

Conclusion**Deflecting Colonial Canons and Cannons: Alternate Routes to Knowing Afghanistan**

The windfall reaped by the Sethi family through their intimate commercial connections with Abdur Rahman stands in stark contrast to the more usual experience of mercantile flight from and avoidance of Afghanistan. Abdur Rahman temporarily reversed the trend of Indian capital's penetration of Afghanistan, but he could not eliminate the dependence of Afghanistan's exports on India's mass consumer markets. Geography is the primary structuring variable in the long term economic connection between Afghanistan and India, and state politics are important determinants in the precise articulation of this commercial relationship between two unequal but interdependent economic zones. Interactive social and cultural histories blend geographical constants and political fluctuations into a multidimensional holograph of market life on the frontier between Afghanistan and India. This book explored a limited set of market relationships on this frontier during the nineteenth century when colonialism was globally ascendant.

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The lens of colonialism can be adjusted, however problematically, to accommodate both macroscopic and microscopic vantage points. The oeuvres of Chris Bayly and Bernard Cohn, respectively, capture those two complimentary scopes of colonial analysis, and that argument is made stronger because each author recognizes and engages the opposite "polarity" to make their own points and positions more potent through dialogue and flexibility.¹ This two-tiered vision of what can be called the local and the global is at the same time an integrated one, and as such it is perhaps the primary connection at work in the preceding pages. Other connections that are equally basic, and similarly complex in their dialectics, have been necessary to consider in order to approximate what really happened on the ground and not what is imagined to have occurred from distant vantage points during the articulation of modern Afghanistan. Colonial connections between Afghanistan and British India were addressed through relations between states and markets in their own right and in relation to one another, social communities and commodity groups independently and interactively, and through texts and money again as multifaceted but singular units of analysis as well as an analytical pairing. It has been necessary to do a bit of disentangling along the way toward making social and economic connections between states, markets, people, money, and texts. This feature of the analysis highlighted important elements of distinction, on the one hand, and continuity, on the other, which were occurring within and in many ways articulating the larger and smaller colonial connections just described.

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The connections between colonialism and capitalism are metaphorically electric and can be viewed as productively synergetic, but those same connections can also be simultaneously and literally explosive and destructive. Capitalism and colonialism each have their own conceptual turf, but when combined those two rich fields of inquiry yield a fertile terrain to cultivate a study of Afghanistan. **3**

Fernand Braudel's historical analysis of capitalism tracks between the micro-local and macro-global levels and has arguably yet to be surpassed. The nomadic trading tribes who were central in the foregoing analysis capture the distinctions and links between what appear in Braudel's scheme as material life and market activity, the former geared toward basic subsistence and existence, the latter involving "surplus" goods and their exchange. For Braudel capitalism arises out of market activity and generates connections between formerly unintegrated markets. The agents of those connections and the agency employed to make them correspond in many important ways to the mobile Hindkis and hundis that paired with the commercially precocious nomads to form the fluid base over which political authorities must raft and camp rather than permanently settle. Braudel's view of complementary geographic, fiscal, and social variables facilitates an understanding of the imbalanced market relationships between Kabul, Peshawar, and Qandahar. His insights about market "pulls" and polarities magnify the colonial data used here, allowing us to see distinctions and interactions between those three market settings. His global model prompts a view of our three seemingly geographically marginal markets as much more central to the functioning of larger, again separate but interactive interregional and global commercial networks. **4**

Braudel is also a beacon for those lost at sea when trying to navigate toward an understanding of how large-scale debt is accrued and circulated, its roles in the genesis and demise of market and political structures, and its perpetual impact on ordinary debtor folk who are not fully aware of all the variables conspiring to undermine their relative fiscal buoyancy. Braudel demarcates debt through the interactions of commodities, cash currencies, and bookkeeping practices. His consideration of financial texts and accounting practices is amplified by Jack Goody who conveys the basic importance of literacy for bureaucracy and therefore in a more complicated way for governance. While attending to literacy's state locus, Goody also demonstrates that scribal groups and textual practices transcend cultural and political barriers. Together, Braudel and Goody illuminate the cavernous debt associated with Afghanistan and help to conceptually substantiate the data-driven arguments about debt presented in this book. Among the conclusions reached here are that the origins of Afghanistan's current poverty are found in state policies and practices, the articulation of Afghanistan's debt burden transpires via state paperwork handled by certain scribal and bureaucratic classes, and that ordinary consumers experienced this state-created and state-managed debt via the marketplace where Afghan state currency was increasingly less favored and devalued in relation to surrounding exponentially stronger state monies. **5**

Capitalism's advance often signals the emergence of "new" social groups and the transformation of "old" social relations, but this does not mean that before capitalism time stood still for "traditional" societies who lacked a familiar form of history. Eric Wolf highlights how capitalism produces new global migrations of laboring classes associated with new production regimes and circulations of old commodities. Arjun Appadurai sees tension between consumers and state authorities emerging from new commodity flows and finds those conducting the new commercial movements to have a distinct form of knowledge transcending single market settings to geographically span full commodity trajectories from points of production to consumption. Appadurai identifies an important distinction between customary and diversionary commodity paths, the latter involving a larger reconfiguration of social and political relations along the way. For Appadurai and Wolf, global historical change is propelled by these new circulations and movements of certain key marketers, laborers, and commodities. In the markets of Kabul, Peshawar, and Qandahar these two authors allow us to see that the emergence of a far more robust bureaucracy signaled a new state fiscal regime that transformed labor and commodity traffic patterns and revised social and political relations in and between the three locales. **6**

Within the vast rubrics of colonialism and capitalism we have been striving for a way to manage fundamental but fundamentally complicated relationships that constitute human economic strategies, as well as other complex associations such as those between the ideological constructions of political space and the material realities and inequalities that uncooperatively represent and belie so-often hasty reasonings about Afghanistan and everything it involves. These independent but integrated explorations of capitalism and colonialism have involved histories of populations within, on the borders of, "passing through," and at varying distances outside of the territory in question. What we have been searching for is the political economy of a permeable zone characterized by multiple kinds of barriers and crossings. In other words, we have had to reckon with, on one hand boundaries, borders, and frontiers, and, on the other hand, interregional, indeed global exchange networks, trans-Eurasian commodity and cultural circuits and patterned migrations transgressing the limits of the analytical units being deployed. **7**

David Akin's and Joel Robbin's model of enlarged spheres of exchange model generates a basic set of questions that were posed at the outset of this journey through the nineteenth-century market relations between Kabul, Peshawar, and Qandahar. We are now able to answer those basic questions. Regarding the market actors themselves, we have seen Hindkis and the trading tribes as primary and interactive communities. In terms of commodities, we have focused primarily on the wide assortment of fresh and dried fruits and nuts produced in the fertile Hindu Kush valleys, but a number of other popularly consumed goods such as tea and sugar were also addressed. We have learned that multiple varieties of cash coinage, especially silver rupees, hundis, and other forms of textual money, and various private and state monies **8**

of account were involved in market transactions in these three cities. We now also know that relations between state currencies and accounting practices are subject to wide fluctuation and manipulation in the context of wider credit-provisioning and debt-servicing techniques. It is clear that there have been two states, and therefore two large and diverse sets of state actors, operating in Kabul, Peshawar, and Qandahar. It is also clear that tension between the respective state commercial agents in each market diluted the potential influence of state agents on local market practices. Arguably the most basic point about the relations between these three markets is that they are dynamic and interrelated. The growing concentration of commercial and other forms of capital in Kabul through the agency of colonialism increasingly transform the city's market relationships with Peshawar and Qandahar, intensifying connections between Kabul and Peshawar and diluting commercial interaction between Kabul and Qandahar.

The organization of this study has necessarily left a number of areas either unexplored or undeveloped. In the first geographic instance, this has been a study of markets on the eastern "side" of Afghanistan and primarily only one route between Afghanistan and India. Markets in northern and western Afghanistan have not been addressed directly, and it is certainly the case that the market connections between Qandahar and Herat had an impact on the Kabul-Qandahar route, for example. Similarly, market relations between Mazar-i Sharif and Kabul had an effect on the commercial traffic and trafficking through the Khaibar Pass to Peshawar. And the market functions of the central Hazarajat highlands are important, in different ways, for understanding the economic and social fabric of Qandahar and Kabul. The cultural and historical influence of Iran on Afghanistan and the Russian strategic presence in the British Imperial and Indian colonial visions have also not been engaged. The market analysis itself has perhaps been unconventional in treating markets in relation to one another rather than as isolated loci of social and economic activity. The connections made between Kabul, Peshawar and Qandahar did not address market hierarchies, periodicities, and network patterning in play in each location. The small-scale, short-distance pastoralism practiced in relation to rural markets that is common throughout the region of our concern did not receive attention due to the nature of the sources consulted for this project. The result is a large gap or missing connection in this work, namely urban-rural relations between our three urban market settings and their respective hinterlands.

The rigorous use of archival records was at the same time partial because smaller district archives in localities such as Dera Ismail Khan and Quetta were not consulted, nor were larger imperial repositories of textual and material colonial data found at such institutions as the Royal Asiatic Society in Calcutta or the Imperial War Museum in London. Afghan state source materials held at the National Archives of Afghanistan and perhaps other government repositories in Kabul and elsewhere in the country could shed considerable light on this study of market relations between Kabul, Qandahar, and Peshawar. Municipal records from three

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cities and private business records from individual traders and family firms also hold considerable promise as sources of data for future researchers interested in delving deeper into the connected histories of these three markets. And finally, the economic aspects of comparative and theoretical treatments of gender, Islam, and war have the potential to complement and enhance this study of markets in nineteenth-century Afghanistan.

The foregoing notice of gaps in and areas of augmentation for this study indicate a number of conceptual mechanisms and data pools that have the potential to provide a more complete understanding of the market relations addressed in this book. Ultimately this has been a spatially and chronologically limited, largely demilitarized, and relatively secular social history of markets and the economy in Afghanistan. The determining influence of British Indian colonialism on the country, despite the outcomes of the two Anglo-Afghan wars, may be the primary realization that is gained from this book for some readers. In the end, it is hoped that for all readers this work forms a springboard into new ways of understanding the country. After all, the routes between Kabul, Qandahar, and Peshawar do not begin or end in those markets; rather, they have origins and lead elsewhere. **11**

The only route of history is toward the present, which is of course just a small gateway into a large future. It is therefore worthwhile to close with a few words on the status of these markets in the early twenty-first century, with a clear understanding that a full comparison of the nineteenth century with events in the historical present requires consideration of the twentieth century that is not possible here. **12**

Whereas nineteenth-century British colonialism favored the Khaibar Pass route between Kabul and Peshawar, the current colonial or neocolonial project in Afghanistan in the early twenty-first century privileges the Kabul-Qandahar highway. At first glance, this represents competition between Peshawar and Qandahar for Kabul's favor. However, today, as always, there is more complexity to the relationship between these three cities than any single dyadic market connection can explain. Beyond the highly contingent interaction between Kabul, Qandahar, and Peshawar, cultural, political, technological, and military considerations and relationships extending far beyond the market triad are also involved in the economic relationships between the locales. **13**

Today, Kabul is the object of local colonial occupation, the subject of distant colonial strategizing, and a staging point for larger colonial initiatives. The current Kabul regime continues a pattern of colonial dependence Abdur Rahman and his British Indian patrons implanted in the Afghan state structure. Abdur Rahman's dependence on colonial resources has been transformed into today's political culture of entitlement expressed by current regime officials in their dealings with the aspiring and declining global colonial powers.² **14**

The flagship project of the current colonial regime, the Kabul-Qandahar highway, has failed to meet its primary goal of integrating the markets of Kabul and Qandahar. The highway itself is a useful index of the sheer magnitude of capitalism underlying the current colonial presence, however qualified with para- or neo- or international or multilateral, in Afghanistan. For the first phase of resurfacing 242 miles of the 300-mile road in September 2002, the U.S. government through its Agency for International Development awarded a contract of \$190 million and ultimately committed \$270 million to the Louis Berger Group of New Jersey, which employed approximately two thousand Afghan nationals and five hundred Turkish and Indian nationals for the work that was completed in December 2003.³ The Berger group has successfully bid on work commissioned by the U.S. government in the area categorized as "Rehabilitation of Economic Facilities and Services." For its projects in Afghanistan, the Berger group works with multiple hundreds of companies from the Americas, Europe, the Middle East, South Asia, and South East Asia.⁴ Through U.S. government contracts alone, there are hundreds of organizations like Berger that are profiting from the current colonial cycle in Afghanistan. The Kabul-Qandahar highway was opened with great fanfare as the flagship project of the new regime, but it quickly reverted to being a patchy and dangerously insecure road, and the expected burgeoning of market activity in and between Kabul and Qandahar has not materialized. **15**

In addition to the United States, there are a handful of major countries that directly fund the systematic "kinetic" destruction of Afghanistan and benevolently claim credit for its economic and social reconstruction that together with about a dozen smaller countries host most of the several thousand of non-governmental organizations funded to execute a variety of 'development' projects in the country. Although the current activities in Afghanistan are distinct in scale and context, they are not very much unlike "urban renewal" in the West in practice, and these destroy-to-rebuild cycles represents both capitalism and colonialism and the influence of state policies on those combined processes. **16**

In the markets of Kabul, Qandahar, and Peshawar, Afghan and Pakistani state currencies still compete with each other, with the Pakistani rupee winning that particular exchange battle. Both local state currencies are losing value in relation to more powerful international currencies, such as U.S. dollars, Euros, and Iranian and Saudi riyals. Enlarged subsidies and the reform and revaluation of cash currencies and book monies of account were important elements of nineteenth-century colonial activity in Afghanistan. Similarly, the current regime in Kabul instituted dramatic fiscal changes by issuing a new state currency, now with all denominations entirely in paper, revaluing it against other state monies, and opening up a brand new formal bureaucratic space for the state to receive its subsidies.⁵ Afghan state **17**

currency continues to diminish in absolute and comparative value and is now explicitly unwanted outside of the country and experiencing declining circulation inside Afghanistan. Foreign currencies increasingly dominate the economic space of Afghanistan.

In the historical present, there is very limited if any exchange of coinage, and paper currency is still ultimately controlled by new forms of accountants' book money. Small-scale credit and debt may be settled by large wads of various paper monies, but now electronic money transferred through a growing number of banks and paper money forms circulated through informal hawala-based networks have become increasingly prominent.⁶ The textual and technological dimensions of money and its accounting draw attention to literacy, and currently a number of new literacies are exerting their influence in the markets of our concern, sometimes from great intercontinental distances. Computer and cell phone literacies of various kinds, accounting and clerical literacies, English, Pashto, Persian, and literacies in other languages, technical and industrial literacies, and literacy in drug production, financing, and smuggling are all vying for market space.⁷ **18**

As was the case in the nineteenth century, today the communities and markets of Kabul, Peshawar, and Qandahar, and the Afghan state itself are all differentially affected by new technologies and technical literacies necessary to engage them.⁸ As in the colonial past the privileges and disparities of literacy continue to be evident in Afghanistan. In the neocolonial present, imposition of new literacies is inconsistently and unevenly transforming pre-existing state bureaucratic and other literate communities while also exacerbating residual class, ethnic, and geographically based tensions that were produced during the British colonial period. The relationships between spoken languages and various forms of textual literacy through which market transactions occur and state intervention is expressed are complex and fluid, and perhaps designed to be elusive and ambiguous. **19**

During the experimental period of Anglo-Afghan relations in the nineteenth century culminating with the demise of the Army of the Indus (1809–42), a small group of experts who wielded influence in Afghanistan for the British, such as Alexander Burnes, are identified in colonial literature as "men on the spot."⁹ During the routinized phase of Anglo-Afghan relations that began after the second Anglo-Afghan war with the reign of Abd al-Rahman (1880–1901), scores specialists and experts, ranging from piano tuners to engineers and medical professionals were contracted to service the Amir personally, his court more broadly, and the state workshops specifically. Today, a much larger and more diverse body of experts, numbering in the tens of thousands, who collectively possess a much wider range of skills and literacies than comparable individuals and communities in the nineteenth century are active in the country. **20**

Elements of continuity between the nineteenth- and twenty-first-century generations of foreign experts on Afghanistan include the general lack of local language skills, both written and oral, involving but not limited to Persian and Pashto, the overwhelming concentration of their experiences in Kabul to the exclusion of other locations, and an expressed desire for financial profit.¹⁰ Through the various intensive courses of Afghanistan's exposure to colonial and neocolonial projects in the modern era, a handful of relatively well-known experts and cadres of much less visible but still very influential "Afghan specialists" with marketable knowledge about the country have emerged. The degree of continuity between the first Afghan experts and those active and influential today is remarkable for how various forms and combinations of literacies, some fashionable and specific and others more durable and transferrable, are marketed in Kabul by non-Afghans and Afghans alike, with Western training commanding the upper market hand.¹¹ The literacy market in colonial Kabul is driven by practicality and basic functionality, with conceptualization and framing of issues, and basic questions about basic relationships devalued and undesired. **21**

In that sense, the orientalist practices of homogenization and stereotyping that took shape during the British colonial era have been reproduced consistently to and through the current neocolonial activities in Afghanistan. Sweeping generalizations made from great physical and cultural distance about the activities and practices of Pashtun populations and the Pashtun influence in Afghanistan are key reflections of this orientalist tendency that has resulted in a tautology of a country existing as if it were only about one single monolithic group. Today this is the most notable area where colonially inspired orientalism continues to persist and perpetuate a misleading vision of Afghanistan for Afghans and non-Afghans alike inside and outside the country. This book demonstrates Afghanistan can be discussed outside of the foiled rubric of "Pashtun domination." **22**

The notable exceptions to the preceding generalizations about the community of "Afghanistan experts" stand apart from the crowd because of their focused attention to geographic and spatial considerations.¹² It is hoped that through its focus on routing between three key markets, this book will continue to advance knowledge about Afghanistan in ways that challenge the overtly political tone and orientalist bias characterizing classic colonialism and a great deal of contemporary scholarship and political commentary about the county. This book has portrayed Afghanistan as a remote place only if the connotations of remoteness include complexity, dynamism, and cosmopolitanism.¹³ It is hoped that attention to connections between groups of economic actors and the markets they form will contribute to an intellectual reorientation for those who see and interpret Afghanistan's and its inhabitants' remoteness using exoticism and romanticism as tools of scholarship. **23**

Notes

Note 1: NAI, Foreign Secret F, April 1895, Proceeding Nos. 81–94.

Note 2: Today, Afghanistan's state budget is approximately 90 percent subsidized by external capital. This leaves the state virtually dependent on that capital and significantly effected by the competing agendas behind its provisioning. See later in this chapter.

Note 3: See http://www.usaid.gov/about_usaid/presidential_initiative/afghanroad.html.

Note 4: <http://www.bergerafghanistan.com/>.

Note 5: On October 7, 2002, a new Afghan state paper currency set, printed in Germany and Britain, was introduced in Kabul and gradually but incompletely phased there and in other markets over the next few weeks. On January 2, 2003, its value was dramatically reconfigured in relation to the U.S. dollar, on the order of one thousand degrees of paper strength, moving from 4726.30 on January 1, 2003, to 42.7850 the next day (see <http://www.oanda.com> for currency conversion statistics). The Afghan state's budget for the solar year 1384 (2005) was based on \$333 million in domestic revenue and \$3,178 million in external donor assistance (<http://www.and.s.gov.af/admin/ands/documents/upload/UploadFolder/%5CInterim%20Development%20Budget%20Decree%201384%20-%20English.pdf>) (PDF). This means that the Afghan government relies on donations for nearly 90 percent of its revenue, and gathers slightly more than 10 percent of its resources from domestic sources. The Donor Assistance Data base, run by the Synergy International Systems (<http://www.synisys.com>) Technology Firm that is based as least partially in Vienna Virginia in the suburbs of Washington, D.C., is the bureaucratic space where patrons and clients can exchange fiscal information and track resource flows. According to the company's fact sheet, "(t)he Donor Assistance Database (DAD) is an Aid Management and Coordination system for use in national reconstruction environments that strengthens the effectiveness and transparency of international assistance. DAD is a powerful, Web-based information collection, tracking, analysis and planning tool for use by national governments and the broader assistance community, including bilateral donors, international organizations, and NGOs." See <http://www.synisys.com/resources/040407DADFactSheet.pdf> (PDF). The DAD does not appear to be accessible to the general public, but one link to it is through the United Nations Development Programme's Afghanistan Web site at <http://www.undp.org.af/>. Similar to the impact of the British subsidy for Abdur Rahman and Afghanistan, the sources, intentions, means of transmitting, and handling external funding have significant domestic implications for the current regime and state-society relations in the country.

Note 6: For banking, see

http://www.export.gov/afghanistan/pdf/afghanistan_banking_services.pdf (PDF), and <http://www.centralbank.gov.af/>. For a view of the hawala system from the vantage point of a diaspora hawaladar, see S. M. Hanifi (2006), wherein citations to additional hawala literature can be found.

Note 7: See Allan (2004) and Goodhand (2000 and 2005) for considerations of Afghanistan's opium economy. Local memories of the economic hardships caused by the failure of the Helmand Valley Project, a U.S.-funded (privately through the Morrison-Knudsen Corporation first, then by the United States Agency for International Development) project designed toward Afghanistan's development and modernization in the Cold War era may contribute to today's resistance to internationally sponsored *cum* Afghan state "alternative livelihood" initiatives and projects in the region. For more on the first phases of what appears historically as an ongoing Helmand Valley development project, see Calluther and Michel, and 1954 USG document "Obtaining Financial Aid for a Development Plan."

Note 8: See, for example, <http://www.ltera.org/>.

Note 9: See Yapp.

Note 10: See Rubin (2006) and Berely and Rubin (2004).

Note 11: See Louis Dupree's comment in the "Ethnology/Ethnography of Afghanistan" in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* Afghanistan section, that everything said since Elphinstone has been a mere footnote to that original work.

Note 12: See Allan (2001) and Monsutti.

Note 13: See Ardner for some brief insights about "remote areas" that belie orientalist renditions of remoteness connoting social homogeneity and historical stasis.