General World Cultures

Chapter 30- Pakistan and Afghanistan

**Taliban**- the group of Sunnite Muslims who instituted Islamic fundamentalist rule in Afghanistan

**dowry**- money or goods that a bride brings to a marriage

**buffer state**- a small country that separates two large countries and prevents a conflict between them

**mujahideen**- warriors who fight for Islam

**A Dry, Rocky Land**

\* In the northwestern corner of the subcontinent of India are the countries of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Much of this land is mountainous and dry. The Hindu kush run through northern Pakistan and into Afghanistan. Lack of rainfall makes farming difficult in this region. Only about 13% of Afghanistan and 26% of Pakistan can be farmed. Why might this pose major issues for the citizens? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Even still , more than half of the population makes a living in agriculture. Families in the dry mountains and deserts depend on sheep and goat herding. Believe it or not, goat is the most consumed meat in the world! See the following Wiki article: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goat_meat>

\* Pakistan has five provinces: Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan, the North-West Frontier Province, and the Northern Areas. India claims part of the Northern Areas, too. Over the years, this claim has led to much fighting between India and Pakistan. In 1949, the United Nations started a **cease-fire** between the two countries. A cease- fire is a state of peace so that they can discuss peace terms. It is an agreement to stop fighting.

\* Most Pakistanis live in Punjab, where the nation’s capital, Islamabad, and the nation’s most productive farms are located. Much of the land is low and flat. Four rivers flow south through Punjab and join with the Indus River. Water from these rivers make Punjab the world’s single largest irrigated farm area.

*Complete the Afghanistan and Pakistan Map Study on page 449*

**Everyday Life**

\* One of the things that most people in Pakistan and Afghanistan have in common is their religion. They are Muslims who practice Islam faithfully. This gives everyday life a certain unity throughout the region. For example, the day is organized around the five times of prayer. Almost everybody **fasts**, or does not eat (or in some cases drink) during the month of Ramadan. Almost everybody also celebrates Eid, the three-day holiday that follows Ramadan.

\* Both Afghanistan and Pakistan are poor countries. Most people live in small villages. Their houses are usually made from homemade mud-and-straw bricks. Few homes have running water. Most people bathe using buckets of water drawn from a well. Pakistan, however, is far more developed than Afghanistan. More than half of the villages have electricity. Some village families even own televisions. In the cities of Pakistan, modern appliances are not all uncommon.

\* Men and CHILDREN in the villages typically spend their days working in the fields. They use water buffalo, oxen, donkeys, and other animals for heavy work such as plowing and pumping water from wells. Women do the household chores, such as cooking, cleaning, and hauling water. Cooking is done outdoors. Women also milk whatever dairy animals the family has, including water buffalo. They also look after the children. In Pakistan, a woman may give birth to seven or eight children. Many children die as infants, however, because clean water and good medical care is scarce.

\* In Pakistan cities, many people, including women, work in offices and factories. However, cottage industries are more common. People make baskets, pottery, carpets, furniture, metal wares, and leather goods. Craftswomen often work at home and make lower wages than men.

\* Pakistan also has a thriving repair business. Because appliances are technical goods are hard to get, people tend to keep everything that can be fixed.

\* Like the people of India, Pakistanis eat lentils, rice, and bread nearly every day. Unlike the people of India, Pakistanis eat a lot of meat- especially lamb. However, they do not eat pork because Islam forbids it. Meat is often grilled over charcoal or baked in a clay oven. Traditionally, people eat with their hands rather than with knives, forks, and spoons.

\* Afghan cooking shows the influence of the cultures of India and Central Asia. From India come baked rice dishes and curry-like sauces. From Central Asia come steamed ravioli and dried yogurt products. The daily diet for many Afghans consists of bread, onions, and tea.

\* Traditionally, both men and women in this region wear a two-piece outfit: baggy cotton pants and a long loose shirt. Pakistanis call this outfit a shalwar qameez. It covers the body as required by Islam. Because the same outfit is worn by rich and poor alike, it stands for class equality, which is an important value of Islam. Women usually wear long scarves or shawls over their heads and shoulders. Some wear veils when they go out in public. Most Afghan men wear turbans.

**The Islam and Family**

\* Arabs brought Islam to the subcontinent of India in the 600s. The religion quickly spread from Central Asia to the Indus River. Today, most people in Pakistan are Sunnite Muslims. Both countries have strong Shiite minorities.

\* It is forbidden to charge interest on a private loan. Women and men live separate lives. In most households, women have an area set aside where men from other families cannot go.

\* All children get a religious education. In the early years, women take care of this education. Mothers, aunts, and grandmothers teach children what it means to be a Muslim and how to say their five daily prayers. Later, boys may study further in a mosque.

\* Children may also go to regular schools set up by the government. In Pakistan, a low percentage of girls go to school. Girls who do get an education go to separate schools from boys. In Afghanistan, when the group known as the **Taliban** took control in 1996, it became illegal for girls and women to get an education. This was because the Taliban instituted its version of strict Islamic rule. As a result, literacy among women is low. In many parts of Afghanistan, the percentage of women who can read and write is close to zero.

\* Girls often are married by the time they are 15 or 16 years old. Nearly all marriages are arranged by the families. Women put much time and energy into arranging these marriages. Only they can visit other households and identify possible brides.

\* Dating is rare, but two people who are about to marry often know each other. Many people marry within their own clan. In fact, marriages between first cousins are common.

\* Weddings are important events. In some parts of this region, a man pays a bride price to the woman’s family. Almost always, the bride’s family gives her a **dowry** to bring to the marriage. Usually, this includes household items such as bedding, dishes, and a radio.

\* Nearly every family keeps a copy of the Koran at home. This book is carefully wrapped in cloth and placed on a high shelf so that nothing can be set on top of it. The Koran is not just read but is treated as a sacred object. For example, before a trip, a relative may hold the Koran above the front doorway while the family passes under it three times. Sometimes, the Koran is used as a blessing.

**The Art of Storytelling**

What is your favorite story? Tell me about it in a paragraph on the lines below.

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\* Storytelling is important in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Because few people can read or write, storytelling helps to keep family history alive. Grandparents describe where the family came from and tell them about their ancestors.

\* Storytelling is part of public life. In northern Afghanistan, singing storytellers are sometimes hired to perform at weddings and parties. Audience participation (good or bad) is encouraged. In Pakistan, storytellers have a street named for them. The street is lined with teahouses for people to gather to share stories.

**Afghanistan**

\* Afghanistan has many different ethnic groups. It is very mountainous. It is between cultures that don’t get along. For many centuries, warring forces have met and clashed in Afghanistan.

\* Britain and Russia first clashed in the 1800s. They were fighting to control Afghanistan. It ended up as a **buffer state** between Russia and British India.

\* After WWII, and throughout the cold war, Afghanistan accepted money from the U.S. and the Soviet Union in later years to remain neutral.

\* Over time, a large Communist Party formed within the Afghan military. In 1978, this party seized power of the country, killing the Afghan president. It declared Afghanistan a Communist state. The new government tried to break up big landholdings, send girls to school, and introduce other social changes.

\* These changes threatened the conservative Muslim way of life. People in rural areas rebelled. The rebels said they were fighting for Islam. They became known as the **mujahideen**. Student leaders and soldiers from the Afghan Army joined them. By 1979, the Communist government in Kabul seemed in danger of failing. The Soviet Union poured troops into Afghanistan to prop up the Communist government. Eventually, the Soviets moved 115,000 soldiers into Afghanistan.

\* For years, a battle waged between the mujahideen and the Afghans. Two million Afghans dies and six million fled and became refugees. In 1992, the Soviets gave up and the mujahideen declared Afghanistan an Islamic state.

\* The mujahideen were divided into seven main parties based on particular ethnic groups. In 1994, the Taliban became the strongest of the ethnic groups. Over the next few years, it managed to gain control of most of the country.

**Sports and the Arts in Afghanistan**

\* There is a game played on horseback called buzkashi. The dead, decomposing body, or **carcass**, of a calf or goat is placed on the field. Whoever picks the carcass up and carres it across the field and back again wins! Then, the rider must drop it where it was when the game started. The whole time, other players are trying to take it away. Who wants to see some pictures?

\* Buzkashi is dangerous. Riders can be pulled off their horse and trampled. The game is a test of warrior virtues- skills, strength, and courage.

\* The many ethnic groups of Afghanistan have a rich tradition of artistic expression. Even everyday objects such as blankets and purses are beautifully made. Afghans use fine details to weave carpets. These are known as Persian rugs. They are prized around the world and also made by Iranians.

*Complete the Global Issues The Arms Race on page 457.*