków 1985. A list of mentioned associations was published in the Polish language by A. Myśliwska in her paper *Czym jest paštunwali dla Pasztunów*, T. Gacek et al., op. cit., pp. 97–110.

⁷⁵ Z. Pucko, *A Philosophical Interpretation of the Afghan (Pashtun) Code of Honour*, “Folia Orientalia”, 1992–1993, vol. 29, pp. 213–217.