

FINAL REPORT

Annual of the Kabul Magazine, 1932-55: An Annotated Bibliography

(M. Jamil Hanifi)

1. During the months of June and July, 2006 I spent about three weeks visiting the collections of the 1932-1955 *Salnama-ye Mojala-ye Kabul*, the monthly *Kabul* and other related publications produced by the government of Afghanistan at the Library of Congress and libraries at Columbia University, Harvard University and the University of California-Berkeley. Librarians at these sites offered generous assistance and access to their collections of these publications. At Harvard University and the Library of Congress portions of these publications which were in storage and not yet catalogued were also made available to me. All 23 volumes of the annuals and the *Kabul* monthly for corresponding years have been located and examined. Preliminary notes from each volume and photo-duplications of select portions were produced. Arrangements have been made with the staff of these libraries to make available to me some of these works—especially the volumes that have yet to be catalogued (at Harvard University and the Library of Congress)--through the interlibrary loan system.

I had originally planned to produce descriptive summaries of the contents for all 23 volumes in about 7-8 months, about three volumes per month. However, since these annuals contain a wealth of information I have decided to go beyond mere descriptive annotations and address the ethnographic and historical dimensions of the structure, organization, policies and operations of the Afghan government, the thinking and orientation of the Afghan state elite and texts about Afghan culture, society and history. I will address the emergence of this numerically small but powerful new Afghan urban strata of professional technical and administrative intellectual elite as it developed alongside pristine monopoly capitalism in Afghanistan in the first third of the 20th century. My principal objective is to find out how this intellectual elite organized a new culture and acted as “hired pens” of the capitalist class in organizing its domination through the Afghan government apparatus and its hegemony in civil society. So far I have undertaken a systematic description and analysis of the 1932 volume and hope to finish its initial draft soon. The remaining volumes will receive similar treatment. I hope to have the initial draft of the annotations and analyses of the annuals completed by summer 2007.

2. The initial stage of the research has located a complete set of the annuals and the monthly *Kabul* for the years 1932-55 at Harvard University Library and the Library of Congress. The holdings of Columbia University and the University of California-Berkeley are not complete. However, all four libraries contain numerous other printed books and periodicals in Farsi and Paxtu produced by the Afghan government during the middle third of the 20th century. Most of the authors of these publications come from the same pool

of the government employed Afghan elite whose writings appear in the annual and the monthly *Kabul*. A preliminary general conclusion can be drawn about the immediate and long-range consequences of the monopoly of this elite on the production and circulation of printed information and ideas about Afghanistan in general, modernity, and the outside world, Europe in particular. How this monopoly conditioned relations of power in Afghanistan will provide a central focus of the study. I have started the search for sources from which the Afghan elite consumed information and images about modernization and European culture, society, and politics.

3. The Kabul annual, the monthly *Kabul* and other printed texts produced by the Afghan government contain a wealth of information about the structure and organization of the Afghan state apparatus. These mass produced texts are a rich source of ethnographic data about state-tribe relations, ethnic and linguistic contours of the operations of the government, modernization efforts in several areas including incipient industrialization, communication, public health, education. As a whole, these texts serve as a window on the culture, society, and politics of Afghanistan.

The AIAS fellowship facilitated the realization that virtually all of the Farsi and Paxtu (and a limited amount of English and French) printed text that the Afghan state produced are available in several academic research libraries in the United States. From a general overview of these texts, I was discouraged but not surprised to discover that this rich mine of raw data has remained almost totally unused by academic researchers, especially anthropologists. Large portions of these works were relegated to storage rooms and perhaps eventually to waste bins. I hope the publication of the results of this study will make known the availability of this rich resource and encourage scholarly research dealing the role of the printing press (and literacy) in the articulation of class relations, state formation and modernization of Afghanistan. Potential users of these publications need full reading competence in Farsi. (Some volumes contain short lithographically produced inserts in Paxtu).

4. Prior to the publication of a comprehensive report about these texts, I plan on producing a preliminary article about my findings. As soon as I finish the latter, I will start search for a publisher for the larger work. It is my hope that the publication of the larger work will receive material assistance from the American Institute of Afghanistan Studies and/or other sources .

5. A. Why has this gold mine of information about the culture, society, history and state format of Afghanistan remained hitherto unused? What role has mass produced lithographic and printing press played in the dynamics of relations of power, modernization, development of the popular culture and the articulation of the state apparatus of Afghanistan?

6. The AIAS fellowships are a welcome boost to Afghanistan studies. Here are some suggestions: 1. The dollar amount of the fellowship should be

changed to a range, let us say 5-10 thousand, in place of current fixed amount. 2. Although the security situation in Afghanistan is not stable, it is a tragic irony that recipients of the AIAS fellowships are prevented from using these resources towards travel and research in Afghanistan. If multiple tens of thousands of American and European soldiers and civilians can travel to and stay in Afghanistan, why cannot the recipient of the AIAS fellowship?. To my knowledge other grants and fellowship programs involving federal funds do not have such restrictions about Afghanistan. Research anywhere involves risks. That the risks in Afghanistan are slightly higher does not justify the AIAS fellowship restriction on travel to Afghanistan. A glaring contradiction of this restriction policy is that the AIAS maintains an office with a hefty rent in Kabul. The American director and the staff of this office are subsidized by funds from the AIAS budget. 3. The AIAS fellowship program and its activities and programs need to be publicized more widely on the internet and in academic and professional publications and venues. For example, I have yet to see anything about the AIAS in the Anthropology News (American Anthropological Association) and other similar organs in the social sciences and the humanities.