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ANTHROPOLOGY DEVELOPMENT VS. DEVELOPMENT ANTHROPOLOGY: MEDIATING THE FORESTER-FARMER RELATIONSHIP IN PAKISTAN

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By Michael R. Dove

The Forest Service of Pakistan has concerned itself since colonial times largely with the production, protection, and extraction of trees in the nation's state forests. The only contact that its officers had with most farmers (except large land-owners, with whom they had traditional patron-client relations) was to levy punishments for violations of forest laws or gather fees for the use of forest resources. In recent years, the state forests have declined in area and importance, and the need to increase on-farm supplies of tree products and halt resource degradation has increased. As a result, the Government of Pakistan, with the assistance of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), decided to change the basic direction of the Forest Service—away from state lands to private lands, away from commercial to subsistence or mixed subsistence/commercial production, and thus away from the rural elite to the small farmer. The vehicle chosen to accomplish this was the bilaterally funded Forestry Planning and Development Project, Pakistan's first major social forestry project.

The mission assigned me as project anthropologist was to assist the Forest Service to make this transition to a public service agency by helping it to identify and communicate with its intended clientele, the small farmers of Pakistan,

It was initially assumed that my work would focus on ways of "motivating" the farmers, based on the then-wide-spread belief within the Forest Service and USAID that small farmers were inherently ill-disposed towards trees

towards working with small farmers. A large part of my mission shifted, therefore, from motivating farmers to plant trees to motivating foresters to help farmers plant trees, and from communicating forestry technology to farmers to communicating farmers' attitudes and needs to foresters.

The Role of the Project Anthropologist

As the project anthropologist I was one of four long-term, expatriate experts on a technical assistance team assembled by the Windrock International Institute for Agricultural Development under contract to USAID. The other expatriate experts were a farm forester, a research forester, and a training expert. On the Government of Pakistan's side, a special project cell was established in the federal office of the Inspector General of Forests to provide overall supervision and guidance, and individual project offices were established in each of the country's four provinces to carry out field operations. My direct counterpart in all activities was a Deputy Inspector General of Forests in the federal project cell. I was assisted in my work by one full-time and eight part-time

Pakistani sociologists and by thirteen farmers hired to keep daily records.

The specific goals of the project anthropologist were (1) to carry out a national program of research to establish a base line for farm forestry in Pakistan,



*Michael Dove Interviews Tenant Farmers
in Nasirabad, Baluchistan*

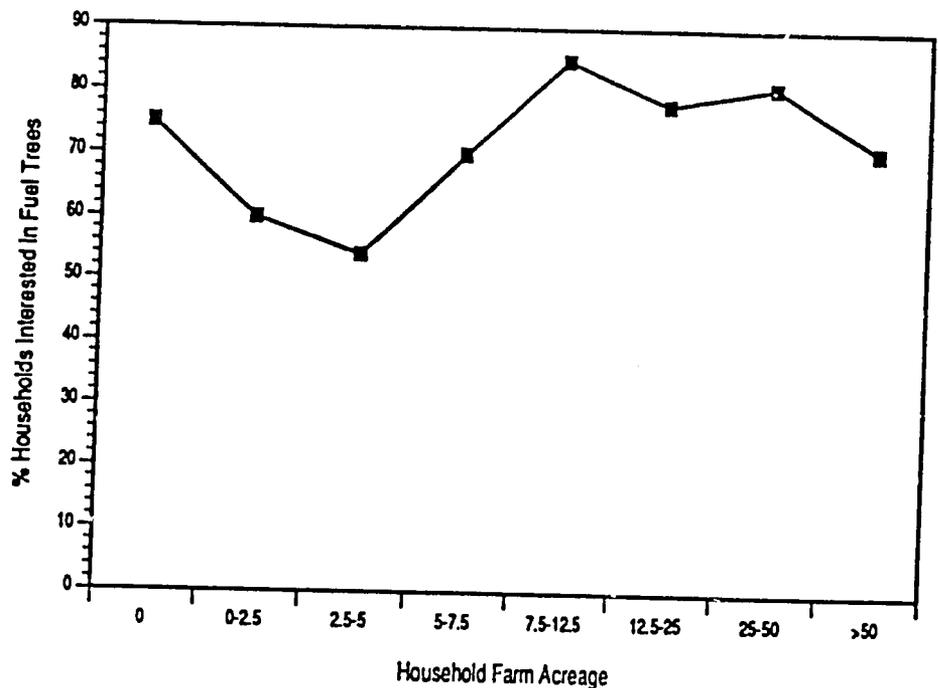
and tree cultivation. My field research soon revealed that this was largely a myth, and that the real constraint to the development of farm forestry was that many foresters were ill-disposed

monitor farmer response to the project, and promote research relevant to farmers' needs within the Forest Service; (2) to assist in developing practical extension strategies based on this research, with special attention to the involvement of women and the landless; and (3) to assist in the development of socially relevant curricula at the Pakistan Forest Institute and to develop in the forest service generally an appreciation of the utility of a social science perspective. A project-wide goal, to which I also devoted a good deal of my time, was to develop a national policy to better manage the forest and tree resources of Pakistan.

My approach to the first goal, involving a national program of research, was to carry out a series of surveys in the three project provinces of Baluchistan, the Northwest Frontier Province, and the Punjab. There were five stages to this research, each more focused than—and to some extent based on the results of—the previous stages: (1) group interviews on basic village characteristics (in 118 villages); (2) interviews on basic household characteristics in 1132 households; (3) in-depth interviews on farm ecology and economics in 589 households; (4) in-depth interviews on village ecology with 40 village groups and village religious leaders; and, finally, (5) daily monitoring of farm dynamics for 18 months in 13 households.

I adapted anthropological techniques for analyzing and reporting on these data to the time constraints, pragmatic interests, and expository style of government forest officers. Ten timely, succinct reports were issued, focused on identifying the proper clientele for project services, describing their needs, and predicting their responses. Highlights of these reports were the presentation of complex data in easily-understood, computer-generated graphs like Figure 1, which shows that interest in planting trees for use as fuel is essentially uniform among Pakistani farmers, regardless of farm size. This finding refuted the widely held belief in social forestry that farmers (especially better-off farmers) are not interested in

Figure 1. Farm Size & Interest in Planting Trees for Fuel



(Note: In an 8x2 table, $\chi^2=6.62$ and $P<.50$ for $n=185$)

planting trees for use as fuel. Another highlight of the reports (for me, if not my intended audience) was the use of the prose of the biological sciences (for the benefit of the Pakistani foresters) and the U.S. government (for the benefit of USAID). This expository style differs from that of anthropology in its emphasis on brevity, use of numbers rather than prose, and implication of authoritativeness.

I used these reports as the basis for developing extension strategies, which was another goal of the project anthropologist. This involved, among other efforts, preparation with my Forest Service counterpart of a manual on social forestry extension in Pakistan, emphasizing simple techniques for contacting and communicating with common farmers. These techniques were lacking among many forest service officers, in part because the social and political structure of Pakistani society normally rules out any contact between visiting government officers and common villagers. Many foresters initially regarded meetings with local officials as the beginning and end of their "extension" activities, with the

focus of these meetings being on what the Forest Service could do for the officials. In contrast, in our manual we emphasized that meetings with local officials are just the beginning and that their focus should be on what the officials can do for the project. One thing that local officials can *not* do for the project, however, is be responsible for contacting local farmers. The initial impulse of most foresters was to rely upon local officials to set up all farmer meetings. In our manual we strongly encouraged the foresters to do this themselves on the grounds that meetings arranged by local officials are invariably limited to a tiny minority of economically and politically influential farmers, who have the least need of extension services.

With the same counterpart, I established an Urdu-language quarterly, *Farm Forestry Newsletter*, for farmers, focusing not only on communication to farmers of simple, useful information, but also on communication to foresters of the farmers' own skills and knowledge. Foresters tended to be slow to appreciate this knowledge because of a cognitive block against the perception

Table 1. Methods Proposed to Attain Forestry Policy Objectives

| % of All Methods Proposed: | Type of Method Proposed to Attain Announced Objectives of 1955/1962/1980 Forestry Policies | | | |
|----------------------------|--|-----------|----------------|-------------------------|
| | Study & Research | Extension | Field Activity | Planning & Organization |
| | 11% | 23% | 26% | 39% |

of tree cultivation in non-conventional patterns, locations, and strategies. For example, the most common farm forestry system in Pakistan, the thorn fence—incorporating a wide variety of trees, bushes, and grasses; some wild, some managed, and some planted; and variously used for fuel, fencing, fodder and timber—is invisible to most foresters. In each issue of the newsletter we accordingly highlighted traditional practices of tree cultivation and implicitly made the point that the farmers knew how to cultivate trees before the Forest Service came along, that some of this knowledge is unknown to the Service, and that there are things that the forest officers could learn from—as well as teach to—the farmers.

A notable example is the traditional system of lopping and pruning, which is part of a sophisticated management system for maximizing desired impacts and products of trees and minimizing

undesired impacts and products. One widespread custom is lopping trees just before the winter wheat planting in order to reduce shading of the wheat seedlings and energize the soil and at the same time ameliorate a seasonal shortage of fuel and fodder. I discovered that this management system is based on an indigenous system of humoral classification of trees and tree shade, the understanding of which should offer promising new perspectives on research and extension concerning the critical tree-crop interface. (See M. Dove, "The 'Humor' of Shade: The Peasant Epistemology of Tree Shade in Pakistan," *Human Ecology*, forthcoming.)

These efforts to stimulate a flow of knowledge from farmer to forester reflected my concern for institutional development, the third goal assigned to the project anthropologist. My efforts in this regard included co-sponsoring an international seminar (with the Office of

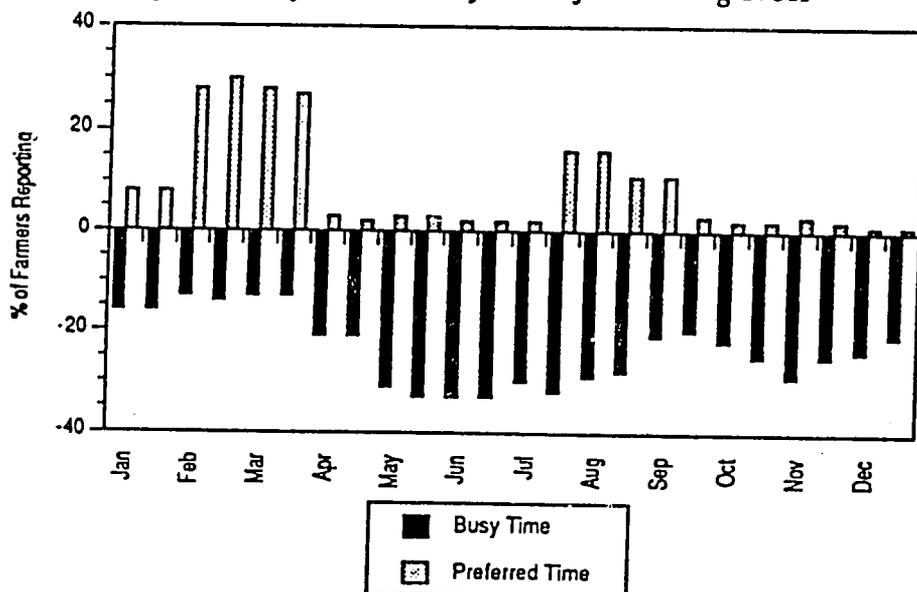
the Inspector General of Forests) on the need for a more people-oriented forestry policy in Pakistan. I also co-authored with this same office a review of past national forest policies and a draft of the new policy. In our review of past policies, I used anthropological techniques of textual analysis to reveal the implicit structure of past policies, which produced some novel and useful perspectives for policy revision. For example, Table 1 shows that past forestry policies in Pakistan have relied most heavily on planning or organizational changes to attain policy goals and least heavily on study or research.

For the Pakistan Forest Institute, I developed a syllabus for a course (in the M.Sc. curriculum) in "Rural Sociology/Anthropology" based on South Asian case studies of the use of anthropology and rural sociology to solve extension problems in natural resource use. I subsequently co-edited a textbook (*The Sociology of Natural Resources in Pakistan and Adjoining Countries*. M. Dove and C. Carpenter, eds. Lahore: Vanguard Press for the Mashal Foundation, forthcoming) for this course.

Use and Impact of Anthropology in the Project

As an ecological anthropologist, with eight years prior field experience studying indigenous use of forests and grasslands in Indonesia, I drew on ecological anthropology and ethnoscience to analyze Pakistan's farming systems, recommend directions for forestry extension, and prepare extension tools like the farmer newsletter. I looked at what tree species the farmers were already cultivating; how, where, and why they were cultivating them; and what the principal perceived constraints were. One finding, for example, was that farmers decide when to plant trees based not only on climatic conditions, but also on the availability of labor, a constraint that the foresters had not previously had to consider (when planting trees with hired labor in state forests). As Figure 2 shows, the times preferred for tree planting are when farmers are least busy in the fields with food crops.

Figure 2. Preferred vs. Busy Times for Planting Trees



(Note: For the percentages of farmers categorizing each 2-week period as "preferred" vs. "busy" $r = -0.83$, significant beyond the .001 level.)

I drew on the traditional tools of social and economic anthropology to correlate variables of interest to the Forest Service, such as willingness to plant seedlings, with important differentiating variables in rural Pakistani society, like land tenure or access to irrigation. I then identified for the Forest Service the household types likely to be most receptive to extension efforts, as well as those where the net impact of these efforts would likely be greatest. I established that landless tenants possess some traditional rights to trees, and that rural women play a major role in the production and consumption of tree products, and I accordingly recommended an increased extension focus on both groups.

I attempted to meld the anthropological focus on local-level dynamics and perceptions—which I believe is essential to revealing farmer needs—with the short time-frame and broad scope of a national development project. I did this through use of open-ended questionnaires emphasizing local perceptions and knowledge, and strategic mixing of sample size and interview focus. I also utilized the novel method of having farmers keep records of their own activities to provide the in-depth and long-term data normally used by anthropologists but typically missing from development projects. The application of anthropological methods was not limited to farmers alone: I utilized techniques of unstructured interviewing, with senior officials as my expert informants, to produce the first draft of the new national forestry policy. This proved to be a very successful exercise and suggests a new avenue for contributions by anthropologists—drawing on our special skills in eliciting and structuring informants' beliefs—to the formation of development policy.

Of most importance perhaps, I drew on anthropological tools for institutional analysis to help mediate a conflict over the basic philosophy of the project. The explicit design of the project—to assist small farmers to cultivate trees to meet household needs—initially met with resistance from some forest officers who contended that there were no small farmers in Pakistan, and if there were,

they would not be interested in planting trees. These officers pressured for a redirection of the project to cultivation by large farmers of block tree plantations for the market. Drawing on our base line study data, I was able to demonstrate not only that small farmers exist in Pakistan, but that they are very interested in tree cultivation. I determined that small farmers were invisible to some members of the Forest Service because they defined "farmer" as big landowner, a definition that I traced to traditional patron-client ties between forest service officers and rural elites. My documentation of the interest of small farmers in tree cultivation, and hence of the practicality of the project design, contributed to a subsequent decision by the Forest Service to discourage efforts to redirect the project towards a market-oriented project for large farmer and refocus attention on improving implementation of the existing project.

After three and one-half years there was considerable evidence that the value of these anthropological inputs was appreciated within the Pakistan Forest Service. The sample and methodology of the base line study was adopted for use in two major Forest Service research projects; reports on the results of the base line study were ac-

cepted for publication in the *Pakistan Journal of Forestry* (the foremost publication of forestry research in Pakistan), the first ever by an anthropologist; in the revision of the national forestry policy in which I participated, social forestry was elevated to a position equal to traditional commercial or protection forestry; and the Federal Government unilaterally requested USAID to extend the involvement of the project anthropologist beyond the original commitment. This represented an about-face from the start of my appointment, which one provincial forestry office had attempted to block and which the USAID project officer had called an "experiment." (This starting position—not at "go," but at some point considerably behind it—is, unfortunately, still the norm rather than the exception for anthropologists working in international development.)

Anthropology of Development vs. Development Anthropology

The most stimulating work that I did in Pakistan, and the work that drew most heavily on my anthropological training, involved the analysis not of peasant behavior and beliefs, but the



Village Assistant Displays Biomass Fuel, Attock, The Punjab

behavior and beliefs of government officials. It was not small farmers, but government officials that posed the principal development challenge in my project. This is often the case in rural development, yet the belief systems of government officials in developing countries are rarely studied by anthropologists (or, indeed, by any other discipline). Why is this?

I suggest that anthropologists do not study government officials (at least not in developmental contexts), do not treat them as the anthropological "other," because to do so is to call into question the conventional perceptions of development. To treat the *object* of development, the farmer, as "other" is fine; but to treat the administering official as "other," to study (and hence implicitly question the basis for) his perceptions, is to acknowledge that there is a subjective element in the management of development programs. Institutional and personal aversion to making this acknowledgment has contributed to a tradition of study in which the anthropological "other" is firmly located outside of government, development, and aid offices.

This positioning of the "other" in non-governmental contexts is part of a more general effort in post-World War

II anthropology to draw a boundary between research and application, selecting non-applied topics for basic research, and then attempting to apply the insights gained to development problems. The result is a theoretical anthropological literature that has little to say about development, and a (grey) development literature that has little to say about anthropological theory.

The conclusion to be drawn from this unfortunate schism is that relevance and theory are mutually developed not by the application of research findings to relevant topics, but by the selection, in the first instance, of relevant topics for research. An "applied anthropology" is good for neither application nor theory (recognition of which is reflected in the use of "practicing" instead of "applied" in this journal's title). Many of the most relevant topics involve the development process itself; the use of anthropology within development must not, therefore, preclude the study of development by anthropology.

The development process itself should be one of the foremost topics of anthropological study. This is one of three lessons that any anthropologist with an interest in "praxis" should bear in mind. The second is that a sincere commitment to the first lesson will

inevitably, as in any such self-reflective exercise, create conflict with some colleagues and counterparts. The third lesson is that the practicing anthropologist must be willing to assist in any activity, whether strictly anthropological in nature or not; this will provide the data needed to honor lesson number one, and it will provide the political capital needed to survive lesson two.

The study of the development process (as opposed to the study of the objects of this process) implies that the anthropologist has an agenda of his or her own, over and above the particular tasks assigned within the context of the development project. The existence of a personal agenda raises a number of problematic ethical issues, *but so does the absence of a personal agenda*. To bring one's own agenda to a development project is to bring one's own moral conscience. There is nothing in recent development history to suggest that this is not needed, and much to suggest that it is.

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Michael R. Dove received his Ph.D. in anthropology from Stanford University. He spent twelve years in Indonesia and Pakistan in association with the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, the East-West Center, USAID, and Stanford University. His research and publishing focuses on indigenous knowledge of the natural environment and the integration of local systems of resource-use into national and international political economic systems. He is currently a fellow at the East-West Center's Population Institute, and in 1991-92 he will be a visiting Research Fellow in Yale University's program in agrarian studies. ■



Project Forester Interviews a Tenant Farmer