

ISTALIF



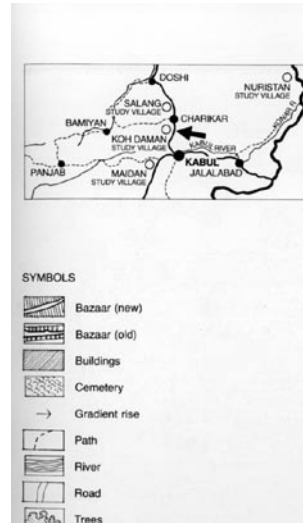
Pic. 1: map of Istalif (frame)

FACTS

Inhabitants:	8.500 (2002) 7.5000 (1999)
Population Density:	
Average Income:	60\$/Month
Life Expectancy:	43.1 (F)/42.71 (M)
Illiteracy rate:	
Language:	Dari
Religion:	Muslim
Climate:	arid, continental
Topography:	elevated plane, slopes of mountainous area

INTRODUCTION

Istalif is a Tadjik village some 50km north of Kabul situated at the slopes of the mountains framing the Shoali-plane on it's western edge. For centuries Istalif was known as a place of candycraft production and famous for it's pottery. Beside the pottery there used to be production of felt-work, gilims



Pic. 2: legend 1



Pic. 3: legend 2

and woodworks. Istalif was as a preferred picnic-area for Kabul-inhabitants and became seat of a royal summer-house for Afghanistan's last king Zahir Shah. Istalif underwent a series of serious destructions. In 1842, the British army burned down the complete village, as a revenge before withdrawing from Afghanistan.

During the Mudshaheddin resistance against the Sovjet invasion once more Istalif was destroyed by Afghan-Sovjet military planes bombing the village. But even then, the inhabitants reconstructed the village and Istalif underwent a growth of it's population during the 1990s before it was drawn into the civilwar between Taliban and the Mudshaheddin in the late 1990s. After this last war all of the houses were destroyed, no roof existed on any of the Istalif houses, all inhabitants where forced out and the vineyards were destroyed, watering canals destroyed and polluted.

Now slowly the village is reconstructed and refugees start to come back. Already some of the old potters restart their business. Foreign NGOs support the village, a boarding school was built.

CLIMAT

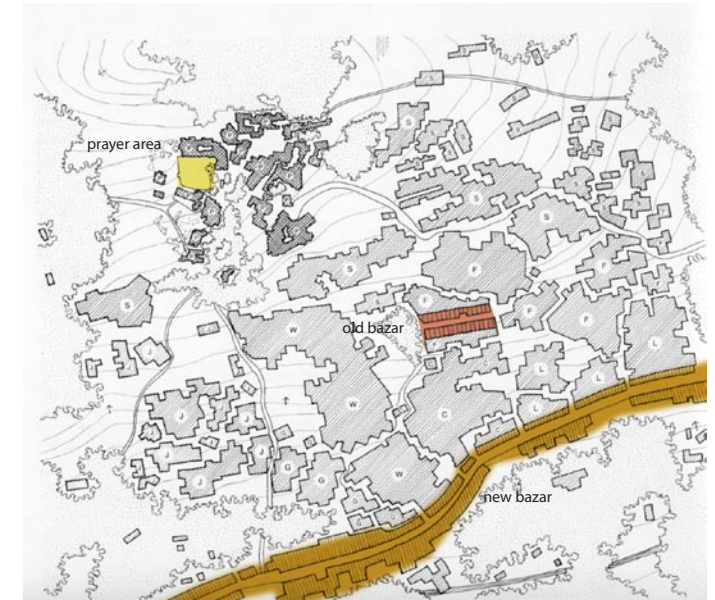
Due to it's altitude of 2200m and the continental climate, summers are quite hot and the winters cold. Sandstorms are usual in summertimes. Precipitation takes place mainly in winterti-

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mes. Temperatures reach up to 45°C in summertime and -10°C in winter.

SETTLEMENT STRUCTURE

The buildings of Istalif seem to be scattered randomly over the slopes of the hillfoot. Actually there exists a certain devision of the village into subvillages along „crafts production lines“. There used to be a specific area for each of the „guilds“ (see pic. 4). A unique characteristic is the dual use of the houses for both living and production. Unlike most afghan villages the income of Istalif's used to base on craftsproduction. Agriculture was only used as a source of subsistence. Crops grown were



Pic. 4: public spaces in Istalif

wheat, vines, and orchards.

The guilds are the following: C= Carpenter, G= goldsmith, J= jai namaz (prayer rugs or mats), P= pottery, S= Satrangi (cotton rugs), L= shawl, F= sheepskin for coats (posteen), W= wood-working. In the map above, the pottery area is marked by darker appearance. The yellow marked area is a prayer area at the top of the village, where the potter's patron Saint Eshan Ze is burried. The potters say that their ancestors came to Istalif from Bukhara with their master Eshan Ze.

The village consists of multi-storied buildings (1-3) which are



Pic. 5: view on Istalif

Pic. 6: at the prayer area

partly built into the slopes of the hills.

The area of the potters forms a single subvillage by its own, which is named Kolalan. In 1976 there have been 21 kilns producing an amount of 500.000 pieces of pottery each year and earning some 90% of Kolalan's people's income.

public spaces

Public spaces exist only along the gravelled roads, in the bazar and the prayer area on the hilltop.

Cluster: It is remarkable that by means of connecting walls,



Pic. 7: the cluster-structure

courtyards and roofs individual buildings and dwelling-units are connected to several wider clusters. These clusters often are inhabited by members of one clan. If more than one clan dwells in a cluster subunits are built.

Though different clusters often use the same walls their rooms and spaces are separated.

Access

Two different ways exist: the access to the working area in the groundfloor leads directly into the workshops. From inside these workshops there is another entrance by means of stairs or leaders to the privat spaces on the upper floors.

The more formal and public acces takes place via the courtyards. The circulation and movement within the clusters often is maintained by using leaders and moving across the roofs.

INFRASTRUCTURE

roads

Since the mid of the 20th century there exists a paved road to Istalif, but inside the village most of the roads are of clay and gravel. A big problem are the mines and duds - remains of the many years of war. Though the main roads are claimed to be



Pic. 8: truck on the main road from Kabul to Charikar in the shomali-plain

cleaned, there is still a risk and the mines in the surrounding mountains are still a danger to farmers.

Education: In the 70s there existed a highschool in Istalif. During the reconstruction after the victory over the taliban regime one boarding school has been rebuilt.



Pic. 9: Istalif pottery

Health: A medical centre existed 14km away in 1976. Now there is a medical station organized in Istalif.

Trade: Istalif originally had just a small Bazar in the center of the village. When the paved road was built and a greater amount of customers available, an additional Bazar was built, which since the end of the last war is used as a place for production. In difference to most of Afghn villages, Istalif earns the greater part of it's income by selling crafts and not as normal, by agricultural productions.

Water: A central water supply does not exist neither does a waste-water treatment. Fresh water is taken out of the river, but recently a well has been drilled, which supplies the villagers with unpolluted drinking water.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Istalif is a tajik village. The Tajik society is patriarchal, the authority belongs to the oldest males of the extended families. Inheritance is passed down through the males. Women, when married, move into their husband's familie's house. A clan-structure exists.

In 1974 there have been 80 households and a number of 519 inhabitants. A families consist on average of 6 to 7 members.

CONTINENT: Asia > LAND: Afghanistan > REGION: Kabul > SUBREGION: Istalif

RELIGION

The majority of the Tadjik people belongs to the Sunni Muslim.

MOBILITY

There are at least buses from Kabul to Charikar serving the mainroad between these cities, it is not certain whether a direct connection exists between Kabul and Istalif.

Nowadays there are cars in Istalif, but still donkeys transport men and materials. So do camels, but the latter is used only within caravans for long destination travels.

MATERIALS

The material used for building is mostly the regional available clay and earth as well as stones and some wood, mostly poplar, which is grown near the river that passes Istalif. There are some woods in the plain of Shomali, around Baghram. Since the construction of the paved road to Istalif more wood is used for constructions .



Pic. 10: reinforced concrete construction at the new-built mosque

Today, the use of reinforced concrete is sought, though often not performed in a sufficient quality, quite expensive and not available for most of the people. Picture number 10 shows the use of RCC for the reconstruction of a mosque.

Images:

Pic.-Nr. 1,2,3,4,7: Szabo, Albert and Barfield, Thomas J.; Afghanistan - an atlas of indigenous domestic architecture; University of Texas Press, Austin 1991; Pic.-Nr. 5,6,8,9,10: Morten Loës

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