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CONCLUSION

When she left Mohla in 1955, Eglar was very aware that the village was on the cusp of the major changes. She had witnessed the very beginnings of some of these changes, as documented in her Ph. D thesis (later published as *A Punjabi Village in Pakistan*). Subsequently, at Harvard as a research fellow, she wrote its sequel, mostly using material she had already collected during her extended stay in Pakistan. However, realizing the need to return for a follow-up, she applied for grants to carry out further field work during the year 1961-62. She wanted, she wrote in one grant application, to make a study of "change in action" that had been initiated by the land reforms of 1958. "The importance of this project," she wrote farsightedly, "lies in the fact that this is a study of a Muslim community in the process of change. The knowledge gained with regard to the effects of and the attitude toward change in the village communities of Pakistan may contribute to a better understanding of and approach to the Muslim communities in other underdeveloped areas which are faced with problems similar to those of Pakistan"[1].

Obtaining a grant for this study, she left America in the fall of 1961, traveling to Pakistan via Japan and other Far Eastern countries. Her travel companion was Fazal Ahmed, the Chowdhry or headman of Mohla who had been her initial translator, field guide, and 'principle informant', to use the anthropological term. They arrived in Pakistan in January 1962. Although she was close to the Chowdhry family, Eglar found the experience of returning to the village disturbing and strenuous, as she wrote in a letter to Mead[2]. She found it particularly difficult to continue her field work after Fazal returned to America after a few weeks in order to re-join the Museum School at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts to continue his graduate studies. Having collected the material she felt she needed to complete her study, Eglar decided to return to America earlier than originally planned. The heat of the approaching summer was intensifying, and she wanted also to avoid the start of the monsoon season and the floods that often accompanied the rains.

[1] Zekiye Eglar, proposal for 'A study of Change in Village Communities in Pakistan' (Philip E. Mosely Collection, record series 15/35/51, Box 7; Folder: Zekiye Eglar, 1960)
[2] To Mead, April 2, 1962 (Margaret Mead Collection, Library of Congress [C55] 1962)

Mead, upset at this decision, shot off several letters and cables to Eglar urging her to write up her materials before leaving Pakistan. In addition, she and Rhoda Metraux were hoping that Eglar would to do some research for Metraux's new 'time and space' study. Metraux sent a detailed letter to Eglar about this. Despite the pressure, Eglar returned to America in August 1962. Back at Harvard, she completed The Economic Life of a Punjabi Village, intended as a sequel to *A Punjabi Village in Pakistan*. However, she never attempted to get it printed or reviewed -- it is published here for the first time.

The conclusion to her book *A Punjabi Village in Pakistan* provides a glimpse into the sequel. In it, Eglar had noted that the villagers and their system of *vartan bhanji* were already undergoing changes. With the 'Green Revolution' introduced by the government, changes were starting to take place in an area that had remained the same for centuries, she observed. Slowly, inexorably, the traditional methods of farming would start to alter. Many ceremonies had already been shortened or discontinued, noted Eglar. While people still took satisfaction in being part of self-contained *baradaries* (family communities) or villages, there was a visible desire for change, to improve their own lot and that of the village. Although things were still "stable" in terms of attitudes, interpersonal relations and major occupations, the villagers were making adaptations to the new methods and tools being introduced, and modifying their daily activities accordingly.

The process of change really accelerated after the 1980s. But even as some things changed, others remained the same. Mohla today retains its basic physical structure and layout, much as Eglar had documented. One major difference is the population increase. Secondly, there is much more visible prosperity. The exodus of labor to the Persian Gulf States since the 1970s after the oil boom resulted in expatriate workers sending money back home. The first thing their families did was to replace their 'katcha' (literally, 'unbaked') mud houses with 'pukka' (solid) red brick and cement structures. Thus, while they continue to live where they always have, their houses look very different, and most importantly, they are no longer washed away when the river floods its banks during annual monsoon season.

In addition, what has been transformed is the once delicately balanced and interdependent socio-economic system of *vartan bhanji* that Eglar documented. Fazal uses the analogy of an intricate beaded necklace, the thread of which has broken, scattering the beads of that system all around.

Mohla's main connection with the outside world was the old train station that Eglar used, twenty minutes walk from the village, where members of the Chowdhry family and their guests would leave their luggage at the station master's office to be picked up later by the barber or some other *kammi*. The station is no longer used. Neither are the horse-drawn coaches that well-to-do families once maintained for their visits outside the village. In the past, lesser mortals with city business used bicycles and *tongas*[3] but these are now fewer. Today, those heading to the city use public buses, or if they can afford it, motor cars and scooters. Footpaths and old dirt roads still connect the cluster of villages that Mohla is a part of, the way Eglar described. However, a highway connecting Lahore to Islamabad built in the 1990s now goes right by Mohla and links the village to its nearest city, Gujrat, which is also the capital of the district. With Gujrat just ten minutes away by car, the Mohla villagers have greater opportunities for work and travel. In addition, Lahore, the provincial capital, is now only about an hour's drive from Mohla, compared to the three hours it used to take by train or bus in the old days. These cities have themselves experienced rapid growth over the past couple of decades. In the process, they have swallowed up great stretches of former farm land for urban development – schools and colleges, hospitals and clinics, businesses and factories, apartment buildings and sprawling homes. As elsewhere in the world, wealthy city-dwellers are buying up acres of land in rural areas for 'farm houses' – weekend getaways or vacation retreats.

Mohla's main road, now a wide, paved artery, descends into the village from the highway to traverse the village center. The mosque, larger and grander than before, stands at the corner of the main road and a narrow red brick-lined street leading to the Chowdhry residence, passing between open drains and the brick walls of neighboring courtyards. The lane, wide enough in the old days to allow a horse and buggy to pass through, had to be expanded after the advent of the motor car -- the Chowdhry family negotiated with

[3] Horse drawn buggy used for public transport, like a shared taxi.

their neighbors and compensated them for pushing back their walls on either side. Diagonally across the main road from the mosque stands the new *baithak*, the Chowdhrys' guest-house, in the center of a grassy compound with a red brick wall around it. After damage from successive floods Pervez Chowdhry had the new *baithak* rebuilt on the same spot as the old one but at a higher elevation. Large trees shade the *manjis (*wood-framed rope cot[4]) in the lower level of the compound near the iron front gate, away from the main compound of the dera. Villagers still gather here, although in fewer numbers now, to exchange news and daily goings-on over a *hookah* (water pipe) as they did during Eglar's days.

Behind the *dera,* water gushes from a tube-well – the first one to be installed in Mohla, in 1953. It was, as Eglar noted, the harbinger of how tube-well irrigation would change the way farming was done in non-canal areas. Crops in these areas used to be dependent for irrigation on Persian wheels[5] and on rainfall. Based on these factors, farmers would decide how much acreage to assign each crop. In Eglar's day it took four to five hours to irrigate one acre of rice paddy. A tube-well, bored deep into the earth to pump out ground water, can irrigate 20 acres of paddy in the same amount of time. Gradually, the ritual paddy planting that used to take place right after the first rainfall would become a thing of the past. Concurrently, other modern methods began to change the agricultural process and its associated lifestyle. During the period that Eglar studied, every cultivator in the Punjab owned a traditional seven-piece 'native plow'. Only two or three men in the neighboring villages (none in Mohla) owned the new plow developed by the department of agriculture, which cost three times as much as the old one, and required strong animals. The agriculture department continues to suggest and introduce improved versions of old methods and equipment, but in Mohla, as in other villages of Pakistan, the old and the new continue to exist side by side.

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[4] *Manji* is the Punjabi word for this light, portable piece of furniture that doubles as a bed and as day-seating (*charpai* in Urdu).

[5] Also known as a water-wheel, this traditional, fast-disappearing means of water-harvesting across northern India consists of a series of water pots on a vertical wheel attached to a horizontal wheel driven round by bullocks, oxen, buffaloes – or camels in the more arid regions. As the circular motion of horizontal wheel turns the vertical belt, the pots around it dip into an underground water source. As the pots come up, they deposit the water into an irrigation channel.

Pervez Arshad, the current Chowdhry of Mohla, has introduced mechanized agriculture and uses tractors instead of oxen or bullocks to plow his fields. But he is in a unique position because unlike other farmers in the area, his lands have not been divided up due to inheritance – in general, lands tend to get fragmented when they are divided up between the sons of the family who traditionally inherit the land after the death of the father. In Pervez Arshad's case, his uncle Fazal Chowdhry and younger brother Guli, did not claim their share of the land as they were living in America. Thus the Chowdhry lands remain united[6]. Then, in 1990, the district government began a process of consolidation of land holdings. This enabled Pervez to consolidate the land his family had purchased in Dhirke village after the old Mohla was submerged under the river. As the largest landowner in the entire *tehsil*[7], he can afford to mechanize his farming, which those with small holdings cannot do.

The land-based agrarian lifestyle of Mohla made the villagers interdependent. The system of *vartan bhanji* that formed the backbone of the socio-economic structure of the community recognized and ritualized these relationships. With land no longer the primary means of livelihood, the interdependence has also ended although its vestiges remain. Mohla is now a suburb of Gujrat city, which has emerged as a center for businesses and small factories manufacturing goods ranging from pottery and wooden furniture to electric fans. Many Mohla villagers work at such factories, industries or businesses, as well as at schools, colleges and banks in Gujrat. Other means of livelihood locally include loading trucks at night with sand and clay from nearby river bed for construction in the city. The laborers who engage in this nocturnal loading tend to sleep half the day and on waking, have the cash to go and eat at one of the many road-side food establishments that have sprung up. There was no concept of eating out in the old days. Today, it is commonplace.

All this marks a huge change from Eglar's day when there was basically no other option to agrarian work. As livelihoods have changed, so have people's options. The small farmer has disappeared, along with all the associated trades linked to the process of

[6] Under Pakistani law, which incorporates Islamic laws, daughters also inherit. But girls usually transfer their share to their brothers, who sometimes compensate their sisters in some way.
[7] A Tehsil is the sub-division of a district, in this case Gujrat.

agriculture and with one another. Members of each trade had their own very specific places in the village social and economic structure – the *kammi* (laborers), the carpenter, the blacksmith, the weaver, the tailor-washerman, the potter, the village baker. Fazal remembers the old potter's house and kiln next door to the Chowdhry house, where he would watch the potter go through the entire process of bringing in the clay he had collected from his land, shaping it into bowls and pots, then baking, coloring and glazing it. The kiln is no more. The potter's son is a businessman who buys and sells grain. People purchase their pots and other earthen ware material in nearby Gujrat city, a pottery center.

Because of the changed lifestyles few families now have the time to maintain the water-buffalo and other cattle that once set the tempo of village life. Then there is the economic aspect. One of the different ways in which the small farmer paid a *seypi* with whom he had *seyp,* or a barter agreement, was to provide fodder for the *seypi's* buffalo or to allow the *seypi's* buffalo to graze on his fields. Other installments of the *seyp* would include payment in kind from the crops harvested, or food and clothing for services rendered at ceremonies like weddings and funerals. With the disintegration of these inter-dependent relationships, only the well-to-do can now afford to maintain buffalo for their personal use. Visiting Mohla today, you can still see them placidly chewing their cuds tethered around mangers in some courtyards or cooling off in shallow ponds around the fields to escape from the "pestering flies" as Eglar noted. Those who do not own buffalo buy milk directly from buffalo-owners or from the milkman who goes around collecting surplus milk from such owners. *Ghi* remains a precious commodity, but the women's role in the economics of making and selling *ghi* has declined. Often it is factory-manufactured, while most people can simply no longer afford to use *ghi* for everyday use. Besides the fact that 'real' *ghi* is now more expensive, many families prefer to use 'vegetable ghi' for health reasons. The twice-annual cattle fairs that used to take place at nearby cities like Gujranwala and Lyallpur (later Faisalabad) are now events of the past.

Life was much harder in the old days -- "a struggle for man and cattle" as Eglar put it. Fifty percent or more of the land in Punjab, she wrote, was cultivated by tenants at will and the other fifty by peasant proprietors, who cultivated their own land. Income was

estimated in terms of produce, rather than cash, as payments were made through barter (with wheat being the principle medium of exchange) or in kind through a *seyp,* yearly contract, or through *vartan bhanji,* reciprocal social exchanges. Seventy per cent of the villagers belonged to the lower income group, twenty per cent to the middle-income, while five per cent or less had surplus for their needs (Scanned MS, p. 136). Food constituted ninety per cent of a farmer's expenditure, and most people could afford to buy meat only twice a month on average. It was "impossible", wrote Eglar, for a farmer to increase his limited income. There was "a shortage of land available for cultivation or shortage of working hands or the restrictions of tradition and his economic condition" (Scanned MS, p. 136-137). The precarious economic conditions were responsible for his inability to change to modern methods.

Today, Mohla is a relatively prosperous village, where no one is unemployed. Everyone in Mohla had some work in the old days too, but then, money was not the most important consideration. For the farmer, observed Eglar,

"…his points of reference are his produce, cattle, debts and the extended social relations. It is with regard to the amount of produce, the quality and number of cattle owned, the extent to which he has been able to settle his debts and the fact that he has increased or decreased his social dealings with relatives and friends by attending and participating in various ceremonial occasions that he can check and see whether he is better off or is not doing as well as in the past" (Scanned MS, p. 135).

In this social networking, the ability to exchange appropriate gifts was essential. Eglar had also found a certain fatalism, an acceptance of one's "lot" that governed social attitudes. This fatalism still exists to an extent, the acceptance of the vagaries of weather and the natural world. For example, when a flood or a hailstorm destroys the crops, Chowdhry Pervez Arshad, can only attribute it to 'kismet', fate.

But modern amenities have made life easier. Eglar herself catalyzed some of the changes in Mohla. Moving beyond her role as an ethnographer, she lobbied with bureaucrats to

get Mohla a post office, paved roads and electricity (which arrived in 1962). She also revived its first primary school, which the village *munshi* (scribe)[8], used to run.

Over time, this primary school evolved into two schools, one for boys and the other for girls. Later on, a middle school was added. Some years ago, a son of Mohla, one of the Chowdhry's nephews who is doing well as a surgeon in America, established another girls' school in memory of his late mother. In addition to the regular curriculum including English, students learn marketable skills like crafts, stitching, tailoring, and embroidery. Significantly, all the teachers at this school are themselves from Mohla, college graduates who happen to be girls from different *kammi* families. In fact, Mohla boasts over a dozen women college graduates besides several more young men. Many descendents of *mussalis* have basic or even higher levels of education. Their sons (and some daughters) now work in towns, in industry and government service. All this makes Mohla a village with a high level of education compared to many other places – and all these educated villagers manage to find employment in nearby towns and cities, if not in Mohla itself.

During Eglar's time, Mohla had a population of about 350. The highest level a *mussali* could hope to achieve, as she noted, was to be a tenant to a landowner. Yet even then, some had transcended their hereditary roles – one musalli family's son was in the army in Eglar's day, another was a sweetmaker. Today, there are practically no limits to how high someone may go up the socio-economic ladder. Eglar documented the very beginning of the process of change in a village that had remained almost unchanged for centuries. Change continued to creep inexorably into the life of the Mohla inhabitants but the real acceleration took place from the mid-1980s onwards. Even so, the village is still recognizable as the one that Eglar studied in the early 1950s and 1960s. *Vartan bhanji* may not exist in its old form, but the traditions of hospitality and reciprocity are still strong. Threads from the old traditions continue to weave themselves into the fabric of life not just in this village but around the country and indeed the region.

(ends)

[8] The Munshi in those days was a son of the mosque imam from a neighboring village.