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KABUL III. HISTORY FROM THE 16TH CENTURY TO THE ACCESSION OF MOḤAMMAD ẒĀHER SHAH

Kabul was a small town until the 16th century, when Ẓahir-al-Din Bābor (1483-1530), the first of the Great Mughals, made it his capital. Later, his successors chose to spend the winter months there. Under the first Mughal emperors, Kabul developed into a prosperous, well-organized town renowned for its beautiful covered bazaar, Čār Čatta, built by the Kurd ʿAli Mardān Khan, the town's governor from 1641 to 1652 (Schinasi). Its many gardens are named and described by chronicles of the time. By the water on the right bank of the river, Čār Bāḡ was Bābor's favorite garden, while the Emperor Jahāngir enjoyed staying at Šahrārā. Jahānārā, on the left bank opposite Šahrārā, was entirely redesigned and refurbished by Shah Jahān, who turned it into his private garden (Babur; Lāhōri; ʿAllāmi; *Tozuk-e Jahāngiri*). The only trace of the Mughal era that remains today is an elegant little mosque made of white marble, built by the same Shah Jahān in another garden as a tribute to his ancestor Bābor, buried nearby (Shephard-Parpagliolo).

Neglected by the last Mughal emperors, Kabul was given a new lease of life in 1775, when it succeeded Kandahar (Qandahār) as the capital of the

independent Afghan empire built by Aḥmad Shah Ṣadōzay (1747-72), chief of the large Abdāli/Dorrāni tribal confederation. This suited the interests of Timur Shah (1772-93), Aḥmad Shah's son, who sought to offset Kandahari forces by surrounding himself with urbanized non-Pashtuns (Fōfalzay, 1967, pp. 193-96). As the new capital, Kabul continued to develop throughout the last two decades of the 18th century under the reign of Timur Shah and especially his son Shah Zamān (1793-1800). The city then remained more or less unchanged for most of the 19th century under the first of the Moḥammadzay rulers. The population grew considerably and was estimated at 60,000 in the 1830s (Masson, II, p. 55) and 140,700 in 1876 (*Gazetteer*, p. 230).

At the time, Kabul had three distinct sectors, all enclosed within defensive walls on the right bank of the river Kabul. To the east, the citadel (*bālā ḥeṣār*) stood on a rocky spur of the Šēr Darwāza mountain. As well as its numerous royal buildings, barracks, mosques, an arsenal, stables etc., an entire town developed in the lower part (*bālā ḥeṣār-e pāyin*), while the upper part (*bālā ḥeṣār-e bālā*) was home to an infamous prison. In the mid-18th century, Qizilbash (Qezelbāš) military contingents from Iran settled to the west and formed the Čendāwol district, which was noticeable as a Shiʿite neighborhood in Sunnite surroundings. Between the two, the city itself, "a mile in length, and somewhat more than half a mile in breadth" (Burford, p. 4), lay between the foot of the Šēr Darwāza mountain and the river, with the dome of Timur Shah Ṣadōzay's mausoleum dominating the skyline. On the left bank, which had only one residential district—Morād Ḵāni, named after Sardār Morād Khan, who built the Ṣadōzay capital—there were large royal gardens along the old Ḵiābān, the Avenue of Bābor, but which lacked the refinement of the Mughal era (Burnes; Fōfalzay; Hensman; Masson).

A mixed population of Tajiks, Pashtuns and Hindus, as well as some one hundred Armenians and a few Jews (*Gazetteer*, p. 230) lived and worked in the residential and business districts (*maḥalla*) on either side of Čār Čatta and Šur Bāzār, the two main streets. In this tangle of narrow winding streets (*goḏar*, *kuča*) lined by high walls, flat-roofed buildings made of mud and straw (*kāhgel*) were built around inner courtyards where domestic life was hidden from view. The opposite was true in the trading streets (*bāzār*) and wholesale markets (*mandaʾi*), where business was transacted in broad daylight around the stalls (*dokān*) and caravanserais (Masson, II, passim). There were many neighborhood mosques, and cemeteries spread on the outskirts of the city around holy sites held sacred by the population, such as Ziārat-e Ḥażrat-e

Tamim wa Jabr-e Anṣār, Šāh-e Šahid, ʿĀšoqān-o ʿĀrefān (Einzmann; Ḵalil).

In order to alleviate this dense, urban fabric, Amir Šēr ʿAli (r. 1863-66 and 1868-79) decided to found a new town on the right bank, beyond the royal gardens. The plan was that, along with the army, a large share of eminent families would move to Šērpur, leaving more space for the remaining needy population (Ḵāfi, II, 147-48). The installation of a military camp at the foot of Bimāhru hill was underway when Afghanistan was once again caught in the rivalry between its two powerful neighbors, Tsarist Russia and British India, and the country was plunged into a second war with Great Britain. The Šērpur project was abandoned (Hensman, pp. 41-43).

When ʿAbd-al-Raḥmān (1880-1901; see AFGHANISTAN x. POLITICAL HISTORY) acceded to the throne, Kabul was a city in ruins without a single prestigious building still standing. On two occasions it had paid the price of the Anglo-Russian "Great Game" being played out in Central Asia (see ANGLO-AFGHAN WARS i and ii). The Mughal bazaar of Čār Čatta in 1842 and the Bālā Ḥeṣār and part of the city in 1879 were irreparably destroyed by the British. Moreover, with time, entire sections of the city walls had collapsed and most of the royal gardens had run wild.

The arrival of Amir ʿAbd-al-Raḥmān proved to be a turning point in the Afghan capital's history. The spatial layout changed with the selection of a new site for a new citadel/palace (*arg*); modes of production were reorganized, with the construction of a complex of industrial workshops; and unique architecture developed, combining Central Asian, British-Indian and European styles. The decision to build the new Arg on the left bank of the river to the north of the town placed the city's future firmly on the left bank. The royal palace—called Kōti—was built inside a vast compound, surrounded by a mud wall and a moat, along with its harem (*ḥaramsarāy*), two durbar halls (*salām-ḵāna-ye ʿāmm and salām-ḵāna-ye ḵāṣṣ*), various buildings to house the Treasury, the princes' offices and those of the administration, and numerous outbuildings and barracks, with a large park occupying the rest of the land (Gray, pp. 34-40; Martin, pp. 51-52). Also on the left bank, further upstream at Bāḡ-e ʿĀlamganj, the Workshops (*māšin-ḵāna*), the first of their kind, were to produce a vast range of manufactured goods. Equipped for the first time with steam-powered machines, an entire industry producing military equipment, textiles and domestic items was soon to become "the most remarkable spectacle of modern Kabul" (Curzon, col. c).

Amir ʿAbd-al-Raḥmān, who had a taste for architecture, also endeavored to adorn the capital and its surroundings with civilian and religious buildings, starting with a collection of palaces and royal residences: Bāḡ-e Bālā, Bāḡ-e Čarmgar, Bostān Sarāy, Gerdān Sarāy, Golestān Sarāy, Kōti Londoni, Mehmān-ḵāna, Šahrārā, etc. would remain familiar names long after some of them had disappeared (Schinasi). Close to the Arg and inspired by the Central Asian style the Amir had seen in Samarqand, Naḡāra-ḵāna, also known as Gonbad-e Kōtwāli, was a monumental covered passage (Markowski, p. 38) that served as a city gate and led to Bāzār-e Arg, an avenue that ran to the river and the town. As for Masjed-e Jāmeʿ-e ʿIdgāh, Kabul's largest mosque, built on the outskirts of the city, it borrowed from Mughal architecture (Fayż Moḥammad, pp. 993-94).

During the first two decades of the 20th century, Amir Ḥabib-Allāh (1901-18) took little interest in the city and its lower classes, and Kabul slowly developed on the left bank. The Arg was extensively reorganized. Three new palaces, Delkokā, Gol-ḵāna, and Stōr, were built and decorated, a clock tower and a photographic studio were constructed, and the park was transformed into a reception area where audiences were held when the weather allowed. All these developments show how much the Amir cared about his own comfort and his fascination with Western innovation and technology (Schinasi). To the west of the Arg, the princes and certain eminent figures moved to the village of Deh Afḡānān, which emerged as a residential neighborhood. Alongside the British-Indian style in vogue at the time, European architecture also appeared, such as Zayn al-ʿEmārat, the residence of Prince Naṣr-Allāh, the Amir's older brother. Nonetheless, despite their sloping roofs and openings in the façades, family privacy remained protected behind high garden walls (Dupree, 1977). To the east of the Arg, Qawmi Bāḡ was a new kind of palace. It was a large salon that the Amir reserved specially for the *qawm* or ruling Moḥammadzay clan, to relieve families of the considerable burden of organizing receptions (*Serāj al-aḵbār* III/1, 1913, p. 7b). Even further east but on the right bank on the outskirts of town, the population was given a large public park: Čaman-e Ḥożuri, which also served as a place of amusement, a sports field, and a parade ground, where large gatherings were held to mark certain festivals, when the tents of the Amir and his court were erected in a specially reserved area (ibid., 1911, I/1, pp. 2-4, and I/20, 1912, pp. 1-3). Military maneuvers and reviews were held at Čaman-e Neẓāmi, a larger site located beyond the village of Bimāhru (ibid., V/9, 1915, p. 2), while the palace of Bāḡ-e Čarmgar was to host the new military academy (*maktab-e ḥarbiya-ye serājiya*; ibid., 1912, I/12,

I/20; Rybitschka, pp. 50-52).

The *serājiya* reign does, however, boast some major works and innovations that not only satisfied the Amir's taste for progress and modernity, but also served the urban community. These included a considerable increase in the city's drinking water supply through the laying of several kilometers of pipes between Pa̱gmān and Kabul, and the maintenance of wider roads that ran between the different palaces, around the Arg, and at Deh Afg̱ānān. The road surfaces were rendered suitable for vehicles, a necessity as the first automobile appeared in the city, a privilege reserved for the Amir and a few senior court members. In addition, more popular forms of transport arrived, such as bicycles and two-wheeled, horse-drawn carts (*gādi*) that became widely used, and the first telephone lines were installed. There was renewed activity in the Workshops, which housed the office and typographic equipment of *Serāj-al-aḵbār* (1911-18), the historic illustrated newspaper that published the first photographs of Kabul taken by Afghan photographers. The Workshops grew, with the creation of a wool weaving factory (*pašminabāfi*) (ibid., 1914, III/10, III/18, IV/5) and most importantly, the facilities were modernized when electricity was installed in 1918. Although only the palaces and Workshops were lit, the introduction of this new driving force, produced by the Kohestān hydroelectric plant at Jabal-al-Serāj, was undoubtedly the highlight of Amir Ḥabib-Allāh's reign (Jewett Bell, passim). Kabul was changing, but with no master plan.

With King Amān-Allāh (1919-29), Kabul, and Afghanistan, entered the 20th century. With the recognition of Afghan independence by European powers, Kabul became an international capital for the first time, and government organizations were so extensively reformed that it became a Western-style administrative city. But Kabul was not prepared for such upheaval. The lack of adequate housing for foreigners and new civil servants was resolved by the radical change in royal habits. Amān-Allāh chose to surrender his exclusive use of royal palaces and residences, which were allocated to foreign diplomatic missions and to senior ministries (*Amān-e Afg̱ān* 1/3, 1919, p. 3; Schinasi). The Arg opened its doors. With the exception of the palaces of Gol-ḵāna, where Amān-Allāh moved with his family, Delgošā, which was used for receptions, and Kōti, renamed Kōti Bāg̱ča and turned into a museum (*Amān-e Afg̱ān* 5/19, 1924, pp. 4b-5), the various other buildings were used as offices for ministries and for the administration.

"The new Afghanistan" that the King strived to build was defined in over one

hundred locally published decrees (*neẓām-nāma*). One of them outlined the status and mission of the new municipalities (*baladiya*) and of Kabul in particular, which he dreamed of turning into a modern, organized capital (*Neẓām-nāma-ye baladiya*, 1924). Ranging from some rules on urban planning and behavior on public highways to the safety of passersby, the circulation of pack animals and *gādi*s in the bazaars, the list of current market prices practiced by shopkeepers, road maintenance etc., the fields in which the municipality could intervene were stipulated for the first time, but as they clashed with certain deep-rooted habits, they had little effect. The historic town remained unchanged.

The river marked an increasingly distinct divide between the historic town, which remained the business center, and the northern districts, where a new center emerged some distance from Naqāra-ḵāna, around the Bāzār-e Šāhi and the first modern hotel, Kāfe Wali, and where the village of Deh Afḡānān developed more and more into a residential neighborhood. Activities and construction also began on the embankments (*lab-e daryā*). On the right bank, the old Čār Bāḡ of Bābor was transformed into a public park (*bāḡ-e ʿomumi*). On the left bank, from the small ʿOlyā Rotba mosque to the entirely reconstructed large mosque of Šāh-e Du Šamšira, the Andarābi district became fashionable (Schinasi).

During the *amāniya* decade, the modernization efforts supervised by foreign technicians affected many sectors of public life. Communications, postal, telephone and telegraph services and a radio station were established (Markowski, passim), and airplanes flew over Kabul for the first time, landing at the Šērpur airport built between Bimāhru hill and the royal palace (*Amān-e Afḡān* 9/34, 1928, p. 2). Newly created local trading companies (*šerkat*) began intense import-export activities, and the first ever foreign company was authorized: the German “Deutsch-Afghanische Companie” (sic) opened its doors on the Andarābi embankment. A Western-style education system also began to take shape, with the opening of general and specialized teaching establishments: for example, two new buildings housed the Amāniya in 1923 and Amāni in 1924, schools that taught respectively in French and German; the Šahrārā palace became home to the Ḥabibiya school; and the Kōti Londoni to the School of Fine Arts (*maktab-e ṣanāyeʿ-e nafisa*). The greatest novelty of all were two girls’ schools created by Queen Ṯorayā and her mother. One of them, the ʿEṣmat school at Qalaʿ-ye Bāqer Khan on the right bank, was to close down quite quickly, while the other, Maktab-e Masturāt in Deh Afgānān,

would constantly expand in the Golestān Sarāy palace made available by the queen mother (Schinasi, 1995, pp. 449-53).

As part of his dream of modernization, Amān-Allāh also launched a monumental project to build a new capital named after him, Dār al-Amān, in the Čārdeh plain southwest of the city. The project was designed by German architects and the French architect and archeologist André Godard, with German engineers in charge of construction (Gerber). In Dār al-Amān, as in the northern districts, regulations recommended abandoning mud constructions and encouraged European architecture with detached houses visible from the street (*Neẓām-nāma-ye abniya-ye šahr-e Dār al-Amān*). This dream ended with the fall of the king in 1928. Tāj Bēg, the royal palace, the governmental palace, the future city hall and around ten villas remained unfinished. Various attempts to revive them in 1930, 1960, and 1974 all came to nothing (*Dar-ul-Aman–Brief History*). The *amāniya* decade was one of modernization at all costs, but, still with no master plan, Kabul remained a disorganized city.

The task of truly adapting Kabul to the new requirements of the emerging modernized State fell to Moḥammad Nāder Shah (1929-33; *Kābol* 30). However, at the time the new king was laying down his course of action (*ḵaṭṭ-e maši*; *Anis*, 15 October 1930), the capital had been ravaged by a brief period of Tajik rule that left Afghanistan destabilized after the fall of Amān-Allāh and the nine-month rule of Amir Ḥabib-Allāh Kalakāni, known as Bačča Saqqā, who had seized power in 1929. Nāder Shah set up a National Council for Assisting Reconstruction (*majles-e emdādiya-ye melli*; *Eṣlāḥ* 11 November 1929). Repair work was completed within a few months, and Kabul recovered its activity and vitality. The newly reorganized municipality set to improving the city's finances and published a series of measures that concerned the life of the city and its residents (*Anis*, 1 May 1930). The Prime Minister (*ṣadr-e aʿẓam*), Moḥammad Ḥāšem, who was appointed by his brother the king, moved into the former palace of Zayn al-ʿEmārat (*ṣedārat*), and transferred the entire administration and the ministries from the Arg, where Amān-Allāh had grouped them, into their own buildings in the city (Schinasi). In addition, a large Ministry of Public Works, founded in 1933, was built at Čaman-e Ḥožuri; it took charge of all public works for the various ministries, as well as road maintenance and bridge repairs, monument construction (the holy site of Ḥażrat Tamim; the memorial to General ʿAbd-al-Wakil, and factory modernization (*Sāl-nāma*, 1933-34, pp. 163-64).

An intensive construction program began. The Ministry of Public Works began to build the Bāzār-e Čaman-e Ḥożuri, a women's hospital at Čendāwol and a new military academy in the old Bālā Ḥeṣār, despite which the historic town remained the center of the traditional economy, its physiognomy unchanged with the same tangle of houses piled upon covered passages. On the other hand, new urban planning rules and plans for urban amenities brought more lively development to the left bank. A huge number of buildings sprouted up, including the new printing house (*maṭbaʿa-ye ʿomumi*) in the Arg gardens, a new customs house (*gomrok*) between Qalʿa-ye Maḥmud Khan and Morād Ḵāni, the Kabul Literary Society opposite Café Wali, renamed the Kabul Hotel, as well as *ḥammām*s, post offices, etc. The pace of urbanization picked up in Deh Afḡānān, with more housing estates, villas, and private gardens. Between the old and the new town, various activities developed along the newly built embankments. As well as small shops, a plot of land at Bāḡ-e ʿOmumi was allocated for the School of Fine Arts, a midwifery school (*kurs-e qābelagi*) was created at the new Andarābi women's hospital, and the headquarters of the first semi-public joint stock company (*šerkat-e ashāmi*), the first product of a nascent economic policy (*Kābol* 30, passim), had a desirable location on the left embankment.

Nāder Shah drew upon the skills of numerous foreigners: Turkish doctors for the new medical faculty opened in Dār al-Amān, renamed Dār al-fonun, and for the sanatorium named after Dr. Refqi and built on the ʿAliābād site; French and German teachers for the Amāniya and Amāni schools, renamed Esteqlāl and Nejāt respectively (*Eṣlāḥ*, 24 September 1933); and German, Indian, Swedish, and other engineers and technicians to set up basic services. Afghanistan and Kabul opened up to tourism (*Sāl-nāma,* 1933-34, pp. 257-59).

During Nāder Shah's four-year reign, the contrast became even more pronounced between the historic town, now known as the old town (*šahr-e kohna*), and the modern town, whose present and future lay mainly on the left bank. With no more than a roughly outlined framework, Kabul was transformed through various public programs and by the private real estate market. This transformation was to continue at an even faster pace during the reign of Moḥammad Ẓāher Shah (1933-73).

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