

We saw the famous shrine of Ali in Mazar Sharif in Afghanistan

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Hazrat Ali shrine -- Mazar-e Sharif, Afghanistan

We saw the famous shrine of Ali in Mazar Sharif and then went over dirt roads by bus to a friend's village. It was very interesting. Life for a guest is very simple there -- drinking tea by the potful, eating wonderful (if oily) foods, and sleeping under the stars listening to wild dogs bark and the clang-ing of the bell around the neck of the last camel in the caravans which go plodding by.

I met a wizard who was a mullah also. He can tell you who your enemies are and how to kill them, and also he can tell you who to marry. He really is an Islamized witch doctor, a leftover from pre-Islamic paganism. We rode bicycles everywhere, always on the lookout for wild dogs; we fended off one attack with sticks that we carried, and I was glad there were only two dogs.

There were camels everywhere and that's heaven for me because I love to look at camels so much. These people are different from most Afghanistan races; they are Turkomans. They came from Central Asian plains in the early 1920s to escape persecution at the hands of the Bolsheviks. I myself was only 30 miles from the border of Tajikistan SSR -- the Soviet border. The Turkomans in Afghanistan are very anti-Communist. As a minority, they are deprived in Afghanistan and Iran. Their culture is related to, but not the same as, the Turks in Turkey. They usually look Mongoloid, but there is obviously a lot of Caucasian mixed in. Some have blue eyes, while others look Korean. Their women are famous for weaving wool carpets. It was the only time I had ever visited another province besides Kabul.