

Naqib

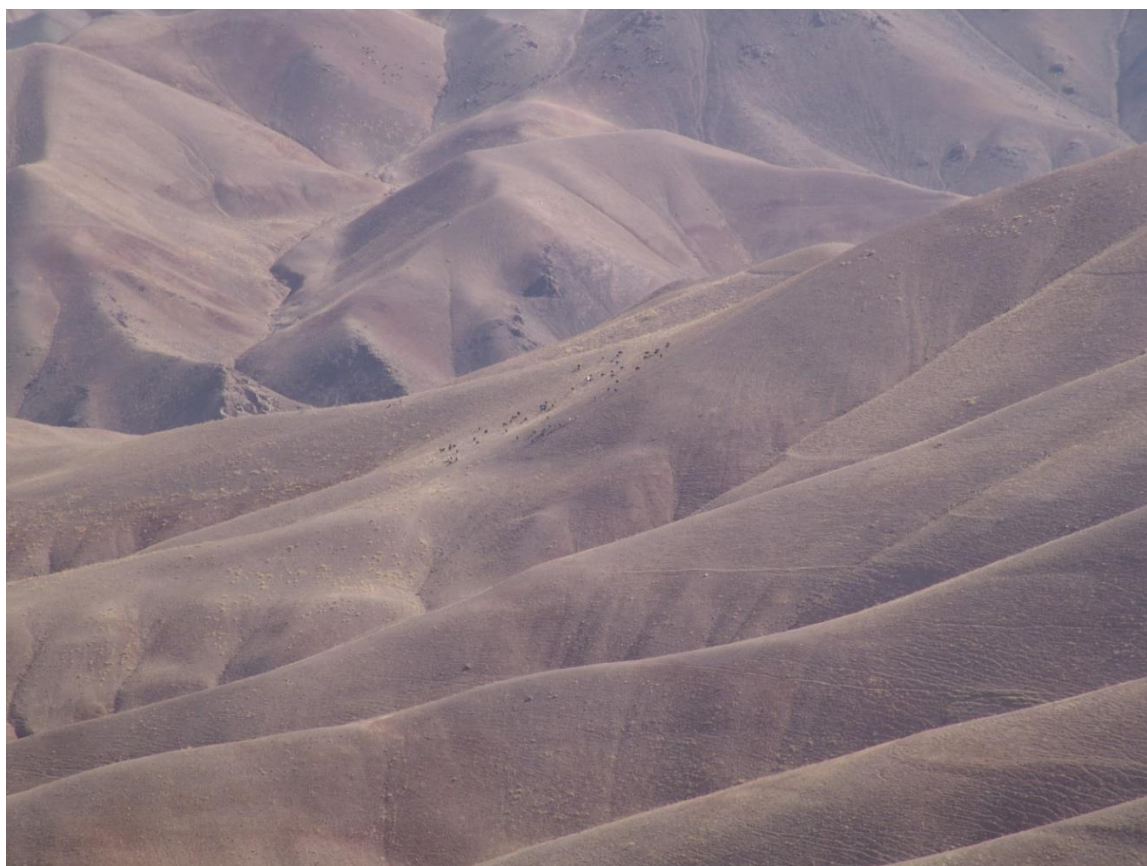
Khazan Gul belongs to the Tani tribe, which settles in Khost province, in the border area with Pakistan. He studied in Germany. During the war against the communists, he led a resistance group in his homeland. They took part in fights, but also tried to help the people survive economically. During this time I visited him and learned a lot from him about how people lived together there. After the expulsion of the communists, Khazan Gul continued to live in Khost, working as a farmer and organizing the teaching of some schools. He rarely comes to Kabul. He visits our Kabul office maybe once a year.

One day, maybe ten years ago, he visited us and had a request. His great-nephew Naqib was unemployed. Could I hire him as a driver? Naqib is the grandson of one of Khazan Gul's sisters. Naqib's father was killed as a government soldier during the war. Khazan Gul had taken in the niece's family.

What else could I do but hire Naqib? We never regretted it. Naqib was experienced in several crafts and always knew how to repair something. He radiated an infectious cheerfulness. Everyone got along with him.

One day he asked me for a vacation. He had to take a relative from Khost to Pakistan for medical treatment. Other colleagues also had such requests. Naqib got the leave. We ourselves were about to leave for home leave.

When we returned from vacation, Naqib was missing. The colleagues reported that he had not returned to work from his vacation in Pakistan. Once he called and said that he would not be coming back. He now had another job and earned better than he did here. The last statement was open to doubt. It bothered me that Naqib had not taken the trouble to visit us to say goodbye. After all, we had gotten along well.



When Khazan Gul came by again, I told him the same thing. He, too, thought it was rude that his nephew had simply disappeared. "Well, maybe he'll show up soon," he hoped.

A year later Khazan Gul came by again. Naqib still hadn't gotten in touch. When Khazan Gul was in Kabul, he stayed with Naqib. He promised to follow up. The next day, he was back. He had been pushing Naqib for a long time until Naqib told him everything. I should listen to that now. I should take a deep breath.

A tribal brother from a closely related family of Naqib and Khazan Gul had been active with the Taliban in northern Afghanistan. Government forces had captured him. He was now in prison. Prisoners can often bribe prison wardens and get out. However, our friends' tribal brother was too prominent a terrorist for that. The government could not afford to let this big fish swim away.

But the prisoner's family had an idea. They turned to Naqib: "You work for a foreigner. Help us kidnap him! Then we can exchange him for our brother."

Naqib initially declared that this would bring shame on his uncle and himself and refused. But the family of the prisoner persisted. That's when Naqib pulled the rip cord. The foreigner had just thrown him out, he told the prisoner's family. Afghans assume that you should only carry out an attack on another property if you know your way around there. As a released prisoner, Naqib no longer had access to our office. As someone who could kidnap me, he hardly came into question. So nothing had happened in those years. Naqib was unemployed, though.

Khazan Gul had still learned that the prisoner's family had bribed Marshal Fahim, the vice president of Afghanistan. The term of the then President Karzai was about to expire. Then, before the successor took office, the vice presidents ran the office. During this time, Fahim wanted to release the prisoner. A week later, the marshal died. He had suffered from severe sugar and had been treated repeatedly in the Berlin Charité in recent years.

Another week later. Telephone: "Can we come in to see you? We are standing here in front of your door." it sounded energetically. No question: German military. Some soldiers entered our property and started taking pictures, although it was almost dark. Apparently, they were using infra-red devices. One of them grumbled, "We'll have to know our way around if we're ever going to get you out of here." Finally, they announced the visit of Mr. Baumann from the embassy for the next day.

He came and told me that I was on a list of foreigners who were to be kidnapped in order to free captured terrorists. That was the official German stamp on Khazan Gul's story.

Then a few more weeks passed until one morning Khazan Gul and Naqib were sitting happily with us. "Everything is all right now. Nothing more can happen."

Ra'is Khodaidad was the head of the family of the captured terrorist who urged Naqib to kidnap me. "Ra'is" means "president." This honorary title marked Khodaidad's superior position within the mafia structures. It was Ra'is Khodaidad who had put pressure on Naqib to kidnap me.

Ra'is Khodaidad had gone to great lengths to always change his appearance and disguise. He had passports from Ukraine to the Gulf States. But now he had made a mistake. The authorities knew that he was in Afghanistan. So, he could be arrested - apparently by foreign soldiers.

For a week, Ra'is Khodaidad dominated television reports as the biggest mafioso there had ever been in Afghanistan. He was shown from all sides, including in some disguises he had used. For Khazan Gul and Naqib, it was clear that Ra'is Khodaidad would never be released. Naqib returned to us.

Ra'is Khodaidad had been captured in the very last days of President Hamid Karzai's term. It was up to the new Abdul Ghani and Dr. Abdullah government to process his case. This was tricky. Khodaidad knew too much – about warlords who still had hundreds of warriors under arms, and perhaps about members of the new government – certainly about people the new government could not tamper with. The government had to prevent Khodaidad from speaking out publicly. A trial under the rule of law would have been too dangerous. Thus, the case was handled as "according to the rule of law as possible". Khodaidad was confronted several times over the course of several months with everything he was accused of, but he was completely shut off from the public eye. He made a statement to the police. Then he was hanged.

Thousands of tribesmen came to the funeral ceremonies. The family had difficulties to organize these celebrations according to the customs. They were completely impoverished.